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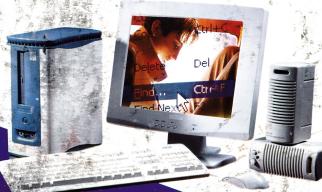
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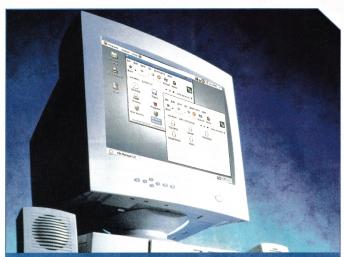


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PG07 BARGAIN COMPUTER BUYERS' GUIDE

We keep banging ON THE COVER on about the fact that you really don't need to spend the earth to get your paws on a more than capable computer. And this week? We've set about proving it. In our

six page special, Louis Turfrey takes us through the ins and outs of getting your hands on a good bargain. Plus, he picks a few computers advertised of late, and takes you through just how much you're getting for your money. Page 7.



PG53 ZIPPING UTILITIES **GROUP TEST**

You could be

ON THE COVER

forgiven for thinking that if you needed to economically archive and shrink down files, WinZip is your only choice. Not so. In this week's group test, we gather together five such utilities and put them head to head. Which will be the winner? Ah, to find that, you need to head over to Page 53.



PG35 MOTHERBOARD CHIPSETS

ON THE COVER

make a motherboard decision purely on the basis of what kind of processor it accepts. However, there are a variety of chipsets that are integrated into boards these days, each with differing pros and cons. We take a look in our special feature this issue, which starts on Page 35.

It's too easy to



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FRUIT MACHINES

We look at a group who have used PC emulation software to argue that fruit machines aren't fair. Page 44.



CHANGE YOUR LAPTOP'S CPU

A mighty upgrade for a portable computer - we show you what you need to do on Page 92



OVERCLOCKING WORKSHOP

Our monthly selection of tips and advice for overclockers. Page 106



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THE BARGAIN COMPUTER BUYERS' GUIDE

Louis Turfrey introduces us to bargain computers and helps us decide just what we need when we are buying one and helps us avoid some common pitfalls.

You know how it is. You're a beginner to computing, or you haven't upgraded your PC for years and you want to know what you need to get the job done, but nothing more. The budget is tight, and the need is great. What do you need, and where can you look for help? The decisions are endless and the darkness of PC Hell seems to be closing in around you. If this is you, then I hope that this article will shed some light on just what constitutes a bargain.

Let's start at the beginning then shall we. You are looking for a bargain PC and you have a fixed budget. You want it to do specific jobs but you're not sure what to buy, which software to use or what additional hardware you might need. We'll kick off with some of the basics.

WHAT IS A BARGAIN PC?

A bargain PC may not necessarily be a cheap PC. My definition of what constitutes a bargain PC is one that offers a lot of performance or accessories for the money. Whether that money is £400 or £1400, if you get a lot of product - it's a bargain. For the sake of argument though, I am look towards the budget end of the market as a starting point.

DECIDING THE BUDGET

No matter what PC system you are after, it is always best to work out what you can afford, before you make a decision over which unit to buy. Be realistic as well. You might have decided that you want to spend £400 on a PC, but consider the need for software and accessories.





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Once you have decided the budget, stick to it. Unless you can get a massive jump in performance for only a few pounds more, you need to stick to your guns and your budget. Don't let a salesperson con you in to taking something that you don't want or don't need.

KNOW ITS PURPOSE

Remember that just deciding that you need a PC is only the beginning of the decision making process. You must already have a reason for deciding that you want one, and this will usually be a specific task (or several of them). It is therefore up to you to make sure that the PC that you are buying is up to the task, and any future tasks that you might need to do.

when I told him that the motherboard could not support the new XP processors and that he had no AGP slot. To add insult to injury, the system only supported SDRAM, when he had specifically been told it supported DDR SDRAM.

In this case, my client was lucky enough to have a standard ATX format case, and I was able to replace the motherboard, processor, memory, and graphics card. You might not be so lucky, so please consider whether you want the freedom to upgrade your PC in the future.

NEW FOR OLD?

Due to the constant race to improve PC computer speeds and expandability, there is a thriving second hand PC and component market. There are also a lot of

WHEN TO SKIMP, WHEN TO SPLASH

An often-overlooked piece of hardware, the computer keyboard and its partner the mouse, offer the means of allowing interaction and input with your PC. As you can end up using them for hours on end, it is always an idea to get the most comfortable you can for your budget. I find the lower cost OEM version of the Logitech keyboard offers

I find the lower cost OEM version of the Logitech keyboard offers excellent value and comfort. However, this may not be as comfortable as you need so it is always best, if you get the chance, to try out the product beforehand.

refurbished machines on the market as well, often having full manufacturer's warranty. Then there are also the end of line products that manufacturers promote or sell on when they have a new product arriving. Are these any better or worse than a new machine?

The answer is not that clear cut and depends upon your needs and expectations. End of line machines have often been discontinued because they are

DUE TO THE CONSTANT RACE TO IMPROVE PC COMPUTER SPEEDS AND EXPANDABILITY, THERE IS A THRIVING SECOND HAND PC AND COMPONENT MARKET.

That last caveat is the killer. Not a lot of machines that you can buy from your standard high street retailer take full account for the need for expandability. Take as an example a client of mine, who we shall name Richard for the sake of argument. Richard wanted a machine that he would be able to handle the basic everyday office tasks that he might require of it. However, he also wanted a machine that would be expandable enough to allow him the use of high-end multimedia applications and video editing. His local retailer seemed very knowledgeable about the machines that he was looking at and recommended a unit for £100 less than his budget. Richard was pleased at the saving and thought no more about it.

However, eight months later, he asked me to come along and see what could be done to the machine to make it into the multi-media editing studio that he could now afford. Imagine how horrified he was



One of the major questions you must ask when buying a system is what do you intend to do with the machine once you have it



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slightly out of date when compared to new machines. They might not have all that cutting edge technology, or they might just have been a bad seller. Either way, your best bet is to check out the full specification of the system and ask whether it will meet your needs.

Refurbished machines might have been corporate loans, catalogue returns, or machines that have developed a minor fault that has been repaired. They might also be ex-lease machines that have been reconditioned for resale. Whatever the origin, the same rules should be applied as above. Check that the warranty covers all aspects of the machine well.

VALUE FOR MONEY

As a means of helping you decide which hardware or PC system is best for you I have provided some examples of what you might expect to able to get for a certain amount of money. I have also used this section of the article as a means of showing you where compromises might be expected.

The examples within this next section are taken from the adverts in Micro Mart

PCs UNDER £300

You might not expect to be able to get much of a PC system for under £300 nowadays, and in some respects, you would be right. However, there are various new systems, which include a base unit, an operating system, and a monitor, for under the total price of £300.

EXAMPLE 1

This machine is available for £279:

- AMD Duron 1300 MHz CPU
- SiS AGP Graphics Card (AGP x 4)
- DVD ROM Drive
- 256 Megabytes of SDRAM
- 40 Gigabytes Hard Disk
- Modem
- Inbuilt sound
- Speakers
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- 15" Monitor
- (refurbished with a 12-month warranty)
- Windows MF

Now this machine should be able to handle most office tasks, Internet access, and DVD playback. It doesn't come with an on-site warranty, but it does come with twelve months parts and labour, and four years additional labour warranty. That's not a bad deal and in my book rates as a bargain. The Windows ME operating system is a license and software only, so you will have to add a CD-R and back it up if you wish to keep an original disk copy. A backup directory is created on the hard disk and there is an option to buy a full OEM version. The

ANY OLD IRON?

Whether it be an advert in your local paper, a note in a superstore or a classified in this magazine, it is easy to get hold of a second user PC. What is not so easy to discover is whether it is working properly or not.

In cases where there is a private

In cases where there is a private seller, I would ask for a demonstration of the unit. Check for signs it might have been stolen, damaged, or badly treated. Don't just switch it on; if possible ask to load a bench testing product such as SiSoft Sandra (freely available from the Internet).

If buying from a dealer, expect

to pay a premium. You should also expect some sort of warranty as well, which is likely to make that premium (usually not that much) worth every penny.

same system is available with an AMD XP1700+ CPU for £299.

Neither of these machines offers an upgrade path for the processor beyond an AMD XP 2200+, and in their basic versions, they are not games machines either. Expansion space on the motherboard is limited and so this machine is a compromise between a second user system and a full-blown power PC. They make very good office machines and also good student workstations.

EXAMPLE 2

This is a refurbished machine, available in various guises from different suppliers. The specification is as follows:

- Intel Celeron P4 1.8 GHz
- 256 Megabytes PC2100 Memory
- Combi DVD & CDR/W
- 30 Gigabyte Hard Disk
- 64 Megabyte GeForce MX420 Graphics Card (TV & DVI)
- Inbuilt, Sound
- Matching Speakers
- Keyboard & Mouse
- Modem
- Windows XP Home
- Works Suite 2002
- 1 Year On-Site Warranty



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YOU CAN ALWAYS BUILD A PC FROM SCRATCH RATHER THAN BUYING A SYSTEM

Now although there is no monitor included with this system, it still offers good value for money by giving the buyer greater future expandability and a better software bundle (OEM disks are included). The on-site warranty is a good feature as well, although there is no further warranty beyond the first year.

This machine would be well suited as a Students PC, and because it has a DVI output, it would be well suited to use with a TFT Flat Panel Monitor. It's a good all rounder offering basic gaming capability, enough power for office use and a decent office software bundle.

Finally, apart from the monitor, the only real compromise with this system is the minimal storage space. Yet, even this would not have been an issue if we were discussing this before the advent of Windows XP.

PCS FROM £300 TO £400

Now, with that extra £100 we can really push the boat out and get a PC with more performance and even a larger monitor. Similar machines are available to those that are listed above, but come with AMD XP2000+ processors and 17-inch monitors. We also have the option

whether to spend more money on software and storage space or replace the graphics card and upgrade the memory. All of these options make for more performance and a wider range of abilities.

Even at this lower price point, it is possible to get machines that are designed to fulfil a specific function. One company that I have used in the past are now providing a decent low-level video editing system for under £400. It consists of an Athlon XP2000+ processor, 512 megabytes of DDR memory, a 120 Gigabyte 7200 RPM hard disk, separate DVD drive, and CDR/W, GeForce 4 graphics, modem, keyboard and mouse, speakers and lastly, a DV video card featuring Firewire (IEEE 1394) and the Ulead Video Studio software suite. This is an ideal solution if you wish to specify your own operating system and monitor, but only comes with a back to base warranty.

DIY

There is a lot to be said for building your own system. It allows you to specify exactly which components go inside and what software is installed. The downside is that you will have to look after the basic

HORSES FOR COURSES

Here of a few tasks you might wan a PC to perform.

■ WORD PROCESSOR (OFFICE 97)

Pentium II or Pentium III, running Windows 98 on a 10-gigebyte hard disk. No less than 128 megabytes of memory, otherwise swap file accesses will slow down the system. A nicely refurbished 17-inch monitor is the ideal solution

■ INTERNET PC

A Pentium III running Windows XP with 256 megabytes of memory is more than enough to take care of the functionality required of an Internet workstation. Dependant on why you use the Internet, you might expect to have at least a 20-gigabyte hard disk. A 56K or ADSL modem is essential and sound would help as well.

■ BASIC GAMING PC

A Pentium 4 or AMD XP running at about 1.5 Gigahertz. GeForce 4 graphics cards makes a nice choice. Hard disk space is a pre-prequisite. A modem would be required for all those on-line tournaments. 256 megabytes of memory is important.

STUDENTS' PC

All of the above but with a faster CPU and a CDR/W drive and DVD with which to play all those arthouse movies. Cough.

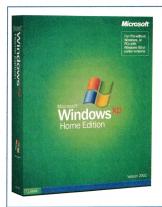
maintenance yourself, you will have to factor in postage and courier costs, and you will need a basic understanding of how to put a PC together.

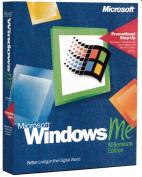
If you can do all these things then it is also worth me pointing out some quick ways of saving costs. Wherever possible you may want to consider buying the OEM versions of both hardware and software. These sometimes lose out on the longer warranty periods beyond a year, but they offer better value for money and can save you a fortune.

Another way to save costs is to use those suppliers that are offering free postage for buying over £100 worth of goods (before VAT). A lot of the larger, cheaper suppliers now do this and if you



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CONSIDER YOUR SOFTWARE AS WELL, PARTICULARLY WHICH OS TO GO FOR

are careful how you split the costs, then you might not end up paying for any postage at all.

Be warned though, as I understand it the OEM license on most products is only valid for the first PC upon which it is installed. Technically, this means it can be reloaded upon the machine it is bought for, as many times, as you wish, but if you sell that machine, then the software must go with it. In other words, even if you take the software off of that system, then it cannot be installed upon another. I would check with your conscience beforehand and maybe your legal department as well.

CONSIDER THE SOFTWARE

It might seem a bit strange considering which software you might want to use, before we have even discussed hardware in any detail. However, all will become abundantly clear as we read onwards.

The software you might want to run on your PC is defined by, and guides, the tasks that you might want it to perform. As you might expect, some software puts more of a demand on system resources than others. The most demanding piece of software that you are likely to run on your PC is your operating system (or OS). However, this above all things should be as current as your budget will allow. I like Windows XP Pro; it seems to be more stable than the standard home version. (I have no idea why, that's just my experience of it). However, Windows 98SE or Windows 2000 are both stable now, after years of development. Windows 2K is probably the most solid O/S next to Linux.

The disadvantage of using a Microsoft operating system is the expense that is involved in purchasing in the first place. The advantages are the compatibility it brings with most other PC systems. Don't get me wrong, Linux, (in all its incarnations) is an excellent O/S, but it is not as friendly as Windows (in any current format). However, if you have any experience of it, and you want a product set that includes either low cost or completely free office software, then Linux is your gig.

REDUCING SOFTWARE COSTS

As I mentioned before, Microsoft are not the only people who write decent stable (laughs) operating systems for PCs, there is also Linux

Linux comes in many forms and variations, many of which are starting to make life easier for those of us who know very little about it. Both Mandrake Linux

and Red Hat Linux now come with a Windows like interface and installation features. In fact, with the right emulator, they will even run programs that have been designed for the Windows environment.

It isn't true to say Linux is totally free, unless you download it. However, when you purchase a retail distribution version of Linux you don't just get the operating system. Most of the time you get comprehensive manuals, excellent support, loads of additional application software (such as Star Office which reads and writes to the Microsoft. word document format), and comprehensive utilities. You also get one of the most stable and least power hungry operating systems in the world, a factor that can make a budget system look like a mid-range system.

You might have just noticed me mention the excellent Star Office product. This is a decent low cost alternative to Windows. It comes in many guises, including the Supreme Office Suite (given away with some motherboards), Open Office, and Sun Office. The last version is available as a free download (version 5.2) and a low cost. office distribution (version 6 onwards).

Other low cost alternatives to the above include Ability Office and Corel Office Suite. Both of these are excellent alternatives to the Microsoft products and are good packages in their own right.

COMPONENTS

As mentioned above, you can save a fortune and get the exact specification that you want by buying the individual components that make up a PC and then putting them together yourself. However, there is still some room for a bargain even at this level.

DISPLAY CARDS

Let's take graphics cards for example. Now there are plenty of bargains out there at the moment, but very few of them offer both value and performance. The obvious exception to the rule, and a much better choice than the similarly priced GeForce MX440 series, is the ATi Radeon 9000 Pro.



SECURE 24 HOUR ONLINE SHOPPING www.PlanetMicro.co.uk I much prefer this unit to the rival GeForce FX 5200. It is faster, the quality of the display is better, and it is currently a fraction cheaper than its rivals are. It also fully includes support for the DirectX 9.0 API.

If performance is less of an issue, then the Radeon 7500 offers excellent DVD playback and visual quality for about half of the price.

STORAGE

Hard drives are now selling for under a £1 a gigabyte, which means that there are a lot of bargains to be had out there at the moment. For me, the deciding factor on which Hard Disk I use is not limited to just the cost. I much prefer to use quieter 5400-RPM drives, as they rarely cause a failure and often produce less heat and noise. This is a plus point as these drives come cheaper than the 7200-RPM variants. However, they are getting increasingly difficult to find nowadays, as 7200 RPM becomes the default standard. I tend to go for skyt to eighty gigabyte hard disks, as they offer decent value for money and better performance.

BACKUP

If you hold valuable information on your PC then there is a need to back it up on a regular basis. This can be achieved by a floppy disk drive (1.4 MB), a Zip disk drive (100 to 750 MB), a Super Disk drive (120 or 240 MB), a CDR/W drive (640 to 800 MB) or a DVD R/W (4.7 Gigabyte).

The DVD might cost five times as much as a floppy drive, but the media is only just above the cost of a CDR/W disk (from 49p). However, although this offers the best value for money in the long term, it isn't the most immediately cost effective. This prize goes out to the standard CDR/W that can be purchased for under £30 and has media starting at around fifteen pence a disk. For bargain backups, the CDR/W wins first prize.

PROCESSORS

With AMD processors still offering more bang for your buck than Intel units do, I would still recommend them as the basis for a bargain system. Intel units are excellent for high-end media work, but only just beat the AMD units for games and basic Office applications. Avoid the Celeron unless you really have to, as they are simply underpower variants of the Pentium 4 and as such, the AMD processors offer better value.

MOTHERBOARDS

The best way to save money on any system is to purchase a motherboard that contains as many integrated functions as possible. Modem, LAN, Graphics and Sound are just

few of the integrated functions that are becoming commonplace nowadays. You can even get processors hard wired into the motherboard, offering little upgrade potential - but plenty of value for money.

Buying a board with integrated functionality may not increase the performance of the system, but it will increase the cost effectiveness. If you are buying a completed system, then you might find that you get an integrated motherboard as standard. Note that integrated functions rarely work as well as standalone devices (eg a separate graphics card or sound card).

INK JET PRINTERS

Prices start from about £29, and go up to several hundred. A point of note here is that however much the cheapest printer might seem like a bargain now, it might not be the case when you have to replace the ink cartridges.

Chose a printer that offers a decent entry point, incorporating low cost media and low overheads. Traditionally, the best units have been those with separate ink cartridges for the individual colours.

CONCLUSIONS

So what makes up the best budget PC? For me, it would be a unit built around an integrated motherboard, with a little expandability a decent 17-inch monitor and an AMID Duron or Athlon XP processor. If you are brave, you could save a decent amount of money by using one of the more user-friendly variants of the Linux Operating System. Alternatively, get an OEM copy of one of the Microsoft Windows operating systems (but avoid Windows 95 and any previous version). Lastly, it should come with a decent software package, offering basic office functionality and a cost effective printer: Happy shopping!





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README .TXT

To say the last week or so at Micro Mart Towers have been busy would be something of an understatement. On top of the magazine itself, we've been looking at the likes of putting back content of MM on CD. beta testing our new forum software, and gauging your opinions on Micro Mart mugs (which we hope to be introducing shortly). And these are just some of the developments and ideas we've been working on, with more news on the way that we can't tell you just yet.

What's most pleasing for us though is that most of the above have been requested in one form or another by you, the readers. We work hard to give you the magazine you want, and it's great for us that so many of you are forthcoming with your views on Micro Mart. and things we can do with it. That goes for comments both positive and negative. Please continue to send them in, and I can assure you that we read and take on board every one.

One more thing. Blogs, or weblogs, have become more and more commonplaces over the past months, to the point where we want to highlight some in the magazine. If you keep a blog and want to give it a plug, then drop us a line with some details on yourself and where we can find your blog, and we'll be highlighting them in future issues. Enjoy the magazine, and we'll be back next week!

Simon Brew Editor Micro Mart

PS For followers of the disclaimer, we've promised Richard Hunt an unedited, 30 word riposte. We can't wait...

TABLETS AREN'T TAKING OFF

Sales are falling, too

Whilst it's too early to judge the long term future of the Tablet PC, what's become clear is that sales for the format over the past three months have been disappointing. Launched in a blaze of publicity at the back end of last year, shipments of Tablet PCs fell by nearly 25% in the second quarter of the year. And since the launch back in November, less than 100,000 of them have shipped across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Some have chosen to point the finger of blame at Microsoft, who spent a lot of time and money hyping up Tablets, but haven't continued that push very heavily since then. As such, it seems users aren't that familiar with the benefits of the Tablet format, and with few hardware firms putting many funds into it either, it now accounts for just a very small proportion of portable computer sales.



NERO'S BACK!

