

The Luddite Lounge – All Things Rando

Episode 33 Transcript, 05/23/16

www.ludditelounge.com/episode33

You're listening to The Luddite Lounge where we're serving up news, views and how-tos for the digital world we've all come to depend on—whether we like it or not!

Hey there glad you can join me today in The Luddite Lounge. I'm Elizabeth Kricfalusi, publisher of the Tech for Luddites blog and Chief Luddite.

This is Episode 33 of The Lounge, returning after a lengthier hiatus than expected! You can find show notes with related links at ludditelounge.com/episode33.

Let's get started!

I hope nobody got hit with the WannaCrypt ransomware that spread through Windows-based computers a couple of weeks ago. Ransomware is a type of malware that overrides people's computers with a message that all their files have been encrypted, i.e. you can't access them, and if you don't pay the hackers money, your files will be gone forever. If you used to watch The Good Wife, there was an entire episode about this particular type of cyberattack.

In the case of WannaCrypt the ransomware attacked systems around the world, including the United Kingdom's National Health Service, literally affecting its ability to provide critical care to patients. It was stopped fairly quickly, but completely by accident, which doesn't make me feel a lot better about it.

If you weren't hit with WannaCrypt before it was stopped, don't assume you're safe now, since its success guarantees that copycats will come. Your best bet to avoid being hit in the future is to make sure you install all critical Windows updates. Because of the damage WannaCrypt can do, Microsoft even released security patches to fight it for older versions of Windows that are long out of the update cycle. Also, make sure you keep backups of your most important files on an external hard drive or through a cloud service so you can still access them.

Check the show notes for links to more info on protecting your computer.

I have to say, of all the types of hacks and scams, ransomware freaks me out the most even though theoretically if I can pay some money to get my files back, that wouldn't be as bad as a virus that wipes them out completely without warning. But something about the "we're screwing up your life to make some quick cash" motive seems extra skeezy to me.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/everything-need-know-wannacrypt-ransomware-attack/>

<http://gizmodo.com/global-ransomware-attack-accidentally-halted-but-its-pr-1795191097>

<https://blogs.technet.microsoft.com/msrc/2017/05/12/customer-guidance-for-wannacrypt-attacks/>

Next up: This spring seems to be a major Amazon-a-palooza. In the last episode, I talked about two new versions of the Amazon Echo: The [Echo Show](#), which has a touchscreen, and the [Echo Look](#), which has a camera. A couple of days later, I wrote a Three Tip Thursday post that included information about the new ability to make free calls using the Echo devices or the Alexa app on an iOS or Android tablet.

Now the news is all about the [Amazon Fire family of tablets](#). They've just announced the seventh generation of the tablets with four new models that will be released on June 7th. Three of them are upgrades to existing models: the Fire, the Fire HD 8, and the Fire Kids Edition, which is just the full 7" Fire with extra parental controls, a colorful case, 2-year warranty, and kid-friendly content options. The fourth model is a Kids Edition for the HD 8 tablet because I guess they figured some parents want their kids to have better displays too.

The improvements to all the models include being thinner and lighter – always a plus – longer battery life and faster performance. The new Fire tablet at \$49.99 is the same price as the old one but the Fire HD 8 at \$79.99 is actually \$10 less than its predecessor. The Kids Edition models cost \$50 more than their base tablets. As an introductory promo, Amazon is offering 20% off if you purchase any three of the new tablets, which has Dads and Grads written all over it.

I've had so many Fire tablets over the years and I'm still a big fan. My go-to model these days is the current Fire HD 8 and I do plan to upgrade. If you're not familiar with the Amazon tablets, there are three posts on Tech for Luddites you can check out. The first is about the [pros and cons of the tablets](#) overall, the second helps you decide [which one is best for you](#) (and, note to self, which now needs to be updated because of these new models...), and the third explains [how to get standard Android apps from the Google Play store onto the tablets](#), since Amazon's app store doesn't have anywhere near the number that the Play store does.

And on top of all that Amazon news, the company's Fire TV functionality has now been built into an actual TV, made by Element. The [Element, Fire TV Edition](#) comes in sizes from 43 to 65 inches, supports 4K Ultra HD video, has four HDMI ports to connect your other devices, and includes all of the standard Fire TV capabilities including Alexa voice support.

The TV is available for pre-order now, with shipping beginning in mid-June. Amazon is offering an introductory promo that throws in a digital antenna for free with your purchase. (They also have a discounted bundle with an antenna and sound bar.)

In other streaming media news, starting in 2018 the European Union is going to allow people to use online subscriptions purchased in one country to be used in other EU countries for limited periods, so people can access their services when they're on business trips or on vacation. For those of you who are not EU citizens, or don't want to wait until 2018, I have a link in the show notes to a T4L post about how to use VPN technology to access streaming videos that are restricted to certain geographies.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170515STO74834/streaming-without-borders-eu-rules-to-allow-using-online-subscriptions-abroad>

<https://techforluddites.com/use-expressvpn-to-access-tv-shows-and-movies-not-available-in-your-location>

There are lots of reasons to choose one streaming media player over another, but rarely is the reason because it's so darn adorable... Until now. PBS Kids has created its own streaming stick and it looks like a race car! The stick comes with preloaded videos and games that kids can watch offline and when it's connected to the Internet provides access to children's programming 24/7. It costs \$49.99 and is currently available exclusively at Walmart but additional retailers are expected to carry it later this year.

<https://www.theverge.com/circuitbreaker/2017/5/10/15600776/pbs-plug-and-play-streaming-stick-hdmi>

You can find a running list of streaming-related headlines at techforluddites.com/streaming.

In T4L happenings, in addition to the Three Tip Thursday and Weekly Tech Headlines posts since the last Lounge episode, I updated one of the blog's most popular posts about how to [send your cable TV signal to another room wirelessly](#). This is a solution for people who have sets in places where they don't have a cable outlet and don't want to run a cable all along their baseboards and ceilings from the outlet to the set. It has other uses as well – for example, sending a signal from a DVD or streaming player to a wall-mounted TV and the company that makes the product I talk about in the post currently has an excellent promo going on for one of their models.

And finally, I'll be doing my annual blogathon this June, where I'll be posting a new or updated post every day throughout the month. So stay tuned for a lot more tech news, views, and how-tos in the near future!

And that's it for this episode of The Luddite Lounge. Again, you can find the show notes and leave comments at ludditelounge.com/episode33.

Thanks for listening! Until next time...