



# The *GAB'er*

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Volume 21, Number 4 - December 2004

## Apple Asteroid

AppleInsider claims to have knowledge of a new audio interface for GarageBand users in the coming months. An audio 'breakout box' of sorts, Asteroid will include two XLR/TRS audio input connectors, two RCA analog output jacks, and a standard headphone jack. The device reportedly will draw power through a single FireWire 400 port and include a phantom on/off power switch. Developed by portions of the crew originally responsible for Emagic and recently spun into Apple's iPod division, the device is expected to be debuted during the MacWorld-San Francisco show in January 2005, along with a revision to the iLife suite of applications, including a new version of GarageBand.

Asteroid will require Mac OS X v10.2.8 or later, iLife '04 or later, and a computer with a built-in FireWire port. A forthcoming revision to the Mac OS X Sound Preference Pane will reportedly allow Asteroid to interface with Apple's Soundtrack, Logic, DVD Player, and other third party applications. Meanwhile, revised FireWire Audio sound drivers have already appeared in early versions of the company's Mac OS X 10.3.7 Update.

The device will retail for approximately \$129 - \$149 and will aggressively target similar products such as M-Audio's Mobile Pre and Edirol's UA-5 USB Digital Audio Capture device. But even at \$149, Asteroid will represent one of the lowest priced FireWire breakout boxes on the market, selling for \$250 less than M-Audio's more sophisticated FireWire 410 audio interface.



## Coordinator's Corner

by John Buckley

Last month we looked at web browsers and this month we will look at how to put content on a website. There are a number of programs used to develop web pages of which we will look at one. Originally, I was going to look at *Dreamweaver* by *Macromedia*. However, I have come across a much simpler program to use that is more at the skill and price level of most of our membership. The presentation will not be a total "how to" with *RapidWeaver*; a program published by *RealMac Software Limited*. We will look at some of the new ideas in web design and how you can accomplish those in this program.

To find out what's happening in the Mac World, GAAB is the place to be. So be sure to be at our December meeting and every meeting to find out the best information about the Mac.

The December meeting will be held at Troy High School in room 212 on Wednesday, December 8, 2004. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Troy High School is located at 1950 Burdett Avenue two blocks south of Samaritan Hospital. From the Northway, take exit 7 to Alternate Route 7. Follow Alternate Route 7 to Troy. Route 7 becomes Hoosick Street in Troy. Travel east on Hoosick Street to the first light past the old closed Dunkin Donuts. This is Burdett Avenue. Turn right and travel past Samaritan Hospital for about two blocks. Troy High School will be the second school on your left. The name is on the front of the building. You can park in the front lot. Come in the main entrance, go up the main stairway to the second floor, turn left and go to room 212.

**Next GAAB Meeting**  
**December 8, 2004**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**RapidWeaver**

**Room 212, Troy High School**  
**Burdett Avenue, Troy, NY**

**Featured in this Issue**

Apple Asteroid .....	1
Coordinator's Corner .....	1
Apple Ambassador .....	2
Internet SIG .....	3
Education SIG .....	4
Mac OS Tips .....	6
Blogging .....	7
MacUser Awards .....	7
GAAB Internet Addresses .....	8

*Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984*

The Greater Albany Apple Byters is an Apple Computer User Group. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month (except July and August) in Room 212 of Troy High School, located on Burdett Avenue, Troy, NY.

Annual membership fee is \$10.00. Membership privileges include this newsletter, access to a large public domain software and video/audio tape library, local vendor discounts, special interest groups, and other special offers.

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## Apple Ambassador

## The Changing Face of Web Design

by Jim Dalrymple  
[jdalrymple@maccentral.com](mailto:jdalrymple@maccentral.com)

*The following is from the MacCentral website and is an introduction to the GAAB demo for December.*

Not long ago Web design was the sole domain of professional graphics and Web designers using high-end tools and charging prices for their work that were well out of the range of the average Internet surfer. The average user was relegated to a small amount of space from their service that was linked to a clunky HTML page with a small list of links and scattered family photos. In recent years, all that has changed.

The average user is no longer satisfied with a stale Web page. They want and are demanding cool designs and the ability to update their sites on the fly with fresh content. Not only do users want to change the content, many expect to be able to change the layout and design of their site as often as a new holiday or sporting season rolls around.

With the help of the Macintosh shareware community there are several applications on the market that will allow users to do all of those things.

One such application, which has been in development for a year and a half, is RapidWeaver, developed by Daniel Counsell. The idea to make an application that could build an entire Web site and manage content came from feedback Counsell was receiving from users on other projects he was working on.

