

The bizarre secrets I found investigating corrupt Winamp skins

Jul 24, 2024

In January of 2021 I was exploring the corpus of Skins I collected for the [Winamp Skin Museum](#) and found some that seemed corrupted, so I decided to explore them. Winamp skins are actually just zip files with a different file extension, so I tried extracting their files to see what I could find.

This ended up leading me down a series of wild rabbit holes where I found:

- Encrypted files which I was able to crack to discover their secrets
- A gift a dad in Thailand had made for his two and a half year old son, but didn't want published online
- Somebody's email password
- A secret biography of Chet Baker
- Cryptic backwards audio files
- A file called `worm.exe` which held quite the surprise
- A host of extremely random images and files
- 56 previously unknown Winamp skins hidden inside other Winamp skins!

This all aligned perfectly with my love of [Winamp](#), my love of [found items](#) and was enabled by storing all the data I have about these skins [in an sqlite database](#) (as [discussed on Hacker News](#)).

Here's the story:

The first corrupted file I looked at contained just a PDF advertising a rentable bowling pin mascot costume:

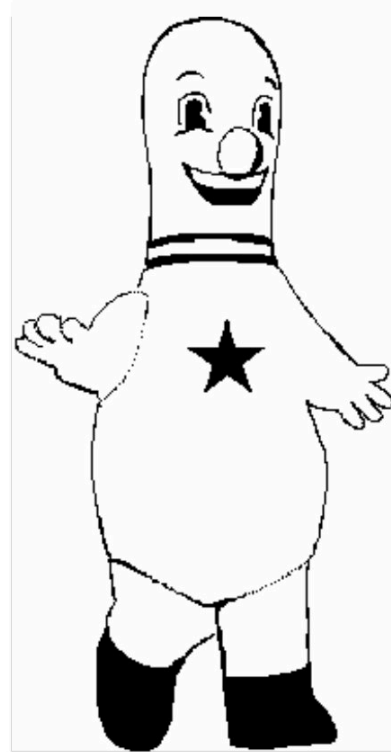


For Rent

Giant, inflatable WalkAround "WBPI PIN MAN" "Bowling Pin"



HEIGHT	10 feet
QUALITY DESIGN	Made of tough, industrial-strength nylon, reinforced for durability and finished with lifelike detail.
OPERATION	Easy-to-operate, battery-powered blower attached at the waist inflates the "WBPI Bowling Pin" in about 15 seconds.
WEIGHT	The "WBPI Pin Man", when it is not inflated, weighs 14 pounds. However, when it is inflated, the person inside carries about 17 pounds of weight which is located at the waist and shoulder harness. Shipping weight including batteries and case is 75 lbs.
HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS:	Any person who is at least 4' and under 6' 5" can wear the costume. Of course, keep in mind that they will be carrying around 17 pounds of weight.
RENTAL FEES:	Thanks to our Sponsor, Western Bowling Proprietors' Insurance who generously paid \$3,800.00, we are able to offer Rental at very reasonable rates to our members: ONE (1) DAY - \$ 75.00 TWO (2) DAYS - \$125.00 THREE (3) DAYS - \$150.00 SEVEN (7) DAYS - \$250.00
RENTAL INCLUDES:	One-way shipping via UPS (1) WalkAround WBPI Pin Man (1) Power Belt Assembly (1) "Kool" Tube (3) Sealed Rechargeable 12-Volt Batteries (2 Hours Each) (1) Battery Charger - 115 v Two Stage/Pigtail (1) Ship/Carry/Storage Case (1) Instructions
RETURN SHIPPING	Sponsoring bowling center agrees to return all equipment via UPS to the Nor Cal BPA headquarters the first business day following the rental period.
DAMAGES	Sponsoring bowling center is fully responsible for any damaged or un-returned items. (Remember, the WBPI Pin Man cost \$3,800).



Make your reservation to use this GREAT PROMOTIONAL TOOL TODAY!

Another was called `bobs_car.wsz` and, as advertised, contained just this picture, which I have to assume is the titular "Bob's car".



But then things got interesting. I found one that was an encrypted zip archive.

