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Digits / *Gambits & Gadgets in the World of Technology*

The New, New Jukebox

It may get a little easier to leave the office early and head to the neighborhood bar.

Ecast Inc., which provides broadband-enabled entertainment systems, including jukeboxes, and Pronto Networks Inc., a Wi-Fi hot-spot manager, are about to start rolling out Wi-Fi access to jukeboxes. That means that any bar with a jukebox serviced by Ecast -- currently in 2,700 bars and restaurants around the country -- could be a location to access the Web wirelessly.

"If you're coming home from the office and stop off in the bar, you've probably got the laptop," said Robbie Vann-Adibe, Ecast's chief executive, who says he expects Wi-Fi to be available in between 10% and 20% of its locations within a year. "If they know there's a connection in there, they leave the office a little earlier and finish up their spreadsheet there."

The hot spots initially won't allow wireless music downloads onto laptops, though Pronto says that is being considered.