ello, and welcome to this month's edition of A Spider Speaks. This monthly column is dedicated to providing you with a wealthy source of tips, tricks, and other information. Comments or questions can be sent to me at erik@applewizards.net . I'm always open to suggestions for future columns, so fire up your email application and push some bytes my way.

This month I'm going to delve into the murky world of Mac OS 8.5. Specifically, what can you do with this new OS that you could never do before?

Mac OS 8.5 represents a huge leap forward. It is arguably a bigger transition than was the move from Mac OS 7.6.1 to 8.0. With each new version of the Mac OS, refinements are made and cool features are added. This month's A Spider Speaks is geared towards helping you get the most out of your new operating system.

If you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions, I'll again remind you that email lines are open 24 hours a day and operators are standing by.

I've divided this column into the following sections:
Third Party Life of the Party — Third-party utilities that make your Mac OS 8.5 experience all the better.
Take Some Control! — Some changes have been made to your system-standard control panels. This section lists what you need to know.
Icon Do It, I Know Icon! — Icons are 32-bit (millions of colors) and have some other cool properties you may not have known about.
Miscellaneous OS — Mac OS 8.5 odds and ends that didn't fit into their own sections.

# hird-Party Life of the Party

Almost one month before Mac OS 8.5 hit store shelves, various control panels and AppleScripts were released to allow for more

customization of your new OS than the OS itself provided via its own control panels. It seems Apple engineers hid some of the features of the Appearance control panel and the Application Menu, and these shareware AppleScripts or control panels let you unlock their power.

restissimo is the best all-in-one utility I've found. It's an application — don't let the icon fool you — so it doesn't conflict with other extensions or control panels or take up system RAM at startup. Prestissimo allows you to set the size of your Application palette, scroll bar features (double-arrows and proportional scroll thumbs), and more. It's 100% free, so download it today from http://www.polymorph.net/ .

After you've set up Prestissimo, you'll no doubt stumble into Sherlock, Apple's new find utility. Perhaps the most touted feature of Sherlock is the "Search the Internet" capability. However, Internet-savvy folks will quickly notice that some pretty darn popular search engines (Yahoo, WebCrawler, etc.) and some other sites with a search capability (Time, MacCentral, Amazon.com) are also missing. Well, consider this problem solved. Just fire up your browser and head on over to these sites:
Apple's own — http://www.apple.com/sherlock/plugins.html
EI Resources — http://www.eiresources.com/sherlocksearch/

A quick note: if a site offers its own Sherlock plugin (Macintosh Resource Page at http://www.macresource.com/ for example), I encourage you to use it instead.

Wrapping up my quick list of third-party party-makers are these fine items:

ACTION Files — http://www.actionutilities.com/
Although Mac OS 8.5 supports a new "Navigation Services" (which you may have heard of), I much prefer Power On Software's ACTION Files. Besides, applications need to be rewritten to use Nav. Services.

Power Windows — http://www.kaleidoscope.net/greg/
Want translucent (or solid) windows when you drag? Go get Power Windows. This feature much improves the Mac's overall appearance.

PowerSwitch — http://www.binarysoft.com/

Apple's own now-standard application switcher pales in comparison to this third-party stud.

Sleeper — http://www.stclairsoft.com/
Energy Saver is cool and all, but Sleeper's far more functional.

Snap-To and Scrollability — http://www.edenware.com/
This is a pair of gems I have trouble living without when I use someone else's Mac. Each has its own purpose, and each is indispensable to me.

TypeIt4Me — http://www.hebel.net/~rettore/
"aw" expands to "Apple Wizards." Get the idea? Good, now get the shareware.

Window Monkey — http://www.tigertech.com/
Still stuck in the dark ages of plain white Finder windows? Hop into the next century with this nifty utility.

Yo! — http://www.clixsounds.com/
Random alert sounds are cool! I beta tested this bugger, so I know it's good!


## ake Some Control!

A few changes have been made to your Control Panels folder. I'm an orderly type of guy, so let's take it one at a time (alphabetically, no less!).

Appearance
This is what many will consider the single greatest improvement in
Mac OS 8.5. I won't list all of the changes here (some are discussed elsewhere), but explore this control panel yourself and I'm sure you'll figure it out.

Apple Menu Options
Until now, I'd used an Apple Menu control panel called
MenuChoice (others may have used one called BeHierarchic).
Until these utilities are updated to be compatible with Mac OS 8.5, AMO will have to serve. You may find yourself in a similar situation.

Date & Time
With a whole new look and some advanced features, Date & Time is
not your grandma's egg timer anymore. Particularly of interest

is the "Use a Network Time Server" feature. Just find a server close to you, set the update frequency options, and you should never have to worry about tuning your clock again. This new control panel also fixes some long-standing HFS Extended (HFS+) -related issues.

Internet
Don't trash your Internet Config stuff just yet! The Internet control
panel will (may) one day replace Internet Config, but until applications are updated to recognize and use "Internet," IC is still useful.

