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Holiday Desktops

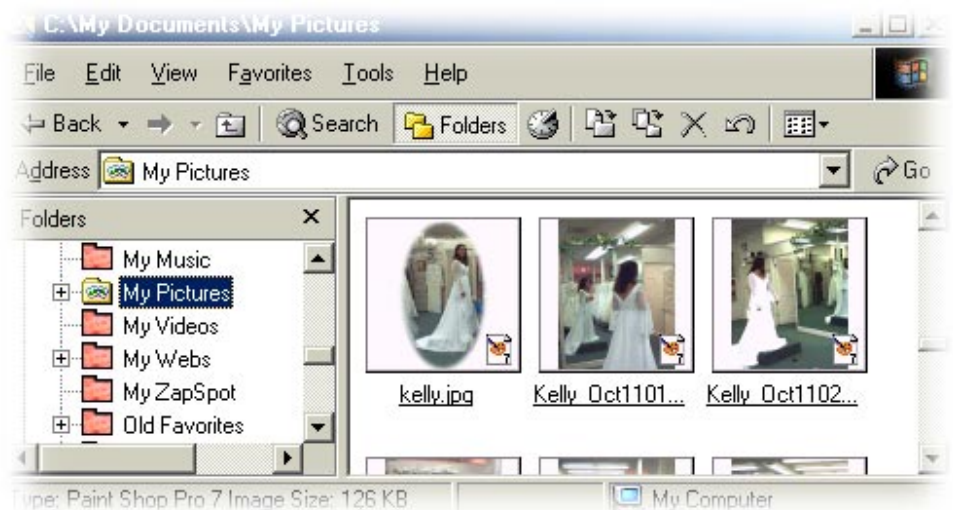
This month's CompuQuickTips was almost completely done while sitting in a car on the way to St. Augustine, Florida. With a handy dandy cigarette lighter adapter/power source hooked to little Dixie (her trusty laptop), old Mr. Wizard at the wheel and her two little bounds safely lounging in the back seat, Mrs. Wizard kept her sanity by keeping her hands busy. It sure beats knitting!

*The occasion?
Mr. & Mrs. Wizard's
beautiful daughter
Kelly O'Neal
is being married
to
Christopher Keltner.*

The holidays are quickly approaching, and before we know it we will be in the throes of holiday magic and madness. With all the eating, shopping, good will to all, eating and more consuming of holiday goodies than we probably should (did I mention eating?), the spirit of the season can sometimes get lost in the shuffle. Time spent banging away on a computer keyboard can be a calming, reaffirming experience when you pay attention to a few details. Take personalizing to a new level by decorating your computer for the holidays too.

It can be as simple as changing your color scheme and wallpaper, or go the extra mile and change your entire desktop theme, including icons, cursors and mouse pointers. There are many tools available that make these changes very easy, and holiday graphics, cursors, pointers, and themes galore available on the Internet, just waiting for you to come by and pick them up.

Changing Wallpaper ... If you know anyone who is still staring at those God-awful clouds on their main computer screen (desktop), please share this issue of CompuQuickTips with them. Wallpaper is nothing more than a graphic that is used as the background. Windows 98 - 2000 makes it very easy to change on a whim, without any special software. The only thing you need to know is where your special photos or holiday graphics are. Ever since Windows 98, there has been a nice little *My Pictures* folder in the *My Documents* folder to make organizing and finding your stuff easier, and as long as you make sure to save there in the first place, you should have no trouble finding just what you need..



To tap your *My Pictures* folder for wallpaper graphics, right click on any empty area of the desktop and choose *Properties*. The next window you should see will be the *Display Properties* window with the *Background* tab up front. Click the *Browse* button to the right, make sure *Background Files* or *All Picture Types* is showing in the *Files of Type* box, and find your *My pictures* folder contents. You might need to double click on the *My Documents* folder, then double click on the *My Pictures* folder. Use the up and down arrows until you see what you want. Then double click to make it your new background graphic.

Holiday Desktops ...

