

Your questions answered

iLife inquiries, OS X obstacles and .Mac maladies can all be overcome by our resident expert Rob Buckley. See if you can stump him...



Contact

If you have a question, don't hesitate to get in touch at:

email:

icreate@icreatemagazine.com

post:

iCreate
Highbury Entertainment Limited
Paragon House
St Peters Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

It was the best of times



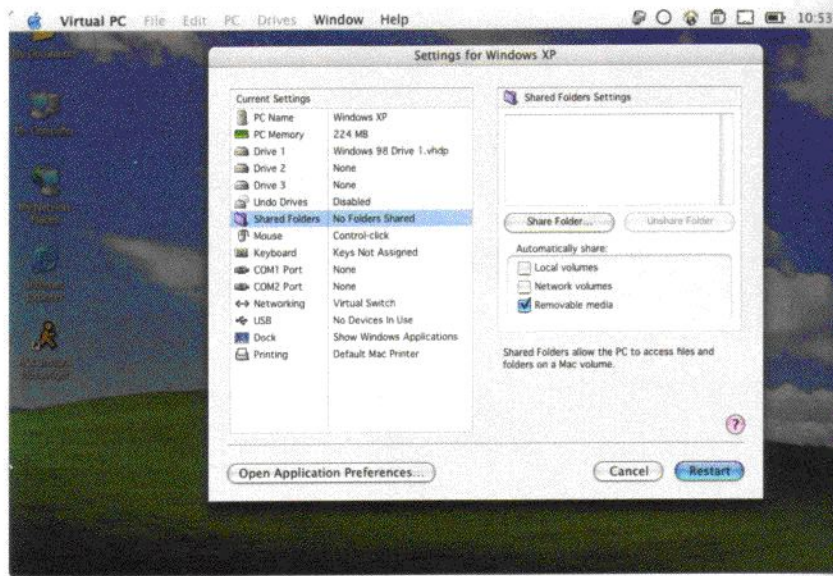
I wonder if you can help with a problem that's starting to drive me mad. I want to know if it's possible to run Virtual PC from an external hard drive? If I get a Windows virus would it affect Mac OS X? And could hackers hack OS X through Windows?

Spencer MacDonald
Email

A It's good news for you, Spencer. You can put both Virtual PC (and the Virtual PC images that contain your Windows drives) onto an external hard drive and it'll run just fine. The only thing that you need to make sure you do is tell Virtual PC where your images are: it expects them to be in a folder called 'Virtual PC List' which lives inside your Documents folder. But by adding aliases of your images (select the image in the 'Finder' and then select 'Make Alias' from the 'File' menu) to the Virtual PC List folder, you can keep Virtual PC happy. Alternatively, you could just put all your images into one folder and create an alias to the folder; you can then rename it 'Virtual PC List' and then put that inside your Documents folder.

As for viruses and hackers, there is a slight risk to your OS X environment from Windows when you run Virtual PC. Very few modern Windows viruses actually do anything really bad - such as wipe your hard disk - so for the most part, the worst you might face if you do get a virus is a badly behaving Windows installation, lots of network activity and annoying attempts to send lots of emails to people. Some worms do try to put copies of themselves in network folders, and since shared folders in Virtual PC show up as network drives in Windows, you might find mysterious files appearing in these folders. These won't actually affect your Mac since they're designed to work with Windows.

If, however, you do get an old virus that tries to do something unpleasant like wipe your hard drive, you might have some cause to worry. Attempts to erase the contents of your Windows disk image could



Theoretically you could get a virus via Virtual PC, but it would only affect the files in your shared folder

certainly succeed; attempts to wipe the contents of your shared folders wouldn't, since they're network drives and it's not possible to format network drives remotely; but attempts to delete individual files one by one from your shared folders would work.

We're not aware of any viruses that work that inefficiently or that target network

drives for file erasure, but that's not to say there aren't any or that a hacker who was controlling Windows via a Trojan Horse wouldn't try. So if you do decide to share folders using Virtual PC, it's best to only share small areas of your hard drive, rather than the whole drive or your entire home folder. Either that, or don't use the shared

The greatest slideshow

X I'd like to use my Mac to make a slideshow of various stills from my digital camera. However, as hard as I try, I can't seem to get iPhoto to keep the file names on screen during the slideshows. Help!