"It's really nice to see people putting RapidWeaver to good use," Counsell told MacCentral. "If it wasn't for RapidWeaver a lot of these people would have to spend weeks learning HTML or spend hundreds of dollars on complex Web creation software."

For the \$34.95 shareware fee, RapidWeaver includes everything you need to get a Web site up and running. The newest version includes integration with iPhoto and .Mac allowing users to publish their sites on their .Mac Web space.

*Continued on page 5.*





# Internet SIG



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## What You Need to Know About Firewalls

by Kim Komando

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It only takes 20 minutes on the Internet for an unprotected computer running Microsoft Windows to be taken over by a hacker. Any personal or financial information stored on that computer is ripe for the taking—passwords, bank accounts, credit card numbers, and more. A firewall is your first line of defense and works, so long as it is used properly.

Firewalls hide your computer or network from Internet threats. They can be either hardware or software.

Hackers use programs that roam the Internet and search for open computers. They do this by sending information to IP addresses. If the IP address (the location of your computer) is unprotected, a message is sent back to the hacker. The hacker then knows your computer can be infiltrated.

Hardware and software firewalls prevent this from happening by only accepting requested information. For example, every time you type in a Web address or access the Internet, you are requesting information. If you type in my home page ([www.komando.com](http://www.komando.com)), a request is sent to my Web site's server.

The server acknowledges the request and sends the information, and your computer displays it. Since your computer made the request, the firewall lets the information through.

This is a great first step to protecting your computer, but it's not enough. What happens if a malicious program gets onto your computer and requests information without you knowing it? Trojans can be downloaded with a free program, or they can get onto your computer via an e-mail attachment. A hardware firewall won't stop them because your computer is initiating a request.

That's where a software firewall comes in. It alerts you with a pop-up message whenever a program tries to access the Internet. If it's a valid program, such as Internet Explorer or

Outlook, you tell the firewall to allow access. If it's an unknown or suspicious application, you can block it.

This can get confusing. You'll be amazed at the number of programs that need Internet access. Sometimes, your music player needs access to online databases when playing CDs or MP3s. Other programs automatically log onto the Net to check for software updates.

After installing a software firewall, you'll initially get bombarded with messages. If you recognize the program name, grant it access. If you don't, deny access and then look up the name on the Internet.

There are a number of free and pay software firewalls. Windows XP has a built-in firewall. This firewall works much like a firewall on a router. It's able to shield your computer from hackers trying to get in, but it does nothing if you have a Trojan trying to get out.

So I recommend a good third-party firewall. Several companies market free for personal use software firewalls, including Agnitum's Outpost ([www.agnitum.com](http://www.agnitum.com)) ZoneAlarm ([www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com)). Firewalls are also available from McAfee ([www.mcafee.com](http://www.mcafee.com)) and Symantec ([www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com)) for under \$50.

Mac OS X has a built-in firewall similar to the one included with Windows XP. If you want something better, check out offerings from Intego ([www.intego.com](http://www.intego.com); \$59.95) and Symantec ([www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com); \$69.95). So far, Macs have not been targeted like Windows machines, so the situation there is much less dire.

Firewalls are just one part of a bigger equation in computer security. You still need anti-virus software, and Windows updates. All work in tandem to keep the predators out.





## Education SIG

### Impressions of the NYSCATE Conference

by John Buckley

One conference that I always make an effort to attend is NYSCATE (<http://www.nyscate.org>).

The New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education is an educational, not for profit organization, which seeks to promote the effective use of technologies for quality education. NYSCATE fosters collaborative efforts to integrate technologies in instruction across the curriculum, and disseminates information designed to assist educators in enhancing the management and effectiveness of the learning environment. These imperatives are further detailed in our Strategic Plan.

In ongoing cooperation with such partners as the New York State Education Department, state and national educational organizations, private sector corporations, and publishers, NYSCATE is involved in helping define statewide policy regarding the use of technologies in education.

NYSCATE has drawn strength and support from its talented and diverse membership since 1965. The current membership is made up of teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, consultants, and business people from all regions of the state. You can view a state map of regional directors and staff members at the NYSCATE website.

Over the years, the NYSCATE conference has been held in different regions of New York State. This year the conference was held in Rochester. As with last year, next year's conference will be held in Albany. Over the past few years whenever the conference has been in Albany, the Troy City School District has played a prominent roll in hosting a number of the pre-session hands-on events in its many compute labs and media centers. The conference is held on Saturday through Tuesday before Thanksgiving and is an event educators should put on their calendars now for next year.