[resubmitted.2003_rsx.wsz](#)

I took the opportunity to learn about tools for brute forcing passwords in zip files. Soon enough, I cracked it, and found its contents:



The password was "honda". No idea why it might have been encrypted.

Another one had been created by a dad in Thailand who made an Adobe Illustrator mock up illustration of a Winamp skin he had designed as a gift to

his two and a half year old son. But he didn't know how to make it a skin, so he sent it to winamp.com (along with a text file letter) asking that it be made into a skin that he could use. The letter was very touching but he asked them not to share the skin, so I have not included it here.

I found another encrypted zip file. This time the password was not in my wordlist. After a bit of fiddling with the cracking tool's config file, I was able to brute force it as well. The result was a valid Winamp skin!



Password was "nayane".

I went ahead and uploaded the decrypted version [here](#).

This got me interested in other “sensitive” things that might be included in skins, so I started searching for things like “password” inside the files *inside* all the Winamp skins.

I found one with a file called `E-mail passwords.txt` which contained... their email address and email password. Not great operational security.

[Another skin](#) contained a text file with hundreds of blank lines and then, at the very bottom, the text:

```
YOU HAVE FOUND THE SUPRISE!!!  
USE THIS PASSWORD:KEWL16
```

Inside the skin was a file `Suprise!.zip` which was itself encrypted, but the password didn’t work! Eventually I figured out that the password needed to be lower case. Inside were a bunch of `.avs` files:

```
[11:44]: jordanel dredge at Jordans-MacBook-Pro in ~/Downloads/AVS  
└─┬─ la  
total 120  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 261B Oct 31 2000 Jeroen - 3Rings.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 473B Oct 28 2000 Jeroen - BeAt ThiS.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 401B Oct 28 2000 Jeroen - ChAoS sPaCe.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 385B Oct 31 2000 Jeroen - DaNcE hALL.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 165B Nov 10 2000 Jeroen - Dude,thats Sick!.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 229B Oct 28 2000 Jeroen - EaT tHiS.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 521B Oct 26 2000 Jeroen - EyE oF tHe StOrM.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 308B Oct 29 2000 Jeroen - I am getting sick.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 577B Oct 27 2000 Jeroen - JoKeR.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 213B Nov 2 2000 Jeroen - MeShY.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 461B Oct 29 2000 Jeroen - NuKeD.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 361B Nov 3 2000 Jeroen - The re@l Zlim Zhady.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 477B Oct 28 2000 Jeroen - Wh0 kNeW.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 1.3K Oct 28 2000 Jeroen - WoOdSt0ck 2000.avs  
-r--r--r--@ 1 jordanel dredge staff 225B Nov 2 2000 Jeroen - ZoOm!.avs
```