Continued from page 1

OK... I'm not going to deny the previous page was a sneaky way to slip in a few small shots of the future Mrs. Keltner, but it also serves to make some of you wonder how to get thumbnail views out of an Explorer file manager window. The next time you browse through a folder with graphics in it, click the word *View* at the top right of the window. If *Thumbnails* are an option, choose that to make finding exactly what you want, quickly and easily, without having to guess.

Themes ... There are plenty of holiday ready to use themes available on the Internet. Ranging from naughty to nice, most are free for the taking. Just crank up your favorite Internet search tool and type in *Desktop Themes*.

Icon Themes ... E-Icons has been featured as a *Tiny Treasure* in CompuQuickTips before, and will quickly become your favorite once you give it a try. There are icon sets galore available on the E-Icons website at <http://www.deepgls.com/eicons>. You can't beat it for making sweeping changes to a computer's personality with a minimum fuss.

Cursor and Mouse Themes ... Changing cursors and pointers to reflect holidays or odd personal tastes can be fun, but distracting over the long haul. Instead of making sweeping changes, try just sprucing up a few items, like your main pointer (normal select) and maybe the old

hourglass. Again, the Internet is the place to go for fancy mouse and cursors. Just make sure you save your downloaded goodies in a folder you can find easily. You don't need any particularly special utility to change or organize your cursors or mouse pointers. Click *Start*, *Settings* and *Control Panel*. Then double click the *Mouse* icon. Tweak and change to your heart's content by clicking once on the pointer you want to change, then clicking the *Browse* button. Navigate to your private stash of more interesting pointers and select the one you want to replace with. Click once to select, then click the *Open* button and you will see your new pointer. Click *Apply* to apply your change and continue changing other pointers. Click *OK* to apply your changes and leave the pointer window. Click *Cancel* if you want to change your mind and leave well enough alone.

Holiday Music ... Whatever you do, don't forget the music! Seasonal music playing in the background can go a long way towards keeping that happy spirit going strong.

**Chomputer...
Computer
hardware that
chews up data.**



Web Resources to check out ...

Free icons and cursors

<http://www.coolfunclicks.com/index.html>

Icon Themes and Software

<http://www.deepgls.com/eicons>

<http://www.free-spot.com/desktop/>

Not exactly Theme changing, but it will certainly keep the holiday spirit alive and your computer interesting all year round!

<http://www.twinklebulbs.com/>

holiday music

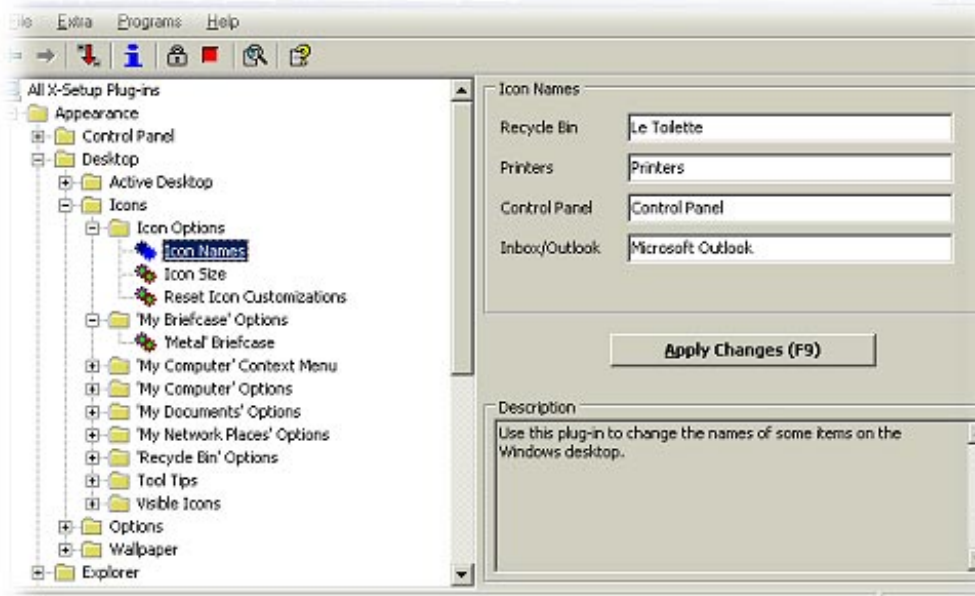
<http://deckernet.com/shed/xmasmidi.htm>

Free holiday music player

<http://www.winamp.com>



Super Tweaking Utilities...



