

NEVER BEFORE HAD STIERLITZ BEEN SO CLOSE TO FAILURE (OR: WHAT IS A SOVIET SUPER-SPY DOING IN A POPULAR BUNDLEWARE FOR MAC?)

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ABSTRACT

The popular *macOS* bundleware exemplar presented in this research employs some surprising techniques. Not only does it employ anti-debugging, strings/API encryption and Mach-O runtime decompression techniques, its developers went as far as embedding a full backdoor component into the installer, granting it capabilities that extend way beyond what one might expect from a piece of installation software.

In this research, we'll dive into the installer's Mach-O binary to demonstrate how it piggy-backs on 'non-lazy' Objective-C classes, the way it dynamically unpacks its code section in memory and decrypts its config. An in-depth analysis will reveal the structure of its engine and the full scope of its hidden backdoor capabilities, anti-debugging, VM evasion techniques and other interesting tricks that are typical in the *Windows* malware scene, but which aren't commonly found in the unwanted apps that claim to be clean, particularly on the *Mac* platform.

This paper will reveal practical hands-on tricks used in Mach-O binary analysis under a Hackintosh VM guest, using *LLDB* debugger and *IDA Pro* disassembler, along with a very interesting marker found during the analysis.

DISCLAIMER: the software vendor won't be named; this research is entirely focused on technical aspects of the reverse-engineered software.

INTRODUCTION

The user experience interacting with *Mac* applications normally starts from the download and installation process. In their quest to make this experience positive, many developers turn to application installation platforms that promise enhanced installation analytics, optimized footprint, and a guaranteed smoothness of installation.

What happens is that some of the application installation platforms bundle the title application with third-party software, such as adware or browser toolbars, leading to a setup that the end-user might find unwanted.

The word 'unwanted' is the key here. Once the target application is installed, users often encounter undesirable consequences, such as installed browser hijackers that modify the search engine for their web browser. In some cases, the highly questionable Mac removers might prompt the user to pay for the removal of non-existent threats.

To protect customers, for many years *Sophos* has detected such bundleware under the tag ‘potentially unwanted application’.

Detecting such applications is never a problem, as they normally belong to a league that is different from malware – it’s a way more simplistic breed, so to speak.

That’s not always the case though.

The fairly popular bundleware exemplar described in this paper employs techniques that any seasoned threat researcher will find rather amusing. Not only does it employ anti-debugging, strings/API encryption, runtime decompression and VM evasion, its developers went as far as embedding a full backdoor component into the installer, granting it capabilities that extend way beyond what one might expect from a piece of installation software.

The power given to the installer practically enables full control over the target system. Even if this was done so that the company behind it would have ‘advanced analytics’ or the ability to push any third-party software it wants, what happens if this power is abused?

Boasting ‘tens of millions of downloads’ per day (whether this is true or not), this particular bundleware has potential access to a large number of Macs around the world. Given the amount of power it aggregates, it is a matter of duty for security folks to take a closer look at this software.

THE APPLICATION

The bundleware described in this post is a Cocoa application – an application built with the AppKit framework [1]. It is distributed as an application bundle. Among other resources contained in the bundle, the Info.plist file (an XML file) contains a key `CFBundleExecutable` that points to the main executable located in the MacOS folder.

From sample to sample, the name of the main executable varies. For example, it can be named `radiosurgical` or `Herculid`.

The digital signature used to sign the app varies constantly. At one point, it was signed by ‘Owen Bell’; in other cases, it was signed by ‘RuiQing Software Technology Beijing Inc.’; in September–October 2018, the app was signed by ‘AVSoftware EOOD’.

MAIN EXECUTABLE

Compiled as Mach-O (the native executable file format for *macOS*), the main executable relies on Objective-C runtime `libobjc.dylib`.

When the kernel first loads it, it makes sure it’s a valid Mach-O file, and then examines its `mach_header` structure. Next, it loads the dynamic linker to load all the shared libraries that the main executable links against.

