

ACPCUG

December 2002

Last Notice!

This is the last mailed newsletter! If you did not receive an e-mail notice of this newsletter, you need to contact your board or Art McRowe, newsletter editor! To save costs, the board has moved and announced that the ACPCUG will electronically distribute its newsletter unless a member notifies us of an extreme hardship!

December 3, 2002

Taylor Memorial Library

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

6 PM- DOS Commands - Gerry Schaefer

**7:30 PM Q&A 8:00 PM Ghost -
Dick Lash**

Buying a DVD recorder

By Bob Elgines, elginesz@rraz.net

Well the prices are coming down, now under \$300 and as low as \$220, for a DVD recorder. The blank disks are now under \$2.50 each in lots of ten or more. But beware, the great decision as to which format is still under debate, DVD-R or DVD+R! If you just wish to make videos either one should work in most DVD players made after the year 2000, but not all. Cheaper DVDR disks and players will not work.

Support out there is very weak to almost NONE! Much time is needed to be invested like 4 to 10 hours to make a 2 hour video DVD, of which several programs require you to sit in front of your computer.

Most of the software is over priced and does not work without many problems and no support like "Video Studio 6" by Cyber. The best so far has been "MyDVD" by Sonic. Some of the suggestions listed below came from them.

The best input devices are: "USB Instant DVD" by ADS (\$160), "Bungee DVD" by Pinnacle (\$150), "DCS 100" (\$170) and "DCS 200" by Dazzle (\$230). They all come with software that have individual problems, and advertise "Fast, Easy & Fun", boy that is a huge JOKE! It's Slow, Hard, & Will drive you nuts.

If you can not provide all of the suggestions (really necessary evils) below then don't get involved. I became one of their guinea pig and I am about to throw it all in the circle file and call it a lost.

My ASUS computer is an Intel P3 @ 866MHz, 256MB RAM @ 133MHz, 60GB Hard Drive @ 7200rpm ATA100, ATI Radeon 32MB video card, with the "USB Instant DVD" input device (I tried out

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Computing Factoids

There are unrelated things I pick up in e-mail that are terrific-but not long enough for an article. Here are two of them.

**Compiled by Steve Bass,
Pasadena IBM Users Group
Saving Paper? Ha!**

I just bought a program (which I think is excellent) called "Cool Edit Pro" from Syntrillium (www.syntrillium.com) which is audio editing and processing program.

The registration card has a box to check that has this amusing statement:

"Yes! Please send me a hard-copy manual. (A complete manual is included on your CD. In the interest of paper conservation, Syntrillium ships hard-copy manuals only on demand.)"

So I can print it out (conserving their paper) or have them send me something that should have been in the box in the first place (conserving my paper, 225 pages for the manual plus 42 pages for the addendum). Since I paid \$399 for the program, I think I'll conserve my paper instead of theirs. --*Stan Slonkosky*

Listen Up and Take Heed!

I always tell people to unplug their PC when working on the insides. It's something I never do. My unsolicited advice? Do it. All the time.

Here's why: I added a sound card to my wife's PC the other day. Easy enough, right? Then, while the system was up and running, I replaced the cover. I've done it that way since I started with PCs in 1983. This time it bit me on the butt. The case cover touched an add-in card and the systemboard fried. Better it should have happened to my PC, you know what I'm saying? -*Steve Bass*

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check his Home Office columns at <http://snurl.com/homeoffice> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <http://snurl.com/signup> §

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Preparing your Computer for a New Operating System

By Guenter Schoett, Fallbrook CC email schott@tbf.com

An easy and safe way to add and manage a new OS with System Commander 7 (?)

I have been debating for some time now how best to install the new Windows XP Professional operating system on my computer. Reading various articles and technical newsletters can be a virtual adventure and impress upon you the four most-important facts before jumping into the arena:

1. Read all instructions very carefully and follow them
2. Back up your system because extensive changes will be made to your hard disk
3. Make a bootable diskette for your current OS. To create a new bootable floppy disk, click on Start, Settings, Control Panel, and then the Add/Remove Program's icon. Now click on the "startup Disk" tab at the top, and select Create Disk. You may be asked to insert the Windows OS CD. When you have a startup disk, it allows you to start your computer, run diagnostic programs, and fix many problems.

4. Clean up your machine's hard drive by deleting unnecessary memory hogs and run Scan Disk followed by defragmentation. Although the backup and boot diskette may never be necessary, they provide a safety net should you experience serious bugs or problems that overwrite critical areas on your hard disk.

I was not quite sure whether to add an additional hard drive on my machine and facilitating a clean install or simply to upgrade from my Windows 98 SE. One of our club members (Bill Wolf) suggested the use of a helpful automatic preparation software package for adding operating systems. It's called System Commander and widely recognized for quality and reliability. You can find more information and other related operating system management products on the company's Web site at <http://www.v-com.com>. The product can be directly purchased from VCOM for \$69.95.

OK, I got their software and installed it on my computer. I should have said "I was trying to install it". Seconds into that process a window popped up and informed me: "System Commander has detected a disk manager program such as EZ-BIOS or Ontrack installed on your system. These programs will not operate properly if System

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Commander is installed. The installation will be cancelled". So I checked to see if I had any of them but did not.

