

Special Report

Armour-piercing Jaguar tricks fun and free

by Ben Brill

There's lots to love in Jaguar aka OS 10.2—Quartz Extreme not only speeds up graphics but also takes a load off the processor. But, troublemakers that we are, let's start playing with it.

This time around, I want to touch on a couple of different avenues for spicing up your system—one for streamlining operations and one for being just plain cool.

COOL SCREEN TRICKS

Macs are notorious for being cool. That said, here's a really neat way to show off your souped-up Mac to all your friends. This trick will work a lot better running Quartz Extreme (see www.apple.com for more info).

What we're going to do is temporarily route your background resource over to your screen saver. Also, I think the most visually impressive screen saver out there is Flurry, so that's the one I'd personally choose in the Screen Effects preference pane before doing this.

Step 1 The first thing you'll want to do is locate the following file: `System/Library/Frameworks/ScreenSaver.framework/Version/A/Resources/ScreenSaverEngine.app/Contents/MacOS/ScreenSaverEngine`

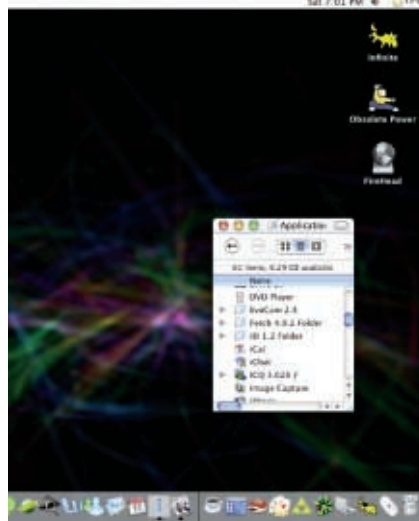
Note: When you're at "ScreenSaverEngine.app" you'll need to control-click the file and click "show package contents".

Step 2 Open a new terminal window and drag-and-drop this file into it, or type the path in—your choice.

Step 3 Put a space after the file path, then type `-background &` and hit the return key.

Step 4 Woohoo! Impress somebody.

Step 5 When you want to stop this wonderful show and get back to work, restart, logout, or type `top` into the terminal. Then look for `ScreenSaver`, and take note of the (process) number on the left. Hit control-C to exit `top` and type in `kill [process number]`.



Now—let's say you're a network administrator, and you'd like to add a Tornado warning to your log-in window. Here's how.

This neat function will display any text you want in a box that's at the top of the OS X login window.

Step 1 Open a new terminal window and type: `sudo pico/Library/Preferences/com.apple.loginwindow.plist`

Step 2 Enter your admin password.

Step 3 Go to TextEdit or equivalent, and put: `<key>LoginwindowText</key><string>[any text]</string>`

Step 4 Scroll down in the terminal window one line past the first `<dict>` tag and copy in step 3.

Step 5 Hit Control-X, then Y, and return.

Step 6 Logout to see the effects.

Next, let's talk about a few handy Jaguar add-ons that might save you a few precious seconds every day.

PRODUCTIVITY FOR \$0

Here are some bits of great freeware I picked up (www.versiontracker.com carries tons of new and useful software).

Meteorologist is an awesome little weather program that can display the current temperature, humidity, wind, pressure, UV index, a handy long-range forecast—all under a small icon on the menu bar or dock. It can rotate through multiple locations and best of all—it's free.

<http://homepage.mac.com/fahrenba/meteo/meteo.html>

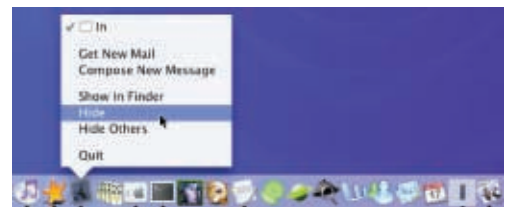


Prefling is a docking that allows quick and easy access to all your system preferences. By clicking on this dock item you have a list of all the system preference panes. It tends to be faster if you know what you're looking for. And once again, it's free!

<http://homepage.mac.com/asagoo/prefling>

HidefromDock is a nice little patch which when activated adds Hide and Hide Others to the list of options on dock items. Hide stuff without lugging that heavy mouse all the way to the menu bar! Pay nothing, get something.

www.gwenhiver.net/applications/hidefromdock



See? That wasn't so tough. Time to play with the iTunes 3 Smart Playlist. 🎵

Ben Brill has spent the last decade developing his skills as a Mac aficionado. Got a hint or hack you want to share? E-mail him at ben@gxo.com.