This skin included a file named `secret.txt` which was just a biography of [Chet Baker](#).

```
secret.txt
-----
Chet Baker and his music
-----

Chet Baker was undoubtedly one of the leading jazz trumpet players of the Fifties. Born Chesney Henry Baker in Yale, Oklahoma, December 23, 1929, he started to play trumpet while still in his teens as a member of the 298th Army Band. Beginning in 1950, he sat in at countless jam sessions at Bop City and the Blackhawk in San Francisco. This period marked his first encounters with the alto players Paul Desmond and Charlie Parker. After his final army discharge in 1952, Baker moved to Los Angeles where he participated in some historic Pacific Jazz recording sessions at a club called the Haig and with a group led by Gerry Mulligan. This group was to evolve in to the famous pianoless Gerry Mulligan Quartet. From this point on, the popularity of Chet Baker grew quite fast, quickly garnering him the number one position in popularity polls in Down Beat and Metronome, and winning him many thousands of fans worldwide.

The Chet Baker Quartet was established when Mulligan temporarily retired from music in 1953. In 1953 Baker's Quartet made the longest European tour yet made by an American jazz group. Originally scheduled for four months, the tour eventually stretched to eight. During this tour, Chet's piano player, Dick Twardzik, 24, died in a Paris hotel of an overdose. The narcotics problem was rearing his ugly head and Baker himself soon became hopelessly strung out. He was arrested in April 1959 for having heroin in his possession. Reentering society in the fall of 1959, Chet Baker embarked upon yet another extended tour of Europe and probably the bleakest period of his life. He was hospitalized and arrested several times, generating little except a lot of nasty rumours and quite a few unflattering portraits in popular magazines.

March 1964 found him deported back to the United States from Germany. He switched to flugelhorn to replace his stolen trumpet. The roller coaster of Baker's career continued to go up and down, only this time with less velocity and diminished public notice. The recordings he made for Pacific Jazz and Verve in the late Sixties were disappointing and often embarrassing, showcasing stifling arrangements, rock rhythms and a low flame of inspiration.

Baker lived in New York and Los Angeles until 1968, when he moved to San Francisco and was promptly mugged there by five hoodlums who knocked many of his teeth out. Chet stopped playing for two years, controlling his drug addiction through methadone. He slowly made his way back in 1974 and started to record again. Of course, his playing was a bit different now but startlingly his work began to show more and more range and authority. He returned to Europe in 1975, where he started to extensively play on concerts and record with quartet, trio and duo. The renewed assurance and heart felt lyricism in both his playing and singing continued to impress both fan and critic alike. His music always projecting beauty, passion and emotion. But it all ended too soon, when on May 1988 he fell out of his hotel window in Amsterdam. Baker was dead, jazz lost a giant.

When Chet Baker was still a member of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet, his playing was inspired by that of Miles Davis, characterized by restrained dynamics and an intimate, warm delivery. His tone had a certain melancholy quality, never overly sharpened or raw, a quality often referred to as 'tristesse'. Chet Baker is often wrongly associated with the so-called West Coast Jazz, but his musical roots and sense of swing derive very clearly from the classic BeBop stylists prominent in New York City in the late Forties and early Fifties. Chet's playing is moody, with natural ease and originality of conception, a model of economic inventiveness.

After Baker returned from Europe to the USA in the mid-sixties his playing underwent a very marked evolution. His musical ideas somehow showed a stronger sense of logic, his more muscular attack seemed to owe a lot less to Miles and a lot more to Fats Navarro. After his return to Europe (1975) his playing got even more emotion and his timing became unique, relaxed and warm, soft and deep.


He wasn't at all the pathetic character everybody liked to see in him. He didn't think himself pathetic, absolutely not! This was his life, this was what he had chosen. The drugs too. It was a fact of life, nothing more and nothing less. And he didn't mind travelling from hotel to hotel with a
```

Some skins included mp3s inside them:

```
sqlite> SELECT skin_md5, file_name FROM archive_files WHERE file_name LIKE '105a63846a068bcd2199f3921c006c99|winampme/MSNet d0marrage Win-Me.mp3
125a87ff1e2b7bce537aa3126b1a80d8|cool.mp3
329105cd7d11d3ec1236a7333a6b46e9|WILLIAM/Winamp Skin/MegaMan/Megaman/[MegaM
57a98f6b68236dd22a006fc8171f94b5|SPARKY.MP3
7653b2504bc3d9404a17c8eca7ba71af|Knuckle-Duster/hagmans_demo.mp3
86080023e53a798ccda91109d33abeb7|arrrrrrrg.mp3
9f9c65a5d416d1a97f18dd8488e8cf7b|Blair Amp Project f/Heather_Sorry.mp3
a5a3a08340feb5dae3aa87af698b0654|cool.mp3
b6a51893dde10f4bcbee50a1fa24b217|(Adam Sandler - Billy Madison - Back 2 Sch
b6a51893dde10f4bcbee50a1fa24b217|(Mike Myers - Huge Head).mp3
b6cf670eb351e2e76f9048a25aeb639d|Diablo.mp3
```


b8ba93a4d427d8fd4f4c5fba7bcba627|BROTHERL - Breathe Swallow.mp3
b8ba93a4d427d8fd4f4c5fba7bcba627|BROTHERL - Fuck That Noise.mp3
b8ba93a4d427d8fd4f4c5fba7bcba627|BROTHERL - SunScreen2000.mp3
c647cd24f5809664e0d2e210a68310c1|SKATEBOARDING - Osiris ShoesTheme.mp3
c9b348ae2b93471b76ee2634a12d1dce|The Mark, Tom and Travis show/Blink 182 - I
d54e166f5227967e153ec40783473c0b|cos-xenu.mp3
d54e166f5227967e153ec40783473c0b|lrh-xenu.mp3
e47edeecb002afecf1b30ebab8c8d1e9|Destroy v2.0.mp3
fcf17a808fdb485bb3e95a64debea848|Diablo.mp3

For example this bizarre five second `cool.mp3`.

 cool.mp3



This skin included a file named `Sovergein Sect.wav`.