Jim Poyner
Email

A You're in luck. Apart from all the other improvements in iPhoto 5, its ability to display and export slideshows has been greatly enhanced. It will even keep the title names on each image when you export it...



On with the show

1 Start off my opening iPhoto 5 and selecting the album you want to create a slideshow for. Once that's done, just click on the 'Slideshow' button in the toolbar.

folders feature at all, and use Virtual PC's drag-and-drop facility to use your Mac files in Windows.

Putting out the trash

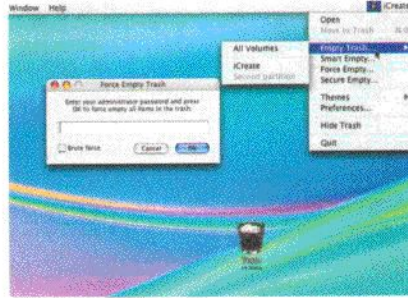
X I'm looking for something that will force-empty a Trash that just won't empty. I've tried the usual stuff like Option-drag and using force-empty software but it won't empty stuff that was dumped from any drive other than the boot drive (as far as I can gather). I have read of this problem before and apparently no fix exists. Is this true? Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Eoin O Riabhaigh
Email

A Trying to delete everything in the Trash when items are locked, etc, has been one of those problems that has plagued OS X since the very beginning. Although Panther has almost fixed the problem, there are still some occasions when you can't quite clear the Trash, particularly if some of the files happened to be on a drive other than the boot drive.

Probably the best utility for managing your Trash is something called iCan, which you can download from www.kanzu.com. It allows you to force delete files and specify which drives you can delete things from. It also has a 'brute force' Force Delete option, so give it a try and see if that works.

If it doesn't, your next best option is to highlight the drive with the recalcitrant files in the Finder, got to 'File', 'Get Info' and if it isn't checked already, click the checkbox marked 'Ignore permissions on this drive' - permissions are usually responsible for



Sometimes it's impossible to empty the Trash. That's when you need a utility like iCan, available from www.kanzu.com

these kinds of problems - then try to empty the Trash. Afterwards, uncheck the checkbox to return things back to normal.

If that doesn't work, it's time to get out Terminal and try some Unix. Go into Terminal and type 'cd /Volumes/DriveName', replacing DriveName with the exact name of the drive: you can type the first couple of letters of the drive name (getting upper and lower case right) and then press the 'Tab' key to save yourself some typing. Once there, type 'sudo rm -R Trash; sudo rm -R .Trashes'. You'll need to be using an administrator account to do this and you'll have to enter your password to authorise this nuclear option. You might get an error by trying to remove the Trash folder since it only rarely appears, but the other command should still work.

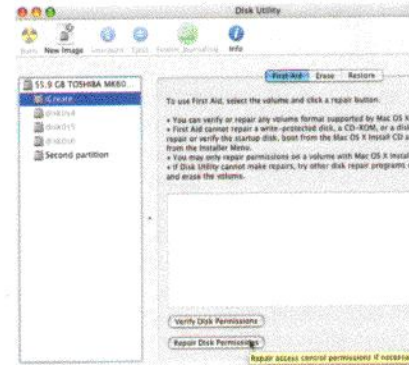
If you do get any errors asking you to override something, you'll know that some files have been locked. You can ferret around in the Trash for these files and use Get Info to unlock them, or you can type 'sudo chflags -R nouchg .Trashes/*'; sudo chflags -R nouchg Trash/*' and try to empty the Trash again.

Scary warning message

X Just recently on starting up, a rather alarming warning message appears that says; "The program you are using needs to use a system file that may reduce the security of your computer" - "the file 'symfs.kext' has problems..." Despite making sure that I hit the fix and use button, the message keeps appearing on starting up my Mac. How can this be stopped?