Version six available now

We seem to have been using Nero Burning ROM 5.5 for donkeys now, and whilst Easy CD Creator has

undergone a couple of big updates in recent times. Nero has fundamentally remained as the burning software we know and love. Still, Ahead Software have now confirmed the release of Nero 6, which they are billing as the "ultimate solution for data, video, photo, audio and backup!"

The software follows the route of being a suite of applications rather than one single

product, with StartSmart being the launcher that holds it all together. The software now includes packages that can edit, mix and record, as well as design CD covers, optimise performance and other such jobs. All this has strong potential, as long as they don't fall into the trap of watering down the main application. A demo is available for download if you want to have a go, and you can find that at www.nero.com. Pricing details and a review to follow shortly.

SUITED AND BOOTED

File swapping battle gets nastier

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) continue to wage war against file swappers, with the announcement that they will be filing the first set of lawsuits against individuals within the next month. They're apparently planning to sue hundreds of people in one go, rather than taking on a few at a time, and some of the names are as a result of the hundreds of subpoenas that the RIAA have been sending to Internet Service Providers.

The key targets are users who have uploaded large amounts of copyrighted works, although the RIAA haven't been drawn as to what a large amount is. We suspect a few hundred people will be finding out quite shortly, though.



TRIPLE FIRST FLAGSHIP

Canon unveil their new scanner

Jumping to the head of their range of scanners, Canon have announced their new LiDE 80, a unit that they reckon marks three world firsts. The first first is that it's a film-capable Contact Image Sensor (CIS) scanner, the second is that it's the first 2300 x 4800 CIS scanner and the third (confused yet?) is that it's the first CIS scanner with FARE automatic film retouching technology. So now let's take a look at what that lot actually means.

FARE is Canon' system of removing dust from printers, automatically repairing the target image by using 'intelligent gueswork'. It's worked reasonably well so far in previous units, and we're hoping that it continues to improve.

The Contact Image Sensor replaces the CCD (charge couple device) as the part of the

unit that actually takes the image, and one of its key advantages is that it's a lot smaller - hence, the LiDE 80 is a slimline device. Another by-product is that it requires a lot less power, so the unit can draw its necessary power via USB, negating the need for a separate power supply.

The unit hooks up to a PC via USB 2.0, and features some helpful software packages, including Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0, ArcSoft PhotoStudio and PhotoBase, and the CanoScan Toolbox. It has a gold aluminium lid with a fancy finish, and it's a slim beast, too. It has four EZ buttons mounted on it too for quick access to e-mailing, filing, copying and scanning facilities. The cost of the scanner is £139, and it goes on sale in September. For more information, call OB705-143-729 or check out www.canon.co.uk/canoscan

MORE CHEAP DVDS

Remember those DVDs for £5.99 we told you about a month or two back? Well, 20th Century Fox are about to release another eighteen at the same price point. Thus, on August 25th, £5.99 will be able to get you the likes of Titanic, The Vanishing, Bound, Commando, Unlawful Entry and Conan the Barbarian. Enjoy 'em!

ENOUGH!

Well, you can't say we didn't warn you. Electronic Arts and Maxis have now confirmed a final add on pack for The Sims, before The Sims 2 becomes a reality later in the year. And it is... The Sim Makin' Magic. Sigh. This time round, your pretend people can play magic tricks, cast spells and set up sideshows. Plus there's some oven for them to cook bread in. Honestly. It'll be out in October. We can't wait

MAKE IT LONGER!

Ever wish that USB lead would stretch just that little bit further? Then let Lindy come to your rescue, with their new USB Extender. It allows USB devices to be up to 50 metres away from the PC, and it requires no separate power source either. The extender is comprised of a unit that hooks up to your USB port, then a remote unit that you can place wherever you like (within reason). Then, connect them with some network cable (which, we're guessing, is not included) and all is well. The price of it is £69.99, and more information can be found at www.lindy.co.uk

INCOME DISPOSED

> ON PS2

Eve Tov £39.99

Social gaming rarely gets better than with Sony's latest gadget. In essence, a USB webcam that sits on top of your telly, the bundles in dozen games then project your image onto the screen and you control things with your movements. For instance, there's a game of keepieup, or another where you wave your arms around like a rapper trying to swat ghosts. The games themselves are simple, and in single player are only limited fun. Invite a few people round, though, and this is top notch entertainment.

8/10

> ON DVD

Punch Drunk Love £19 99

Odd one, this, If you're expecting standard Adam Sandler fare, then you're not going to get it, in this oddball, dark comedy drama. However, if you're a fan of the director's earlier films (Boogie Nights, Magnola, Hard Eight) then you're on much safer ground, as throughout its 90 minute running time, Punch Drunk Love rarely takes the conventional. It's not perfect by any means, and ultimately is quite cold, but if you are in the mood for something different...

7/10

HAVE SCO **GOT IT RIGHT?**

Some don't think so

Recently, we reported on SCO's plans to license out Linux, seeing as they have been granted the property rights to Unix code that forms the basis on many Linux distros. Furthermore, SCO have been planning legal action against those who refuse to do so. However, according to respected analysts Datamonitor, SCO's actions could well backfire. Prominent firms who use Linux in one form or another include the likes of IBM, Dell and Oracle, each of whom has very deep pockets with which to fight any legalities. Indeed, it seems that Datamonitor wouldn't mind seeing the whole case shift into the courtroom rather than a settlement being arranged outside of it.

Datamonitor argue that it could well be in the interests of Linux users to make sure SCO's

copyright infringement claims in court, to help bring clarification to a matter that has unsettled the Linux world. The argument centres on version 2.4 of the Linux kernel, and not the generations before it, which some may well simply roll back to, in order to avoid digging into the piggy bank to pay SCO.



YOU CAN MANAGE

EA won't give this one up

With Eidos' Championship Manager 4 continuing to bring home the bacon, you might think EA foolish for continuing with their notparticularly-appreciated Total Club Manager series. But full marks for effort, as they're introducing a 2004 edition, which intriguingly will allow you to build up your team and export them into the forthcoming FIFA 2004. Also, you get to try some player missions, including saving a team from relegation or scraping promotion from a mid table position.

The rest of the game looks pretty much the same, though. Potential still lies in the 3D match engine, but despite the fancy visuals.

the actual tactical game has never hung together too well. Here's hoping they sort it this time. There are more teams, players and statistics in the 2004 edition too, if you're interested. The game goes on sale from 7th November, and you can find out more at www ea com



THE THIRD DIMENSION

Want to make a screensaver?

Introducing a low cost utility from Xara, whose name pretty much gives away what it does. 3D

Screensaver Maker makes it easy for virtually any user to make themselves a nice and fancy screensaver with 3D text or images. Xara have made the software easy to use, and it comes with numerous templates. Plus, it can support numerous formats when putting your screensaver together, including AVI. The cost of the program is around

£11 depending on the value of the Euro when you buy it, and it can be downloaded from www.xara.com /screenmaker3d. You'll find a free trial version there too if you don't want to shell out for the full thing just yet.



PHILIPS DRIVE ON

New DVD burner launched

Billed as an entry-level mode, Philips have confirmed that they are to release their new 4X DVD+R/+RW drive, with the highly catchy name the DVDRW416K. The drive comes bundled with a copy of Easy CD & DVD Creator 6 Basic, and that's in line with Philips' plan to make this particular unit as easy to get to grips with as possible.

As usual, buffer underrun functions are built in, and on the supplied CD is a video demonstration of how to install the drive in the first place. Also in the box is a blank DVD+R disc, an audio cable and mounting screws. It will set you back £179. More information on it can be found at www.philips.com, and shipments of the drive start in mid-August.

MY FAVOURITE **PROGRAM**

If you've got a little heard of program you'd like to tell other Micro Mart readers about, then drop us a mail to theeditor@micromart.co.uk and let us know what it is, what's it like and where to get it from Fise drop the same information in an envelope and send it to the usual address!

Anyway, this week's recommendation comes from M Kallen, who recommends a program called Badcopy from Jufsoft: "It's a disc recovery program that has saved my life on many occasions, especially when dealing with dusty old floppies and dodgy domestic written CDs. The interface is very easy to operate and the success rate with a floppy

anymore I have averaged about 98% recovery, all neatly rewritten into a new folder". You can get www.jufsoft.com/badcopy

which cannot be read

COULD PANEL PRICES JUMP?

Shortage is rumoured

Looking to buy yourself a 15" LCD panel? Then you might want to act quickly, as a shortage in supply is set to raise the price over the coming weeks. The problem has been caused by more and more PC manufacturers including a 15" panel with their PCs, instead of a traditional CRT monitor, and thus supplies are being quickly eaten up. The price of 17" panels, which was dropping, has also steadied.

However, if you're after a CRT monitor, then it's a good time to buy. As more and more migrate to LCD screens, some great deals are emerging on the bulkier CRT monitors. As CRT screens still have higher resolutions than their LCD cousins, they certainly shouldn't be ignored.



OUR WEEK IN WEBMAIL

Inger Diverson? Despite addressing your e-card to

'Fine Brew', we thank you for your invitation to visit Russian vapour baths. We're getting really paranoid now though with the number of people sending keep fit related spam to micromart@email.com (please sign us up for as many bizarre, but clean, mailing lists that you can). We've also found ourselves added to a mailing list for spare parts for 1968 VW Campers, to Desktop Publishers World, and then Simon was particularly pleased to see we'd been signed up for the Pampers Pregnancy Newsletter. Apparently, his

unborn has the wiggles ...

Buy Online at Trade Prices*



£1173.83 incl VAT

CCL's NX Station, a PC Plus Editors Choice System (May '03) Based on the Shuttle SN41G Chassis - see website or call for more details

*All online orders are at trade prices and are free of credit card surcharge. DIY and Built systems are also available at trade prices by telephone.



lecommended" Awan (CCL Home X-Force 801 - March 03)

ecommended" e XPK2 - July 02)

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	120Gb Maxtor D'Max Plus 9 SATA (8Mb Cache) 250Gb Maxtor MaxLine Plus II SATA (8Mb Cache) 40Gb Hitachi Deskstar 120GXP	78.82 202.91 40.07	92.61 238.42 47.09	PRO	Soltek SLKT400-A4C (DDR M/Board) Soltek SLKT400-C (DDR M/Board) Asus A7V8X-X (DDR M/Board) LAN	40.25 42.44	47.29 49.86	
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	56K Speedcom+ Rockwell Int PCI 56K Genius Internal V90 PCI Retail 56K Genius External GM56E-V2	8.80 11.58 22.91	Inc Vat 10.34 13.61	SOI	FIWARE	ONLINE Ex Vat	ONLINE Inc Vat	
	56K Genius External GM56E-V2 56KV90 Speedcom USB Modem 56k Sparkle Rockwell Ext V90 Sparkle ISDN PCI Modem	22.91 14.85 17.27	26.92 17.45 20.29		Microsoft Windows 98 OEM SE Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition OEM Microsoft Windows XP Professional Edition OEM Microsoft NT4 Workstation OEM	61.94 57.20 94.01	72.78 67.21 110.46	
	Sparkle ISDN PCI Modem Speedcom+ ADSL PCI Modem Speedcom+ ADSL USB Modem D-Link DSL-200 ADSL External Modem (USB)	14.85 17.27 16.23 21.95 28.05 50.25	10.34 13.61 26.92 17.45 20.29 19.06 25.79 32.96 59.04	20	Microsoft Works Suite 2002 OEM	108.57 15.75	110.46 127.57 18.51	
	D-Link DSL-200 ADSL External Modern (USB)	50.25 ONLINE	59.04 ONLINE	ress un	Microsoft Office 2000 SB Edition OEM Microsoft Office XP Small Business OEM	131.92 131.30	155.01 154.27	V
M	15" Proview KX562NS	Ex Vat 49.95	Inc Vat 58.69	Pro	Panda Antivirus Titanium	4.51	5.30	
	17" Proview KX772NS 19" Proview PX986NS 15" Proview HG-562 (LCD)	64.00 95.00 165.00	75.20 111.63 193.88 182.13		Ability Office 2002 OFM	13.50 28.05 CALL	15.86 32.96 CALL	
	15" Proview KX562NS 17" Proview KX772NS 17" Proview Py369NS 15" Proview H5-652 (LCD) 17" Proview LCD (K-573 (Silver) 17" Proview LCD (Beige)	263.00	309.03		IND CARDO	ONLINE Ex Vat	ONLINE Inc Vat	
	17" CTX VL700 19" CTX VL950T 17" CTX EX700F	66.00 113.00 86.00	77.55 132.78 101.05		Dina 6Chi DSM01A Soundoard	7.32 12.49 10.64	8.60 14.67	·
	17" CTX EX710F 19" CTX EX950F	156.00	118.68	DC		10.64 20.27 29.02	14.67 12.50 23.82 34.10	
	19" CTX EXPSOF 17" CTX PR705F 17" TFT CTX S700 17" TFT CTX S700 (Black)	102.00 265.00 276.00	119.85 311.38 324.30	PRO	Sound Blaster MP3+ (External Soundcard) Sound Blaster Audigy 2 PTL Sound Blaster Audigy 2 Platinum eX	71.56 142.01	84.08 166.86	
	15.1" TFT CTX PV520A Silv/Black 15.1" TFT CTX S530 Champ 17" TFT CTX PV720A Silv/Plack	206.00 201.00 325.00				108.46 29.99 70.88	127.44 35.23 83.28	
	15.1" TET CTX SS30 Champ 17" TET CTX PV720A Silv/Black 17" TET CTX PV722C Silv/Black 19" TET CTX PV32E Silv/Black	359.00 446.00	236.18 381.88 421.83 524.05	SPE	AKERS	ONLINE Ex Vat	ONLINE Inc Vat	
	15" VM 1952 (LS502U G) 17" VM 1403 (LS704U G) 17" VM 1403 Flack (LS704UBK) 19" VM 1451 (LS902UT G) 21" VM 506 MS1G3DT) 17" VM Pro 1413 (LMT04UT A)	70.00 84.00 84.00	82.25 98.70 98.70 125.73		Genius SP-K10 (200W PMPO) Genius SP-K16 (320W PMPO)	9.11	10.71 15.73 27.23 8.20	
	17" VM 1403 - Black (LS704UBK)	107.00	98.70 125.73 451.20		Genius SP-K10 (200W PMPO) Genius SP-K16 (320W PMPO) Genius SW-K106 (320W PMPO) with S/Woofer) Genius SP-G06 (120W PMPO)	13.39 23.18 6.98	27.23 8.20	
	17" VM Pro 1413 (LM704UT A) 17" VM Pro 413 (HM703UT A)	125.00	451.20 146.88 172.73	NEW	Sound Blaster SBS230 OEM Speakers Creative Inspire 2.1 RTL (Inc Sub) Creative Inspire 4.1 4400 CEM Creative Inspire 5.1 5100 CEM Creative Inspire 5.1 5100 CEM Creative Inspire 5.1 5100 (EM)	6.45 28.85 27.91 37.40 105.09	7.57 33.90 32.79 43.95 123.49	
	17" VM Pro 413 - Black (HM703UTABK) 19" VM Pro 455 (MM904UT) 19" VM Pro 455 (MM904UT) 19" VM Pro 455 - Black (MM904UTBK)	147.00 193.00 193.00	172.73 226.78 226.78	20	Creative Inspire 5.1 5100 OEM Creative Inspire 5.1 Digital 5500 (Rtl)	37.40 105.09	43.95 123.49	
	22" VM Pro 513 (MA203DT)	230.00 340.00	270.25 399.50 489.98		Creative Inspire 6.1 6700	72.73 29.84 45.61	85.46 35.07	
	22" WIL He S14 (HADUAT) 15" LCD ProLite E3805 - 8 (Black) 15" LCD ProLite E3805 - 8 (Black) 15" LCD AX3819/UTBK (Black) 15" LCD AX3819/UTBK (Black) 17" LCD ProLite E4905 - 17" LCD ProLite E4905 - 17" LCD ProLite E4905-8 (Black)	187.00 187.00 215.00	219.73 219.73 252.63			45.61 54.88 125.92	53.59 64.48 147.95	
	15" LCD AX3817UTD 15" LCD AX3819UTBK (Black) 17" LCD ProLite E430S	215.00 296.00 303.00	252.63 347.80 356.03	HEAT TWO	Videologic Digitheatre Std Videologic Digitheatre Platinum	174.90 322.88	205.51 379.39	
	17" LCD ProLite E430S-B (Black) 17" LCD AS4332UT	303.00	356.03		AR550A Speakers for Proview Monitors	7.60	8.93 ONLINE	
	18" LCD AS4611UTG 18.1" LCD AS4636D 18.1" LCD AS4637UTBK (Black) 19" LCD AU4831DG	339.00 605.00	398.33 710.88 735.55 748.48 CALL		EU EDITING	13.75	Inc Vat 16.16	
	18.1" LCD AS4637UTBK (Black)	626.00 637.00 CALL		PRO			40.00	

PAGE 23

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I-SPY TOP TEN

Crime Library www.crimelibrary.com /terrorists_spies Accounts of the exploits of Burgess, Blunt, Philby and Maclean (the Cambridge Spies) along with Mata Hari and other double agents can be found in the Spies section of the Crime Library. Short fiction is also available on the site.

Codes and Ciphers www.codesandciphers ora.uk Webmaster Tony Sale takes you on a tour of Bletchley Park and the famous Enigma machine. Looking at its vulnerabilities and how these were exploited, he also provides simulations of nearly all the tools used to break the Enigma code.

Eye Spy www.eyespymag.com Complete with Breaking News, the online presence of Eye Spy Intelligence Magazine covers intelligence, espionage, and covert operations. Read of the connection between MI5, the FBI and John Lennon and discover what goings-on the MOD might have covered-up at Porton Down.

International Spy Museum www.spymuseum.org At Washington's own International Spy Museum site there are image exhibits to engross anyone with a fascination for the world of spies. Check out the "spookspeak" to learn the lingo from fact and fiction, agencies and authors around the world.

64 Baker Street www.64-bakerstreet.org/main.html This web site tells of the activities of an extraordinary group of Special Operations Executive women - active during World War 2. Although some pages are still being written, you can read about the "James Bond-style armoury" that included exploding rats!

NAPSTER BACK FOR CHRISTMAS

File sharing festivities



The granddaddy of file swapping services, Napster, will be back in time for the festive season under

plans from new owners, Roxio. Napster will be relaunched as a legal music download service, and will have a catalogue of around half a million songs. That will, if all goes to plan, make it the largest such service in the world.



THE GAME'S TO BLAME

Lara's new film a bust

The second cinematic adventure of Lara Croft has opened at the US box office, to around half the business of the original movie. Paramount Pictures are believed to be pointing the finger of blame at the quality of the recent Tomb Raider videogame, which has had a bit of a critical mauling and has already been knocked off the top of the charts in the UK.



NEWS COMPILED BY: SIMON BREW, ROB MCLAUGHLIN, LINDA PURNELL

TOP TEN SALES CHARTS **PC LITILI**

- **01** ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 2.0
- 02 NERO BURNING ROM V5.5
- 03 NEASY CD/DVD CREATOR V6.0
- 04 AUDIO CLEANING LAB 3.0 DELUXE
- 05 PAINT SHOP PRO V7XE (EXTENDED ED.)
- **06** ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ALBUM
- **07** TEACHING YOU TOUCH TYPING
- 08 115,000 CLIP ART IMAGES
- 09 PAINT SHOP PRO 8
- 10 MAVIS BEACON 15

TOP TEN SALES CHARTS PC HOME

- 01 NORTON ANTIVIRUS 2003
- 02 NORTON INTERNET SECURITY 2003
- 03 MICROSOFT OFFICE XP STUDENT EDITION
- 04 NORTON ANTIVIRUS/FIREWALL 2003
- **05** MICROSOFT PLUS! FOR XP
- 06 PARTITION MAGIC 8.0
- 07 VIRUS SCAN 7.0 HOME EDITION
- **08** NORTON ANTIVIRUS 2003 UPG
- 09 NORTON PERSONAL FIREWALL 2003
- 10 MONEY DELUXE 2003

SHUTTLE LAUNCH COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Snap 'em up!

The unique and limited edition SB516 XPC is the latest release from Shuttle, the first collector's edition product that the firm have produced. The XPC is available in five different colours, and the firm argue that it highlights their ongoing commitment to

design innovation and aesthetic style.