As in the past, the emphasis this year was on the integration of technology into the learning process. A strong point in the many sessions is that educators are demonstrating the innovative ways in which they have used technology to increase the learning of students. In addition, there is always a large exhibit area with vendors presenting the latest in

educational software and hardware. Also, there are vendor sessions showing how teachers are using different products to improve the educational process.

Sprinkled throughout the convention are a number of keynote speakers. This year I was very much impressed with David Warlick

David Warlick has been an innovator and leader in the field of educational technology and a prolific programmer, writing some of the most popular interactive web tools available for teachers on the Internet — most of them free. He created and maintains the second oldest continuing online project, Global Grocery List, and writes for publications that include Technology & Learning Magazine, ALA's KnowledgeQuest, Education World, and CUE Online. He has also written two books, *Raw Materials for the Mind: 3rd Edition*, and *Redefining Literacy for the 21st Century*, which will be released by Linworth Publishing in March 2005.

What makes David a highly effective and sought-after speaker is that, at heart, he is a teacher with a contagious passion and enthusiasm for helping people discover a brand new world of teaching and learning.

Mr. Warlick's presentation: *Literacy & Learning in the 21st Century – AKA Redefining Literacy for a New Century* was excellent in that it demonstrated the needs of our society to look at literacy in an entirely new light.

As little as we know about the future for which we are preparing our students, it is clear that it will be a place that is governed by information. Accessing, processing, building with, and communicating that information is how we will all make our livings.

Being literate in this future will certainly involve the ability to read, write, and do basic math. However, the concept of literacy in the 21st century will be far richer and more comprehensive than the 3 Rs of the one room school house, a legacy that still strongly influences today's education environment. His enlightening and thought-provoking address made a case for a literacy model that extends out of reading, writing, and basic math to answer questions like:



- What do you need to know, when most of recorded knowledge is a mouse-click away?
- How do you distinguish between good knowledge and bad knowledge?
- What does it do to the value of information, when everyone is a producer?
- How do we address ethics, when we are empowering our students with such prevailing skills?

One of the best parts of David Warlick's presentation is that his website (<http://davidwarlick.com/>) expands each of his subtopics and provides additional web-links to other sites that reinforce

Throughout the conference, there was much concern about the emphasis the federal government seems to place on the importance of education and technology in education in what they say, but not in what they do. This was especially true in the cuts made in the area of support for the Title II D program to enhance education through technology. In New York State, this will mean a \$9 million cut in expenditures. Many were even going so far to say that the cuts Washington is imposing along with the demands they are making on public education with NCLB is setting the public schools up to fail. This is on top of the fact that the federal government is cutting back on accountability requirements for charter schools, a pet project of the current administration.

## Apple Ambassador

*Continued from page 2.*

There is also an export function that allows users to publish their sites to any ftp server if they don't have a .Mac account.

RapidWeaver supports several different page layouts including Blog, File Sharing, HTML Code, iFrame, Offsite Page, Photo Album, QuickTime and Styled Text. While the application is still missing some functionality like "More" links found in some blog software, Counsell said that these features will be included in future versions of the product.

### Growing Community Support

As with many applications, RapidWeaver has a growing community supporting the product. While Counsell designs most of the default themes for the application, he says the theme community is coming onboard quickly.

Currently there are many RapidWeaver theme sites that have a combination of free and commercial themes available. Sites include Bench Design Themes, Med Designs Themes, RapidWeaverThemes.com and RapidWeaver Flash Themes.

Applications like RapidWeaver have drawn the attention of amateur and professional designers alike — just because you are using a shareware application, don't assume a professional graphic artist didn't make the theme you are using.

In addition to his other work, U.S. Army veteran and professional graphics artist/Web designer Dave Cantu has built a business (RapidWeaverThemes.com) around designing themes for RapidWeaver.

"I found RapidWeaver to be very useful for quick site building but it didn't have many themes included," said Cantu. "I thought it would be a good idea to create some of my own and to offer them to everyone."

The response to his first theme pack was so positive, Cantu decided to continue designing themes and selling them on the Internet. Currently Cantu is offering 12 different theme packs for RapidWeaver ranging in style from Apple's Aqua interface and corporate designs to simple CSS designs and kid oriented themes.

Cantu also sees other applications for RapidWeaver. While targeted to the average user to build their own Web site, there are ways the professional Web designer can utilize the application as well.

"Even for experienced Web designers this is an awesome way to put a site together in just minutes," said Cantu. This helps a lot when showing clients different ideas to choose from."

### Putting some power behind the design

For some users, applications like RapidWeaver don't provide enough backend power to drive the type of Web site they want. These users typically want dynamically driven content running on a MySQL database and PHP — with the increasing interest in Web publishing many companies are offering free and commercial publishing systems to satisfy those users' needs.