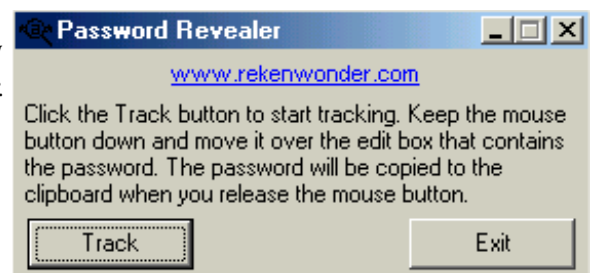
Keeping a computer in tune with your personal Karma can be a full time occupation if you aren't careful. There are those of us who live for the next nifty utility to hit the street. Our breathing gets a little heavier, and the hair stands on the back of our necks at the mere mention of a new Registry tweak. Awww come on! You know who you are! Admit it. You don't need romance any more. You have a *Computer!*

Even Mrs. Wizard doesn't spend *all* her time tweaking and optimizing, although she would if she could. It can be a fascinatingly challenging pastime. Here are a few that have helped keep her

relatively calm and collected over the years.

XTeq X-Setup is one of the best tweaker utilities available for advanced Windows users. It doesn't run in the background like some parts of *TweakUI* does, and I have yet to see any sort of conflict while using it. Best of all, it is a FREEBIE. You can download it, as well as several other interesting and valuable utilities at <http://www.xteq.com>. If you decide to give it a try, look in the Programs area for a nifty little Outlook tweak that will give you an extra button when writing email (using Word as your editor). This button will quickly let you choose to send your email as plain text (great for AOL users) or in html format. Another terrific tweak is in the Icon Options area. This will let you quickly and easily change that pesky *Recycle Bin* to any other name you want.

Another great tool to keep handy is **Revealer**. You can pick it up in the *Tiny Treasures* area on Mrs. Wizard's web. This is strictly a one trick pony, but it does its trick very well. If you have ever forgotten your password, you will appreciate what *Revealer* can do. This only works on passwords that are in little password boxes (with all the tiny ***) and are somehow hidden or stored on your computer. You are pretty much out of luck with Internet web passwords, and will need to throw yourself on the webmaster's mercy. But things like AOL passwords are a breeze to recover with *Revealer*. Just double click the *Revealer.exe* file, and when the window appears, left click and hold the *Track* button. Drag your mouse to the window where the password is hidden by those little ***'s and you will magically see what you should have written down in the first place!



Don't neglect your **mouse** when you find yourself in a tweaking mood. If you have a *wheel mouse*, you will be surprised at some of the little extras it can do for you. Click *Start*, go to *Settings* and *Control Panel*. Double click your *Mouse* icon and tweak to your heart's content. Lefties *Rejoice!* Another place to pay special attention is your *Desktop Properties* area. Right click on any empty area of the desktop and choose *Properties*. Click the *Settings* tab and try setting your screen resolution (screen area) to something a little higher than 800 by 600. Your icons will be a bit smaller, but when you have windows open, you won't believe how much more you will see. You might be amazed at how much you have been missing! Think of it as the *Adult View*.

Be sure to check out the *Advanced Tiny Treasures* section on Mrs. Wizard's web for more tools to help you with your more detailed tweaking and optimizing. You will find a great tool to help keep your *Registry* clean and doing what it is supposed to do (what a mystery!) without making you too crazy.

Carpal Knowledge... computer smarts.