The machine is based on their Intel 845G based SB516 XPC, and given the popularity of that, Shuttle are expecting these limited editions ready-to-integrate bare bones units to sell quickly. More information on them, and the entire Shuttle range, can be found at www.shuttle.com



A LIGHTER LOOK AT COMPUTING



CHARTS COMPILED BY CHARTTRACK (C) ELSPA

TOP TEN SALES CHARTS GAMES

- 01 THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR
- 02 THE SIMS
- 03 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4
- 04 WARCRAFT III: FROZEN THRONE
- 05 THE SIMS: UNLEASHED
- 06 GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY
- 07 TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS
- 08 THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY
- 09 MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
- 10 RISE OF NATIONS

TOP TEN SALES CHARTS **BUDGET**

- 01 SIM CITY 3000
- 02 THEME HOSPITAL
- 03 THEME PARK WORLD
- 04 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000
- 05 SONIC 3D
- **06** LEMMINGS FOR WINDOWS
- 07 DEUS EX
- 08 STRONGHOLD
- 09 COMMAND AND CONQUER: RED ALERT
- 10 TOMB RAIDER 4 THE LAST REVELATION

http://foia.fbi.gov
/spies.htm
There aren't too many spy
files available through the
FBI's Freedom of
Information Act website
but the ones to be had run
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the last 40 years. Taking a
tour of the archive will
remind you of essential
spy gear used by 'The
Avengers' and that man
from 'U.N.C.L.E.'!

MIS Espionage Solutions www.trousers.co.uk/miS Wanna-be spies with some knowledge of photocopiers and fax machines will welcome the extract from next year's 'demanding' GCSE espionage exam! As this spoof site points out, the meagre agents' salary does include benefits - along with a very useful Nectar Card!

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YOUR LETTERS

STAR LETTER

In issue 758 you discussed the variety of Mini PCs available, but excluded one type, the Saintsong Espresso which is readily available from Computer Bargains Itd and Sterling XS, and it just happens to be advertised in you magazine. Did the writer fall asleep! At present I use the Espresso and have no problems with it to date. Recently I have

become a proud user of ADSL with it via Zetnet service. I will still carry on reading MM and go buying, but do have a word with research department.

John Oakes F-mail

Point taken, although given the space restrictions on that feature, it was a squeeze to get everything in that we did!

THE MAILWASHER DEBATE

In reply to the letter from Henry Bond in 759. A few months ago I started to receive unwanted emails of a pornographic nature. I looked on the internet and found Mailwasher. I downloaded and installed it right away. I used the Bounce facility. After a week or so I thought that there was some increase in this mail. However, I kept bouncing them all back and gradually the traffic diminished. I have not had one of these horrible emails now for a few weeks. If my experience is anything to go by. I think it best to persevere with Mailwasher and simply bounce the things right back to where they come from.

Ron Haworth F-mail

Re Henry Bond's letter in issue 759, I also am experiencing an increase in spam. On average, I get in excess of 60 new spam messages per day since using Mailwasher. I've tried filtering etc., but cannot stop the flow. I think the only answer is to change ISP and username.

Micro Mart is a great magazine, which seems to improve every issue. Keep up the good work.

Frank Sillitoe E-mail

I have been using Mailwasher for about a year now, and have found it an invaluable tool. It's hard to say whether the amount of spam has increased since I use a hotmail account, which seems to attract this type of mail.

However what I do find it useful for is checking all of my e-mail accounts, and I have about 8 that I've managed to collect, and deleting those mails that I don't want straight from the ISP's servers without downloading them to my computer. Once I've cleaned out the rubbish. I can then use my e-mail program to download the remaining messages which means I only get what I want to read.

Ian Roberts E-mail

PS. Been getting your mag for a while, but have only recently noticed your ever changing disclaimer notice. Brilliant. and I can't believe your Production Manager didn't buy any drinks with his winnings. Name and shame him in the main body of the magazine is what I say.

Richard Hunt, you should be ashamed of yourself...

QUITE IMPRACTICAL

Ref: Issue 753 / 19th June

Your star letter on the above date / issue was about Kevin's all time favourites. He suggests that you run a poll of people's opinions. Great idea but quite impractical, surely!

How can I tell you what is my favourite video card / Anti Virus software . . . unless I have tried them all and can come to an informed conclusion. The chances of that happening are

very very small. I'd either need to have lots of time and/or money or be a geek I think.

I know what I've tried and I know what I think of it, but it is a very small portion of the market. People like yourselves are the only ones who have the time/expertise/equipment and opportunity to do this evaluation and I'm sure we all benefit from your findings.

Steve E-mail

To be fair to Kevin, what he was getting at we think is that people write in with their favourites, not what they considered to be the absolute best. Thus, if you've tried a few graphics cards, but found a RADEON 9500 the best you've had, then to share that, along with those cards you're not so keen on. We're geeks, by the way, And proud of it!

WINDOWS USER STRAY

I look forward to reading Martin Curran's articles in Micro Mart. Although not originally a Linux user I find his articles well written, articulate, humorous and above all I can almost feel the enthusiasm he obviously has for his subject. He has certainly made me have a look at Linux in a different way and I have found myself "fiddling" with various live Linux CDs that otherwise I would have been totally ignorant about. If it won't embarrass him too much tell him to keep up the good work, let him know he has one loyal reader at least and made a Windows user stray, albeit at the moment to only dip his toes into Linux. I would have sent an email direct but it seems unlike your other contributors he has no email address associated with his articles.

John Leeson Sheffield

OUR FORUMS

Don't forget that you can debate, discuss, seek help and give advice 24 hours a day over at the Micro Mart forums. Currently, over 1000 people have signed up, and the forums are growing by the week. You can find them over at www.micromart.co.uk/forum

THIS WEEK'S COLUMNIST: ADAM ANDERSON

ADAM SAYS



I've had an expensive couple of weeks, shelling out over £700 for 4GB of super-fast memory for testing purposes. That was painful enough, but I also bought a number of hard drives, also for testing purposes. That was more of a luxury, as it means that I won't have to constantly format drives and load up Windows with a different set of chipset drivers. Instead, I can have an Intel drive, an Nforce drive, a VIA drive and one for SiS too. I can even leave graphics drivers loaded up if I am feeling particularly lazy. Besides, a 120GB IBM 180GXP drive is a ridiculous bargain at £75 inc VAT, and I assume the price cut is simply because of the IBM/Hitachi buy-out, which means that IBM branded drives have become old stock.

I bought three of the drives so that's the thick end of £1000 including the memory, but the bit that really hurt was buying a full retail copy of Windows XP Professional, which set me back £253.

For the last three years I've been lucky enough to be given copies of

Windows by Microsoft PR or by the places that I've worked at. Most of the copies have six months life before they expire, but I generally build a new workstation every three months so that's no problem.

Buying a single copy of XP Professional brought it home to me just how Microsoft has \$49 billion in cash assets. I wanted a copy of XP with Service pack 1 built in, and I went for Professional so I could do all the networking tricks that can be necessary when testing new hardware, but even so, £253. I mean, what?

A full retail copy of Windows Me costs £163 while XP Home is coincidentally - £163. You would have to be barking mad to buy any Microsoft Operating System other than Windows XP, and frankly at those prices you'd have to seriously wonder about the sanity of building your own PC. Consider that a brand new PC is sure to have a 17 inch monitor, a DVD-ROM, a decent processor, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard drive space and a shiny fresh copy of Windows XP for about £600. Unless you have a PC that is less than two years old, a new PC must look very tempting compared to extensive upgrades.

I do this for a job, but I doubt that many of you lovely Micro Mart readers are running XP3000+/3GHz PCs with a DirectX 9 graphics card and an eye-watering amount of memory. In future I shan't boast about any of that. Instead, I shall be known as the man who bought a full copy of Windows XP.

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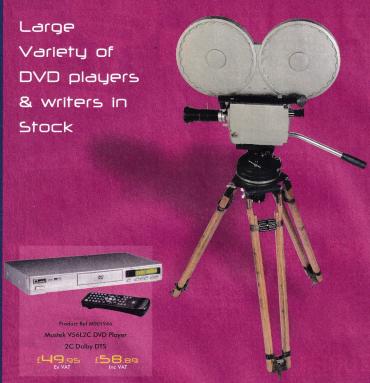
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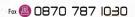
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When you buy a motherboard, getting the right feature set is vital, as you may have to live with the choice you made for some time. Depending which processor you plump for, there are numerous motherboard suppliers all looking for your business, so how do you decide which is right for you?

Part of the answer to that question starts with the chipsets, the building blocks for any motherboard design. If you can decide what chipset you want, then the process of whittling down the board makers is significantly easier. Things have been complicated in the past few years by the divergence of chipset designs into the North and South bridge concept, where the CPU is support by two groups of independent functionality. The Northbridge communicates with CPU, memory and the AGP port while the Southbridge handles all the I/O, which includes networking, sound, USB and so on. Many Northbridge designs can be mated with multiple Southbridge chips, so that the solution can be tailored better to whichever features the board

. It's interesting to note that almost all the high end boards use special Southbridge parts to provide most of the bells and whistles, while the only changes on the Northbridge relate to memory access. It's for that reason you may find



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THE INTEL 1865PE, A FRIEND OF THE OVERCLOCKERS UNTIL INTEL HOBBLES IT

boards that go beyond the specs I detail here, for example MSI offer VIA VT400a boards with 1GB Ethernet. Here's an overview of what a range of chipset makers produce, and are about to release.

INTEL - THE 1865 AND 1875.

Strange as it may seem, Intel only support processors made by themselves. For them, the mainstream product they support is the Pentium 4 processor and its socket 478 design. These have two current products, the i865 'Springdale' and i875 'Canterwood'. The previous i845 models are now considered legacy items, and should be avoided generally.

The Springdale chipset has recently become a firm favourite with the overclocking community, which is turned out unexpectedly to have features designed for more expensive i875 product. The i865 comes in three types, the 865G, 865P and 865PE models. They all offer a core functionality that includes many needed features. All the models support Dual Channel memory, Serial ATA, RAID and inbuilt AC'97 sound.

In addition the 'G' version has integrated graphics, but nothing else special. While the 'P' version can't do 800MHz Front Side Bus, which also restricts its memory speeds. So if you want the 865 then the PE is the model to shoot for, unless you

need the Intel graphics - which you won't, I can assure you.

If you want a solid P4 machine, then this is an exceptionally good choice with almost every board maker using this chipset. Only if you must go faster or want ECC memory do you need the 875P Canterwood.

The 865 'Canterwood' is a great chipset, but Intel always like to produce something special for those willing to pay a bit extra. I would list the features, but there would be little point, as it's almost identical to the 865. The only significant changes are that it doesn't support 400MHz processors, and it does support ECC memory. One other difference is slightly weird, the 875P has PAT or 'performance acceleration technology'. This can make 5% difference to the overall performance of the machine. The 'weird' aspect is that it turned out to be in the 865 also, but Intel insisted that it wasn't. ASUS launched a new BIOS for their 865 board activating the feature which wasn't there and Intel got very upset.

As a result, Intel have now announced a new version of the 865 which can't have PAT switched on, but in the meanwhile you can get 865 boards which are PAT capable. To my mind, the 875P was always going to be a problem, because it never came with enough reasons for the extra expense. And with the PAT revelation there are virtually no reasons to buy the 875P, until Intel kneecap the 865 chip.

VIA AND INTEL -THE P4X400 AND PT800

Many people are saying VIA have had enough of the PC motherboard market and want out. True or not, VIA have been instrumental in getting lots of technology on motherboards and moving the speed barrier higher over the last few years.

They recently had a legal spat with Intel, which caused many board builders to avoid their P4 products until it was resolved. Strong in the AMD market, their position in the Intel world is less secure and they need to release some class products in the coming months to regain lost ground.

The VIA APOLLO P4X400 was a flagship product for the Pentium 4 range, and the successor to the previous P4X333 model. It uses a VT8754 Northbridge and a VT8235 Southbridge, the latter provides six channel sound and six USB 2.0 ports. If it has an issue, it's in not handling the latest 800MHz FSB processors. It also can't use any memory quicker than DDR333, so it's not going to attract the speed freaks among us.

Even with those limitations, I rate this chipset, as I found it very stable and easy to work with, but it's now only used on budget boards these days. Luckily VIA have something better, the VIA PT800.

The PT800 chipset is VIA's answer to the Intel 865PE and in some respects betters the 875. As you might expect, it has a very comprehensive feature list, which includes the much needed 800MHz and DDR400 support. It also has a very impressive VIA Vinyl multichannel audio system, which makes the standard AC'97 look as bad as many people have been saying. The Serial ATA is four device and RAID empowered or 'V-RAID' as they like to call it.

This is a very new chipset and as such relatively few motherboards are in circulation using it at this time. Initial reports suggest that this is an exceptionally tight design from VIA and that the PTROC could be a winner!

VIA AND AMD - THE VT400A, KT600, K8T400

Looking back over the last four years I'd say that AMD owe VIA big time! It was chipsets by VIA which really popularised the Athlon as it went from Slot A to Socket A and then through stepped increases in Front Side Bus speed. Not that they haven't made a few mistakes, with USB always being an issue with VIA solutions until recently. They make a large number of chipsets for Socket A processors, so I'm only going to concentrate on the key ones.

The VT400a is possibly the most common AMD chipset out there, and been at the heart of many systems in the last year. Based on the VT400, this is a slightly extended version with an added ability to handle DDR400 memory. In doing this, the chipset was stretched beyond its original capability, and it shows. You can only use DDR400 if you intend to use only two memory sockets, and your processor is 266MHz FSB. If you use a 333MHz FSB processor, you can only run DDR333, which is rubbish to my mind. Having said that, this is an excellent chipset that is perfect for earlier Athlon designs, and



VIA ARE EXPECTING A HIT WITH THE K8T800 ON THE ATHLON 64

СРИ	Chipset	FSB SPEEDS	DDR Speed	Max Mem	USB Ports	S-ATA	AGP	Audio
P4	Intel 865PE		400/333/266	4GB	8	4	ВX	6 CH
P4	Intel 875	533/800MHz	400/333 ECC	4GB	8	4	8X	6 CH AC'97
P4	VIA P4X400	400/533 MHz	200/266/333	3GB	6		2X/4X/8X	6 Ch AC'9
P4	VIA PT800	800/533/400MHz	400/333/266	8GB	8	4	8X/4X	VIA Vinyl
P4	SiS 655	533/400MHz	333/266	4GB	6	2	8X	C-Media
ATHLON	SiS 748	333/266MHz	400/333/266	3GB	6	0	4X/8X	Hollywood 3D
ATHLON	VIA VT400a	333/266MHz	400/333/266	4GB	6	2	4X/8X	VIA Vinyl
ATHLON	VIA VT600	400/333/266MHz	400/333/266	4GB	8		4X/8X	VIA Vinyl
ATHLON	NVIDIA Ultra	400/333/266MHz	400/333/200	3GB	6		4X/8X	Realtek 6
A 64	VIA K8T800	800MHz	400/333/266	8GB	8	4	2X/4X/8X	VIA Vinyl
A 64	SiS 755	800MHz	400/333/266	8GB	6	0	4X/8X	Hollywood 3D
A 64	nForce 3 Pro	800MHz	400/333/266	8GB	6	2	2X/4X/8X	AC '97 2.1

when combined with a good Southbridge it can provide S-ATA, RAID and all the extra features that you expect on top of the line solutions.

Whatever VIA did to the VT400 it wasn't going to work well with the new 'Barton' cored XP processors, or DDR400 memory. So they designed the KT600 to address those issues. As well as addressing those issues it also added lots of goodies, like a FastStream64 memory controller and an extra two USB and S-ATA ports.

From all accounts this is a very good chipset, and may well be the last VIA solution for the Athlon XP. That's because the Athlon XP is about to be replaced with the Athlon 64, and VIA already have a solution for that - the K8T800. Previously called the K8T400, this chip supports both the Opteron and Athlon 64 processors. While exact details are still sketchy, it seems to be dual processor capable and designed to make use of PCI Express slots.

SIS - THE 655, 748 AND 755.

Like VIA, SiS has been a supporter of both Intel and AMD, and carved out a niche in making solutions for cheap graphics integrated solutions. Earlier this year they produced a P4 chipset the SiS 655, an attempt to grab a little slice of this market. This is a well featured chipset, but doesn't either the top processor or memory speeds.



THE SIS 655 IS THAT COMPANY'S FIRST TOE IN THE BIG POND OF THE PENTIUM 4

Therefore are only likely to see it used on cheaper products.

More natural territory for SiS is the Athlon for which they have produced numerous support chips, the latest being the SiS 748. This is completely current with the latest in AMD technology, offering both 400FSB and DDR400. To make best use of the bandwidth on offer, the design uses a special 1GB MuTIDL connection between north and south bridges to reduce bottlenecks. In testing, this solution is a fast as both the VIA VT400a and the "Force 2 solutions."

The final SiS solution isn't really in circulation yet, because it supports the unreleased Athlon 64, but it's worth a mention. The SiS 755 is the only chipset aiming for the low end of the Athlon 64

market, and as such comes with an integrated video core. They also have the SiS 760, which they are staying tightlipped about. It may be a dual processor design to compete with the VIA KBTBOO.

NVIDIA - THE NFORCE 2 AND NFORCE 3 PRO

The Nforce series has been very successful for NVIDIA, and has quickly attained a reputation for high performance with the AMD Athlon series processors. In the last year they have built on that by extending the excellent nForce 2 line with some new versions. These include the new nForce 2 400 and Ultra 400. The difference between the two is that the Ultra version now supports Barton 400 FSV processors and DDR400, where the basic 400 didn't support anything higher than 333MHz operations.

What you get with the nForce is complete hardware coverage, with S-ATA, 1394 Firewire, USB 2 and AGP 8X. It's also blindingly quick and available with an integrated NVIDIA Geforce MX video core for those that want it.

They are also at the front of the line for Athlon 64 with the nForce 3 Pro, where they aim to get into the workstation market. There is also talk that they may use this chipset to support both the Athlon XP and the Pentium 4, which would be interesting. The plan is to offer a version second release of the chipset with a combined Geforce FX graphics core, which would interest the game market.

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Technology

THE SPEC CHECK: MONITORS

"...but a monitor is just a monitor, isn't it?", Darren Woodward explains all...

Sadly, many people think that a monitor is just a monitor. It is quite common for people to go for the cheapest one, because for most people the price is the dominating factor when considering which one to purchase. However, as you have probably guessed, a monitor is not just a monitor, and it is import to choose the one that is right for you. The good thing about monitors is that unlike other computer components they do not get outdated very quickly. There is no reason why you shouldn't have the same monitor for several long years.

A few issues back in The Spec Check, I wrote about the specifications of graphics cards. Now, although the quality of the graphics produced by your system is almost entirely down to what graphics card you have, a poorly selected monitor can seriously lower the quality of what you see, even if you do have one of the best graphics cards to date! This week I'll tell you just what to look for in a new monitor...

CRTS

CRT stands for cathode-ray tube, and it is the traditional style monitor. By this I mean it is not the flat-panel type. Generally speaking, CRT displays are bright, colourful, and offer really good value compared to flat panel monitors. A CRT monitor contains a funnel shaped vacuum tube behind the screen. which contains an electron gun that excites the phosphors on the screen. The phosphors are arranged in groups of three, one red, one green and one blue. This group of phosphors is known as a pixel. Electrons from the electron gun cause the phosphors to light at different intensities, which causes images to appear on the screen. Since the light only has to pass through one sheet of glass, CRT monitors are very bright.





SHADOW MASKS AND APERTURE GRILLES

The electron guns in CRT monitors are not as perfect as you may like to think. So a shadow mask is built into the display to prevent electrons from accidentally exciting the phosphors of nearby pixels. A lot of CRT monitors now use Trinitron or similar technology. In such displays the pixels are arranged vertically in stripes. This means that the electron gun is highly relied upon to keep accurate horizontal separation of pixels. This means that the shadow mask (or aperture grill as it is known in this type of display) only has to be used to separate pixels vertically, it therefore blocks less light resulting in an even brighter display.

DOT PITCH AND STRIPE PITCH

Dot pitch is the amount of space between one phosphor and an adjacent phosphor of the same colour. The smaller the dot pitch

RESOLUTION

As ever, resolution is one of the most important aspects of a monitor. The higher the resolution, the better the image on the screen One thing to bear in mind is that there is no point in getting a small monitor with a high resolution, this is because the text and image detail displayed on the screen will be so small that you will never get to use it.

Here is a rough guide of what to be looking for depending on the size of the CRT monitor:

- 17inch will look good at anything up to 1,024 x 768.
- 19inch monitors look good at any resolution up to 1,280 x 1,024.
- 21inch monitors will look nice at resolutions up to 1,600 x 1,200.