"The biggest thing is that people are now embracing dynamic publishing systems," said Rick Ellis, CEO of pMachine Inc. "The popularity of publishing is there because these systems have been made available to the masses. That is the fundamental shift — the empowerment of people to communicate on a daily or hourly basis."

pMachine Inc. offers users a free version of its blogging software, suitable for beginners and the average user, that includes enough features to satisfy most users needs for a Web site. Ellis sees the awareness of the average user as a huge reason for the increase of blogs on the Internet.

"I don't know that our customer base has changed, but there are a lot more people now," said Ellis. "There is a lot more awareness among people who are not keeping their finger on



the pulse of the Internet. The average person is much more likely to have heard of blogging nowadays.”

In recent years, Ellis has seen the need to expand his company’s offerings to include a pro version of the software, giving users even more power to manage their content.

With the corporate and high-end user in mind, Ellis launch ExpressionEngine, a new \$199 offering that would give companies that would have spent \$100,000 on a content management system just a few years ago, most, if not all, the power they needed.

“People want a way to manage information and content — they don’t necessarily need something as big as they did before,” said Ellis.

The community, says Ellis, is very enthusiastic about ExpressionEngine, proving that even the average users that use pMachine want advanced features in their content management system and are willing to pay for them.

“People are really embracing ExpressionEngine. Even among pMachine users, a huge percentage have already made the transition,” said Ellis.

As with RapidWeaver, pMachine and ExpressionEngine have growing communities that not only answer other users questions, but they also submit plug-ins and modules to enhance the management of content.

It is the community that Ellis is reaching out to for help with themes so people can more easily customize their site. As with most blogging software like pMachine, most sites have the same look and feel, unless the end user customizes them.

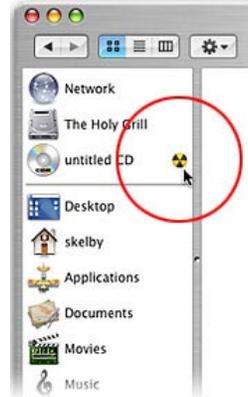
While several themes are included with ExpressionEngine, Ellis would like the community to help build a backlog of themes while his company works on enhancing the software.

“Our job is to integrate the features that we feel are going to be the most useable by the most people,” said Ellis. “We do our best to listen to our community and integrate the things that make the most sense.”

ExpressionEngine has just launched a new contest to get the community involved in making new themes. Aimed at both sets of the company’s customers, the categories for submitted themes are Blogging and Professional.

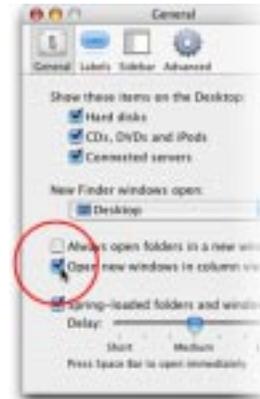
## Mac OS Tips

### Burning a CD Right From Your Finder Window



If you’ve loaded a blank CD (or a DVD) into your Mac, you’ll see it appear in the Sidebar of any open Finder window. You’ll also notice a little Burn button appears to the right of the blank CD’s name (which is “untitled CD” by default). So now, when you’re ready to burn that disc (maybe you’re using this disc to back up some files), you can simply press the tiny Burn button that appears right within the Sidebar. Burning doesn’t get much more convenient than that.

### In Love With Column View? Make it a Permanent Thing



Since Icon view and List view have been around for over a decade, it’s not surprising that many longtime Mac users absolutely fall head-over-heels in love with Mac OS X’s lovely new Column view. If you’re one of those lovelorn users, you can request that all new windows automatically open in Column view. Just go under the Finder menu, under Preferences, and click on the checkbox for Open New Windows in Column View. This turns every new window into a moment of unbridled passion that knows no bounds. Well, it does for some people anyway.

### Uncluttering Just Your Current Application

If you’re working within an application (like Photoshop), Exposé works there as well, it’s just a different shortcut. For example, if you’re working in Photoshop and have eight or nine photos open, their windows are stacked with one overlapping another. Just press F10 and Exposé will miniaturize each of those nine windows within Photoshop, so you clearly can see each photo, to get right to the photo you want. Using F10 only affects the current application (in this case Photoshop), whereas F9 miniaturizes every window, in every application, including the Finder. Again, this is one you have to try to really appreciate it, but I must warn you — once you use Exposé, you’ll cringe at the thought of using Jaguar ever again. It’s that cool.