David Gough
Email

A The message you're getting typically rears its ugly head after a system software update when all sorts of permissions can be altered - Panther also upgraded the security requirements for certain system files, so this kind of message is pretty common for anyone who installed certain utilities under Jaguar and then upgraded to Panther. The first



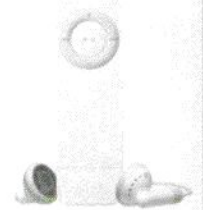
Using Disk utility to repair permissions is a simple first port of call for any bout of Mac troubleshooting

Apple updates

To make sure you have the latest software versions purring away on your Mac, click on the little 'Apple' icon at the top left of the screen. Choose 'Software Update' from the pull-down menu. If you're connected to the Web, this utility will check out the status of your Mac and give you a list of the latest updates available. You can then tell your Mac to download and install them. If you happen to be a .Mac member, login to www.mac.com and check out the latest goodies that you may not have spotted. For example, there's currently an exclusive screensaver offer.

Security update 2005-1
Available for Panther and Jaguar users, this small download (7Mb for Panther users, 18Mb for Jaguar users) sets about plugging a number of security holes, mostly in third-party applications included in OS X. PHP is one of the packages altered, so if there are any OS X Server users who upgraded their versions, they should be ready to reinstall their new version afterwards.

Logic Express/Pro Update 7.0.1
Performance and reliability improvements for Apple's audio apps. Highly recommended apparently. It weighs in at 7.8Mb/15.5Mb.



iPod Updater 2005-01-11
There's really not that much new in this apart from software for the iPod shuffle. Don't worry too much if you don't download this 21Mb update.

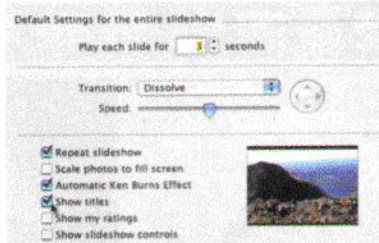
iTunes 4.7.1
You'll need this to use an iPod shuffle, and there's a security fix, too. It's only 10.5Mb, so isn't too hefty.

Xserve Remote Diagnostics 1.0.1
A few of you out there might fancy this software for fixing Apple's Xserve hardware, especially since it's a tiny 1Mb download.



Let it slide

2 To start to build up your slideshow, just select the slideshow in the pane on the left and then click on the 'Settings' button in the toolbar. This lets you add little extras.



Show titles

3 When you access the Settings options, click the 'Show Titles' checkbox and set any other preferences you have for the slideshow, such as how long each still is displayed for.



Voila! One slideshow

4 Choose 'Export' from the 'Share' menu to export the slideshow as a QuickTime movie. The slideshow can now be imported into iDVD, complete with titles.

Get your fax straight

X I am starting to get more and more disappointed with the faxing software in OS X. Is it not possible to fax via my broadband connection, rather than the internal modem, and save me the cost of a phone call? Also, if someone sends me a 10-page fax, OS X creates four or five PDFs in separate pages, rather than one PDF file of 10 pages. The person sending me the fax has problems sending the fax because they won't all transmit in one go, as when sending to a normal fax machine. They then get error messages for each of the 10 pages they've sent. Any advice you can give would be most welcome.

Tim Wainwright
Email

A If you're sending a fax to a fax machine, you have to use the phone line, since the fax machine is

connected to a phone line, unfortunately. There is a free fax service at www.tpc.int. It's not 100% reliable, but there's no harm in you trying.

We must admit that we've not heard of anyone having similar problems with the fax software on Panther, but there are several possibilities for why you may be experiencing these kinks. For starters, the micro-filter on your phone line might not be working as well as it should. Also there may be a problem with your printing software, so try running Printer Setup Repair from www.fixamac.net. We've had reports that the modems in some Macs are, erm, temperamental: using USB modems instead of internal modems has helped some people. Apple also says a patch for some problems with the fax software should be out by the time you read this.

If, after trying all of this, you're still experiencing the same problems, you



It's nice to have free fax software in OS X, but it's not a great solution for those who want to do more than send the occasional fax

could try some other fax software. We particularly recommend pagesender from www.smileonmy.com/pagesender and although it costs \$29.95, it does work with earlier versions of OS X, it has a lot more features than the Panther fax software and can use online fax services such as eFax. Let us know how you get on with this.

thing we suggest is to launch Disk Utility and click on the 'Repair Disk Permissions' button to see if that helps.