Obviously, something else was holding me up. But what? The extensive (200+pages) user manual for version 7 might give me the answer. Right? Not exactly! In chapter 9 (Troubleshooting) or anywhere else nothing refers to my first problem.

Contacting Technical Support was my next step. On page 195 of the manual you are encouraged to check the index to see if you can save yourself a phone call. Also mentioned is a troubleshooting assistance program called "SCIN" which allows you to press F1 or Alt-H in most places to get context sensitive help. Unfortunately, the program had not been installed as I mentioned above, and I couldn't take advantage of that lifeline. OK, let's go to the Website <www.v-com.com/support> and seek help.

I entered details about my problem, sent it as an E-mail and was informed that a support technician was going to respond within 3 days, and often much sooner. The answer came the following day!

It read:

"Dear Customer,

Downloading and installing v7.03 should solve that problem. This was an error that was corrected in v7.03."

Good. So I went back to the company Website and tried to locate version 7.03. Could not find it but instead discovered the System Commander 7 Maintenance Release page which indicates what you will need to update System Commander 7:

System Commander 7 installed on your computer

System Commander 7 Serial number

2 blank formatted 1.44MB diskettes

The Update file: sc703_us.exe

Download size: approximately 4.2 MB

"Holy Moses" I said, wouldn't it be much easier to just let you download an update file? In my case, this wouldn't have worked anyway because I was unable to install this software in the first place.

But wait, this is getting more complicated. Next you find instructions on how to obtain the System Commander 7 update:

Fill out and submit the online Download Request Form. You will need your serial number to complete the form. (For DOS users

only, click on the DOS Version Download Request Form). After you have successfully completed the form, you will be able to download the update file sc703_us.exe. **Note:** While not critical, for Windows 9x/Me users, please rename the file C:\SC\SC7.EXE to SC7OLD.EXE before running the sc703.us.exe update program. If you fail to do so, the older SC7.EXE utility program will not be updated.

This last bulleted item really raised my eyebrows. If it is not critical, why go through this whole process?

Well, since I am a fairly tolerant and understanding individual I filled out the online form to see where all this would lead me. My 56K modem had a good day and it took only 13 minutes for the download. And in order to follow all procedures, I sent another E-mail to the Support team

to find out how to interpret the "Critical" designation referred to in the note.

The following answer arrived on the next day:

"Dear Customer,

The reason it is not "Critical" is that you will probably not have to start over with the oldest file. Even if you do have to, the latest update will update the original file utility program when it is applied."

The good person who wrote that message completely ignored my initial question of how to rename that important original file that still resided on the CD and not on my hard drive.

Obviously, another message had to be dispatched in which I stated that the tech person completely by-passed this problem and that I could not see how this response could help me. I then suggested that we cut this run-around game and they should send me a new CD that included the update and will allow me to install System Commander. This was Friday evening.

Here is the answer that came Monday morning:

"Dear Customer,

Here is the latest full copy. (See attached file: SystemCommander7.exe)". Hurrah, no more problem! Think again. Just as it happened originally with version 7.02, the installer quit a few seconds into the installation procedure and a similar message appeared on my monitor screen:

"System Commander has detected the EZ-BIOS disk manager on your system. This program will not operate properly if System

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Buying a DVD Recorder

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the DAZZLE equipment, but it had big noise problems and they had NO support at all), VIVASTAR (LF311) DVD-R recorder. I have tried two operating systems such as Win '98SE and Win'ME and saw no difference, went back to Win'98SE.

For Windows '98 'XP users start off with these suggestions on getting ready to record a DVD:

- *Install at least 256 MB of RAM
 - *Disable the Screen Saver
 - *Disable the Turn off Hard Disks option
 - *Disable the Hibernation option
 - *Disable the Network Time Server (Win'XP)
 - *Disable Text to Speech (Win'XP)
 - *Disable any scheduled tasks (for example, virus scan)
 - *Do not increase Virtual Memory beyond Windows' recommended setting
 - *Close any other running applications
 - *Do not copy any large files while capturing
 - *Do not allow any remote activities, such as PC Anywhere or Timbuktu connections
 - *Your hard drives are formatted to NTFS (which as no files size limitations Win'XP)
 - *You have at least 21 gigs available on a single drive
 - *You have the latest drivers for the following: DVD Rom, burner, CD-ROM and burner.
 - *Your hard drives have been defragmented.
 - *In particular, while capturing video, do not use your PC for any other activity. Video capture requires all your PC's processing power, and any action such as inserting a disc or receiving e-mail may cause errors in the captured video files.
 - *Your monitor resolution must be set to 1024x768 16 or 32 bit color
 - *You are running ASPI driver 4.6. No higher, no lower. If you are unsure, you can go here to find out and/or download the appropriate driver: <http://aspi.radified.com>
 - *You are not running you machine/session of a network/RAID configuration
 - *Make sure you have the latest version DirectX (a must), WMP (a must):
 - *If your "Input digital device" is on USB, then remove all other USB external equipment.
 - *You may also find it beneficial to enable DMA for all your drives.
- There are DVD-RAM and DVD+RAM which

allows you to save up to 9.6GB of Data, but hard drives are much cheaper, like 20GB for \$69.00 or lower. It is just not FAST and EASY as they have stated in their advertising!

