

Connecting Your PC to Your Stereo

by Bruce Fries author of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook

If you've taken the time to put your music collection on your computer, you'll probably want to listen to it through a good stereo system. Even if your stereo isn't in the same room as your computer, there are several options for connecting the two, including direct analog cabling, USB Audio devices, wireless audio transmitters, and network audio receivers.

The most basic concept of connecting audio equipment is that inputs must always be connected to outputs. Sometimes you will still get sound if you mistakenly connect a sound card output to an output of a stereo receiver. When in doubt, connect the sound card output to the CD jack on your stereo—it's always an input.

Connect high-level (also called line-level) outputs to high-level inputs, and connect low-level outputs (such as a microphone) to low-level (Mic) inputs. Do not use the receiver's phono input jack

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From The Deals Guy by Bob Click, , Greater Orlando Computer Users Group.

Hats Off To The Editors (amen, ed.)

I get about 30 users group newsletters and I'm always impressed at work performed by editors. Some I receive as printed newsletters, others are sent as PDF. Two are ZIP files. A few are newsletters in PDF format that editors notify me as being ready to download by clicking on a URL. Electronic newsletters are rapidly becoming more popular as printing and mailing costs go up. Poor delivery by the Post Office is also a major factor and complaints to them about delayed delivery mostly fall on deaf ears. I take my hat off to those unsung heroes, the editors, and some do it year after year with rare thanks from the members they do it for.

For what its worth, an editor's life is usually one of continuous frustration because of deadlines, and articles that rarely arrive on time. Many user group writers are notorious for their procrastination, which helps burn out editors. Please remember to thank your editors for all their hard work. Many of these newsletters are real works of art, which takes time, research and considerable effort. Many are a variety of informational articles while others lean more toward news and information about the group, but a users group's newsletter is always a major part of the "glue" holding the organization together.

Fast Connections Can Bring Fast Problems Also

Willem ("Pim") Borman [swipcug@lycos.com], Web Site Editor for SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. made me aware of this very unusual experience, and I thought my readers should also be aware of it since many of you are cable-connected. Here is what he told me:

"I recently found SirCam on my computer - not sure where I got it, but consider the following: Norton

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November 5, 2001

**Stark Technical College,
North Canton, Ohio**

**Board Nominations & Elections
EZ CD Creator by Murray
Davis, Door Prizes,
Swap Meet, bring your sales items**

Deals Guy, Bob Click

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Antivirus suddenly, one evening, alerted me, while I was NOT reading e-mail or such. I had it remove the worm. But it kept coming back every evening, sometimes twice. I was beginning to wonder if Norton was seeing ghosts. Instead of removing the worm again, I decided to shut down and restart the computer. That generated a warning that I was about to shut down "Terri" on my network. I don't know of anyone like that, but it gave me a clue.

"I have a cable connection and had "disabled file and print sharing" right after I got it. Somehow, I got reconnected to a network with at least a dozen other users of the local cable. I suspect that one of them has/had the virus and that it transmitted itself to others on the cable network (that were accessible) every time "Terri" turned on his computer! After I disconnected myself, again, from the cable network, I have not heard from SirCam again. I have never heard of this way of getting a virus, but it certainly is worth watching out for if you have cable access to the Internet! SirCam is known to propagate itself across networks."

New To The Column

JB Hillard, president of Chautauqua Cyber Club, Inc. asked about occasionally using the column. In an exchange of e-mail, he mentioned many projects that group is involved in, and I was amazed. This is one of the busiest groups I know of for its size. -- Charles Hajdu of Philadelphia Hub PC Users Group also e-mailed me about getting the column. This group is also interesting since they consist of Air Traffic Controllers of a hub area. Check their unique Web site on my distribution page. Welcome to the Deals column.

Still Good

Modem Booster [<http://www.inklineglobal.com/register>] (code "MB-DEALSGUY-1001") and Redbook Organizer 4.1 [<http://www.inklineglobal.com>] (code RBODEALSGUY) are still good. Cresotech PocketSafe 1.16 for Windows CE (for Pocket PC) is also still good. Use <http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=36402&pc=M6M64>] using the password "dealsguy." The Keystone Learning products have expired, but if you are still interested, who knows what they will say if you call (888-299-3647, EXT. 7002)! Unbelievably, I had two requests to feature products in my deals column, but after multiple requests for more information on the deals, they

have not yet responded.