*Tweaking:
The art
of making
your computer
YOUR computer!*

*Some tweak
for speed
or optimization.
Some tweak
to personalize.
Others tweak
just for
the heck of it.*

Tiny Treasures ...

Anything qualifying as a *Tiny Treasure* must pass a pretty rigid but simple battery of tests.

The installation file must be able to fit on a standard floppy disk (*Tiny*). That's 1.44 Mb or smaller. This makes for nice quick downloads and easy sharing with friends and family. Not everyone has a recordable CD.

It doesn't necessarily have to be *Freeware*. There are many *Shareware* applications that are worth much more than what they ask for in dollars and cents, or pounds and pence for that matter.

It must be easy to install and use. If old Mrs. Wizard has to be a brain surgeon to use it, it will never make the cut. Tech support will not be called for installation assistance.

It must be *gentle* on system resources. No lockups, hang-ups or babying it to make it work.

Most Tiny Treasures are wonderfully useful tools that you will wonder what you ever did without. Others are just plain FUN! Who could ask for more?

Gems ...

Say *Hello* to *Gems*! The answer to a maiden's prayers! Awesome software, same rules and testing as *Tiny Treasures*, without that pesky size restriction! Look for a new featured *Gem* each month. If you don't mind a little extra downloading time, these are for you!

Special Thanks goes to Bonnie in Indianapolis, and a gloomy, rainy day that caused her to spend some time browsing mrswizard.com. She suggested WebShots and Weatherbug as two potential Tiny Treasures. In her words, "Both are free and load very fast. Weatherbug.com lets you set up your own neighborhood to check on the weather. A little bug clicks in your systray if there is an alert. Really neat. The other site is Webshots.com. My very favorite. It lets you download wallpaper for your desktop and has hundreds of beautiful pictures you can use."

I fully agree, Bonnie. Both are free downloads and totally free services, and while not quite small enough to fit on a floppy, they certainly qualify as *Gems*.

FreeCard for Windows ... FreeCard lets you create electronic greeting cards with graphics or video, text, music and sound to send with e-mail or on diskettes. Greeting cards are made into Windows executable files and they expand, play, and clean up automatically on target PCs.

At 473 Kb, it is certainly small enough for a quick download. Installation is quick and easy. Just unzip into its own little folder, preferably on your desktop so you can find it, then double click *setup.exe* to install. I was amazed at how quickly I created a simple e-card, complete with background music and a personal greeting (less than 5 minutes from the time installation was complete). The whole thing is very straightforward and easy to use.

So download it, install it, and have fun!

http://www.pcwww.com/web_mat/freecard.html



*Computers -
vehicles for the
mind; they'll drive
you crazy*

It's *Double Whammy* time!

Weatherbug ... <http://www.weatherbug.com>

1.68 Mb *FREE* download. Adds a dynamic icon to your Windows tray that displays the current temperature from the closest WeatherNet site to your zip code. And that is just the beginning!

Webshots ... <http://www.webshots.com>

1.46 Mb *FREE* download. Free wallpaper, e-cards, and much more! You could spend hours browsing through all the photos. Want to spruce up your desktop with a minimum of fuss? Webshots is the place to go!





Mrs. Wizard

QuickTips ...



Move a window without the mouse ... If you are working in a folder or program window and need to move it around, but don't want to have to reach for your mouse, hold down the *Alt* key and press the spacebar. This produces the *System Menu*, at which point you can type *m* for *Move*. You can also use the arrow keys to move the highlighted menu item down or up until the word *Move* is highlighted. Then use the same keyboard arrow keys to move the window anywhere on the screen you wish. When you are where you want to be, press the *Enter* key on the keyboard to lock in your new location.

Clean up your desktop with folders ... You don't need to wade through umpteen gazillion shortcuts on your desktop every day just to find what you need to open right *NOW*. Sure the desktop is a handy place to keep your most frequently used program and file shortcuts, but it would be nice to see your wallpaper every now and then. Organize it with folders.

