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Update Firmware Before Installing Jaguar!

by Geoff Duncan <geoff@tidbits.com>

From TidBITS#653/28-Oct-02

Last week, I began to see credible reports that installing Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar on some iMacs was "frying" the motherboards. Users would run the Jaguar installer, everything would proceed correctly, and when users tried to restart the screens would remain black, rendering the machines unusable. Furthermore, the screens stayed black: restarting the machine from a Mac OS 9 CD or other bootable volume made no difference. Some users who contacted their Apple dealers were reportedly told the only solution was to replace their iMac's motherboard, potentially at a cost of \$700 or more.

So, after some investigation, here's the deal:

- 1) Installing Jaguar on some slot-loading iMacs *can* render the machine unusable by blacking out the internal display, even when trying to start up in Mac OS 9. The bug is apparently in Jaguar, not the installer.
- 2) You can avoid the problem altogether by updating your iMac's firmware *before* installing Jaguar. The current firmware version is 4.1.9; it's a 1.2 MB download.
<<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=75130>>
- 3) If you've already been hit by this problem, no, the iMac's motherboard is not fried, and replacement is not necessary. See below for the fix.
- 4) A reasonable person would think the Jaguar installer would check for a supported firmware revision before attempting to install. It does not, though the ReadMe and slim installation brochure that comes with Jaguar both hint at the possible need for a firmware update.

Firmware Versions

At this time, it's not entirely clear which iMacs are vulnerable. The original "slot-loading" iMacs and iMac DVs introduced in September of 1999 are affected; the problem may extend to later iMac models with built-in CRTs, which Apple designates "Summer 2000," "Early 2001," and "Summer 2001." Neither flat-screen iMacs nor eMacs are affected.



Be sure you read the instructions before attempting to update the firmware: you'll need to locate and use the programmer's button on the side of your iMac. Firmware updates can be run only when launched from a writable disk under Mac OS 9.x (or Mac OS 8.x, if your computer is old enough). You cannot run a firmware update from the Classic environment in Mac OS X, nor can you run one when the computer is started up from a CD-ROM or network disk. Your PRAM will be reset after installing a firmware update, so you may need to check some of your system settings. In particular, make sure the setting in your startup disk control panel is correct if you have multiple bootable drives or partitions.

If you don't know what firmware version you're currently running (and who does?), you can find out by using Apple System Profiler; an entry for "Boot ROM version," "ROM revision," or "Boot ROM info" appears under the System Profile tab. If you're using Mac OS 9, the version will appear in an ugly decimal format like \$0004.17f1 - that corresponds to firmware version 4.1.7.

The following Knowledge Base article lists the current firmware revisions for Macs which support Mac OS X.

<<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=86117>>

Seeing Black?

If you've already attempted to install Jaguar and are looking at a black screen, you can recover, but it's not simple. Essentially, you must find a way to update your iMac's firmware from a writable drive without having use of the iMac's screen.

Perhaps the best approach is to open the iMac, remove its hard drive, and connect the hard drive to a second computer (like a Power Mac G3 or G4 with an available drive bay). Then copy the firmware updater to the iMac's drive, install a remote control program like Timbuktu onto the hard drive and configure it to allow incoming access, and set the drive to boot in Mac OS 9. Next, move the hard drive back to your iMac and boot the machine in Mac OS 9 (the screen will still be black). Then,

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November
2002

ReadMe v2.0

WHO?

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Website: www.qmugs.org

WHEN? WHERE?

Meetings are 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month (except July, Aug. and Dec.) in the Pioneer Building (the smaller building south of the main entrance) at Loyalist College, Wallbridge/Loyalist Road, Belleville. Room P1.
 ~ Everyone Welcome! ~

HOW?

Special Interest Groups:
 Contact these members if they have questions or problems.
Desktop Publishing:
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Jaguar Warning con't

connect to the iMac over a network from another Macintosh using the remote control program and run the firmware updater. Once you've done that, the iMac's video should be restored. If your iMac is under warranty, note that opening your iMac to remove the hard drive may void that warranty.