Forgot Your Password?

ElcomSoft Company is offering a product to help you with lost or forgotten passwords for ZIP/PKZip/WinZip, ARJ/WinArj, RAR/WinRAR and ACE/WinACE archives. It supports the customizable brute-force attack and is effectively optimized for speed (up to fifteen million passwords per second for ZIP). It has a very fast and effective known-plain-text attack (ZIP and ARJ only), and dictionary-based attack. Multilanguage interface is provided. Application Category: Utilities - Security & Encryption - Password Utilities - File Tools.

The normal price for Advanced Archive Password Recovery is \$60.00, but my readers can buy it for \$40.00 at the discount URL below. Company Email: [dharchenko@elcomsoft.com] Company URL: [<http://www.elcomsoft.com>] Discount download: <http://www.elcomsoft.com/ARCHPR/archpr.zip>] Or [<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=1170-74>] Not sure which. Filesize: 735369 Bytes / 719 Kb / 0.7 Mb. Check this product's capabilities at their site thoroughly before you decide.

Clean It Up Please

Here is multifaceted software that will do a lot to clean up your Windows and browser. Cleaning up the history of your activities can be a tedious chore of manually removing each history file or entry. If privacy and disk space are to be maintained, this process should be performed every time you use your computer.

Window Washer can automatically clean up your browser's cache, cookies, history, recent document list, and much more, and it can run in the background cleaning up your tracks when you are done surfing the Internet, or any other time you choose. Window Washer cleans the tracks left behind on your computer by today's latest browsers, including... Cache, cookies, history, mail trash, drop down address bar, auto complete data forms, downloaded program files. Also cleans ... recycle bin, registry streams, Windows run history, Windows find history, CHK scan disk files, recently viewed pictures, recently opened documents, MS Office 97 and 2000 tracks, Windows temp files folder.

To purchase Window Washer or "Mac Washer," go to <http://www.webroot.com/ugrebate.htm>] where you can get a \$5.00 discount from the \$29.95 regular price. Check [<http://www.webroot.com>] for much more information on Webroot products.

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because this is designed for a very low-level signal and has a special equalization circuit. Avoid using the sound card's headphone or microphone jack to connect to other equipment unless you have no other choice.

Most consumer sound cards have 1/8" mini phone jacks. A mono jack is used for the microphone input, and stereo jacks are used for the line-in, line-out and headphone. Better sound cards may have separate RCA jacks for the left and right channels. These are the same kind of jacks found on most home stereo systems. High-end sound cards may also have connectors for digital inputs and outputs.

The simplest connection between a computer and a stereo system is to run a cable directly from the sound card's line output to a line input of your stereo. To record from your stereo system to your computer, connect a cable from a line-out (or record) jack on your receiver to the line-in jack on your sound card.

If your sound card's line output is an 1/8" stereo mini-phone jack, you'll need an adapter cable (male 1/8" stereo mini-phone to dual male RCA). These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics.

USB audio devices perform the basic functions of a sound card, but outside of the PC, and are less likely to pick up noise from the PC's electronics. USB audio devices can be used for both recording and playback and are a good solution for notebook computer users who want higher quality sound.

The Roland UA-30 (www.edirol.com) is a flexible USB audio device that supports both Macs and PCs. The UA-30 works great and includes just about every type of input and output connector you might possibly need.

Wireless audio devices can transmit a stereo audio signal up to 300 feet. These devices typically include a transmitter and a receiver with standard RCA line-level input and output jacks. Wireless audio devices provide more flexibility than hard cabled connections, but are much more prone to interfer-

ence compared to other types of connections.

The MP3 Anywhere Digital Audio Sender by X10 (www.X10.com) is a good wireless audio device for most users. It sells for under \$100 and uses the 2.4 GHz spectrum to reduce interference and provide a high quality connection. The MP3 Anywhere also includes a remote control and software, which allow you to control most popular player programs.