Flat panel displays work slightly differently, and are quite poor at switching resolution. So you should get one that offers a resolution that you will be using all the time.

specialfeature





the better. A dot pitch of 0.26 millimetres or lower is good.

For Trinitron and similar monitors, this specification is referred to as stripe pitch. This is the distance between two stripes of the same colour. Dot pitch and stripe pitch ratings should not be directly compared, as the results of the two types of monitor with the same dot/stripe pitch rating will not be the same.

FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

The major advantage of a flat-panel display is the amount of space that it takes on your desk. LCDs are backlit, and the light has to pass through a few filters before you get to see it, so they are not usually as bright as CRT monitors although they are improving. Because the light passes through a few filters you can only see the images on the screen when you are directly in front of it.

LCD screens are more accurate than CRT screens because each individual pixel can be digitally instructed to display a specific colour, whereas on a CRT it can vary, even if only very slightly.

VIEWABLE IMAGE SIZE

When referring to the actual screen size of a CRT monitor, it is never the same as the viewable image size. This is because the very edge of the screen is covered by plastic. On an LCD screen the viewable area is almost always the

same as the actual screen size. Just bear this in mind before you make a purchase.

CONNECTION TYPES

Most CRT monitors have an analogue connector. Although some have a digital connector, the image on the screen is produced using analogue methods, so there is no real advantage. LCDs can have analogue, digital or even both types of connector. If you have a graphics card with a digital connector, you should try to get a f lat-panel monitor that also has a digital connector. This is because converting between digital and analogue signals can cause a reduction in the image quality.

CONTROLS

The less control you have on the monitor, the less there is to go wrong. Whatever controls are on the monitor, just make sure they will be easy to get to when you have the monitor set up at home.

ONSCREEN DISPLAY (OSD)

It is definitely better to get a monitor with an OSD. This is because you can accurately measure how the screen has been adjusted, e.g. "Brightness = 80%". Also, an OSD will display any problems, such as "No signal". This can be handy if anything should go wrong.

COLOR DEPTH

The higher the number, the better the image quality. If you are getting a CRT screen you should get one that can deal with at least 24-bit colour depth. This means it will be able to display 16,700,000 (16.7 million) simultaneous colours. Most flat panel monitors can only handle 18-bit colour depth. However, some can simulate 24-bit colour depth. This is a must if you will be watching DVD or playing games using a flat panel screen.

REFRESH RATE

The refresh rate is the number of times per a second that the image on the screen is redrawn. The refresh rate is measured in Hertz (Hz). A refresh rate of 60 or less can cause flickering, which can cause headaches. Only consider a monitor that offers a refresh rate of at least 75 Hz.

Refresh rates often drop as the resolution is increased. You must check that the monitor supports a refresh rate of at least 75 Hz at the resolution you are likely to be using.

DIMENSIONS

Before you even consider taking a monitor home with you, get the tape measure out and take measurements of the area where you plan to put the monitor. You don't want to get it home, only to discover you haven't got enough room for it.

APPEARANCE

It sound obvious, but although you might like the look of a brightly coloured monitor when you see it in a shop, remember that once you have made your purchase, you will probably be looking at that screen for several years, so make sure you get one that you really do like the look of.

PRICE

Before you start to choose, know how much you can spend. If you really want a monitor that is out of your price range, consider a second hand one. Most reconditioned monitors come with a 3 month warranty.

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FRUIT MACHINE FRAUD?

Emulators and source code suggests fruit machines are illegally fixed...

Higher or lower, hold or spin, gamble or take the winnings playing a fruit machine is a real test of skill and judgement. Or is it?

According to the FairPlay Campaign, there's no 'skill and judgement' involved at all, a claim they make after tests using PC emulators and the fruit machine's original source code.

The FairPlay Campaign, a pressure group originally formed to lobby for cheaper videogames, investigated the functions of various fruit machines by running their original source code through the PC-based fruit machine emulator MFME, or Multiple Fruit Machine Emulator. Like the more famous Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator (MAME), the program recreates another machine on your PC, in this case, mimicking the workings of a fruit machine. By using the emulator to run ROMs, the source code from individual fruit machines, you can play an exact recreation of that particular fruitie. "This is not a simulation, ie. something which just acts a bit like the real thing", says FairPlay's web site (www.fairplaycampaign.co.uk). "This IS the real thing. As far as the program code is concerned, it doesn't know it's running on a PC. It thinks it's running on a real physical fruit machine, and acts in exactly the same way."

Using the emulator's freeze function, FairPlay was able to effectively 'save' a game, try an option and then reload and choose again. For example, when asked by an emulated fruit machine to guess whether the next spin of a reel is 'higher' or 'lower' than the number currently offered, they could effectively choose both. What they found was surprising to say the least.

PREDETERMINED

According to FairPlay, it makes no difference how you play or what you choose. Winning and losing is



predetermined, and not affected by your input in any way. So, for example, if the gamble reel offered a '10' and the machine had determined you're going to lose, if you choose 'higher', a lower number is offered. If you chose 'lower', a higher number appears. "It's not a gamble at all", says FairPlay. "It's fraud, and it's illegal. You're being robbed".

Nor is it just the higher/lower gambles that are fixed. "As far as we can tell, pretty-much every spin is pre-determined one way or another, though different manufacturers seem to take different approaches in that regard", said FairPlay spokesman Stuart Campbell. So when you see two cherries on the win line but decline the opportunity to hold, only for the third cherry to appear, you didn't make the wrong decision. The machine had decided this spin would not produce a win, so had you held, something else would've appeared instead of the missing cherry. Again, this was discovered by freezing a game at the critical point then attempting both options, holding the cherries and not holding the cherries.

"We've tested a huge variety of machines", Mr Campbell explained, "and every single one exhibited these characteristics. It's clearly deliberate policy, and examples like the Club Tropicana one on our web site illustrate that beyond any doubt at all".

Club Tropicana is indeed one of FairPlay's more interesting examples. It's a relatively straightforward machine.

ARE RANDOM MACHINES THE ANSWER?

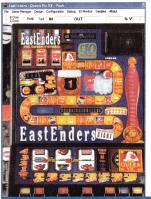
FairPlay isn't campaigning for fruit machines that produce random results. "Everyone knows UK fruit machines aren't random", they argue. "No-one is suggesting they SHOULD de random. However, there's a big difference between simply not being random, and cheating. If you have an '11' showing on a High-Low reel, nobody really expects the next spin to be random, and nobody expects all numbers are equally likely to come up. Many people suspect that the machine will predstermine a 12 for the next spin if it doesn't want you to win. However, most people also believe that, if you're brave enough to choose 'High' from the 11, the 12 would still come up and you would win. The machine pre-selecting a 12 is NOT cheating. The machine selecting a 12 if you press 'Lower', but a 3 if you press 'Higher', leaving you no way to win, IS cheating."







specialicature





THE EASTENDERS FRUIT MACHINE, ABOVE SHOWN NEXT TO THE EMULATED VERSION

and unlike its more complicated cousins, it doesn't need an LED line offering instructions on how to play. However, when you run the Club Tropicana ROM on the emulator, you find it does in fact have an LED - on the 'real' machine it's located inside the cabinet, out of sight of the player, but visible to a maintenance engineer. Again, according to the FairPlay site, "When you get a win in Club Tropicana, the display changes to show the word 'LIMIT' followed by a number. This number refers to the win ladder in the top half of the machine, 'LIMIT' refers to the position on that ladder that the player will be stopped at on the Hi-Lo



EMILI ATION

gamble. So if the display reads 'LIMIT 6', the player is stopped at the sixth position on the ladder. The sixth position is £1.60, so we now know in advance that we will lose the gamble from £1.20, no matter what we do".

"I think everyone thought machines were pre-determining numbers", said Mr Campbell. "If you were on an 11 on the Hi-Lo reel, for example, it might predetermine a 12. Almost nobody thought that if the machine had decided you were going to lose, it didn't matter which way you chose. That's not just stacking the odds, which people expect, because the machine is there to make a profit. That's cheating." And surely it's illegal too? "You don't need to be a lawyer to tell that if something claims to be a 'gamble', but in fact there's absolutely no way you can win, it's deliberately deceiving you in order to get your money, and deception for money is fraud", he continued.

The FairPlay Campaign has provoked little response from the fruit machine industry. Micro Mart contacted industry trade body BACTA, and eventually received the following statement from Chief Executive Phil Jarrold: "We have seen the comments made by the FairPlay Campaign, many of which we think are misleading. All machines manufactured and operated by BACTA members conform to the strict guidelines and compliance procedures, as agreed with the Gaming Board for Great Britain".

When asked which of FairPlay's comments he found 'misleading' and why, he replied, "we believe the emulator referred to fails to replicate the true nature of the machine in play, as the emulator only replicates the software. and not the hardware environment that varies by machine". Stuart Campbell is unconvinced. "We're as sure the emulators are producing accurate results as it's possible to be without access to the real machine source code", he explained. "We haven't vet noticed any differences in overall behaviour between the emulated machines and their real counterparts."

The fruit machine manufacturers themselves weren't forthcoming. Of the 14 companies contacted by Micro Mart, only two bothered to respond. Bell Fruit Games advised us to contact BACTA, and JPM International forwarded BACTA's statement, again ignoring requests for elaboration. No one we spoke to attempted to refute FairPlay's allegations. "We can't think of a single reason why the industry wouldn't take five seconds to refute our claims outright, unless they were true", explained Stuart Campbell. "We're making incredibly serious and, presumably, damaging allegations. The campaign has reached somewhere in the region of six million people so far. You'd think that if the industry had nothing to hide, they'd just have come out and said so, rather than this vague evasive nonsense that they've come out with."

So what can we do about it? "The best thing people can do is go to www.faxyourmp.com and let their MP know that they're not pleased about it" Stuart continued. "And stop playing fruit machines until they're at least halfway fair."

EMULATING FRUIT MACHINES

You can get the MFME, or Multiple Fruit Machine Emulator, at www.fruit-emu.com. It's also available to download on FairPlay's own web site, www.fairplay-campaign.co.uk, as are several of the ROMs they tested, enabling you to repeat their experiments and see for yourself how the machines operate.

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ZIPPING UTILITIES

Trying to cram a multitude of files onto a CD or floppy disc can be a difficult process without good software, but there are so many compression tools available on the Internet that finding the right one can be a bewildering task. Brad Jackson explores some of the currently available applications.

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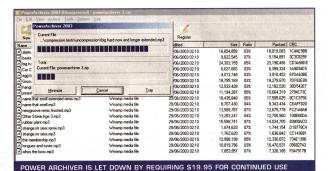
>

Our first zipping, compressing, squashing, utility on test this week is

Power Archiver v8.50 from ConeXware. The download size is a mere 2.8MB, and the application installed only requires 5.8MB to live happily on your hard drive-certainly not bloatware then! Power Archiver comes with a useful extra, a pre-viewer for images in any one of 14 formats, including PNG, JPEG, TIFF, Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, Autodesk, SGL, PCX and TrueVision.

Upon opening, one is confronted with a very tidy window, empty save for some icons arranged along the top. To get compressing, click the New icon, which then prompts you for a name for your new archive, and a location on your hard drive. The window then changes to Add Files, where you locate the files you wish to add to the new archive.

For our scientific tests this week, I chose two MPG video files, one of 379MB (test file 1) and another of 88.2MB (test file 2), and a folder containing a group of 18 audio MP3 files totalling 201MB (test files 3). This makes the application in question work much harder, since both MPG and MP3 files are already compressed. On the other hand, results in space-saved may look a little poor, but bear in mind that with files such as bitmaps and



UPON OPENING, ONE IS CONFRONTED WITH A VERY TIDY WINDOW, EMPTY SAVE FOR SOME ICONS ARRANGED ALONG THE TOP.

text documents, great savings can be expected. The test machine was my beloved HAL9000 - AMD Athlon 2200+ processor, 512M DDR RAM, 80GB HD (we shall be using one 2GB partition), 12BMB Nvidia graphics card - fairly average home computer specifications.

Compressing the files in ZIP format, the results were as follows: File 1 from 371MB to 340MB in 2 min 42 seconds, File 2 from 88.2MB to 80MB in 40 seconds, Files 3 (collection of MP3 files) from 201MB to 191MB in 1 min 32 seconds. Decompression took 1 minute for File 1, 14 seconds for File 2, and 33 seconds for Files 3.

Since Power Archiver will compress and extract in a variety of formats (ZIP, CAB, LHA, BH, TAR.GZ) I decided to complete the tests again in the Blak Hole (BH) format. This time the results were as follows: File 1 to 340MB in 2 min 58s, File 2 to 79.9MB in 44 seconds, and Files 3 to 191MB in 1 min 34s. Extraction times were close to the ZIP tests. In summary, Power Archiver, is good, varied, but expensive and slightly slow.

QUALITY: 7
VALUE: 6
OVERALL: 6







7IPSTAR 4 1

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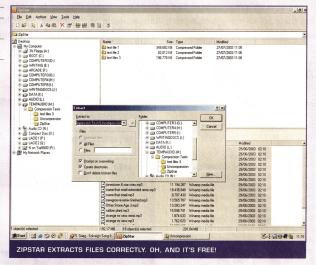
WEBSITE: WWW.SPEEDPROJECT.DE/ENU /ZIPSTAR/INDEX.HTML

More European compression comes in the form of ZipStar 4.1.

created by German software company SpeedProject. This product has the advantage of being totally-and-utterly free for home use, with no spyware or adware to get on your nerves. Should you require a compression application for your business or a commercial enterprise, then SpeedProject has "Sqeez", which is more powerful than ZipStar, but obviously involves handing over Euros!

At a mere 1.87MB, ZipStar is only a small download file, which makes for a speedy transfer. Installing was a trouble-free process, involving a few mouse clicks to confirm where on the PC it should reside. Thereafter. double-clicking the ZipStar icon opened a file window, which is obviously designed to resemble the Windows Explorer. There are three panes - the left hand side contains the file tree. the upper-right contains subfolders of the selected folder, and the lower-right is the currently active ZipStar archive.

One locates the files or folders to be compressed in the left hand and upperright hand panes, then these items are dragged to the archive below. This brings up a "step-through" window. where you instruct ZipStar what you want doing with the files. ZipStar compresses in three different formats: the familiar ZIP, Windows-familiar CAB, or SpeedProject's own format SQX which brings with it the obvious caveat: Only start playing with SQX if you are sure that you will be keeping ZipStar!



THIS PRODUCT HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING TOTALLY-AND-UTTERLY FREE FOR HOME USE. WITH NO SPYWARE OR ADWARE TO GET ON YOUR NERVES.

Starting with the ZIP compression test, the results were as follows: 1 from 371MB to 340MB in 2 min 25 seconds, 2 from 88,2MB to 80MB in 36 seconds, and 3 from 201MB to 192MB in 1 min 22 seconds. Decompression for ZIP files was: 1 in 1 min 14 seconds, 2 in 17 seconds. and 3 in 37 seconds.

I then tried out the SQX compression format, and squashed the test files down as follows: 1 from 371MB to 337MB in 18 min 9 seconds, 2 from 88.2MB to 79.3MB in 4 min 5 seconds, and 3 from 201MB to 178.35MB in 8 min 56 seconds. As for SQX decompression,

the results were: 1 in 2 minutes. 2 in 15 seconds and 3 in 45 seconds. All of the above goes to show that SpeedProject's SQX format is capable of compressing compressed files even further than the humble ZIP format. but you have to be prepared to wait a while!

In conclusion, I really liked the simplicity, speed, and foolproof aspects of ZipStar, and therefore heartily recommend it!

QUALITY: 8 VALUE: 9 OVERALL: 9



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WEBSITE: WWW.WINZIP.COM

WinZip is an experienced and time-served product, given that it is now at version 8.1, and

there is a Beta release of version 9 if you fancy a cutting-edge trial. Sticking with the last "genuine" release, 8.1, the download life is only 1.8MB in size; and installation is virtually automatic, requiring only a few mouse clicks to get bedded-in. The trial period is a tad miserly at only 21 days, but if you get stuck in immediately, you can quickly make up your mind if it is the utility for you.

Indeed, automation runs like raspberry ripple all the way through WinZip 8.1, and one is encouraged to replace the

Classic view with an intuitive Wizard to automate regular zip tasks. There is also the option to create "Favourite Zip Folders", which are quickly located and navigated from within WinZip itself. If you are so inclined, there is an add-on that enables Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator to view zipped internet-based documents, without the need for prior downloading and de-compressing.

WinZip (in common with all the others on test this week) can create self-extracting archives. This is particularly handy if you wish to pass on a disk to a friend containing zipped files - simply double-click the created archive file and the content unpacks itself to the desired folder (just like many downloaded applications, in fact). On the subject of downloads, zipped software can be automatically installed via WinZip if required.



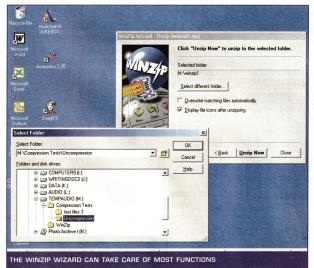
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In the highly-scientific, NASA-supervised compression test, the results were as follows: File 1 was compressed from 371MB down to 339MB in 2 min 7 seconds, File 2 from 88.2MB to 79.9MB in 31 seconds, and the group of MP3 files from 201MB to 191MB in 1min 12 seconds. Decompression took the following times: 1 took 1 minute, 2 took 11 seconds, and The Group Formerly Known as Files 3 took 32 seconds.

WinZip is capable of handling files-in the popular formats: TAR, gzip, Uuencode, XXencode, BinHex, and MIME. ARJ, LZH, and ARC files are supported, but require external programs, and hence, more downloading, but instructions are provided within WinZip on how to do this.

In the final analysis, although WinZip makes archive creation a doddle, the price (especially when combined with the 21-day free period) tends to turn me off. It's very sturdy, very stable, but expensive when compared to, say, ZipStar.

QUALITY: 8
VALUE: 7
OVERALL: 7





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ZIPGENIUS 5

PRICE: ERFE

MANUFACTURER: ZIPGENIUS
WEBSITE: WWW.ZIPGENIUS.IT

download file of the bunch this week is ZipGenius, an Italian-produced application, which requires 7.6MB of hard drive space to comfortably move in. However, initial impressions after installing, are that ZipGenius may possibly be the most intuitive and comprehensive zip utility on test. This started with the Configuration Wizard, which automatically launched upon first run. It asked all manner of questions: Whether I was a beginner or

expert (more wizards or more functions),

camera, and which of an extensive list of

whether I had a scanner or digital

compression formats I would like to associate with ZipGenius. All this made

me feel I was entering Tweakville.

At 6.24MB by far the largest

On to the Zip test, and the results were as follows: File 1 from 371MB to 340MB in 3 min 45 seconds. File 2 from 88.2MB to 79.9MB in 54 seconds, and Files 3 from 201MB to 191MB in 2 min 13 seconds. Decompression yielded the following results: File 1 took 1 min 36 seconds. File 2 took 23 seconds, and Files 3 took 54 seconds. This was performed at the default "Medium Compression" setting, but on a whim. I replayed the test, but at the maximum "Brutal Compression" setting. The only area of difference over the Medium setting was on File 1, where 4 min 4 seconds later, an archive file of 339MB was produced.

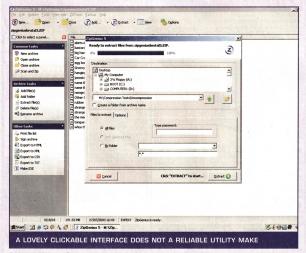
This application has by far the best list of supported compression formats, and in full it looks like this: CZIP, CAB, RAR, ARJ, ACE, ARC, LZH, LZA, PAK, ZOO, GZ, Z, TAR, TAZ, TGZ, UUE, XXE, MIM, and lastly, but by no means least,



ZIPGENIUS, WHILE COMPRESSIN A FILE, DISPLAYS A BUSINESS LIKE WINDOW

BZ2. The front end is lovely, very Windows XP.

What really destroyed ZipGenius as a serious contender for me was the terrible crashes, freezes and hangs that seemed to suddenly beset my operating system. Luckily, I use a multiboot thingy, so I can get back to a decent pre-ZipGenius version of Windows. It started mysteriously rebooting at the end of archive creation, and then the contagion seemed to spread throughout the system as a whole, making everything a tad unstable. Indeed, glancing through the comments page at cnet.com seems to bear this out, with a few different users lamenting the performance and system problems. Also it will not run on a Windows 95 or NT4 based system. Given all the above, I would seriously consider avoiding ZipGenius and trying one of the others instead.