Obviously, not every iMac owner has a second computer and a remote control program at their disposal, or the technical acumen to transplant hard drives between machines. An Apple dealer may be able to perform these or similar steps for you to recover your iMac, but they're unlikely to do so for free even if your iMac is still under warranty: expect to pay at least an hourly rate for the dealer's time, but that's certainly cheaper than a new motherboard. A well-versed Mac consultant might be faster and less expensive. Under *no* circumstances should you let a dealer convince you that your iMac's motherboard must be replaced. Motherboard replacement was initially Apple's official solution to this problem; however, now that the issue has been more thoroughly identified, Apple dealers now have access to information about it how to recover iMacs without replacing the motherboard. If your dealer isn't yet aware of it, ask them to look.

Seeing Red?

This situation is troubling. It's incredible that Apple would release operating system software dependent on particular firmware revisions and not check that appropriate

firmware was available before installing. C'mon: that's just common sense! We're also disturbed Apple would recommend dealers and service centers replace motherboards on affected machines - a costly solution, especially for machines out of warranty - when there's nothing wrong with the motherboards, and Apple's own software caused the problem. We realize working out solutions for these problems takes time and dealers need to provide solutions as quickly as possible, but we certainly hope Apple plans to provide refunds to affected users who have already paid for motherboard replacements.

From TidBITS#654/04-Nov-02

Using VGA Monitors to Fix Blacked-out iMacs

In "Update Firmware Before Installing Jaguar!" in TidBITS-653 we outlined an arduous hard drive-swapping process to recover iMacs that had been rendered unusable by installing Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar. If an affected iMac has a VGA video output port, an easier option may be to connect it to an external VGA monitor. If the external monitor mirrors your iMac's display, you should be able to update the system's firmware directly without attempting to dismantle your iMac... or paying for a motherboard replacement. [GD]

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Submissions...

Letters to the Editor, reviews of current products, etc., are welcome.

- They can be mailed to the Group or emailed to me, the editor, David Morris at djmorris@blvl.igs.net.
- DEADLINE for receiving Articles, Columns, Classifieds and Ads is the first Thursday of the month.

In reviews please indicate which computers can use the program/item and their memory requirements. Rating the item is up to you. Raving too. (No bashing please)

Stories can be 200 to 600 words long. (A column of text is about 400-500 words long.)

If you are sending a file (email, mail or disk) save it as a plain text file (SimpleText), MS Word file, or ClarisWorks or AppleWorks 5 file.

For reviews I'd like two pictures, a PICT of the program's icon and possibly a sample of its work or what it does, again in PICT format (a screen shot will do, I can edit out the extraneous stuff.)

Advertising...

Computer related items only. Phone David Morris, 962-0684, to book space.

Front Banner = \$5.00, 1/8 page = \$3.00, 1/4 page = \$5.00, 1/2 page = \$9.00, Full page = \$15.00

Special Placement (where you want), Front page 1/2 or Any size Back page: Add 50%

Typesetting at no extra cost.

Classifieds...

Free to members, 20 words or less, (Mac) computer related items. Business Members \$1.00 per 20 words

Newsletter Editor and Disk of the Month Coordinator: David Morris

This newsletter was pounded out on a Power Mac 7100/80 with PageMaker 4.2

Getting rid of a Macintosh? Give us a call! I'm in need of a PowerBook 1400, or 5300.

Review: WannaBe 1.0b13

by David Morris <djmorris@blvl.igs.net>

While reading the 1st PowerMacs mailing list someone mentioned 'WannaBe', a text only web browser. Text only, I had heard of Lynx but never used it, and having a PowerBook Duo 230 with an internal 14,400 modem I thought I'd give it a try.

WannaBe is a quick little program that will allow you to visit web pages and read the available text. It won't show images but has clickable links for them. You can download any file as you would with Netscape or Internet Explorer. If you come across a page that you'd like to 'see' you can transfer to your favourite browser.

Ease of Use: 10/10

Cost: 10/10

Overall: 10/10



Not the best icon but a quick little program.