Create a new folder on the desktop by right clicking on it and choosing *New/Folder*. Type a name for the new folder and then press the *Enter* key to lock it in. You can organize your shortcut folders by categories; for instance, utilities, links, programs, etc. Drag your shortcuts to these folders for quick access and to clean up a cluttered desktop.

Note ... Leave *My Computer*, *My Documents*, *My Network Places* (or *Network Neighborhood*), *Internet Explorer* and any other icon that does not have a shortcut arrow on it. These are system files and don't like to be moved. Organizing is great, but don't go overboard moving things you shouldn't.

Right click and move ... You can use your left mouse button to drag files from one folder to another, but it is better to use the right mouse button instead. You have choices when you reach your destination and let go of the right mouse button. You can choose *Copy Here*, *Move Here*, or *Create Shortcut Here*. If you are dragging an executable file or program file (this could be an installation file that has been downloaded), left dragging will only create a shortcut and the original file will be left where it is. This is a Windows protection thing, to keep you from accidentally dragging a program file that should not be moved to another location. Moving program (exe) files that are installed (accidentally or not) can cause the programs to not work. Isn't it nice of Windows to protect us from ourselves? Make sure you *really* want to move that file!

Close them all ... The quickest way to close a bunch of open files and folders is with a little undocumented procedure in Windows 98, ME and 2000. Hold down the *CTRL* key and click on each file or folder's icon in the *Taskbar* across the bottom of the screen. The buttons will seem to depress but nothing further happens. Then right click on any one of these buttons and select *Close* from the menu that will appear. Everything will close at once. Don't worry about losing anything. If you have made any changes, you will be prompted to save before each individual program or file actually closes.

Instant System Properties ... If you have a Windows keyboard with the special Windows key on it (looks like the Windows logo), you can have instant access to your System Properties area. While holding down the Windows key, press once on the *Pause* key. System Properties will be at your command!

Stop long page loads in Internet Explorer ... When a page is taking forever to download and display all of its graphics, press the *Spacebar* to stop the graphics. This will allow you to read the text only. Another trick is to click the *Stop* button at the top of the browser window, then click *Refresh*. Sometimes starting over will cause the page to load a little quicker.

Instead of Right Click and Explore ... hold down the Shift key and double click on any folder to open in Explorer view. This is the best way to view folder contents. You will have two window panes, with the folders appearing in the left pane and the contents of each open folder in the right pane. Right clicking and choosing *Explore* is what Mrs. Wizard preaches all the time. This is just a different way to do it. There is more than one way to do everything with Windows. Take your pick.

Outlook Time Zones ... Do you have friends in other time zones and need to keep track of the time there? If you use Outlook (not Outlook Express) for email, scheduling or the calendar, there is a wonderful little tool to help. Open the calendar and right click above the time bar that displays the hours in a calendar. Select *Change Time Zone* and choose the *Show An Additional Time Zone* check box. Pick a time zone from the list in the drop down menu. In the *Label* text box, type the name of the area to remind you which is which. Click *OK* until you return to the calendar. You should see the second time zone next to the current time zone.

Computer work...
Putting
your mouse
to the
grindstone.

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Editor's Desk

This FREE newsletter is dedicated to taking the mystery out of computers in an entertaining, informative way. If you have any questions or comments, please, drop me a line, give me a call or email me and let me know what you think and would like to see addressed in future issues. I really enjoy hearing from you and am happy to help all I can. You can subscribe to the electronic version of CompuQuickTips by visiting Mrs. Wizard's Web listed below. You will receive a full-color, information-packed subscription delivered straight to your email each month as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file. Download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for FREE at <http://www.adobe.com>.

You can help support CompuQuickTips by ordering Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials when you visit <http://mrswizard.com>. Look in the *Special Offer* section. Due to popular demand, the latest version has *ALL* the past newsletter issues (almost 6 years now), as well as CompuQuickTips (the book). Acrobat Reader (the latest version) is on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of Mrs. Wizard's favorite graphic shareware programs. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!

Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal



Mrs. Wizard's Webs
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In December ...

Christmas Goodies

Making Boo Boo's Work For You



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