QUALITY: 4
VALUE: 6
OVERALL: 4



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ALZIP 501

PRICE: FREE
MANUFACTURER: ESTSOFT
WEBSITE: WWW.CNET.COM

This is a conundrum, since the company, ESTSoft seems to be conspicuous by its absence on the Internet. I downloaded AlZip from cnet.com, and so users in search of the application should try there. I do know that they are a Korean company, and there are a few sites that could be them, but viewing them meant that Internet Explorer wanted to download the Korean character set. This in itself would not be a problem, but my grasp of the

ALAS, AS WITH ZIPGENIUS, THERE WERE STABILITY ISSUES THAT UNDERMINED THE USEFULNESS OF THE APPLICATION.

Korean language is non-existent, so the exercise is pointless.

Small problems such as these are not enough to stop me trying the program out however, and the installation of the little 1.68MB download file went off smoothly. Afterwards, a configuration window appears, with the text in a quaint, restrained font, and it is here that you are given an idea of the immense number of formats that AlZip can handle - I make it thirty (including

ZIP). Here is the list for lexical-funseekers: ALZ (AlZip's proprietary compression format), ACE, ARC, ARJ, B64, BH, BHX, B22, CAB, EAR, ENC, GZ, HA, HGX, ICE, JAR, LHA, LHZ, MIM, PAK, RAR, TAR, TGZ, UUE, WAR, XXE, Z, Z00, D01. AlZip's interface is uncluttered, and action tends to switch between a small dialog box and the large interface.

The ZIP test results were as follows: File 1 down to 339MB in 1min 50 seconds, File 2 down to 79.9MB in 25 seconds, Files group 3 down to 191MB in 1 min 4 seconds. Decompression of the files went as follows: File 1 in 1 min 9 seconds, File 2 in 24 seconds, and Files group 3 in 41 seconds. These are impressive, super-fast figures, and compare very well to the paid-for products on test.

If only the numbers were everything, since alas, as with ZipGenius, there were stability issues that undermined the usefulness of the application. On the face of it, being comfortable with 30 compression formats is fantastic, but at least once on compression (or possibly at the very end of the process) AlZip crashed the operating system. This required an irritating reboot, and that bit of lost time whilst you get everything back to where it was before. It occurred again when decompressing the files, again at the end of the process. It might be just imagination, but the system felt a little strange afterwards too - better to avoid this one too.

	Extract to						
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	Folders/drives					Cancel	
	⊕ COMPU				_	New folder	
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	Groovy Tune.mp3	18,252,397	18,755,169	2%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:42	
	A hanging out proper final.mp3	12,163,776	12,533,428	2%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:28	
	jonestown 6 war cries.mp3	10,648,852	11,194,287	4%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:26	
	name that smell extended remi	17,559,497	18,435,848	4%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:36	
	name that smell mp3	8,331,142	8,707,430	4%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:22	
	nevogroove remix finished.mp3	12,657,490	13,565,787	6%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:32	
	Other Stone Age 3.mp3	12,687,427	13,283,247	4%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:30	
	rubber plant.mp3	14,584,195	15,598,741	7%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:34	
	strange mr secci remix.mp3	1,741,300	1,874,633	7%	Winamp media file	29/06/2003 02:10:18	
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	4				1000		•
O Files Select, O Byte		Total 18 F	iles, 201 MB				1

QUALITY: 5	
VALUE: 7	
OVERALL: 5	





SO WHAT'S BEST?

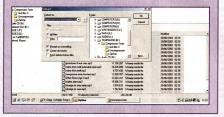
Zipping Utilities	Power Archiver 8.50	ZipStar 4.1	WinZip 8.1	ZipGenius 5	AlZip 5.01
Cost?	\$19.95	Totally Free for Home Use	\$29	Free	Free
Free Trial?	30-days	N/A	21-days	N/A	N/A
Download Size	2.38MB	1.87MB	1.81MB	6.24MB	1.68MB
Zip Time: File 1 (371MB)	2m 42s (340MB)	2m 25s (340MB)	2m O7seconds (339MB)	3m 45s (340MB)	1m 50s (339MB)
Zip Time: File 2 (88.2MB)	40s (80MB)	36 seconds (80.09MB)	31seconds (79.9MB)	54 seconds (79.9MB)	25 seconds (79.9MB)
Zip Time: Files 3 (201MB)	1m 32s	1m 22s	1m 12s)	2m 13s	1m 04s
Uncompress Time - File 1	1 minute	1m 14s	1 minute	1m 36s	1m 19s
Uncompress Time - File 2	14 seconds	17 seconds	11 seconds	23 seconds	24 seconds
Uncompress Time - Files 3	33 seconds	37 seconds	32 seconds	54 seconds	41 seconds
Self Extracting Archives?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Formats:	CAB, LHA, BH, TAR, GZ, RAR, ARJ, ACE, ZOO	RAR, ARJ, ACE, ZOO	CAB, SQX	CAB, TAR, gzip, UUENCODE,BinHex,	30 formats
Website:	www.pawererchiver.com	www.speedproject.de	www.winzip.com	www.zipgenius.it	www.cnet.com

ZIPSTAR 4 1



EDITOR'S CHOICE

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CLIPDRIVE BIO

PRICE: £89 - £499 + VAT MANUFACTURER: JADETEC TELEPHONE NUMBER: 0113 2817788

WEBSITE: WWW.JADETEC.COM

REVIEWER: MARK PICKAVANCE REQUIRED SPEC: USB 1.1 OR 2.0.

WINDOWS 98, 2000, XP.

Ever watched one of those spy movies or shows that have super high technology gadgets?

Security is always something that has to be circumvented, and they generally use biometric means to prevent that. The favourites are voice identification, retinal scanning and finger/palm print readers. On the basis of the fact we are all using PIN numbers at cash machines does suggest that these aren't completely practical as security methods.

Until recently I was none the wiser, but now I have the ClipDrive BIO I understand

KEY FEATURES

- Portable USB 2.0 flash drive safequard access to drive
- Fingerprint scan required to access ClipDrive Bio(tm)
- Secure, protected partition on the drive cannot be accessed without being authenticated
- All files placed on the ClipDrive Bio(tm) secure partition are automatically encrypted (without user intervention and in background)
- ☐ ClipGuard Bio(r) software allows user to select files and folders to be encrypted
- Easy-to-use and easy to install

much more about the reality of fingerprint recognition. The ClipDrive BIO is a USB flash memory stick, which when plugged into a PC will add a solid state drive to the system on which files can be stored and retrieved. This is very standard, and many companies now make these 'pen drives'.

What's different about this one is the integrated fingerprint scanner, which is used control access to the data. This control mechanism isn't limited to the space on the ClipDrive either. You can use it to secure files and folders on the PC to which it is attached, and so give your computer a biometric security system.

When you install the ClipDrive you can 'enrol', where you finger is scanned multiple times, and a biometric model of your fingerprint generated. This can be supported with a password, so as to avoid unscrupulous finger/hand abduction. Multiple people can be enrolled, and this data is stored for verification. The drive is partitioned into two parts, a 'public' area anyone can use, and the encrypted one that needs a fingerprint to unlock. At the moment these are set sizes, but a new software release is promised which will allow you to resize them.

In use the system works well, taking only a few seconds to identify me. I tried fooling it by using a different finger on my hand, or another person and it never allowed access. There are a few little grumbles, like the USB extension cable provided has a pod on the end which makes the unit stand up, when you need it horizontal to use!

Features on the ClipDrive itself are better thought out. There's an integrated



FINGERPRINT RECOGNITION

cover for the USB blade which slides back, so there's no cap to get lost. On the back there's a small switch that locks the drive against accidental modifications and deletions. In the kit they supply a very nice carry case, with a cord to hang it around you neck and a tiny silk cleaning cloth for the scanner. It all seems very 'professional', but then I'm no security expert, so I'm unsure exactly how secure this really is. What can be said is that it would definitely scupper most people's access to secure information. It would have been nice had they provided some software to allow you to use it for biometric logons under NT and XP.

It's not cheap, costing 89+VAT for the 64MB version and climbing to £499+VAT for the 1GB model, with 128, 256 and 512MB capacities also available. That's about twice what you might pay for a raw pen drive, but what you are paying for here is peace of mind and a high degree of control.

	L. Goran	
QUALITY: 8		
VALUE: 5		many to the friend it is
OVERALL: 7		

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MANUFACTURER: FOCUS MULTIMEDIA TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01889 570156

WEBSITE: WWW.FOCUS.COM

REVIEWER: LINDA PURNELL REQUIRED SPEC: PENTIUM 266MHZ PROCESSOR, 60 MB HD SPACE.

800X600X16 GRAPHICS, 128MB RAM, WINDOWS 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP



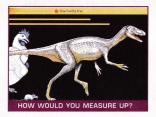
Focus Multimedia and the Encyclopaedia Britannica have put together a program guaranteed to delight anyone with an interest for those "terrible lizards" that lived millions of years ago. Using articles, videos and images, this CD explores the world of dinosaurs in a

Browsing through the images section of this software reveals photographs, along with line and scale drawings, letting you see how you would have 'measured up' beside many of the

captivating yet very accessible way.

creatures. Articles cover all time periods and their prehistoric populations, giving clear descriptions of each creature and its lifestyle. By clicking on the 'Family Tree' option you can explore the ancestral relationship between today's chickens and crocodiles! For detailed searching, the program includes an intuitive search facility so there's no worry about getting those spellings spot-on!

As with other titles presented in the Encyclopaedia Britannica range, there



are plenty of tools to help with producing projects the Research Organiser also includes a handy 'How-to' guide to help vou enter



notes, bookmark articles and pictures and even format reports.

Whatever your interest in dinosaurs, from constructing school projects through to a more enduring absorption, the wealth of articles, images, tools and illustrated interactive timeline make this CD great value for money.

QUALITY: 9 VALUE: 9 **OVERALL:** 9

DESKTOP COOLER

PRICE: £53

MANUFACTURER: ARIA

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 08704-43-23-85

WEBSITE: WWW.ARIA.CO.UK

REVIEWER: SIMON BREW

REQUIRED SPEC: SPARE POWER POINT



A month or two back, we reviewed a handy desktop fridge from Aria, and

concluded with looking forward to the day when they introduce a bigger one. Well, they have, and it goes without saying that it's now stacked with

unhealthy beverages to help us get through the day. It works on the same principle as the lower capacity unit; it can either chill things down to around 5 degrees, or at the flick of a switch, warm them with a maximum temperature of 65 degrees. Either way. it's a quieter unit than we were expecting, and it's come in really quite handy

Perhaps the only downside is that it does its cooling via the floor of the fridge, and that means that if you really stack things up, then it's the items at

the bottom that will be getting the most attention. And if you're expecting it to meet the chilly heights of a standard fridge, it won't do it. However, it's got the Micro Mart team through some of the hottest days of the year, and with a capacity of fourteen litres (we got around fourteen cans of Coke in it guite comfortably), it's a most useful piece of equipment.

QUALITY: 7 VALUE: 7

OVERALL: 7

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ENCORE SAFEWORLD INTERNET SECURITY 2003

PRICE: £39.99
MANUFACTURER: ENCORE
WEBSITE:
WWW.SAFEWORLDSOFTWARE.COM

REVIEWER: GORDON HULMES
REQUIRED SPEC: PENTIUM 233MHZ OR
HIGHER, 64MB OF RAM, 15MB OF FREE
HARD DISK SPACE (MINIMUM

INSTALLATION; 45MB), WINDOWS

98/2000/ME/XP

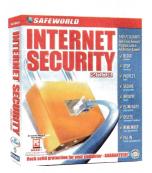
>

Like Norton and McAfee, Encore's Safeworld Internet Security 2003 is a full security

suite comprising personal firewall, antivirus, advert blocking, cookie management, keyword alert plus the addition of the useful form-filler. The advert manager includes a feature to block those annoying pop-up windows and the keyword alert facility prevents personal information from leaving your computer. It works by storing a database of 'keywords' that you regard as personal; for example, your phone number. It then scans all outgoing data to ensure that those keywords are not transmitted. If they are, it will warn you and give you the option to block it or allow it. It scans Web access. Emails etc but it will not work with encrypted files, secure sites, binary attachments and so on.

The Form Filler will fill in recognised Web site forms automatically. Credit card information is stored in an encrypted file on your PC and is not divulged without your consent. There is also a feature to fill the form with random information. It will also securely store usernames and passwords and fill these in for you.

The cookie manager shows all cookies in the 'cookie jar' and allows you to add any that you do not want to the cookie filter. When you exit the system, these cookies are then deleted.





SITES CAN BE SPECIFICALLY ALLOWED OR BLOCKED AND A CONSTANTLY UPDATED ON-LINE DATABASE OF LINSUITABLE SITES IS ALSO CONSULTED.

The firewall is simplicity itself to use. When a program first attempts a network activity for the first time, a dialog box pops up and asks if you want to allow it, block it or ask next time. The rules you set in this way are stored and used each time. The rules can, of course, be amended at any time. These simple rules should be enough for most users although advanced settings, log file and a graphical monitor are also provided. My only complaint of Safeworld, and it's not really a complaint, is that you are often faced with allowing or blocking a process that you do not know what it is. As much information is given as possible but it can still be guesswork.

The parental control feature allows you to restrict access to the Internet. It is intended to protect children but you must disable it (via a password) if you want to access restricted sites yourself. Sites can be specifically allowed or blocked and a constantly updated on-line

database of unsuitable sites is also consulted. A log is produced if your child tries to access a restricted site. It will also allow you to restrict the time your child spends on the Internet, either by set time slots or duration.

The Anti-virus can scan transparently in the background or manually on request and virus definitions are updated automatically according to the duration you specify. The only annoying thing I found with these suites is that in XP Home, if you switch usesr, you have to stop IS 2003 before switching then start it again as the new user.

Otherwise the next user will not have Internet access. That niggle aside, I can definitely recommend the Safeworld range as great value and easy to use.

QUALITY: 8
VALUE: 9
OVERALL: 9
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TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01889 570156

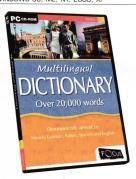
WEBSITE: WWW.FOCUS.COM

REVIEWER: LINDA PURNELL

REQUIRED SPEC: 486 PROCESSOR,

10 MB HD SPACE, 800X600X16 GRAPHICS, 8MB RAM.

WINDOWS 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP





You really can't go wrong with this Multilingual Dictionary software CD from Focus

Multimedia, who have taken a basic approach to continental languages. The program sets up in seconds, then it's so simple to use that anyone could be translating words from English to French. Spanish, German or Italian in an instant.

The single screen asks you to enter a word in your selected first language then, as you type, the program searches through its database to find the nearest match in your second language choice. The dictionary contains 20,000 words in five languages - that's 100,000 words in total - so you can translate between any of the five languages with ease.

Most of the words come with a description. Where more than one

ENCORE SAFEWORLD HACKER STOPPER FIREWALL 2003

PRICE: £24.99

MANUFACTURER: ENCORE

WEBSITE:

WWW.SAFEWORLDSOFTWARE.COM

REVIEWER: GORDON HULMES

REQUIRED SPEC: PENTIUM 233 MHZ OR HIGHER, 64 MB OF RAM, 15 MB OF FREE HARD DISK SPACE (MINIMUM INSTALLATION; 45 MB), WINDOWS 98/2000/ME/XP



Anyone looking for a firewall for their PC - and that should be anyone who has not already

got one - will automatically consider the two main choices, Norton Internet Security 2003 and McAfee Internet Security 5.0. For many there will be no alternative, the chance to save money, not worth the risk. However, Encore's Safeworld product line. including Internet Security 2003, also reviewed in this issue, and Hacker Stopper Firewall 2003, hides a secret. One that should be shouted from the rooftops. The Safeworld brand is a result of a collaboration between Encore Software and Zero-Knowledge. Encore are masters of product distribution and promotion whereas Zero-Knowledge are experts in security and firewall technology. IS 2003 and HS 2003 are based on Zero-Knowledge's respected Freedom Security & Privacy Suite previously only available to corporate customers. However, its customers are the likes of Hewlett-Packard and France Telecom amongst others so their trust speaks for itself.



Encore's direct competitor for Norton and McAfee's security suites is Safeworld Internet Security 2003 but this is the other Safeworld branded title, Hacker Stopper Firewall 2003. This is effectively a cut-down version of Internet Security 2003. For this reason, I will not duplicate a review of its features here (see the IS 2003 review). It is the ideal product for people who already have an up-to-date anti-virus program and wish to add a firewall. Hacker Stopper does not have the anti-virus or parental control functions of IS 2003, but does include the other items - Firewall, cookie manager, advert manager, form filler and keyword alert. At £15 less than the already good value IS 2000, it represents a real bargain. Like IS 2003, I would definitely recommend it but if you don't already have anti-virus software, opt for IS 2003 instead.

QUALITY: 8 VALUE: 9

OVERALL: 8

meaning exists, clicking on the 'Next Word' link gives you another definition - so that you can be sure you have just the right word. And for those who need to distinguish their adverbs from their adjectives, the program also defines the word type.

This program is certainly quicker to use than sifting through an assorted stack of

dictionaries and does include more than just the most basic words. As a budgetpriced package, it could be worth having to hand if you need to translate the occasional word or two

QUALITY: 5 VALUE: 5 **OVERALL:** 5

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WEBSITE: WWW.FOCUS.COM

REVIEWER: JOE LAVERY

REQUIRED SPEC: PENTIUM I PROCESSOR, 50MB HD SPACE, VGA VIDEO CARD, 32 MB RAM.

WINDOWS 98 SE. ME. 2000. XP



When you think of traditional office applications, most people would naturally think of

Microsoft's Office, basically because it's the brand leader and as such is the most widely used. Yet, there are many other Office suites to choose from, notably those from Lotus, Corel and Ability Office. The latter being the source of the Spreadsheet application this review is based on.

The Select Spreadsheet is a fully Microsoft Excel compatible application,

published by Focus Multimedia, aimed at folk who consider £9.99 preferable to £350 when budgeting for a spreadsheet program. Particularly as the more advanced features found in many of these major applications are simply ignored by the majority of users, and the basic function of working out a sales forecast, or perhaps producing accounts for your VAT return, or even a simple work schedule, is all that's required.

It doesn't carry the 300 plus built-in formulae that Excel has, or the facility to create truly three dimensional data structures, but it does have a few fancy features of its own. For example the Write FX tool allows you to enhance your spreadsheets with textured backgrounds and text labels that wrap to the shapes provided. These, together with borders and multi fonts, make it easy to create quite sophisticated on

screen forms, which can then be linked to external database applications.

Naturally the program provides all the usual spreadsheet tools, like multi-sheet workbooks, cell formatting, AutoSum, AutoStats, AutoSpell and AutoList. In addition there's a range of templates to get you started, together with hundreds of predefined mathematical, financial and statistical functions, a graphic chart builder and even the facility to create Adobe .PDF files directly from the application. This is a facility that very few applications can manage without some form of plug-in.

For the price it's excellent value for money and you don't need a spreadsheet to work that out.

QUALITY: 7 VALUE: 10

OVERALL: 8

DISNEY COASTER

PRICE: £19.99

MANUFACTURER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE WEBSITE:

WEBSITE:

WWW.DISNEYINTERACTIVE.CO.UK

REVIEWER: KAT GALBRAITH

REQUIRED SPEC: PII 333 MHZ

PROCESSOR, 32MB RAM, 200MB HARD DISK SPACE, 8X CD-ROM DRIVE, 8MB VIDEO CARD, WINDOWS 98, ME, XP



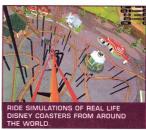
Thanks to the clever people at Disney Interactive, Disney Coaster is the most fun I've had sat at my

PC in a very long time! Suitable for age 7 and upwards, the basic idea is to build your very own roller coaster, in a setting of your choice, complete with all the fun of the fair.

This is interactive fun at it's finest. I was overwhelmed with the amount of choice available at every step of the way. Right from the off, it's decisions, decisions! What kind of ride to have? What theme design? What

props to put in it? Where to put them? And that's just for starters. It's completely addictive - not one single member of my family wanted to come away from the PC once they'd combarked on a building mission, and it even encouraged the kids to work together in an attempt to create the ultimate ride.

For me personally, designing the track was without doubt the best part as it's very much like piecing together a child's wooden train track, only far more adventurous. Children who thrive on the challenges of track design will love exploring their ideas, pushing the boundaries of possibility and putting their designs to the test. By subtly encompassing quite complex physics, Disney Coaster is educational, to quite an advanced level, but it's not scary or intimidating in the slightest. Children and adults alike will be learning all the time they're playing, and they won't even know it... brilliant!