The dynamic linker thus initializes the Objective-C runtime, and then calls the program’s `main()` function.

What appears unusual, though, is that the entry point starts from garbage bytes – that is, the entry point has no valid code to execute:

```
__text:0000000100001150      start  db      4
__text:0000000100001151                        db     4Ah ; J
__text:0000000100001152                        db     3Eh ; >
```

With no valid code at the entry point, how is it executed without crashing?

The answer lies in the concept of *non-lazy* ('eager') and *lazy* ('on-demand') implementation of Objective-C classes.

Non-lazy classes are realized when the program starts up. These classes will always implement the *+load* method.

Contrary to that, lazy classes (classes without the *+load* method) do not have to be realized immediately, but only when they receive a message for the first time (hence the term 'lazy').

Let's check out Objective-C runtime's own source [2] found in the `objc-runtime-new.mm` file.

The snippet below realizes the non-lazy classes, retrieved with the `_getObjc2NonlazyClassList()` call:

```
// Realize non-lazy classes (for +load methods and static instances)
for (EACH_HEADER) {
    classref_t *classlist = _getObjc2NonlazyClassList(hi, &count);
    for (i = 0; i < count; i++) {
        realizeClass(remapClass(classlist[i]));
    }
}
```

Looking at the source of the Objective-C runtime [3] in `objc-file.mm`, one can see that the `_getObjc2NonlazyClassList()` function collects non-lazy classes from the `__objc_nlclslist` data section:

```
// function name | content type | section name - 'nl' stands for non-lazy
GETSECT(_getObjc2NonlazyClassList, classref_t, "__objc_nlclslist");
```

The `__objc_nlclslist` data section of the main binary is very small. It enlists only two non-lazy classes: `ListedUpaithric` and `__ARCLite__`:

```
__objc_nlclslist:0001000692C8 __objc_nlclslist segment para public 'DATA' use64
__objc_nlclslist:0001000692C8 dq offset _OBJC_CLASS_$_ListedUpaithric
__objc_nlclslist:0001000692D0 dq offset _OBJC_CLASS_$___ARCLite__
__objc_nlclslist:0001000692D0 __objc_nlclslist ends
```

The `ListedUpaithric` name, like many other class names, is random. For example, in another sample this class is called `HoundingHusky`.

Both classes above have the *+load* method, and that method is called to realize both classes.

+[LISTEDUPAITHRIC LOAD]

The *+load* method of the `ListedUpaithric` class will be called before the *+load* method of the `__ARCLite__` class, as `ListedUpaithric` is enlisted as the first non-lazy class.

It's worth noting that the *+load* method of the `__ARCLite__` class contains no valid code. The reason is because it is located within the `__text` section of the executable, which is encrypted.

The *+load* method of the `ListedUpaithric` class is physically located in a section of the executable that has a random name, such as `__amorpha` or `__mottled`.

Once run, the `+load` method will take a 32-byte XOR key that is hard-coded in the body and use that key to decrypt the `__text` section (around 15KB in size) of the executable, including the `+load` method of the `__ARCLite__` class.

The decryption routine relies on a special anchor stored in the `__text` section. The virtual address of this anchor is used to describe the virtual address and virtual size of the encrypted `__text` section.

For example, the anchor can be located at the virtual address `0x100001CF0`, as shown below:

```
__text:000100001CF0 23 anchor db 23h ; # ; DATA XREF: decrypt_code+101
__text:000100001CF1 2B db 2Bh ; +
...
```

In that case, the decryptor uses the address of the anchor to describe the parameters of the `__text` section. In the snippet below, the decryptor makes the `__text` section writable and executable, by assigning a new protection to it. To do that, it takes the address of the anchor (`0x100001CF0`) and subtracts `0xBA0` from it to locate the start of the `__text` section (`0x100001150`):

```
vm_protect(mach_task_self(), // decoded stings: 'vm_protect', 'mach_task_self_'
(char *)&anchor - 0xBA0, // 0x100001150 -> start of the __text section
0x37F2, // size of the entire __text section: 14,322 bytes
0,
VM_PROT_ALL) // assign read, write, and execute access rights
```

Once the entire `__text` section is decrypted, the anchor shown above gets decrypted into the following text:

```
__text:000100001CF0 MaximMaximovicIsayev db 'Maxim Maximovich Isayev',0
```

Being next in line, the `+load` method of the `__ARCLite__` non-lazy class is called to perform further initialization.