Before you set your preferences in Internet (which I recommend doing, because Mac OS components and future applications will probably use it instead of Internet Config), choose "User Mode" (command-U) from the Edit menu and set the mode to "Advanced." This will give you access to the "Advanced" options in the control panel, which provide a means of setting helper apps, fonts, file mapping, and more.

Memory
Though not much has changed, the Memory control panel no longer
requires you to set your disk cache. Instead, simply choose "Default Setting" and let it go at that.

Note: Monitors & Sound may change for some users — ColorSync control has been integrated, and some other minor changes were made. Check it out on your system,as you may want to change some settings.


## con Do It, I Know Icon!

Because I couldn't justify giving each of these tips their own section, I've lumped them into this aptly titled piece-o-screen.

I Think Icon Drag It Wherever I Want
lthough this little icon (the folder icon you see
in the title bar of the window at right) existed
in Mac OS 7.5 and was removed in Mac OS 7.6
and later, its re-appearance in Mac OS 8.5 is not
merely cosmetic. This icon can now be treated as
if it were the folder itself. You can click on it and
drag it into other folders, attach it to email,
upload it to an FTP site, and more, all without
having to go to the folder which contains this

folder.

Icon See Millions of Colors
Mac OS 8.5 allows you to have icons with up to 16.7 million colors. It does this by storing the icon in a new resource called the "icns." Gone are the days of icl8 and ics4 resources. "icns" stores every size icon in one resource. This saves you space, albeit a minimal amount.

To "convert" your current custom icons, just get info (command-I), click on the icon (a box will appear around it), copy (command-C), and paste (command-V). Voilà, an icns resource replaces the four or six you previously had. Because you're pasting a 256-color icon, you'll still only have 256 colors, but you've saved yourself some disk space and given yourself the satisfaction of knowing that you're as hip as the icns resource itself.

Icons with millions of colors also present a new opportunity for Mac users: cooler icons! (This is obvious, isn't it?) For example, take a gander at the icon at left. One of my desktop pictures contained an image of earth, and I felt that it would make a cool icon. I opened my image in GraphicConverter (see Sep/98, A Spider Speaks) and chopped the image down to a square of around 500 x 500. I copied this image and pasted it into the Get Info window, and bada-bing, bada-boom, a cool icon in millions of colors is available for my every whim.

## he Miscellaneous OS

What more can this dang OS do? Well, here are a few more things that you'll want to play with.

Shut Up, I'm Trying to Work Here
Although Apple hasn't released specifications for creating themes, several individuals have figured out how to make custom sound sets to complement the included "Platinum Sounds." At first I was hesitant to try soundsets — after all, who wants a computer that never stops making noise? However, after a week with an SGI soundset, I can honestly say that I can't enjoy a silent Mac as much as this!

Go ahead, turn 'em on. Turn 'em all on, then do stuff. Click menus, open windows, launch applications. Your Mac is alive! And in stereo no less! Yes, that's right, clicking on the application menu pumps sound out of your right speaker(s), and the Apple menu shoves some fun out of your left speaker(s). Drag a window around for a near-psychedelic effect. Warning: this may be

illegal in some states and is probably taxable in Ohio. Check with your state legislature before having too much fun with technology.

Lights, Cameras, Folder Actions
Via the contextual menu (control-click), Mac OS 8.5 allows you to attach an AppleScript to a folder. When a file is added to that folder, the script executes.

While this may not seem particularly interesting, imagine the possibilities. You can set up "mirror" folders, add alerts, reject the items, close sub-folders, show the comments in a dialog box, and more. Those are only some of the Apple-made scripts! Other scripts (that you or others create) could possibly allow you to automatically stuff files, attach them to email messages, upload them to FTP sites, do something with file sharing, and more. AppleScript is pretty powerful, so the possibilities are almost endless!

Trim the Application Menu Fat
y default, the Application Menu (right-most
menu item in the menu bar) in Mac OS 8.5 shows both the application icon and the application name. By grabbing and sliding the little bar shown above to the right, you can return your Application menu to an "icon-only" mode, which some people may prefer. Applications with many menus will automatically do this, so I prefer to leave mine in the "fully extended" position.

I'd Like a Yogurt Freezie and a Font Smoothie, Please
Font smoothing is cool, but
etting font smoothing
(anti-aliasing) to 12 point
renders most web pages
and normal office
documents quite unappealing. Instead, try setting font smoothing on your system for fonts 13 points or larger. This will anti-alias fonts on web pages (or in standard documents) that are larger than standard and make them look almost as if they were images. This works especially well on italic text.

Much Much More
I've had to leave a lot of stuff out in the interest of conserving space. I believe I've chosen some good topics, and I've left some areas of Mac OS 8.5 up to you to explore. Please feel free to send any comments you may have to me at erik@applewizards.net .

act of the Month:

Erik is pleased to announce that he has broken a single-person all-time record. What record, you may ask? Well, on 11 October 1998, Erik drank a record-high 15 cans of Cherry Coke.

And on 12 October 1998 Erik broke another record: most time spent peeing. If you have a real Fact of the Month for next month, please send it to me, okay? Thanks...


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