Younger children will need a fair amount of adult supervision, and adults will need the user manual on hand, as it does take a while to fully grasp the mechanics of which control does what on the interface. But let's face it, the results are well worth the perseverance. In my opinion, for the money, this is an absolute must have, Disney proving yet again that they know exactly how to delight their fans of all ages.

QUALITY: 9
VALUE: 9
OVERALL: 9
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REVIEWER: JON FRYER

REQUIRED SPEC: 166MHZ (233MHZ RECOMMENDED), 32MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM

Ah, nostalgia indeed - this is the WW2 puzzle game that masquerades as some kind of action strategy game. I can remember playing demos of this and being enraged and

frustrated by the obsessive linearity of the first level. You have more freedom of action in reading the instruction manual. The premise is cunningly promising. You

lead a squad of troops to infiltrate German bases, blow stuff up, kill people, etc and then escape without being caught or killed. Your men each have a special skill, like disquises, swimming and driving vehicles, which you

must exploit to get through the mission. Sounds guite good, eh? Surely any game that involves killing Nazis can't be all bad?

Unfortunately, the way this is implemented means there is only one way to win, which is annoying whilst you're trying to find it and then disappointing when you do, because winning was a combination of patience and trial and error rather than skill and reflexes. Finding the one true way through the map isn't helped by a cumbersome control system and rules like "you can't shoot people unless you're standing up". How very special forces.

On the plus side, it still looks decent enough and it's quite tense to play, if you can tolerate its unforgiving nature. I can't.

QUALITY: 4

VALUE: 4

OVERALL: 4

HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE

PRICE: £4.99

MANUFACTURER: EIDOS / SOLD OUT

WEBSITE: WWW.SOLD-OUT.CO.UK

REVIEWER: JON FRYER

REQUIRED SPEC: 300MHZ PROCESSOR (MIN) 600MHZ (RECOMMENDED), 64MB RAM. 300MB DISK SPACE.

WINDOWS 95/98/ME/XP

I know! If we release a controversial game then the newspapers will print loads of articles about it and we'll save a bomb on advertising. Be fair - it worked a treat for GTA. Genius. Or not.

This game is a lot like a football hooligan. It's pointless, stupid, annoying and you don't want to be anywhere near it. Technically it's antiquated (which is odd given the system requirements - you can play Unreal on less than a P300

and that's a lot prettier than this] which isn't necessarily fatal, but the game itself is just unplayable. I am in no way motivated to move a bunch of thugs across European streets, get them drunk and then have them chant like the morons they are in order to attract more thugs to start big street fights. Or perhaps I'm being too harsh? If this were a Flash game a mate forwarded to you on your work e-mail it would easily be half your lunch hour gone. Well, maybe fifteen minutes.

I suspect that this is just a big joke that I'm not getting. Because it's not very funny. The only good thing about this whole thing is the "loading song" between each level.

QUALITY: 3 VALUE: 3

OVERALL: 3

TYCOON

MOON

PRICE: £4.99

MANUFACTURER: ANARCHY ENTERPRISES

REVIEWER: JON FRYER

REQUIRED SPEC: 200MHZ, 32MB RAM. 700MB DISK SPACE, WINDOWS 95/98/ME/2000



Imagine Sim City but on the moon. Conciseness is a curse when you're paid by the word

but I'm confident that that one brief sentence encapsulates everything you need to know about this game.

As I've still got 160 words to use up why not have some other useful information? If you're playing Vice City on the PC and you can't start the ice cream van's special tune you have to double tap the "shift" button one or more times. It's a bit twitchy. I was lucky to stumble across that - I know some people who couldn't get any further on that mission.

Another 70 words to go. Okay then, here goes the usual, cliched, production line reviewing: Moon Tycoon puts you in the role of the manager of a lunar colony. It's your job to create energy for Earth whilst keeping your colonists happy and overcoming random disasters. The graphics are poor, the controls are cumbersome, the interface looks like educational software for primary school kids and, damn it, there's nothing else to say except that Moon Tycoon is like Sim City but on the moon and that makes it less accessible and even more dull



QUALITY: 3 VALUE: 3

OVERALL: 3



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F1 CHALLENGE 99-02

PRICE: £39.99

MANUFACTURER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

WEBSITE: WWW.EASPORTS.COM

REVIEWER: JOE LAVERY

REQUIRED SPEC: PENTIUM 450 MHZ PROCESSOR, 1 GIGABYTES HD SPACE, 3D VIDEO CARD WITH 16 MB OF RAM 128 MB RAM, WINDOWS 95, 98 SE, ME. 2000, XP, DIRECTX 8.1

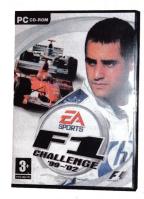
I have to admit to being an ardent Formula 1 follower: so reviewing this latest release

from Electronic Arts, called F1 Challenge 99-02, wasn't exactly a chore. This game is something of a departure from the normal format for EA, as rather than focus on a particular racing year, as many F1 titles seem to do, it covers four racing seasons, giving you the opportunity to drive any of the cars that took part, at any of the different F1 venues. However, this factor alone is not what makes F1 Challenge stand out against many of the other Formula One simulators out there. Like any other simulation, it has to accurately recreate the real life experience, which in F1 Challenge consists of driving one of the most powerful, yet sophisticated, cars

ever built. I'm happy to report that EA have risen to the challenge and produced a superb F1 game that is not far short of perfection, both in its visual accuracy at each of the different tracks and in the overall feeling of speed you get as you scream towards that chicane, trying to head off the irrepressible Schumacher. Who will certainly force you off the track, (if you give him the opportunity).

It's good to see that EA has not forgotten that we're not all accomplished F1 drivers and provided both a difficulty level to suit all aptitudes, together with a range of driving aids that will practically drive the car for you. Although I have to say that even on the lowest level with all these aids turned on, you still feel in command of the car. So the help you get is not as obvious as it is in some F1 games. In the same way the AI of your fellow drivers is tailored to the difficulty level you set. If you go for the highest level you'll have to work hard to get pole position and the drivers are far more aggressive, whereas on the lowest level it's not too difficult to get a podium position.

Naturally, the program includes all the usual embellishments we've come to



expect from this game format. Like different viewpoints, race replays, animated pit stops, race commentaries and beautifully modeled cars. You also have the facility to climb into your overalls and tweak the car, to perhaps shave a few more seconds off your lap times, although this has always been a bit of a black art as far as I'm concerned. So it's good to see that EA have dedicated a section of the manual explaining what to tweak and the effects it will have.

Overall, this is one of the best F1 games yet - it has a quality that's hard to define, but you know when it's right. On the down side, you'll need a decent system to run it on, as EA's optimistic minimum spec is way out in my opinion. If you try to run F1 Challenge on such a system you'll be sorely disappointed, although you'll have a very nice slide show.

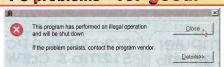
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QUALITY: 8

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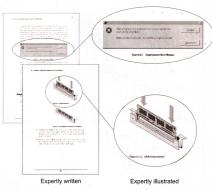


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FREQUENTLY_ASKED_QUESTIONS HOW CAN I CLEAR THE TEMPORARY INTERNET FILES?

Whenever you visit a website, Internet Explorer saves certain parts of the page, such as images, so that the next time you visit the website you do not have to wait for your system to download that image again. This is especially useful if you do not have the luxury of a broadband internet connection.

However, it can prove to be a pain when you are getting low on disk space, and every last byte is precious.

Internet Explorer stores the files in different places depending on which version of Windows you are using. There is no reason why you cannot delete them manually, by navigating to the folder, selecting all the files and hitting delete, but there is a feature in Internet Explorer that will delete them for you.

Whilst Internet Explorer is open, click "Tools" > "Internet Options". Then on the "General" tab, under "Temporary Internet files" click "Delete Files...". If you wish you could also select the "Delete all offline content" check box, on



the box that appears when you click the "Delete Files..." button, to delete all offline files.

If you haven't deleted your temporary internet files before, the process might take a while because Internet Explorer may have to delete hundreds, if not thousands, of small files.

DO I WANT BROADBAND INTERNET?

It is not really a question of "want", but a question of "need".

If you are receiving large phone bills because you are spending a long time online via a 56k modem, then broadband is a popular alternative option.

Most people get broadband either because they want to share an internet connection, or because the get frustrated when they have to wait for large files or websites with a lot of features, such as images, to download.

First of all I would visit my preferred, broadband ISP to see it they offer a demonstration of how 56k and broadband speeds compare. If that doesn't help you make up your mind, the next thing to consider is the price. A simple calculation should help you decide whether or not to have broadband installed in your home.

WHAT IS MOZILLA?

Mozilla is an alternative to Microsoft Internet Explorer. You can get the latest version of Mozilla from

http://www.mozilla.org. Mozilla's features include:

- Tabs This is probably one of the best features of Mozilla. It allows you to have multiple websites all in one window, instead of having a window open for each website.
- Pop-up blocker Another brilliant feature. We all know how annoying pop-ups can be!
- Search box This allows you to search the internet without first having to go a search engine website.
- Tools this gives you better control over the information that the browser receives, such as preventing websites from modifying the browsers status her
- Auto favourite import This allows you to visit the same websites as you used to visit using Internet Explorer.
- Support for all website standards such as HTML.





Have you got a technical problem that you need an answer to? Why not ask our resident technical expert. Adam Anderson?

Each week Adam will be answering your queries and adding comment of his own. He deals with general hardware and software problems (although if you have a specific problem with your current PC, please send that to Jason D'Allison), and can also advise on the likes of upgrades and building your own machine.

Unfortunately, he cannot give personal replies to your questions, but he will endeavour to answer as many as possible in this section. You can write to him at:

Adam Anderson Micro Mart 1st Floor, Edward House, 92/93 Edward Street, Birmingham, B1 2RA.

Alternatively you can email him at: adam@micromart.co.uk

Please try to keep your queries brief and limit them to just one question per letter. Note that any queries that Adam doesn't have the space to answer may end up in our Questions and Answers page later on in this section.

However, he endeavours to cover as many queries as possible every week across these pages.

ASK_ADAM

DRIVE FASTER

Ref Ask Adam 758 and installing a Raid array of hard drives:

Thanks for the info - much appreciated. I will give it a try when I upgrade my hard drive.

John Hamilton

AN ADAPTER

Also issue 758 and an adapter that I couldn't find at Maplin:

The adaptor does exist as a "USB 2.0 to IDE adaptor" Maplin ref A25AT. It is currently listed under their promotions until 9 Aug 2003 priced £29.99. After this it's back to £39.99. So you will have to move fast.

Neil Johnston

(John Beck supplied this information as well)

STILL PORTUGUESE

Also in 758, Ron Graves had the strange case of his Canon scanner turning Portuguese on him. First we have the official line from Rob Williams at Canon UK who appears to be a Micro Mart reader:

I have just read the problem that Mr Graves has been having with his scanner. As you can see from my email address I work at Canon UK at the Head Office in Surrey. Please can you let Mr Graves have the following information:

Our Technical Support Desk for this item is available on 0870 514 3723. They should be able to resolve the issues he has.

Rob Williams, Canon UK

Then we have a long answer from Mike Wright which is relates to manual removal of software. I agree with everything that he says except that I fundamentally disagree with having to carry out a procedure such as this. Canon is a decent company and it should be more than capable of supplying software with an uninstaller that works correctly.

Assuming that Ron's CD software is not faulty, then it seems clear that the uninstall utility has not uninstalled the Portuguese user settings/ini file/dat file.

Usually, these often remain in the undeleted relevant program directory in C:\ Program Files\ Canonsoft or similar. Sometimes there is also a related directory in C:\Program Files\Common Files\Canonsoft.

After uninstalling the software yet again - DELETE one or both of the "Canonsoft" - directories (or whatever they may be called) and all files in those directories. This usually cures most problems of a similar nature.

Sometimes, the user info may be entered into the registry. Run "regedit" from the start menu and hunt for Canonsoft (whatever) in the registry. Delete ONLY those entries, if any, relevant to the Canon scenner.

Then try a clean reinstall of the software again. If still Portuguese, then hunt for a "lone file" named something like cs.ini or scanner.dat. Could be in C:\ or C:\windows\ just in amongst loads of other odd files (but important). Right click on suspect files — select "Properties" and check vendor and file info. If sure, then delete any file related to the Canon scanner software. Sometimes these files are "read-only" -just change the attributein the properties from "read-only" to "archive".

I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THAT HE SAYS EXCEPT THAT I FUNDAMENTALLY DISAGREE WITH HAVING TO CARRY OUT A PROCEDURE SUCH AS THIS.

THE BIOS FOR THE RAID CHIP IS PART OF THE MOTHERBOARD BIOS, AND YOUR ERROR MESSAGE WOULD SEEM TO BE DUE TO SLOPPY BIOS WRITING.

Then repeat the whole uninstall/delete process as appropriate again before trying a clean re-install of the scanner software. The other easier thing that you could have tried before reinstalling XP was to use its "system restore" utility to roll back to before the crash when both XP and scanner were okay. If you did the usual trick of just reinstalling XP over your corrupt XP, then it may not have fixed everything. You may then have to make an XP boot floppy and use DOS utilities FDISK and Format to wipe your hard disk clean and repartition/activate/format it. Then reinstall XP from scratch.

Mike Wright

Then we get onto the issue of drivers.

Re: the query from Ron Graves in MM 758 - I had an identical problem with my Canon scanner - I would attempt to load the English software, only to find it loaded in Portuguese. The solution is to load the software first before using the plug and play routine. Try this sequence:

- Uninstall both hardware and software. (Q: is it necessary to delete registry references to anon at this point?)
- Insert the CD ROM, but do not launch the wizard from Auto-run use Start/Run and browse to the English folder, then install as normal.
- 3. Remove the CD from the drive.
- 4. Plug the scanner in and Windows will detect new hardware and install from the drivers already installed. I also had a similar problem with an Epson C60 printer, which would only install in German - I cured this problem in exactly the same way.

Mick McDonald

In answer to Ron Graves letter (Issue758) I had exactly the same problem, which I cured by downloading new driver from www.canon.co.uk - Scangear CS V7.0.3.0 (now its in broad Black Country arr kid, bostin' like).

Paul Gallagher

I can see that a faulty driver might get the user language wrong, although it seems like a glaring error, but I don't see how it is related to an incorrect installation sequence. Having said that, I always install USB drivers before I plug a new device in. It is quite possible to permanently scramble Windows if you plug in, say, a new printer and it already has other printer drivers installed.

BIOS BOTHER

I was wondering if you could help solve a small problem I have with the computer I have built. It uses the MSI K7N2 Delta motherboard, during boot up I receive the following message:

NO DRIVE ATTACHED TO FAST TRACK CONTROLLER: BIOS NOT INSTALLED

This only appears for a few seconds then the machine boots up with no problem.

I can only assume its something to do with Raid, which I am not using so I have not installed the software. I have looked in the Bios to see if I can disable the Raid controller but I cannot see anything and the manual has no mention of how to do it

John Naylor

The bios for the raid chip is part of the motherboard bios, and your error message would seem to be due to sloppy bios writing. You're quite right that there seems to be no way to disable Raid in the bios or with a jumper, so it seems that you simply



have to live with the problem until MSI releases a revised bios.

EVEN SMALLER

I was originally looking at a 15 inch LG TFT screen that operates at a resolution of 1024x768. Since the prices of 17" ones are dropping I decided to look at the same LG TFT but the 17" model. This is set to display at 1280x1024.

However, everything is okay for me when a 15" TFT screen is set at 1024x768 but if I get the 17 inch version set at the higher resolution, will everything be the same size as it is on the 15 inch operating at 1024x768 or will it be even smaller?

Dave

The 17 inch TFT crams 67 per more pixels into a screen that in physically only 13 per cent bigger on the diagonal so you are likely to find that your icons appear smaller. That can be annoying, but it's a small problem. In applications such as Word either increase your font size or use zoom to increase text to a comfortable size.



Introducing Jason
D'Allison, another member
of Micro Mart's panel of
experts. Jason's expertise
is in troubleshooting
problems with your
existing PC, so if you
need his help, then write
to him at:

Jason D'Allison Micro Mart Trinity Publications 1st Floor Edward House 92/93 Edward Street Birmingham B1 2RA

Jason can also be contacted by e-mail at: jason@micromart.co.uk.

It's the same contact details if you want to get your joke featured in his Wit of the Week slot.

Whilst we try and cover as many problems as we can (hence the fact that Ask Jason now runs to twice its original size), we regret that Jason cannot answer your questions personally. Nonetheless, he'll cover as many as he possibly can through these pages.

Note that any queries that Jason doesn't have the space to answer may end up in our Questions and Answers page later on in this section.

Please try and to keep to one question per letter, and include details of your PC's specifications (including OS).

ASK_JASON

24/7 HEAVEN

I'm going to university in September and the halls of residence I'm staying at are providing 24/7 Internet access. And it's free! Fantastic! The connection is via an RJ45 socket, so what sort of equipment do I need in order to hook up my PC? Is a 10/100Mbit/s LAN adaptor suitable? And what about the cable? Do I need a crossover or a straight-through?

Sirdarkheart, Hotmail

You've essentially answered the question yourself. All that's required to patch into the network is a 10/100Mbit/s Ethernet card and a suitable cable. The cable needs to be rated as either Category 5 or Category 5e and you're after the straight-through type, not a crossover. And that's all there is to it. As for cost, in issue 758 of this very magazine I found a well-known advertiser selling Ethernet cards at £3.52 and one-metre cables at 29p. I make that a total cost of £3.81 (and that includes VAT). At that kind of price it's a wonder Kellogg's aren't giving the stuff away in boxes of Coco Pops! Anyway, good luck at uni. Enjoy yourself. And try to learn something, too, if you get the time.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

I've got a Gigabyte GA-SINXP1394 motherboard. Can I use the latest QDR800-FSB Pentium 4 processors, or am I limited to an FSB of QDR533?

Adam O'Neill, Orange Internet

The GA-SINXP1394 uses the SiS 655 Northbridge. This is an excellent piece of silicon (it was the first Pentium 4 product to support dual-channel DDR333 memory), but sadly its front-side bus tops out at GDR533.



Bad luck, Adam. To support the QDR800 FSB required by the new Pentium 4s, SiS now manufacturers the 648FX (for single-channel DDR400 memory) and the 655FX (for dual-channel DDR400 memory).

CAN ANYONE HELP?

Could you possibly send me a copy of the table of Athlon XP specifications you printed in issue 758? I find your tables incredibly useful.

Phil Peet, Virgin.net

By the time you read this, Phil, a copy of the table should have arrived in your inbox. May it give you much pleasure! I guess in a month or so it'll be time to start drawing up a similar table for the Athlon 64 and Athlon FX...

Also, dear readers, I'm trying to track down datasheets for the Rise mP6 and the Cyrix 6x86 and 6x86MX. I'm endeavouring to complete a comprehensive reference of all Socket 7 processors and I'm somewhat stymied until I can lay my hands on official documentation regarding voltages, frequencies, power dissipation, and so on. Has anyone got

AT THAT KIND OF PRICE IT'S A WONDER KELLOGG'S AREN'T GIVING THE STUFF AWAY IN BOXES OF COCO POPS!

IF IT'S GRATIS, GRAB IT

A couple of weeks ago saw the launch of a new version of OpenOffice - release 1.1. I've been using it daily and can confirm that it's stable, reliable, and one of the finest pieces of free software on the planet. Particularly noteworthy is its ability to save files natively in Adobe's PDF format - something of a killer feature. All in all, if you're after a viable alternative to Microsoft Office, look no further. Also, if you're currently using an unilicensed copy of Microsoft Office (we all know it happens), OpenOffice (wil keep you legal.

the relevant PDFs knocking around on an old hard drive? Or can anyone provide me with some valid URLs? There's no prize for your help, I'm afraid, but I can promise you'll get a mention in this column!

IDENTITY CRISIS

I'm using a Chaintech 7VJL Apogee motherboard and an Athlon XP 2400+ CPU. All's well except that the BIOS states the CPU isn't recognised. It registers the speed as 2GHz, though, and the PC works fine. Any ideas?

Alan Parsons, Somerset

The problem here is that the BIOS isn't quite up-to-date. When your PC fires into

action, the BIOS will read the speed of the processor, reference a kind of internal table, and try to report the appropriate model number. However, as your current BIOS was probably written before the XP 2400+ was released, a model number corresponding to a processor running at 2GHz doesn't exist. So the BIOS will just report the speed. Of course, if you update the BIOS, this issue will be resolved. And the latest release, version 4.0, is available here: http://www.chaintech.com.tw/tw/eng/download/dl_desc.asp?dcsno=48pisno=138.