The decrypted `__text` section is quite small – it's a valid code section containing a valid entry point, and it consists of another layer of decryptor and decompressor:

```
__text:0000000100001150 public start
__text:0000000100001150 start proc near
__text:0000000100001150 push 0
__text:0000000100001152 mov rbp, rsp
__text:0000000100001155 and rsp, 0FFFFFFFFFFFFFFF0h
__text:0000000100001159 mov rdi, [rbp+8]
```

With both non-lazy classes realized, the entry point above receives control. From there, the `main()` function of the executable is called, followed by `_exit()`.

HIDDEN MARKER

Once decrypted, the anchor point within the encrypted `__text` section represents itself as a hidden text that is quite interesting by itself.

The following are some facts about Maxim Maximovich Isayev.

Maxim Maximovich Isayev (Максим Максимович Исаев) is the real name of Max Otto von Stierlitz, the lead character [4] in a popular Russian book series written in the 1960s.

A Soviet James Bond [5], Stierlitz takes a key role in SS Reich Main Security Office in Berlin during World War II. Working as a deep undercover agent within the SS, he diverts the German nuclear 'Vengeance Weapon' research program into a fruitless dead-end.



Leaving a hidden marker like this could indicate an intentionally planted false flag. Regardless of the intention, this marker stays constant across the entire family of this bundleware.

MAIN() FUNCTION

Once the entry point within the `__text` section is called, the `main()` function that follows it will read an internal chunk of data with a size of ~300KB.

This encrypted data is stored in a separate section of the executable.

The data will be read, its CRC32-based hash validated, then decrypted and further decompressed into a buffer, allocated with the `vm_allocate()` function.

The decompression is achieved by dynamically loading the `libz.1.dylib` library, and calling the `uncompress()` API from it.

The decompressed data has a size of ~800KB and Mach-O executable format (`MH_BUNDLE` type). This data is loaded from memory as a plug-in with the help of the `NSCreateObjectFileImageFromMemory()` and `NSLinkModule()` APIs.

This method is equivalent to dynamic DLL loading on *Windows*. It is described on the *macOS* man page [6] as a way to programmatically load plug-ins [7] after a program starts executing.

THE ENGINE

The loaded module represents itself as an engine driven by the JavaScript files.

Some of the scripts reside in the app's Resources directory in an encrypted form, forming an SDK. Other JavaScript files are fetched from a remote server as tasks (internally called 'offers', as they are designed to offer/advertise other products).

The downloaded tasks rely on high-level function calls from the SDK. This allows the composing of tasks with a very flexible logic.

There are several classes exposed by the engine to the SDK, such as:

- System controller
- Installer
- Screenshot controller
- Task manager

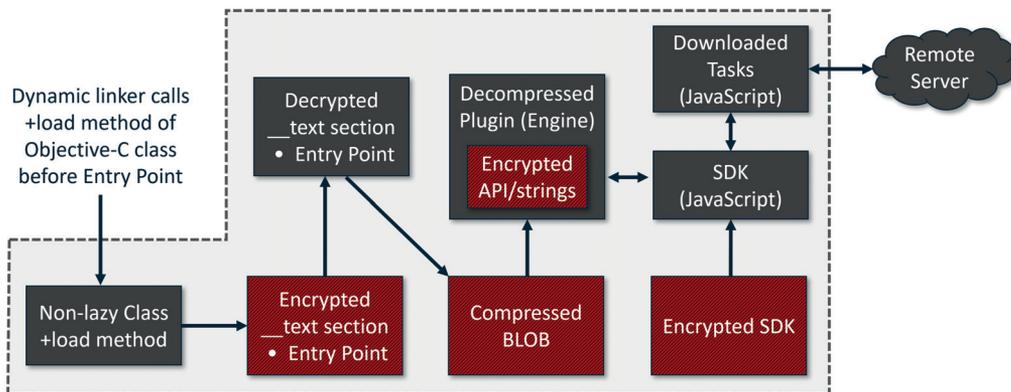


Figure 1: Engine driven by JavaScript files.