The ideal way to transmit audio from your PC throughout your house is by streaming the audio from your PC via a network. A network audio connection eliminates the loss of high frequencies, interference and hum typical of analog cable and wireless connections.

The Rio Receiver (www.riohome.com) is a very capable network audio device that allows you to access individual songs and playlists from your PC anywhere you have a telephone or network jack. The Rio has an LCD interface that displays song title, artist name and other information, and also includes a remote control.

Whatever your choice of PC to stereo connection, you will be able to use your computer as a digital jukebox and take full advantage of the latest digital music technologies to play high-quality music anywhere in your house. For more information on connecting your PC to your stereo, pick up a copy of ***The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook*** (\$19.95) from www.TeamComBooks.com or read it online for free at www.MP3Handbook.com.

Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet.

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Time For a New Suite

This was an APCUG announcement and I am making sure everybody knows about it. Gobe Software's developer team is introducing "GobeProductive" which will be introduced at Fall Comdex. This is the same team that developed ClarisWorks. GobeProductive was first developed for the BeOS. Now it has been adapted to Windows or Linux and if you are ready for a new office suite try this one.

Here is an excerpt from their message: "What sets GobeProductive apart from other productivity suites is a single key insight. Why have an integrated office package that uses different document formats for word processing, spreadsheets, vector illustration, image editing, and presentations? In Productive, you just do what you need to do. If you're in the middle of writing a report and want to insert some spreadsheet data, you don't have to open a separate app. Just insert a spreadsheet 'part' and keep working. Flow your text around it, insert graphics, share data between parts, and keep it all together in one document."

To find out more, go to [<http://www.gobe.com>]. The normal price will be \$124.95, but a pre-introduction order price of \$39.95 is available at [<http://www.gobe.com/preorder>] until the product is officially shipped. They say introduction should be about November 15, 2001. If you miss that one, they will have another users group offer after that, but this is their best offer. They will be sponsors at the APCUG fall Comdex events.

Still Procrastinating on AV Because Of The Price?

A friend suggested that I include F-Prot, absolutely free antivirus software, in a column. Actually, only their DOS version is free to home users. This one will take some experience because you must download, and then unzip, to use it. The same for updating signatures. It can be run from a floppy, although I have not done that as yet. The DOS version is kind of clunky (can't use mouse), but it works. I wish they had updates more often though. They do have a Windows or Linux version, but they are not free.

Point your browser to [<http://www.frisk.is/f-prot/download>] to download F-Prot antivirus. Of course, you will also need WinZip or another decompression product to unpack the file. Just don't forget to keep updating signatures periodically at the same URL.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again

next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.



Customizing the Start Menu is a Snap By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

I was sitting on the back deck, a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale in hand, and leafing through Microsoft's Windows XP Reviewer's Guide.

I was describing to my wife how XP made better use of the Start button than Win 98, when she casually said she hated it. "I never use the thing," she went on, not realizing I was under a moral obligation to make sure she was using the Start Button correctly. "I can get to all the programs I regularly use," she continued, "by clicking an icon on my desktop." Oy vey, I thought, the 293 icons-on-the-desktop syndrome. I had my work cut out for me. (Needless to say, she's never seen my collection of 70 Desktop icons, but that's another

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story altogether.)

"I'm a computing professional," I said empathically, hoping she wouldn't challenge me, "so tell me all about it."

"Besides," she was on a roll and there was no stopping her, "when I open the menu and click Programs, another menu slides out, then another, and half of them aren't even programs I have anymore. To get to the program I want takes, I dunno, 20 minutes."

Was that in real or computer time, I wondered, grabbing my beer, trying to decide if I should start the barbecue or plunge deeper into the abyss.

"The Start Menu," I said, easing back into the conversation, "is fully customizable. Give me ten minutes and I can show you how to make it look, feel, and act just the way you want it to."

Step into my wife's office and I'll show you what I did to her PC. I'm basing my tips on Windows 98 so while some will work in Win95 (and certainly in Win ME), you'll need to do some fiddling on your own.

STARTing to Understand

The first thing to be aware of is that the Start Menu is built upon directories (folders, if you're new to this sport) and shortcuts. If you'd like to make a sub-menu, just add a new folder. Don't forget, a shortcut simply points to the program and can be safely renamed, moved, or even deleted.