The other thing to note is that Norton Utilities and Anti-Virus install 'symfs.kext' (they're from Symantec: hence the 'sym' at the start). You can usually dispel the error message by running LiveUpdate to ensure you have the absolute latest version of Norton Utilities.

If you're still not getting any joy after doing this, open up Terminal and type the following command: `sudo chown -R system:wheel`

`/System/Library/Extensions/symfs.kext;`
`sudo chmod go-w -R`
`/System/Library/Extensions/symfs.kext'`
That should fix the permissions.



Tortoise or hare?

Using OnSpeed via my dial-up connection, downloads are very fast but when I use Software Update, a file takes about 20 minutes with OnSpeed set in fast mode. Why is this? Is it because it's downloading and installing simultaneously? I can't justify broadband for the amount of Web time I use and to get the upgrades I need, but the total files amount to above 100Mb. Is there a faster way to update?

V Sciberras
Email

A The reason why OnSpeed doesn't accelerate your Software Update downloads is that the downloads aren't compressible using its algorithms. OnSpeed intercepts all your download requests, downloads the files itself over high-speed Internet connections and then compresses them using various means, depending upon whether they're images, HTML, Flash files, Word documents or other file types. Software Update downloads aren't one of the supported file types, so OnSpeed uses a generic compression system that normally compresses files up to 20-30%. But since the



It's that old chestnut: you want to download files using Software Update, but you haven't got broadband...

files are already compressed, you don't get nearly that much, and so you're relegated to normal dial-up speeds.

Unfortunately there's no good way to improve this, other than to download the files on a machine that has a broadband connection and copy them over a network or using some kind of removable storage. The good news is that Apple has been working on reducing file sizes so that you only have to download the files your particular machine needs, rather than files that work on all Macs.

Format wars



I record and import a lot of programmes from VHS using my Elgato EyeTV (version 1.7). Can you offer me any advice on which format I should use to store my files? Elgato offers a few different ones and I'm a bit confused. Which one is the best and can be played on different Operating Systems, such as Linux? Elgato offers MPEG4, AVI, DivX, DV stream, iDVD and iMovie. If the files are too big, they cannot be imported into iMovie.
Jean van Hille
Email

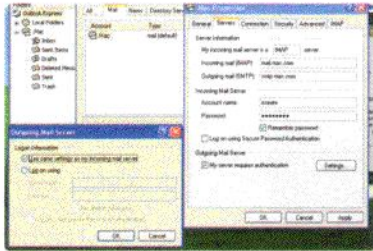
A When you're dealing with video, there's usually a trade-off in quality and file size. So one of the first decisions you have to make is how much quality you want

.Mac on Windows



In *iCreate 13*, you implied that you could use a PC to access .Mac. Can you please explain exactly how this is done

because I always assumed that .Mac was for Mac users only? I would like to keep more in touch with my family in Malta via



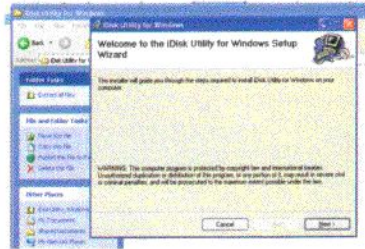
Mail? Check

1 To collect your mail on a PC, use 'mail.mac.com' as the POP or IMAP server and 'smtp.mac.com' as the SMTP server (use your .Mac username and password for authentication).

iChat rather than use email or phone, so this would be perfect.