- System info collector
- Event reporter
- Application manager
- File downloader

The engine itself is executed on the *macOS* platform natively.

For example, a JavaScript task may attempt to elevate the privilege level with the following call:

```
function relaunchWithRoot() {
    installer.relaunchingWithRoot = true;
    var successR = installer.elevatePrivilegedTask();
}
```

The *elevatePrivilegedTask()* call in JavaScript has a corresponding method in the engine's class, such as *tr54jds23*. The engine exposes this method to JavaScript code so that it can be called directly from the engine.

When *tr54jds23->elevatePrivilegedTask()* is executed, the engine calls another method: *ICTaskManager->elevatePrivilegedTask()*.

That will, in turn, create the task *ICTaskManager->root_Task*, which will then create an authorization with the `'system.privilege.admin'` flag. Next, the task is executed with the *AuthorizationExecuteWithPrivileges()* call.

In practice, this may invoke a dialog asking for the admin password so that the task can be executed as root.

STRING/API ENCRYPTION

The engine module stores the names of all critical functions and most critical strings encoded. In one of the most recent samples, there are 1,228 encoded strings, decoded with 1,055 different functions. That is, some strings are decoded with the same function.

All the string-decoding functions use different keys, but they implement one of the following three algorithms:

- Simple XOR key
- Simple key subtraction
- Auto-incremented XOR key

One of the string decryption routines can be demonstrated with the anti-debugging trick explained in the next section.

ANTI-DEBUGGING TRICK

An attempt to attach to or run the bundleware app under a debugger produces the following error:

```
mac:/ user$ sudo lldb /Users/user/Installer/Installer.app
(lldb) target create "/Users/user/Installer/Installer.app"
Current executable set to '/Users/user/Installer/Installer.app' (x86_64).
(lldb) r
Process 1280 launched: '/Users/user/Installer/Installer.app/Contents/MacOS/
radiosurgical' (x86_64)
Process 1280 exited with status = 45 (0x0000002d)
```

The anti-debugging defence is provided with a `ptrace()` request named `PT_DENY_ATTACH` (`0x1F`), called from the function below:

```
ptrace = 0x515D5A5D; // encrypted 'ptrace' string: 5D 5A 5D 51
ptrace_plus_4 = 0x5752; // 52 57
ptrace_plus_6 = 0x33; // 33
ptrace[0] = add_2D_xor(0x5D, 0); // decrypt 1st char (5D ^ (2D + 0))
i = 1; // start loop from the 2nd char
do
{
    // decrypt the rest
    ptrace[i] = add_2D_xor(ptrace[i], i); // ptrace[i] ^= 2D + i
    i++;
}
while (i != 6); // 6 characters from the 2nd char, including /0
fn_ptrace = dlsym(RTLD_NEXT, &ptrace); // get proc address from the dylibs
return fn_ptrace(PT_DENY_ATTACH, 0, 0, 0); // call ptrace(), deny tracing
```

If the process is being debugged, as defined in `man ptrace` [8], it will exit with the exit status of `ENOTSUP` (45), ‘*error, not supported*’. Otherwise, it sets a flag that denies future traces – an attempt to debug it with this flag set will result in a segmentation violation exception.