You might also think of your old program groups (hello? Win 3.1?) as the folders on the Programs menu.

The Structure of Start

When you click on the Start Button and the menu pops open, you'll see three sections. Depending on your PC, the lowermost part has Shut Down and Log Off. The middle section includes Run, Help, Find, Programs, and other entries.

Folder Fodder

The top section is the most troublesome and may have tons of stuff.

What happens when you install a new application is that the program, in collusion with Windows, adds a folder either to the top portion, the Programs area (again, just a folder), or worse, both spots. In my case, at least before I made the Start Menu my own, I had 12 entries (and few that I used often) because of the proprietary way these arbitrary, capricious, and dumb programs install themselves.

Making the Change

To reorganize items on the Start menu, just keep in mind they're all menus or shortcuts, and

all your moves can be unremoved.

If you're a novice and want to experiment, try this: Close all your applications so you're at the Desktop. Open the Start Menu and slide any item from the upper portion onto the Desktop.

Don't like it there? Two remedies to try: Right mouse click on the Desktop and select and click Undo Move. Or just slide the entry back onto the Start Menu by dragging it to the Start Button, waiting for the menu to appear, and dropping it where you want to see it. Cool (and easy), eh?

Now open Start, Select programs, wait for the menu to pop out to the side, and try the same thing. Move, delete, and rename items by dragging and dropping, or using the right mouse button to copy and paste.

Win Explorer Meets Start

If you want to be a power user (or pretend to be one), open Windows Explorer and head for \Windows\Start Menu. Both of those files are shortcuts and correspond to the upper portion of your Start Menu. Try this: Rename any item (press F2, a shortcut). Then open the Start Menu. The change is effective immediately.

Now click on the Programs folder and take a few minutes examining the contents. Each folder matches what's in your Start Menu, right? Begin rearranging items in a logical way. For example, I created a folder named "tools" and moved every system tool, utility, and applet into it. Another folder? Multimedia for all of my music programs. Ditto for security, photos, and games.

Now move programs you use often to the upper portion of the start menu.

Here's a trick: I take frequently used programs, ones I use daily—PowerDesk, Eudora, IE, Word's Open Doc, Snagit (a screen capture tool)—and stick a shortcut for each one in the Quick Launch part of my taskbar. Do it by right clicking on an empty area on your taskbar, click Toolbars, and make sure that Quick Launch is selected.

Then from Win Explorer or PowerDesk (or even your Desktop), drag a program onto the Quick Launch bar. It will add a shortcut (that's done automatically) and you can slide it along the Quick Launch area to suit your needs.

A Clean Start

As you poke around the Start Menu, my guess is you'll find more than a few dead links, programs that you've uninstalled but are still in the Start menu. Instead of hassling with it, use Start Menu Cleaner, a freeware utility which cleans the start menu by removing unneeded shortcuts and folders. It's available at <http://www.mithril.d.se>.

If you want to fiddle with other settings on

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Akron-Canton PC Users Group
PO Box 2151
Akron Oh 44309-2151

Next Meeting - Nov. 5th
Stark State Technical
College
Main Auditorium

First Class Mail

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your PC besides the Start Menu, say, changing icons or editing the Add/Remove Programs list, grab a copy of More Properties 2.0. It's free to try and a dollar if you continue using it.

<http://home.global.co.za/~olivierd/imaginary/mp20lite.zip>

Hey, I've gotta go. My wife's wondering if I can show her how to modify Word's Toolbar.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Write to him at steve_bass@pcworld.com. Check PCW's current edition at <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

Club Officers				Future Events	
President	Frank Ramsey (2001)	330-699-4711	aframsey@yahoo.com	Sun., Nov. 18th, 2001	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off I-77 to Arlington Road, Akron, OH (Exit 120)
Club Outreach	Rick Lubinski (2002)	330-928-7179	lubinski@bright.net		
Secretary	Walt Ruthenburg (2003)	330-283-7867	wruthenburg@usa.net	Sat. Nov. 17th, 2001	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, Berea, OH, West off of I-71 at Bagley Rd. Exit
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