

Radio Days – 2009-12-05

Tip of the Week – Tweet, Tweet

The start of the silly season brings some amazing tweets. There is a music notation program called *SuperCollider* which is used by composers to capture sounds. It has recently been used by innovative composers to produce music which can be shared by tweeting. This has a major constraint: tweets have a maximum of 140 characters and getting any composition into 140 characters is a major achievement. The magazine *New Scientist* had a recent article about these amazing tweets, together with a zip file containing 22 compositions in mp3 format. Download this file from the website below to hear some of these amazing compositions.

Listening to this music is amazing. I have not listened to much electronic music before, and this is a real eye-opener. Try out these sounds: listen to them with new ears and see if you agree with my assessment.

Zero-Day Attacks

Normal anti-virus programs protect you from some of the threats on the internet. One threat type which cannot be fought by normal anti-virus programs is a *zero-day attack*. This type of attack occurs during the time between when a virus is unleashed onto the internet and when you update your anti-virus program with the new code created by your anti-virus company which is needed to protect you from the new problem. This time can be anywhere from a few hours to a few days.

A similar zero-day attack can occur when Microsoft releases updates to Windows. Once Microsoft has released the update to Windows the people who want to use your computer know what the problem was and then can use that knowledge to attack your computer. This is why updating both your anti-virus program (you do have one, don't you?) and Windows is so important: it reduces the chance that your computer can be turned against you.

There is a new way to overcome these zero-day attacks. The program which I am using at the moment is ThreatFire. Programs like ThreatFire is a relatively new phenomenon. They do not use the signatures inside programs to determine if a program is benign or malicious, but rather use the program's activity to determine its status. This is a new form of protection which has risen because the number of new viruses being written has increased dramatically from some 100 per year to about 1,000 per week! This puts tremendous pressure on the writers of anti-virus programs to perform well and quickly so that you remain protected.

More and more, as time passes and viruses mutate and increase their potency, you will need to be protected by something more than just an anti-virus program. I feel that programs like ThreatFire, and similar programs which will be written in the coming years, will be as needed as much as a normal anti-virus program. While there is almost complete privacy on the web you will not be safe from these sorts of attacks because there is so much money to be made by the bad guys.

Look both way when you cross the internet.

Websites

New Scientist www.newscientist.com/article/dn18173

ThreatFire www.threatfire.com