By stepping over the `deny_attach()` call (or NOP-ing the five bytes of the call), the anti-debugging trick above can easily be circumvented:

```
-> 0x103dd1ff5 <+25>: callq 0x103e30cd3 ; call the function with ptrace()
0x103dd1ffa <+30>: callq 0x103de03aa ; ICCrashLogger::sharedLogger()
0x103dd1fff <+35>: movq %rax, %rdi
(lldb) re w pc '$pc+5' ; step over deny_attach() by adding 5 bytes to $pc
(lldb) x/2i $pc ; now $pc (RIP) points to the next instruction
```

```
-> 0x103dd1ffa: e8 ab e3 00 00 callq 0x103de03aa ; ICCrashLogger::sharedLogger()
0x103dd1fff: 48 89 c7 movq %rax, %rdi
```

NEW STRING OBFUSCATION FROM APRIL 2019

In April 2019, the string encryption algorithm was updated.

This time, each hard-coded integer number within a decryption function is encoded with a separate function.

For example, number 6 is encoded as:

```
get_6 proc near
    push rbp
    mov rbp, rsp
    mov al, 3
    shl al, 2
    movsx ecx, al ; ecx = 12
    mov eax, 65
    xor edx, edx ; edx = 0
    idiv ecx ; 65 / 12, eax = 5
    mul cl ; eax = 60
    mov cl, 65
    sub cl, al ; cl = 65 - 60 = 5
    inc cl ; cl = 6
    movsx eax, cl ; result = 6
    pop rbp
    retn
get_6 endp
```

The same code is collapsed by *Hex-Rays Decompiler* into:

```
signed __int64 get_6()
{
    return 6;
}
```

VM EVASION

The engine is able to detect the presence of a virtual environment through the method *checkPossibleFraud()*. This method is exposed to JavaScript, where it can be called as:

```
var isVm = system.checkPossibleFraud()>0 ? 1 : 0;
```

To achieve that, the engine compiles a so-called ‘fraud’ report that consists of the following details:

- **MAC_L:** MAC and IP addresses for all network interfaces, to recognize sandboxes that rely on a common network setup.
- **vmVendor:** The engine checks if the MAC address starts from an address that is common for a given VM manufacturer. For example, if the MAC address starts from ‘00:1C:42’, the installer determines that it’s running under a *Parallels* VM.

Using this trick for over 35 known MAC prefixes, it reports the following VM vendors (the vendor names are shown exactly as the installer reports them):

- Parallels ID.
- Egenera, Inc.
- First Virtual Corporation

- linux kernel virtual machine (kvm)
- Virtual Iron Software, Inc. (was: Katana Technology)
- Paravirtual Corporation (was: Accenia, Inc.)
- Virtual Conexions
- Virtual Computer Inc.
- virtual access, ltd.
- Virtual Instruments
- Virtualtek. Co. Ltd
- VMware, Inc.
- Microsoft Corporation (was: Connectix)
- Microsoft Corp.
- Microsoft Network Load Balancing Service Heartbeat
- Microsoft XCG
- Oracle Corporation (was: Virtual Iron Software)
- Oracle Corporation (was: Xsigo Systems, Inc.)
- Oracle Corporation (was: Sun Microsystems, Inc)
- CADMUS COMPUTER SYSTEMS
- `Host UUID`: Reported by `gethostuid()`, to recognize common sandboxes.
- `hddName`: The engine collects data reported by `DADiskCreateFromBSDName()` for the `‘/dev/disk0’` device, to recognize HDD, presumably common for some sandbox installations.
- `usbFraud`: A list of USB devices, presumably common for certain VMs, as reported by calling:


```
ioreg -l | grep -e 'USB Vendor Name'
```
- `dispRats`: Reports display ratio, to recognize display ratios used in common sandboxes.
- `lastMove`: Reports mouse position since the last mouse movement event, to see if a VM has been restored from a clean snapshot.
- `lastRbt`: Gets system up-time, since last reboot, to recognize a VM restored from a snapshot.
- `dmgLoc`, `fromDMG`: Gets full path filename of the DMG file, in case it's executed by a sandbox under a generic name, such as using a file hash.
- `wndPos`: Gets position and size of the app's window.
- `msePos`: Gets mouse position, to see if the mouse is in use.