# The Blogging Revolution

## Weblogs Are to Words What Napster Was to Music.

by Andrew Sullivan, *Wired Magazine*

In the beginning - say 1994 - the phenomenon now called blogging was little more than the sometimes nutty, sometimes inspired writing of online diaries. These days, there are tech blogs and sex blogs and drug blogs and onanistic teenage blogs. But there are also news blogs and commentary blogs, sites packed with links and quips and ideas and arguments that only months ago were the near-monopoly of established news outlets. Poised between media, blogs can be as nuanced and well-sourced as traditional journalism, but they have the immediacy of talk radio. Amid it all, this much is clear: The phenomenon is real. Blogging is changing the media world and could, I think, foment a revolution in how journalism functions in our culture.

Blogs do two things that Web magazines like Slate and Salon simply cannot. First off, blogs are personal. Almost all of them are imbued with the temper of their writer. This personal touch is much more in tune with our current sensibility than were the opinionated magazines and newspapers of old. Readers increasingly doubt the authority of The Washington Post or National Review, despite their grand-sounding titles and large staffs. They know that behind the curtain are fallible writers and editors who are no more inherently trustworthy than a lone blogger who has earned a reader's respect.

The second thing blogs do is - to invoke Marx - seize the means of production. It's hard to underestimate what a huge deal this is. For as long as journalism has existed, writers of whatever kind have had one route to readers: They needed an editor and a publisher. Even in the most benign scenario, this process subtly distorts journalism. You find yourself almost unconsciously writing to please a handful of people - the editors looking for a certain kind of story, the publishers seeking to push a particular venture, or the advertisers who influence the editors and owners. Blogging simply bypasses this ancient ritual.

Twenty-one months ago, I rashly decided to set up a Web page myself and used Blogger.com to publish some daily musings to a readership of a few hundred. Sure, I'm lucky to be an established writer in the first place. And I worked hard at the blog for months for free. But the upshot is that I'm now reaching almost a quarter million readers a month and making a profit. That kind of exposure rivals the audiences of traditional news and opinion magazines.

And I have plenty of company. The most obvious example is Glenn Reynolds, a hyperactive law professor who churns out dozens of posts a day and has quickly become a huge presence in opinion journalism. This is democratic journalism at its purest. Eventually, you can envision a world in which

most successful writers will use this medium as a form of self-declared independence.

Think about it for a minute. Why not build an online presence with your daily musings and then sell your first book through print-on-demand technology direct from your Web site? Why should established writers go to newspapers and magazines to get an essay published, when they can simply write it themselves, convert it into a .pdf file, and charge a few bucks per download? Just as magazine and newspaper editors are slinking off into the sunset, so too might all the agents and editors and publishers in the book market.

This, at least, is the idea: a publishing revolution more profound than anything since the printing press. Blogger could be to words what Napster was to music - except this time, it'll really work. Check back in a couple of years to see whether this is yet another concept that online reality has had the temerity to destroy.

### MacUser Awards

Apple once again was the star of the show at the annual MacUser awards, taking away six Maxine statues including Product of the Year for the iTunes Music Store. It also picked up a coveted reader award from host Nicholas Parsons - the Power Mac G5 was voted Hardware of the Year - as did Adobe, whose Creative Suite won MacUser readers' hearts in the Software category.

#### Hardware

Comms and Networking: AirPort Express | Apple  
 Creative Printer: Canon Bubble Jet i9950 | Canon  
 Business Printer: Lexmark C510 | Lexmark  
 Desktop Displays: 20in Apple Cinema Display | Apple  
 Digital Stills Camera: Canon EOS 300D | Canon  
 Digital Video Camera : Canon XL2 | Canon  
 Scanners: Microtek ScanMaker i900 | Microtek  
 Storage: LaCie d2 Double Layer DVDRW Drive | LaCie

#### Software

Animation and Modelling : Cinema 4D Release 9 | Maxon  
 Audio Production: GarageBand 1.1 | Apple  
 Business: FileMaker Pro 7 | FileMaker  
 Digital Video: DVD Studio Pro 3 | Apple  
 Games: Call of Duty | Aspyr  
 Graphics: Photoshop CS | Adobe  
 Graphics Utility: xScope 1.0.1 | Artis Software  
 Publishing for Print: InDesign CS | Adobe  
 Publishing for the Web: Dreamweaver MX 2004 | Macromedia  
 Utility: Audio Hijack Pro 2 | Rogue Amoeba

#### Reader Awards

Hardware of the Year: Power Mac G5 Range | Apple  
 Software of the Year: Adobe Creative Suite | Adobe  
 Reseller of the Year: MacWarehouse

#### Product of the Year

iTunes Music Store | Apple