SLOWER IS BETTER

My old PC recently went belly-up, so I've just bought some new kit. I've got an ASRock motherboard, an Athlon XP 2200+ processor, and 256Mb of DDR400 memory. I'm a complete novice when it comes to computers, so would it be okay to add some DDR333 memory to the DDR400 I've already got?

Alan Fox, via email

Memory modules of different speeds are normally quite happy to co-exist (though there are always exceptions). Of course, if you mix and match, all the memory will be limited to the speed of the slowest strip. In your case, Alan, if you added a strip of DDR333, you'd need to underclock the strip of DDR4DO. Trying to overclock the DDR333 module to a



WIT FOR THE WEEK

A programmer and an engineer are sitting next to each other on a business flight. 'Would you like to play a game?' the programmer asks.

'I'm dog-tired, mate,' the engineer replies. 'I'm going to have a bit of a kip.'

'Aw, come on,' the programmer says. 'It's a really easy game. I ask a question and if you don't know the answer, you pay me £5. Then you ask a question and if I don't know the answer, I pay you £5.'

The engineer pretends he's asleep, letting a faint snore ripple from his lins.

The programmer, however, is undeterred. 'Okay, how about this? If you don't know the answer, you pay me £5, but if I don't know the answer, I pay you £50!'

Sure enough, this gets the ngineer's attention. 'Okay, mate ou're on.' he savs.

And so the programmer asks a question. "What's the distance from the earth to the moon?" Without a word the engineer opens his wallet, extracts a fiver, and hands it to the programmer. My turn now, he says. "What goes up a hill on three legs, comes down on four, wears a bobble hat, and dances to "The Birdie Song' every time you snap your fineers."

The programmer looks puzzled He gets up, asks all the other passengers if they know the answer, then uses the in-flight Connexion service to search the Web on his laptop. 'Okay, I give up,' he says. He gives the engineer a crisp £50 note. Eventually he says, 'Well, what's

Without a word the engineer opens his wallet, extracts a fiver

speed of DDR400 would almost certainly render the PC unbootable.

In any case, except when running a DDR400 front-side bus, as with the XP 3200+, using a DDR400 memory bus is pretty much a waste of time. Benchmarks show that when running a slower front-side bus, such as the DDR266 requirement of your XP 2200+, using a memory bus beyond DDR333 usually results not in an increase in system performance but in a reduction. In short, Alan, buy a stick of DDR333, underclock the DDR400,



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ASK GORDON

WFR TIPS

I've had a lot of web related tips sent in by Alex Wheeler, here's one of them:

Tip: Add the Address Bar to the Windows XP Taskbar. You can add the address bar to the Windows XP taskbar. This gives you quick access to the address bar all the time. To do this:

- Right-click on the taskbar. This will bring up a menu. If a check mark appears next to Lock the Taskbar, click this menu item to uncheck it. This will unlock the taskbar.
- On the taskbar menu, click Toolbars and click Address. This will add the address bar to your taskbar.
- To make the address bar longer or shorter, drag the Move handle on the address bar to the left or right.

MSN EMAILS

Since using MSN 6, I do not receive any e-mails in Outlook Express.

Steve Higgs.

MSN is a web-based e-mail service. When you install MSN Explorer, your e-mail inbox is converted from POP3 e-mail (e.g. Downloading into Outlook Express) to web-based e-mail. This means all of your new e-mail will go to MSN Explorer not Outlook Express.

You will not lose any e-mail (your old e-mail will remain in Outlook Express) and your e-mail address will not change. Your address book will be copied to MSN Explorer so it is available online. However, uninstalling MSN Explorer will not switch your e-mail account back to Outlook Express.

HARD GOING

I am trying to set up a web site that uses a mySQL database but I'm finding it hard going. Is there a utility that makes it easier to set up tables and browse the data?

G Scott

There are quite a few, of varying quality and cost. A good value comprehensive one is PremiumSoft's Navicat (previously called MySQL Studio). It is available for download from:

http://www.mysqlstudio.com/product.php3 and currently costs \$88.

TECHNICAL TERMS

I use e-mail all the time but I keep seeing all these technical terms and think I may be missing out on something. I use Outlook Express but I keep hearing about SMTP, POP3, MII/VE, IMAP, web e-mail etc. Could you explain what they are and if they are better than normal e-mail.

Gareth Matthews

Two of the terms you mention, you are already using and two more, you probably use from time to time without realising it. SMTP stands for 'Simple Mail Transfer Protocol'. It was developed over 20 years ago and is the standard for sending e-mail mail messages from the client (e.g. Outlook Express) to the server (the computer at your ISP) and from that server to other servers, all the way to the e-mail's destination mail server. POP3 stands for 'Post Office Protocol 3'. POP3 is the latest version of the POP protocol. SMTP's job ends when an e-mail reaches the destination server (at the recipient's ISP). At this point POP3 takes over and allows the e-mail message, stored on your mail server, to be downloaded to your PC. When you check your mail, your mail client makes a connection to the mail server and downloads and deletes e-mails from the mail server to your PC's harddrive. web-based e-mail replaces POP3 and allows you to access your e-mail account directly from a special secure web page. emails can be sent and read directly from this page. The advantage is that you can access these e-mails from anywhere that has Internet access, the disadvantage is that the e-mails are not stored on your PC, although you can configure Outlook to collect them from certain web-based e-mail services.

The other terms you mention are not forms of email but are part of the e-mail system. MIME, which stands for 'Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions', is a standard, which allows the transfer of binary files such as images in an e-mail. IMAP stands for 'Internet Message Access Protocol' and is a method of accessing e-mail stored on a mail server: Something else you might not be aware of is 'instant messaging'. This allows you to send short messages instantly to other people online. You can also include little icons like a happy face. Read more at http://messenger.msn.com/



By popular demand, a new expert joins the Micro Mart panel. Gordon Hulmes has been writing for the magazine for several years already, and his areas of expertise include the Internet, web page creation and programming in general.

If you have any questions in any of these areas that you'd like Gordon to tackle, then simply write to him at:

Gordon Hulmes Micro Mart 1st Floor, Edward House, 92/93 Edward Street, Birmingham, B1 2RA.

Alternatively you can e-mail your questions to: gordon@micromart.co.uk

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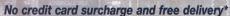
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SIMPLE TIPS

In this week's top tips we give you a helping hand labelling up your newly burned CD collection.

The day I got my first CD rewriter, I knew things would change drastically. No more boxes full of horrible floppies, cluttering up the place, and requiring ridiculous amounts to backup but one application. The rewriter was only capable of 2x speed write, and 1x re-write, but it meant I could cram 65DMB, later 70DMB of data onto one shiny disc.

As speeds have increased - up to the present day where I have a lightning fast Memorex 32x speed writer - a new syndrome has manifested itself. Whereas with a slow burner you have to really want that disc created, a fast burner encourages mammoth burning sessions, often well into the wee-small hours. The end product is a pile of discs; occasionally with scribbled notes tucked into plastic packets, but more often with no identification whatsoever. This produces the predictable "lost disc" comedy moments at later dates. But it really does not have to be like this, and I have the evidence to back up this claim.

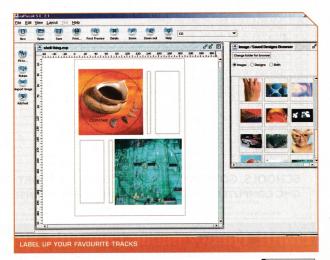
At the lowest level of the technology curve comes the CD marker pen. Just because labels make the discs look pretty, if all you have burned is a backup of a few choice files, why go to all the bother? CD pens are available singly for well under a quid, and I got a set of four (blue, red, green, black) for about £3. Just make sure that they really ARE CD markers (suitable ones proudly display "CD Marker" all over them) - ordinary felt-tips or markers will not do, and might melt your discs if they contain evil chemicals.

Moving on to "proper" CD labelling requires some hardware - viz, a labeller. The one I use is an orange plastic-case-and-big-spring specimen, manufactured by Pressit (but as ever, other makes and models are available, Memorex make a good one, for example). They

are usually supplied with some software, a few labels to get started, and the "plunger" - the thing that puts the label on the disc. How it works is thus: Peel off the CD label from sheet, place sticky side up on spindle, place the CD face down on smaller spindle, push the one onto the other, and then smooth out any wrinkles. Easyl

As regards software (aside from that supplied with labellers), companies such as Ahead (of Nero Burning ROM fame) and MusicMatch, are now bolting labelling functions on to their popular CD/MP3-related products. This is the first area of exploration, since this usually means swapping data between the CD (or MP3) burning component and the labelling part - and so no typing of track or file details. If these are no good, then you can always try a dedicated application downloaded from the Internet.

Lastly, to the sticky labels themselves. These do not have to be customdesigned, brand-named, and hence, expensive (although the quality may be higher). If you are looking to label lots of discs quickly with rudimentary printed details (the mainstay of my labelling requirements) then you can get hold of cheap labels either from the ads in Micro Mart - or sometimes even on your local market! The only thing to make sure first is what type of blank labels you require. For example, the exPressit 2.1SE software requires "offset" labels meaning one in either corner of the page. Your software might require "in-line" meaning one immediately under the other. Since getting the wrong labels only leads to heart-ache (or frantic wandering around the Internet for another labelling application), once you have settled on the right software, make a note of the label type and buy a pile of them.





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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

KARAOKE DISCS

I am setting up an archive of my karaoke discs and need to find a CD-rewriter that will

read and write CD+G Discs (karaoke discs). I have a Plextor PlexWriter 16/10/40A but unfortunately this rewriter only writes CD+G, but does not read CD+G. Can someone help in locating a suitable rewriter for my purpose in backing up my karaoke discs?

Frederick Taylor

REFUSES TO RESPOND

My computer, Compaq, slightly ancient I know, is a PII + 96MB RAM, with

Windows 98. It crashes from time to time with the message that Explorer something or other has caused an illegal operation etc etc. It refuses to respond to control+alt+delete, and I have to disconnect the power and power up again to get restarted. Any idea how to sort it out, please?

Robin Temple

STOPPING SPAM

Help, please! I use MSN 8 for my ISP and of late the spam has become worse

as well as more suggestive. How can I stop this intrusion and violation of my privacy?

Harold Ter Blanche

ENDLESS LOOP



I have an AMD 2000+ on a MSI Ultra KT4 MS-6590 with 80GB hard drive and 512MB

of RAM, running Windows 2000 Pro.

The computer has gone into a loop of booting through the start-up. I get what I think is one beep, it starts to load Windows 2000, then stops and says there is a problem with hard drive and then checks it. After finding it's okay it reboots and starts the whole process over again. I cannot stop this. I have tried to get into the Bios but it shows the windows with all the information in but the goes on to say it cannot find the boot drive in Floppy, CD-ROM and D drive. Any hints on what to do?

Gerry Hadley

CORRECT RUNNING SPEED

Re Terry Fitzgerald's question in issue 758. My first thought on reading his letter, if I understand him correctly, was surely he has his two case fans working the wrong way round? As heat rises, shouldn't he be drawing cool air in at

the bottom of his case, and venting

warm air out at the top? He could be creating heat problems inside the case. The problem with his screen shutting down sounds like it may be some sort of 'sleep' or 'hibernate' mode kicking in, which I've had on some machines. That sounds a bit obvious though, and his

other issues seem to be of a more

serious nature which I'm afraid I'll have

Bob Farish

HOMEPAGE HIJACK

to leave to the experts!

In response to the gentleman with the IE6 homepage problem (Domenico D I think?). I suspect he has

picked up some parasitic spyware whilst surfing the internet. These things are

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unfortunately all too easy to acquire. usually installing themselves surreptitiously without the users knowledge or approval as part of a shareware or freeware application examples include the infamous Gator. Comet Cursor and BonziBuddy. They track users' web surfing activities and keystrokes and return the information gained to a third party, who can use the data gathered to target the user with pop-up adverts tailored to the types of sites visited and also change the user's homepage (even though the user may alter it, it reverts back to the target page whenever the browser restarts). Fortunately such parasites are easy to remove - a good spyware killer utility such as Ad-aware 6 (downloadable free from www.lavasoft.de) or Spybot S & D (from www.security.kolla.de) should eradicate the offending programme and allow you to regain control of your browser.

G I McAdam

TUTORIAL_UPGRADING YOUR LAPTOP'S CPU

Upgrading your laptop's processor is certainly not for the faint hearted. This week Peter Lowe shows you how.

Over the last few weeks I hope you have begun to see that laptops are not the black boxes, bereft of upgrade options, that they once seemed. With a performance boost from the addition of RAM, improved storage with a hard drive upgrade and even changing the optical drive to add DVD or CD-RW capability, the laptop initially purchased on a tight budget can now compete with the high-end machines that were way out of reach. The upgrade potential has now almost run out though, as upgrading the graphics or sound is currently impossible. Additional networking options exist through the mini PCI form factor, allowing the addition of a modem, wired or wireless communication equipment. In reality the easiest way to add these features is via a PCMCIA or USB add-on device. So with all these options explored, only one upgrade remains, the CPU. Clearly a CPU upgrade can afford a major performance boost to your machine but it is not to be undertaken lightly. Of all the upgrades you can perform this is the one most lightly to render your valuable laptop into an expensive paperweight. That said, it is not impossible, and the satisfaction of this upgrade is second to none.

As with all of the previous upgrades the first and most important step is preparation. Before you can begin you need to research the machine you have and identify an appropriate upgrade. This is probably the most difficult part of the whole procedure. To get a guide to potential upgrade avenues, download the free system diagnostic program AIDA32 from www.aida32.hu. With the aid of this program, you should be able to identify the

chipset in your laptop that supports the CPU. In addition, an indication as to the potential processor speeds supported by your configuration should be given. Once you have decided on the appropriate upgrade route. the next task is to find a replacement CPU. Again, this is no walk in the park, as you will not find mobile CPUs available in your local computer shop, but instead you should try online auctions or looking in the Micro Mart classifieds pages. The risk of buying privately, however, from an online auction is that if the upgrade does not suit. returning the CPU may be expensive or impossible.

As always when undertaking a job like this use an anti static wrist band to prevent damage to the sensitive internal components of the machine. Disconnect the mains, remove the battery and then you are ready to begin. The first job is to access the CPU. This will be machinespecific, but in the majority of cases it will involve the removal of the keyboard. The machine shown here is a Sony VAIO, volunteered by a courageous friend who is also hooked on the need for speed. In this example a retaining strip above the keyboard must be removed to expose the screw retaining the keyboard. If there are no obvious screws holding the strip above your keyboard look for a small hole to one side of the strip - if one is present, the retaining strip is likely to slide off away from the hole, but is held in place by a



retaining catch that must be released. To release the catch, gently push an unfolded paper clip through the hole whilst sliding the cover to the side. To have room to manoeuvre it may be necessary to completely remove the keyboard, which will be attached via a ribbon cable to the motherboard - this is typically quite easy to unfasten. At the point where the ribbon cable is socketed you should be able to lift either side of the clasp which will release the ribbon cable. With the keyboard removed the heatsink/plate and fan covering the CPU should be visible. The heatsink will typically be held in place by a number of screws. As in this example, they are usually numbered and should be unscrewed in reverse order. The screws tighten down on springs to ensure the correct contact pressure and are retained in the heatsink assembly even when fully

Knowhow

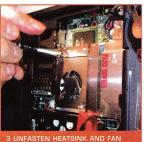
THINGS TO CHECK

- desktop processor should be an easier upgrade, as you can get a standard desktop processor for the upgrade, but do still check for compatibility first.
- will not need to get a heatsink and fan, as this will be integral to the machine. However, you may want to get some thermal compound to ensure good contact between the CPU die and the heatsink.
- versions of your machine to get an idea of what CPUs will definitely be

undone, so do not expect to be able to remove the screws. Check that there are no screws obscured by earth strips that must be carefully removed if present (and replaced when the job is complete). With all the screws unfastened, unplug the fan if necessary and carefully lift the assembly out of the machine.

The CPU should now be exposed, however, you may note that the socket design is not exactly the same as it is on a typical desktop system. Instead, the chip itself must be moved to be released. The socket will be marked "open" on one side and "closed" on the other, with the labels adjacent to angled holes. To release the chip, insert a screwdriver in the "open" hole and lean the screwdriver through 45 degrees, applying moderate force. The chip should move sideways by a few millimetres, allowing you to lift the chip from the socket. The new CPU can now be inserted into the socket, taking careful note of the pin alignment. With the CPU in the socket, insert a screwdriver in the close hole and again lean the screwdriver through 45 degrees until the CPU has moved several millimetres. Before replacing the heatsink and fan, check whether a soft thermal pad is present at

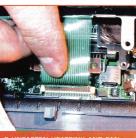






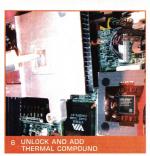
the point of contact. If not, clean off any existing thermal compound and add a small amount of fresh material.

The heatsink and fan assembly can now be repositioned and the screws refastened, this time in numeric order. Then, reconnect the keyboard, reposition and fasten if necessary, and finally replace the retaining strip above the keyboard. The battery can be reinserted and the mains reconnected before finally firing up the machine. It may be



2 UNFASTEN HEATSINK AND FAN





necessary to turn the machine off and then on again once or twice for the BIOS to recognise the new CPU, if all has gone well, the machine should recognise the CPU and, if the chip is compatible, start up. You should now have access to increased processing power which, let's face it, is always handy. If your machine doesn't spring into life as expected. consider reverting to your original CPU until you can find out what is causing the incompatibility.



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AMIGA_MART

Sven Harvey brings you the first part of a three-part article on the possible future of the Amiga brand. First up, the PDA and handheld Amiga technologies.

You may be aware that since the former Amino company (that's Bill McEwen and Fleecy Moss primarily) purchased the brand name, OS and core licenses that came under the banner "Amiga" at the beginning of 2000, their new Amiga, Inc. has been developing the Amiga Digital Environment (Amiga DE), based on Taos intent.

Initially conceived as a replacement for the AmigaOS it soon became clear that rather than a replacement for the Amiga Operating System, the DE would serve very well as a scalable little brother to the full OS, and it was decided that somewhere down the path the two threads should meet.

Indeed they will, and with a future edition of AmigaOS 4, be it 4.2 or 4.5, you will see the start of the gradual inclusion of DE technologies into the AmigaOS. This will in turn allow the two product lines to flow as one in many

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AMIGA DE GAMES SUCH AS PLANET ZED HAVE STARTED TO APPEAR FOR

WINDOWS AND LINUX

situations, yet allowing a huge amount of flexibility for items in a wireless home network, from a home server running the Amiga OS to a Fridge doing your online shopping for you.

So far the Amiga Digital Environment has been unleashed for the public to sample in three ways. Firstly, there was the AmigaDE Software Development Kit (SDK) which allowed people to start playing with the early version of the system and seeing what they could some up with. This has been updated a few times since then, and a special version released in the Amiga Party Pack.

Several Amiga DE games have also appeared, playable either on the Windows or Linux AmigaDE Players, including the brilliant Xenon 2-like Planet Zed.

The third public release thus far of the AmigaDE is the range of Amiga Anywhere packs. Amiga Anywhere is essentially a subset of the whole Amiga DE specifically optimised for PDA gaming in this case, though the AmigaAnywhere games can also be purchased and downloaded to play on the AmigaDE Players. The AmigaAnywhere gaming packs have been released thus far in the USA through Microsoft for PocketPCs on two types of memory cards for the various PocketPC devices running around these days.

The future of the DE leads to a situation where literally millions of devices could run the Digital Environment and thanks to the services also running on the AmigaOS, data and programs would be available to be shared across all of the devices, regardless of the little minor difficulties such as which processor they run, thanks to the DEs virtual processor set



up. Can you imagine walking around with a specialised PDA which is wirelessly networked to an AmigaOS home server? You could literally read any html or PDF file that sits on your server, or indeed anywhere on the internet, from the reader on your PDA, just using a single button to "turn" pages. Okay, so maybe you can't imagine it. In which case, I prescribe the viewing of any episode of the more modern Star Treks where any data from the ships computers can be brought up on PADDs (Personal Access Display Device). Could the AmigaDE be the real worlds LCARS (Library Computer Access and Retrieval System)? I hope so, because it would make life so much easier. Imagine the ability to just switch on a book-like PDA anywhere in your house - it automatically networks to your internet portal/home server and you may well be able to access the entire database known as "the totality of human knowledge and literature".