CRASH LOGGER

The crash logger sends a GET request to a remote script, disguised as a PNG file:

```
http[://]ec2-54-191-37-103.us-west-2.compute.amazonaws[.]com/black.png
```

The stats it submits to the remote script are encoded as URL parameters:

- crash=1
- os=mac
- appkit=%APP_KIT%
- ver=%VERSION%
- ldebug=%LIVE_DEBUG%
- backtrace=%CALL_BACKTRACE%

CONFIGURATION

The installer uses two configuration files. The first one is dynamically extracted from an unused cavity of the installer's own DMG file. This configuration is written into the DMG file (a process internally called '*injection*') after the DMG file is built, and is encrypted with the AES-128 algorithm.

To locate the encrypted config within the DMG file, the installer module parses the contents of the file. For each pair of bytes, it subtracts one byte from another, until it locates the following signature that consists of seven 64-bit integers, such as:

```
__const:0000000103E51C40 signature dq 0Fh, 9, 3Eh, 23h, 7, 86h, 0Ch
```

Once located, the config is extracted and decrypted. As shown in the example below, the extracted configuration specifies the URL of an application to download and install:

```
PRODUCT_TITLE = Duolingo%202017
PRODUCT_DESCRIPTION = To%20install%20Duolingo%202017%20for%20Mac%20click%20Continue.
PRODUCT_VERSION = Mac
PRODUCT_PUBLIC_DATE = 2017
PRODUCT_FILE_NAME = Duolingo%20Setup%20
PRODUCT_FILE_SIZE = 260.8%20MB
CHNL = download7-Duolingo
DOWNLOAD_URL = http%3A%2F%2Fcdn.downloadfree2.com%2Fmacsoftware%2FBlueStacks-Installer.dmg
PRODUCT_LOGO_URL = http%3A%2F%2Fwww.download7.co%2Fgamegraphics%2F90.png
ROOT_IF_INSTALLED = com.bluestacks.BlueStacks
APP_NAME = BlueStacks
TOS_URL = http%3A%2F%2Fwww.download7.co%2Ffeula.html
TYP = http%3A%2F%2Fpiroga.space%2Fpages%2FDM%2FDMTYP.html%3Foffers%3D
EXIT_PAGE_URL = http%3A%2F%2Fpiroga.space%2Fpages%2FDM%2FDMInter.html
PRIVACY_URL = http%3A%2F%2Fwww.download7.co%2Fprivacy.html
ISPBROWSER = ch
%40REPORT_ADD_PARAMS = IRONBRO_ID%253D9309%2526INST_GUID%253D4136ef6c-c79c-49b3-9400-5f99e43ac3e0
INST_GUID = 4136ef6c-c79c-49b3-9400-5f99e43ac3e0
```

The second configuration file is provided as a JavaScript file, and is decrypted with the other SDK files from the app's Resources directory.

This configuration defines multiple operational parameters, such as report and ad servers:

```
var appInfo = {
  report: 'http://rp.[REMOVED].com',
  ad_url: 'http://os.[REMOVED].com/MacDarwenDLM/?v=5.0',
  requires_root: false,
  root_if_installed: [''],
  skip_vm_check: false,
  ...
}
```

REPORT SERVER

The report server from the configuration is used to receive posted reports.

The example below demonstrates what data is posted to the report server:

```
AC = DarwenDLM
PrID = MacDarwenDLM
PrSub = MacDarwenDLM
RS = Q
IRVER = 106.1712
CHNL = download7-Duolingo
PROD_TITLE = Duolingo 2017
schemeName = MacDarwenDLM
OSName = OSX
OSVer = 10.12
OSLang = en
_makeDate = 201711091722
SDT = 20181004195204931
UID = 9C0C266E-266D-4D98-B83C-BCB2A3018EB7
BRW = Safari
OSPlat = 2
MAC_L = [REMOVED]000000000000%3A127.0.0.1%3A24%3A0
hddSize = 107374182400
_makerver = total20171107115116
Isuseradmin = 1
isVmDef = 1
inst_flv = no_injection_106.1712
dwa.SrcNo = 1
QuitPage = welcomePage
RepCnt = 1
ofrClPrm = 266E-266D-4D98-B83C-BCB2A3018EB7
```