Available in two flavours:

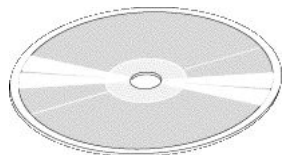
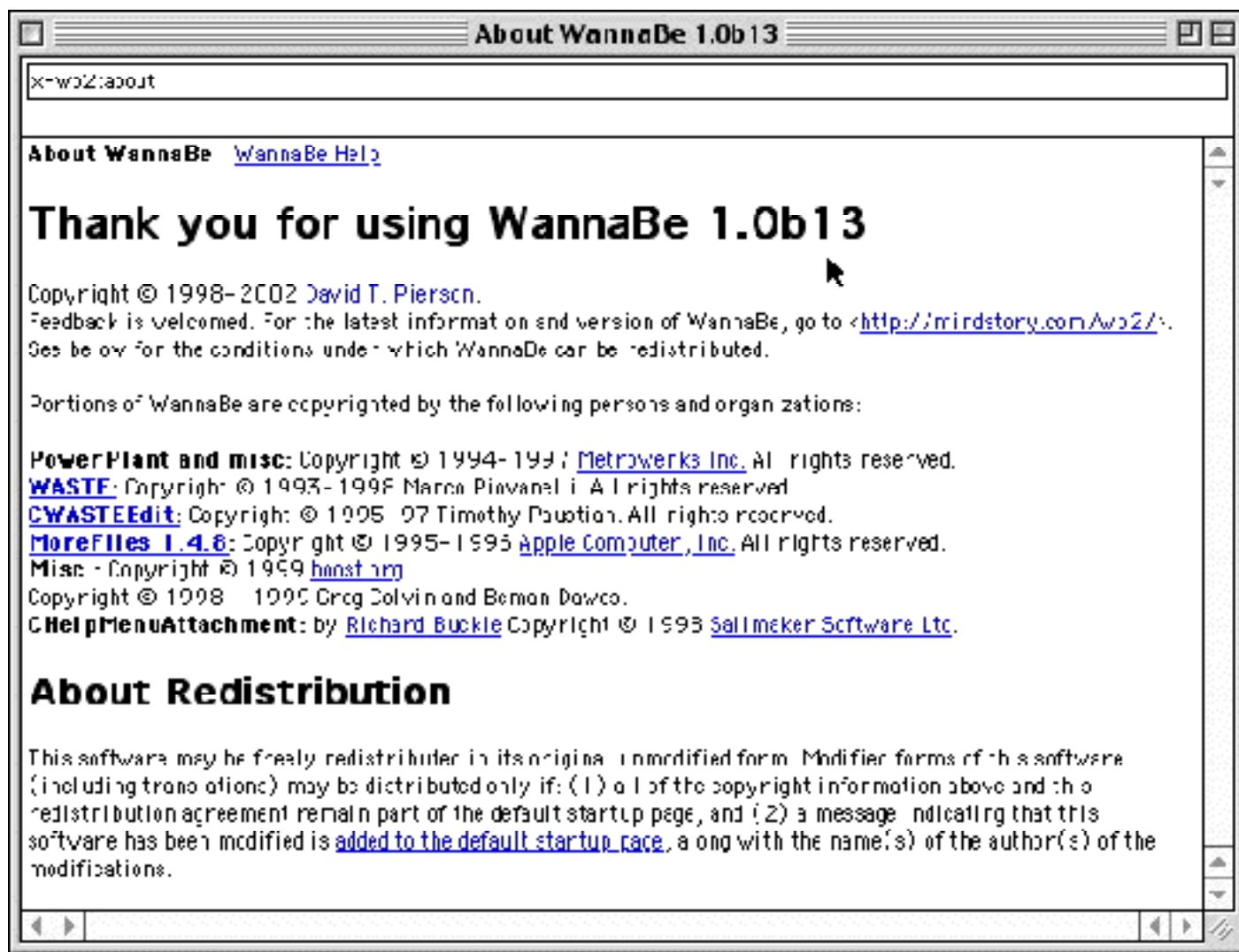
68K & PPC. Worked on a PowerBook Duo 230 (68030), a 7100 (601) and an eMac (G4) without a hitch. You can use its plugins or Sherlock's

Download from

<http://mindstory.com/wb2/>

292 - 350 kb

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Do you have a lot of floppy disks and want them on a CD?

Do you have a program on several floppies?
Or do you have an iMac/G3 and no floppy drive?

I can burn your info onto a CD. Contact me about rates.

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