 Sovergein_Sect.wav



Upon listening it sounded like it was being played backwards, so I reversed the audio file:

 Sovergein_Sect_mp3cut.net.mp3



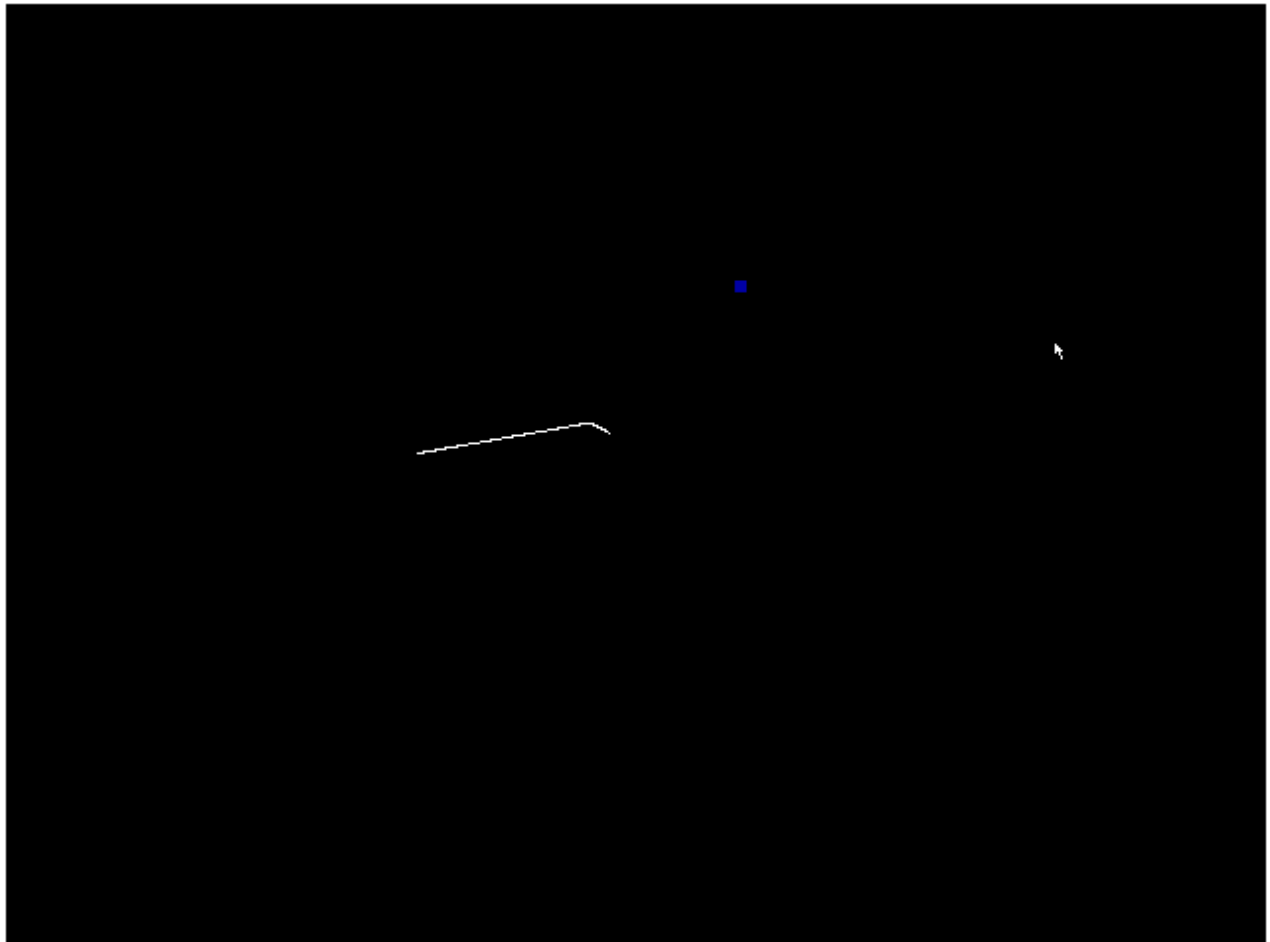
I think it's someone saying the name of the skin and some other information?