As seen in the example, the data it posts contains basic system information, such as *macOS* version number (*OSVer*), language (*OSLang*), MAC and IP addresses for all network interfaces (*MAC_L*), default browser name (*BRW*), HDD size, whether a VM was detected or not (*isVmDef*), whether the user is admin (*isuseradmin*), and some other parameters.

The collected data is assembled into a text, then encrypted with AES-128, and posted to the server:

- **Logger**
 - takes full screen snapshot
 - takes installer window's snapshot
 - submits 'live debug' information to the remote server
- **Screenshot controller**
 - takes full screen snapshot with the mouse location
 - collects a set of screenshots
 - takes snapshot of a given window
- **Task manager**
 - downloads and executes new tasks
 - submits task execution output
 - runs tasks with the privilege level elevated to root
 - creates authorization for tasks, using given credentials
- **System controller**
 - collects system OS version
 - collects MAC address and IP for all interfaces
 - collects all cookies from *Safari, Google Chrome, Firefox*
 - collects the list of all installed applications
 - collects the list of running applications
 - checks for the presence of a VM
 - gets home page for all supported browsers
 - gets system default browser
 - adds/removes applications to/from dock
 - adds applications to dock
 - checks if user is admin
 - checks if a given process runs as admin
 - gets user name
 - gets user locale/language
 - gets free space of start-up volume
 - gets info about connected *iOS* devices:
 - ◆ device class (*iPod/iPad/iPhone*)
 - ◆ device identifier
 - ◆ device serial number
 - builds 'fraud' report (info about detected VM)
 - collects the following lists:
 - ◆ running processes
 - ◆ keyboard input sources



- ◆ graphics card names
- ◆ USB devices
- ◆ apps launched automatically on login
- ◆ launch daemons and agents
- ◆ user launch agents
- ◆ *Google Chrome* extension names
- ◆ *Safari* extension names
- ◆ *Firefox* extension names
- searches for files in the specified directory
- checks if the specified application is running
- terminates specified applications
- encrypts/decrypts data
- gets user paths, such as local applications, download paths
- checks if an application is installed by the specified name
- reads key values from user defaults
- gets default apps for all available extensions
- adds an app to dock as persistent item
- removes all persistent apps from dock for specified path
- reads text files
- copies given directory to a new location
- deletes the specified directory
- runs specified script with `'/bin/sh'`, as root
- checks if the specified file exists
- gets detailed HDD information
- collects network information
- downloads files
- reads/sets window title for running apps
- reads mouse position
- displays alerts
- launches tasks/applications as root
- copies/moves files
- opens URLs
- saves data to files
- checks if path is writable
- creates/deletes directories
- gets specified file size/attributes.

CONCLUSION

Being a legitimate distribution platform, the techniques employed by this popular bundleware product conceal a very powerful engine.

When viewed from a certain angle, this engine resembles a backdoor as it unlocks full access to the system.

The sheer power of the engine is made covert with the wisely engineered trickery. Some of its methods, such as loading code from memory, are known from the *The Mac Hacker's Handbook* [9], and rather belong to the world of malware.

Given that the engine is driven by symmetrically encrypted remote tasks, any researcher who pays attention to detail couldn't help but wonder what would happen if the control of its engine were to be intercepted.

Careful analysis of these techniques also demonstrates a disturbing trend we're witnessing – the continued 'spill' of the traditional *Windows* malicious techniques, such as run-time packing, strings/API obfuscation and memory injection into the *Mac* world.

Even though the installer itself is legitimate, an analysis of state-of-art code where these techniques are honed to perfection is vitally important for researchers to understand what opportunities exist on the *macOS* platform, to be better prepared for the challenges that lie ahead of us.

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