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Commander is installed. The installation will be cancelled". Am I lucky or what?

So, again I went back to searching my computer by entering "EZ-BIOS disk manager" into the search box. 172 answers popped up but unfortunately none included EZ-BIOS. I had copied the installation message with Printkey 2000 and sent it together with the entire list of file names to the technical support team and repeated my request for help. Here is what I received the following day, which was Tuesday:

"Dear Customer,

You don't say what version of SC7 you have. This is a false error message It should have been corrected by the v7.03 update. If you do not have v7.03 installed, download it from our website. If you have installed it, let me know and we'll continue working on this issue".

I am beginning to feel as if I am writing the script for a cyber soap opera. BTW, what is a "false error message"? In my answer to the last customer support message I mentioned that I have been very patient for one week now, but would love to receive a solution to this software problem?

Let's see what tomorrow's mail might bring. Here comes the answer:

"Dear Customer,

It means that we are detecting something in the BIOS that appears to be a drive overlay (such as EZDrive or EZBios), but as we discuss this, we find that you have never had a drive overlay installed. Therefore we are displaying an error message that is "false." We are aware of this issue we don't know at this point what is triggering this error message, in some cases it seems to be related to Western Digital hard drives, but that is not true in your case. The issue is in Engineering and they will have a solution and a new update soon. I'm sorry it is turning into such an inconvenience for you. The only way I can narrow down the possibilities is to have you try the latest update, v7.03, and gather as much information as possible".

OK, now I know at least where the problem is located, namely in the engineering department for

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this software. But doesn't the last sentence sound a bit ridiculous? They sent me that update and it does NOT work. I dispatched another E-mail for an explanation on the last part and when this update will be available for customers like me. Here is the answer:

"Dear Customer,

I should have been more clear -QA is narrowing the cause(s) of this problem and Engineering is writing an update that will correct it/them. It was necessary to see if v7.03 will install or not. Several drive overlay issues were fixed in v7.03 and yours may have been one of them. We are being told about a month for the update".

Doesn't this sound as if I have been a guinea pig for this vendor? Well, I still want to finish this article and review the "working edition", and if everything goes well, the conclusion of this dramatic development will appear in next month's edition of our news magazine. Would have loved to install Windows XP by now but this has to wait for another month, I guess.

Guenther Schoett is the editor of the Fallbrook Computer club as well as I believe the Advertising Director. If you use his article please send him an email to let him know. Thanks.

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My budget discarded, as they eyed my cash,
A new stick of RAM and a floppy drive too?
Why is it that my old stuff simply won't do?
'Oh' I said as I became more confused,
So much for keeping my old Pentium 2.

'All of the new ones use Pentium 4',
The shop-keeper said as I looked for the door,
No! I thought desperately as I looked around,
A 'budget' computer was not to be found!
Around this time I felt somewhat groggy,
And my memory of events is a little bit foggy,
I left the store in a rapture and with a rather large bill,
And a hole in my bank account my paycheck wouldn't fill.

When I hear someone mention an upgrade or two,
My brain starts to hurt, and I feel so confused,
To this day I cannot remember the lines I was fed,
Yet I still feel a shiver, and quiver with dread,
Don't get me wrong, the computer is great,
But if you don't need it, I advise you to wait,
Because soon enough a new one comes out,
And all the consumers will be heard to shout,
'But I just bought this one, and it's obsolete?'
I fear it is true my friends, it happened last week.

As computers get better, and cheaper to build,
It is we, the consumer, who must foot the bill,
As far as speed goes we shout 'We need more!',
Which is dictated to us, by the software stores,
It's a vicious cycle, this computer upgrade,
Once we complete it, all-new parts are made,
They are much faster, and better we're told,
So if we don't upgrade, we're out in the cold,
When you want to upgrade think of this rhyme,
And remember my advice to just bide your time.

v

An Upgrade is Near

So you are looking to upgrade,
Tell you what my friend,
I'll relate one of my stories,
So you can defend,
Against all of the annoyances,
And all the bad times,
Why don't you keep reading,
My upgrade rhyme.

A new Hard Drive, graphics card, CD-ROM, and case,
Just to take the lead in the Jones's race,
A new Motherboard, CPU, new Memory too,
I stared on in horror as this evil bill grew,
Pentium 4-1.6 gigahertz,
What? I exclaimed as my headache got worse,
Won't run '95b! I screamed with a gasp,
My favorite operating system, obsolete at last.

Here is a nice one, it has 'Intel Inside',
The salesman said as he swelled up with pride,
AMD, Cyrix, are last of the bunch,
It is now that damned Intel that packs the most punch,
A punch to the wallet I found out real fast,

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Next Meeting - Dec. 3rd,
Taylor Memorial Library
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First Class Mail

In This Issue...

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Software Evaluation			

	Future Events
Sun., Dec. 14th, 2002	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off I-77 to Arlington Road, Akron, OH (Exit 120)