Victor Carmelo Sciberras
Email

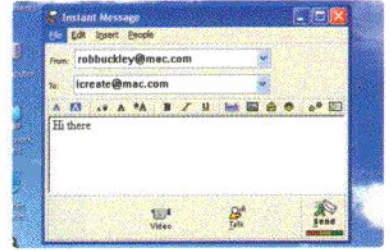
A Virtually all the features of .Mac are also usable by PCs with a few exceptions: the free software only



iDisk? Check

2 Windows XP users need the iDisk Utility from www.mac.com/1/idiskutility_download.html. Windows 2000 users should enter <http://idisk.mac.com/membersname> as the server setting.

works on Macs; you can only synchronise data using iSync on your Macs (although you can access all the information with a Web browser on a PC); and you don't get the integration between PC apps and .Mac that you do with OS X, iPhoto, et al and .Mac. You can use pretty much everything else with a PC, though.



iChat? Check

3 iChat can converse with AOL Instant Messenger on Windows for typed, audio and video chats. You can use either a .Mac account or an AIM account in iChat.

to lose to reduce the size of a video file. If you don't want to lose much quality at all, your Elgato's DV stream, iDVD or iMovie settings will be fine, but be aware that you will end up with large files. iMovie has a 2Gb limit on the size of movies it can use, but iMovie HD, which is part of iLife '05, has upped the limit to 12Gb. So you might want to seriously consider upgrading if that's your main concern.

However, you also want to be able to play the movies on other Operating Systems, which will limit your choices. There are two things to think about here: format and 'codec'. QuickTime and AVI are examples of formats: they're just ways of packaging movies, rather than the movies themselves. The codec (compressor-decompressor) is the method you use to actually encode your movie, and some codecs are better suited for certain purposes than others. So the trick is to find both a format and a codec that can be played as widely as possible.

Probably the best cross-platform format and codec is MPEG4, although it's only as good as VHS tape quality - depending on which version of EyeTV you have, that might be an export option available to you. It can be fiddly, though, so you might have to experiment a little.

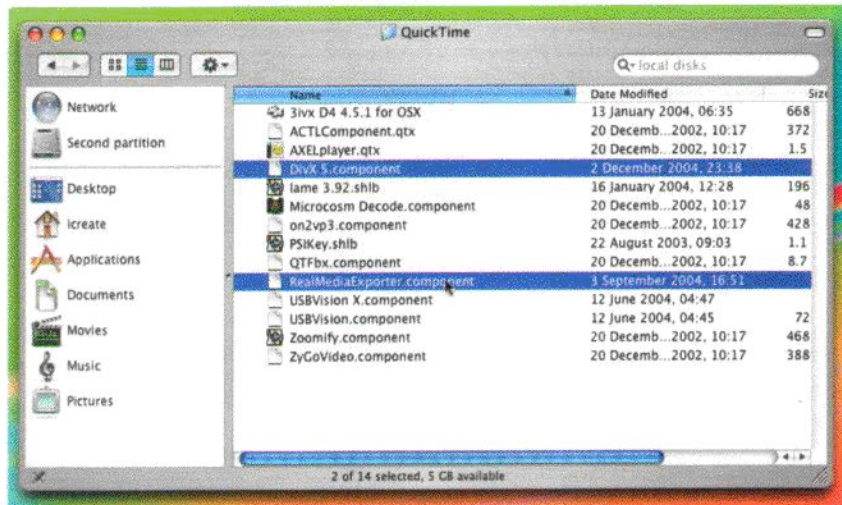
Newer versions of EyeTV offer AVI encoding. Just about every video player on every platform understands the AVI format. And although the massive number of codecs that can work with AVI makes it impossible

to guarantee that every AVI movie will play in every video player, Elgato has picked a pretty common codec for its AVI output. So we'd recommend that if portability is your main concern.

However, for higher quality at smaller file sizes, MPEG4 is probably a better choice. MPEG4 is rapidly becoming the next best cross-platform (and cross device) format and codec. QuickTime Player can play MPEG4 files, as can all the Linux players. Windows Media Player and RealPlayer on Windows can play MPEG4 files with the aid of plug-ins

available from www.envivio.com, although the Windows Media Player plug-in is no longer free.

DivX is probably the best codec choice if you want high quality at small file sizes. Derived from MPEG4, you can use it in both AVI and QuickTime files and there are even some DVD players that will play DivX movies. Unfortunately, just about every movie player on Windows and the Mac needs a free plug-in to play DivXs, so do take that into consideration. If you don't mind that, then choose DivX.



If you're looking to export movies to play on other Operating Systems a good knowledge of formats and codecs is essential