Some days later I found a skin that contained just one file: `WORM.EXE` That sounds dangerous!

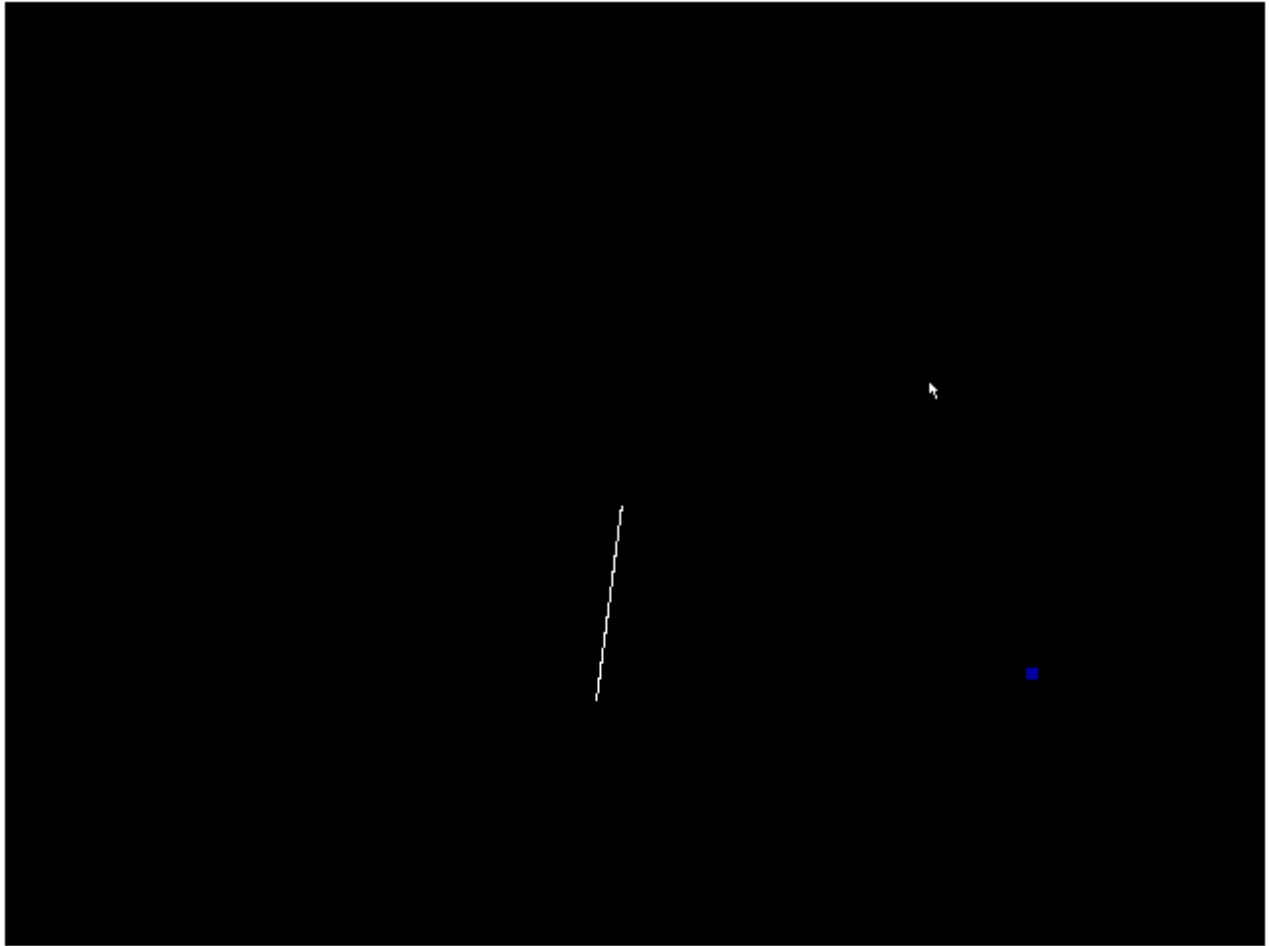
I fed it to Virus Total but it didn't detect any issues. So, someone in the Webamp Discord bravely tried running it in a VM and got this prompt:

Press Escape to end
Enter Speed, 40000 is the highest
? █

It was a worm *game*, like the game snake!



Here's top speed:



Another skin had just one file `Standing around the hoop.jpg`



Another one contained just a single file `ellie.bmp` Here's Ellie I suppose?

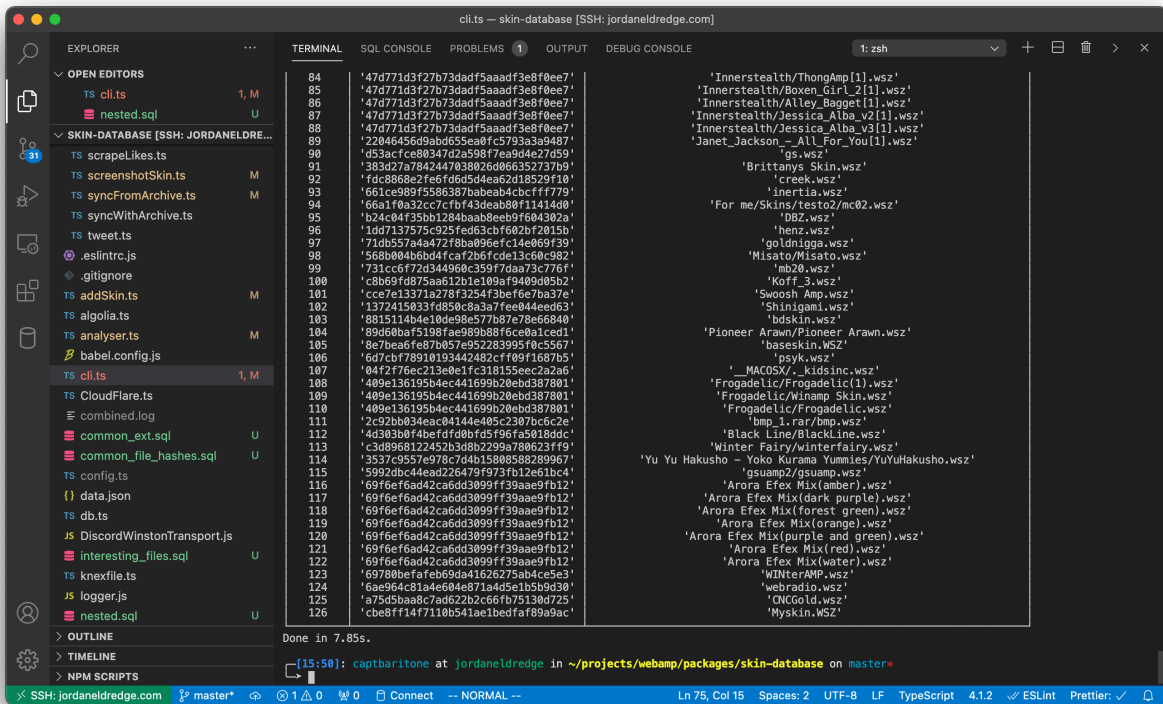


Reencoded as `.png`

Another had two new born baby pictures and a text file:

Here is a few pictures of Dom's baby.
Joe

Finally, I thought to look for skins that contained other skins within them, and discovered 127 skins! 54 of which were not already in the museum, so I uploaded them.



It's so interesting how if you get a large enough number of things that were created by real people, you can end up finding all kinds of crazy stuff! This was such an amazingly strange and interesting ride!

Tags: [winamp](#) [found](#) [anecdote](#)

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