Sounds nice, doesn't it? And the best bet is this little slice of "Science Fiction" could be science fact in little more than a couple of years. Next week: Amiga in gaming.

LINUX_MART

Still licking his wounds after twenty lashes from the editor, Martin Curran has his nose stuck firmly to the news grindstone.

Even though it's summer, when all rational people are as far away as they can be from any kind of computer, Linux is a hive of activity with fresh announcements and no end of glib PR. They must have superb airconditioning that's all I can say. In this heat (at the time of writing) I feel a sense of accomplishment if I simply slide off my chair and make it safely to the fridge.

THE ART OF DISTRO STICK SHAKING

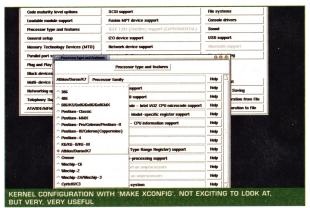
Here are a few choice comments from some Linux heavyweights at Linux World (Australia) concerning distros, and whether all the choice will harm Linux in the long run. It's an old question. (I'll be mentioning a few distros next week, as that area has become weirdly active again, considering it's the summer and sweating over a hot computer isn't everybody's idea of fun. Then I'll be moving on to some walk-through tutorials, taking a break from all this news).

"Juergen Geck, CTO of SuSE Linux AG, agreed that the question of whether Linux was likely to fragment, until there are 50 flavors of Linux like there were 20 to 30 flavors of Unix is a very common one.

"My take on the issue," he said, "is that it won't happen though because SuSE, for example, doesn't own Linux, neither does hed Hat. Whereas Solaris exists because Sun Microsystems tries to produce a best of breed."

"SuSE doesn't benefit from deviating from 2.6," he added. "And that's true for all the different distro vendors."

Jon "maddog" Hall, one of the key luminaries who has helped Linux as an OS to the considerable heights it has already reached today [and also coauthor of "Red Hat Linux 8 For Dummies" as it happens. Look out for a



review of two Red Hat books shortly, including the very same bright yellow "Dummies" book!

Hall offered a different perspective by highlighting the existence of LSB, the Linux Standard Base.

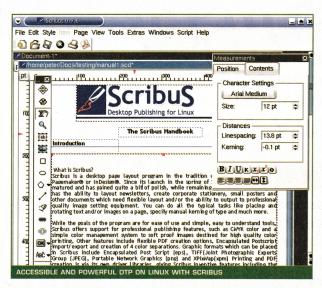
"With 150 different Linux distros all made from the same kernel and the same libraries, what's needed is that you have to say which ones you are going to guarantee. So the Linux Standard Base was an attempt to create a standard for every single architecture."

It was in 1997 some of the member companies in Linux International, he explained, that type of a problem, the divergence of different distros. "So LI formed the Free Standards Group to create standards for each architecture and help binary competibility. It recognizes that there can be innovation underneath a particular standard."

"The Linux Standard Base has done a very good job of specifying a standard that can then be innovated underneath of, Hall said. "It continues to grow and

emerge, expanding the coverage, and as time goes on I hope that hardware will eventually say, for example 'needs Intel LSB compatible 2.5 or higher' on it." [Certainly more desirable than the usual "requires Red Hat version blah" that you normally see with commercial software]. Linus Torvalds typically offered his own take on the issue. "I am a huge believer in the idea that Linux competes within itself," he said. "That keeps everyone honest. A lot of these 130 distros are a little oddball," he conceded. "Some are only used by Bob and his five friends. But that's okay because sometimes Bob did something right and his 5 friends become 50. Then five thousand, and so on," (Interesting that Linus should pick 'Bob' as an example, when you recall the longest surviving distro, Slackware, features J.R "Bob" Dobbs as its mascot. Okay, so the heat really is getting to me)

"Clearly 130 distros is not practical for a middleware vendor so in that sense what everyone does is just to ignore most of them, and end up with just a few things.



Even with the top 2 or 3, mind you, folks working in the enterprise space find it confusing to have a choice."

Torvalds concludes, "I always believe ultimately that we should think of it as being like politics. Choice in operating systems is kind of confusing, But it is better to have choice than not to have choice."

PART-TIME SUPPORTER

Talking of a certain Mr. Torvalds, Linus has a new job, and can now work on the kernel "full-time". Here's his announcement on the 'linux-kernel' mailing list:

"The other big news - well, for me personally, anyway - is that I've decided to take a leave-of-absence after 6+ years at Transmeta to actually work full-time on the kernel. Transmeta has always been very good at letting me spend even an inordinate amount of time on Linux, but as a result I've been feeling a little guilty at just how little "real work" I got done lately. To fix that, I'll instead be working at OSDL, finally actually doing Linux as my main job. (I do not expect a huge amount of change as a result, testament to just how freely Transmeta has let me do Linux work. My email address will change to

"torvalds@osdl.org" effective July 1st, but everybody is trying to make the transfer as smooth as possible, so we'll make sure that there will be sufficient address overlap etc to not cause any problems.)

OSDL and Transmeta will have a joint official (read: "boring". You should have seen the bio - that didn't make it - that I suggested for myself for it] press-release about this tomorrow morning, but I just wanted to say thanks to Transmeta. It has been a special place to work for, and hello to OSDL that I hope will be the same. Sniff. I'm actually all teary-eyed. Linus"

DIGITAL INK

I've mentioned Scribus a free/open source DTP application for Linux a couple of times already in these pages. Now Scribus has reached that rare version number in open source 1.0. "Scribus 1.0 - Linux Desktop Publishing is released

Programmer Franz Schmid is pleased to announce the release of Scribus 1.0 - Linux Desktop Publishing. Two years in development and available in 17 languages, Scribus represents the first open source DTP application capable of generating professional "press-ready" results. Among the major features of Scribus:

- A modern user-friendly interface developed with Gt. Scribus can run on Linux, HP-UX, Solaris, BSD and soon Mac OSX. An experimental version running on KDE-Cygwin and Windows 2000 is in testing.
- Unicode support including support for right to left scripts.
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- features such as transparency.

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RETRO MART

With news that has really got the scene talking, Shaun investigates rumours that Tulip are to start supporting the C64 once more.

In the past, Tulip Computers, who currently own the Commodore brand name, have mentioned the C64 from time to

time in their press releases, and why wouldn't they? It is, after all, one of the most successful home computer systems of all time. However, a recent press release, dated 11th July 2003 (found at

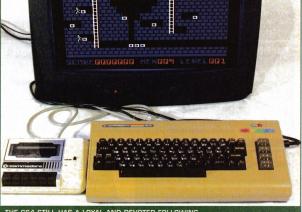
http://www.tulip.com/news/article. asp?nid=109), has provoked a great response from the C64 community. The following is from Allan Bairstow, editor of Commodore Scene magazine

(http://www.commodorescene.org.uk):

"I have been in the Commodore 64 scene since it came out in the early 80's. In recent years, providing a much needed import/export service for the rather sparse user base that currently exists (in the UK) today. Can you imagine the laugh I had when I read that Tulip computers (in conjunction with Ironstone Partners) are to start supporting the Commodore 64 again? That doesn't sound funny to you? How about this: they expect to be serving an estimated audience of '6 million' people. Where on Earth have they got that figure from?

I have the distinct feeling that they believe all the hype in recent months about how well the retro scene is doing. To be fair, the C64 scene is extremely active but I doubt very much that there are 6 million regular or real users out there. The one resounding reason the scene is doing so well is because in most cases (are you listening Tulip?) it is completely and utterly FREE!

Oh, did I not mention that Tulip want to charge everybody modern day prices for old software, or how about this, they are going to enforce the law on anybody using the Commodore 64 name without copyright.



THE C64 STILL HAS A LOYAL AND DEVOTED FOLLOWING

It remains to be seen if they will actually charge you for downloading .d64 images of your favourite games or if this 'pie in the sky' venture will bear any fruit. I hope that they will inject some cash (into the C64) and kick-start a small (if somewhat brief) interest in our beloved computers.

I therefore have some advice for Tulip as they are obviously so out of touch that they have no idea what they are talking about: (1) There is no money to be had on the back of the C64 retro scene. (2) The scene exists because it costs very little, and (3) don't try to enforce any type of copyright law as you will just alienate the people you are targeting. Allan Bairstow, a 'real' C64 supporter."

I have to say that I quite agree with Allan's reaction. Tulip will have an up-hill struggle to enforce copyright laws especially when they only seem to own the brand and not the copyright to the BIOS (which Micro Soft could hold a

claim to, considering that Commodore Basic is a version of Micro Soft basic). This sort of reaction from the C64 community meant that a further press release was issued from Ironstone partners, found at

http://rss.com.com/2100-1042_3-1025814.html?type=pt&part=rss&tag= feed&subi=news, in which Ironstone claim to be the C64's new "guardian angel", and that enthusiasts need not worry about the future, again re-enforced on their home page

http://www.ironstonepartners.com /newsitem1.html. So, what is the future of the Commodore 642 I have invited both Tulip Computers and Ironstone partners to comment further, and as soon as they do so, you will see it here.

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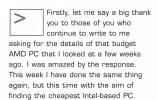






SYSTEM BUILDER

Louis Turfrey delves once more into the world of the system builder, and specifies a low cost Intel PC.



CASE & PSU

Though the case that I mentioned last time was of a decent enough construction, it is currently out of stock with the supplier. Therefore, I have gone for something a little bit better. The Super Flower Atlas 760 ATX Tower comes with no power supply. The case has plenty of space and it is well constructed; it also has front USB sockets.

The power supply that I have selected to go with it is the Hiper 350 Watt unit. It has excellent power management skills, just enough connectors, and is quite quiet in operation.

MOTHERBOARD

Again, I have gone for an integrated solution that isn't the fastest chip off the block. The ASUS P4S533 has USB 2.0, Graphics, LAN, 5.1 channel sound, S/PDIF socket, Crash Free Bios and support for all Intel 533 MHz FSB CPU's. It also has two DDR and two Standard SDRAM sockets. The board supports up to 333 MHz DDR. There is a free AGP slot and three PCI slots.

CPU & COOLER

The Intel Celeron 1.7 GHz unit is not as fast as the equivalent AMD XP unit. However, it beats the budget Duron family. This version has a fan included in the box and a full three-year warranty.

MEMORY

This is a Crucial 256 Megabyte CAS 2.5, PC2100 DDR memory module. Known for its stability and recommended by Intel, this makes for good value over the long term.

HARD DISK

A Maxtor 30-gigabyte, UDMA 133, 7200rpm, hard drive. Reasonable performance, quiet and one of the most reliable drives I have ever used. Also selling at an amazingly low price.

FLOPPY

A Sony standard floppy disk drive offered at a slightly more expensive price than the Alps unit.

MODEM

A 56K Intel chipset, fully hardware accelerated, so reduces any payload on the CPU.

KEYBOARD

This Memorex MX5200 unit is finished in Matt Chrome and black and is very comfortable to use.

CD-ROM

Another Liteon unit that offers a standard $52 \times CD$ read option. It's quiet in operation as well.

MOUSE

A generic optical mouse - after all, I have to cut corners somewhere.

MONITOR

The Relisys TE770 17" Monitor offers a sharp clear picture with good geometry





and colour balance. It helps that it comes with a three-year warranty (on-site swap out).

SPEAKERS

The Creative SBS 250 speakers are smallish in design with a half-decent sound.

OPERATING SYSTEM

Windows XP Home is the system of choice here. It has good driver compatibility with legacy components, whilst making full use of all the multi-media resources of the system upon which it is installed.

THE FINAL PRICE

Yes this time we have stretched the budget a little, but I have included a 17" monitor, operating system, and modem in the price. There are also a few higher quality components as well. The whole lot costs a little over £405 (includes VAT and delivery). As before, if you want to contact me for component prices, use the address in the little green box.

CONTACTS

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OVERCLOCKING

Mark Pickayance talks about fast RAM this month, and looks at what is needed to push it to the edge.

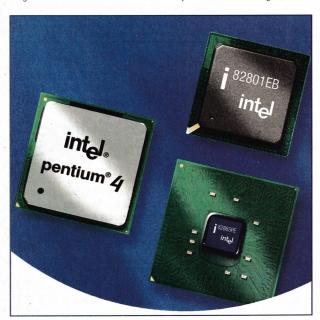
I've been very fortunate in the last month to be sent a number of memory samples from OCZ and Corsair. I rate both these companies very highly, as they are by far two of the best makers of ultra high performance memory on the market. Before I get into the review proper, I'd just like to talk a little about a weird change which has happened recently in regards to the memory and the speeds we are seeing. The chips I got this week are PC 3700 and 4000, which means they are specified to run at 466MHz and 500MHz respectively. The fastest a standard memory controller is designed to function at is 400MHz

currently. So the only purpose in going faster is to support increases in the FSB, and as such is pure system overclocking.

So for the support and respectability you are giving overclockers out there, I salute you OCZ and Corsair. Hopefully more memory makers will launch OC friendly products in the near future. This month I'll bring you the OCZ memory review and next month the CORSAIR. Now, on with the news and reviews.

MORE PAT NEWS

Next, a follow up to last month's news story about Intel 865PE having 'PAT'



	Territoria de la compansión de la compan	
ABIT	IS7-G	
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EPoX	4PDA2+	
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acceleration features, which only the 875 chipset was supposed to have. To recap briefly - Intel first denied it, then said it wasn't possible, and then warned all the motherboard makers not to do it.

Obviously they didn't listen, or they did to the wrong bit of the spin.

A strong rumour is now circulating that Intel will be releasing new models of both the i865P and i865PE chipsets that will not allow PAT to be enabled. If this is true, it's hardly going to make them popular with either board makers or overclockers. There is another slight snag to this master plan - how many of the old chips do they still have in the supply chain before these butchered 865 v2 ones appear? With VIA releasing an 800MHz chipset in the next month it would seem like Intel would like to reduce their market share further. Wouldn't it be easier to give the 875P something extra, which makes it worth the additional cost?

Whatever Intel intends to do, the ones out there now are PAT capable, so get them while they still are. How much longer they will be is unclear.

Above is a list of motherboard makers and models that support PAT covertly, I'm led to understand. Please don't blame me if they don't, or if Intel has been very quick at hobbling the poor old 865

specialists

OCZ PC 3700 EL GOLD DUAL CHANNEL

You know immediately when you pick up the plastic bubble these sticks come in that they are something special. Nothing cheap and nasty weighs this much for starters. This mass and solidity comes not from the RAM used, but solid copper jackets in which the memory is encased and has then been gold plated just for looks. The term 'heat spreader' hardly does these chunks of solid metal justice, but that's the job they do. When you get them, like I did, as a matched pair, then you know that your PC is about to experience something wonderful. The specification of this memory is exceptionally high. PC 3700 is designed to operate at 466MHz, which is well beyond what most motherboards are capable of doing.

So my first challenge was to rig a system to get the RAM up to the speed needed to fully test it. This proved quite difficult. Due to the issues involved in

bringing the FSB up on AMD chips without running into PCI/AGP issues, I decided to do these tests on a P4 rig. Then I had an issue with that due to the board I was using only taking a Northwood processor, which I didn't have at the time, and I was forced to turn back to AMD. Very luckily for me, just a day earlier AOpen had sent me an AK79D, which is an NVIDIA nForce Ultra 4DO chipset design. This board was something of a revelation at it could up the FSB and memory speeds totally independently of the PCI and AGP slots, which I've not seen before on an AMD board.

The standard DDR settings had the ability to be multiplied and had options for DDR440 and DDR532, which straddle the performance spec of the OCZ chip. So initially I ran the memory at 440MHz, just to get it warmed up, really. Then I overclocked the FSB to 141, which gave me a 'close enough' 468MHz! The words 'rock solid' would be a fair analysis, which is amazing because most DIMMS would have died a 100MHz back down the road.



GOLD! - ALWAYS BELIEVE IN YOUR SOUL. YOU'VE GOT THE POWER TO KNOW. YOU'RE INDESTRUCTIBLE

As this OCZ design incorporates an extended voltage protection system, I felt pretty confident in seeing exactly how far they might go if pushed. The top voltage for the OCZ DIMMs is 2.9v, which is more than most boards 'sensibly' will allow you to inject into a memory module. The standard voltage is 2.75v, but in my tests it ran stable at 2.65v, because that's the maximum available on this board. That limitation was the downside of being able to crank up elsewhere.

Just to remind us of the original spec, these chips are rated 466MHz, with these settings: CL 2-3-3-7 1T. So how fast do they go reliably without liquid cooling?

By making the numbers less aggressive I was able to post at over 500MHz, which is amazing. In terms of a solid system being able to run reliably I seem to run into a wall at about 488MHz, where the FSB had been boosted to 148MHz from 133MHz.

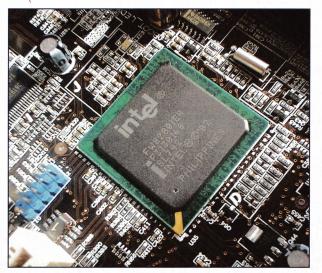
I suspect that issues with the CPU may have curtailed the RAM's performance earlier than I'd expected, I was also way below what voltage this DIMM could handle.

I'd expect that with 2.9v and more experimentation that this DIMM would be stable at 500MHz, and maybe even 510MHz. These numbers are tempting me to consider a voltage modification to the board, which would be a bit drastic, but potentially worth it.

So in summary, they look wonderful and go like the clappers! And as such are an absolute must for the serious overclocker. There's only one issue, if you hadn't guessed it - the cost. A pair of these cost about £175 for a total of 512MBs of memory. I guess you get what you pay for here, and you get plenty!

Next month I'll take the PC 4000 chips from CORSAIR for a similar outing, and see where they max out. See you then!

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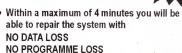
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AUGUST 7TH 2003 -AUGUST 14TH 2003

SHOW CALENDAR



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Tel: 01943 602 784

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Every Saturday HOUNSLOW COMPUTER FAIRS Montague Hall Montague Road Just for Hounslow High Street Tel: 020 8527 4239 Mob: 07951 213 902

Every Saturday & Sunday THREE GEM Carpenters & Dockland Centre 98 Gibbins Rd, Stratford London Tel: 020 8534 7347 Mob: 07958 428 447

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Closed For Refurbishment until 7th Sept HARROW COMPUTER FAIRS Harrow Venue Eastman Sports Ground, Harrow View, Harrow, HA2 Tel: 202 8450 0950

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Last Saturday of every Month MAJOR COMPUTER AUCTIONEERS West Sussex Tel: 01342 717445

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Various Dates 21st CENTURY FAIRS Brownhills, Nr Lichfield Tel: 01623 627 848

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AUGUST 9TH

COMPUTE UK Marconi Sports Club, Chelmesford Tel: 01328 856272

BRITISH COMPUTER FAIRS
Central London (2 Venues)
UCL Windeyer Building & Huntley St
Tel: 01943 602 784

NORTHERN COMPUTER MARKETS Bowlers Exhibition Centre, Manchester Tel: 01706 29990

NORTHERN COMPUTER MARKETS Richard Dunn Sports Centre, Bradford Tel: 01706 29990

BEACOMP COMPUTER FAIRS Hove Town Hall, Hove Tel: 01342 718 699

AUGUST 10TH

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Mon 11th Aug Tues 12th Aug Sat 16th Aug Sun 17th Aug Tue 19th Aug Sun 24th Aug B.H Mon 25th Aug Tue 26th Aug Wed 27th Aug

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SATURDAY 16TH AUG SUNDAY 17TH AUG SATURDAY 23RD AUG SUNDAY 24TH AUG

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SATURDAY 30TH AUG SUNDAY 31ST AUG SATURDAY 6TH SEPT SUNDAY 7TH SEPT

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Mon 18th Aug

Tues 19th Aug

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Richard Dunn Sports Centre, Rooley Ave, Odsal Telford International Centre, Sr Quentin Gate Edgbaston County Cricket Ground, Edgbaston Harvey Hadden Sports Centre, Wigman Rd Hillsborough Leisure Centre, Penistone Rd

Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Pk (Evening) Bowlers Exhibition Centre, Trafford Pk, (J9, M60) Pride Park Stadium, Pride Park

Aldersley Stadium, Aldersley Rd The Dome, Doncaster Leisure Park, Bawtry Rd Fenton Manor, City Rd. Fenton Willerby Manor Hotel, Well Lane (Evening)

Scottis

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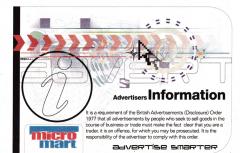
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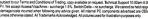












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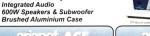
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- 64Mb GeForce Graphics
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