

## Bleeping, blooping boxes on the big screen

**Y**ou know what really annoys me? Computers in movies. Yes, without exception, the film-making world has clearly no idea of what a computer is or how it works. Don't believe me? Let's take a closer look.

Going back 30 years or so, all computers looked like vertical fridge-freezers, complete with lengths of tape spinning mysteriously from reel to reel. So why did film-makers feel they had to overdub any IT footage with ridiculous "bloop-bloop" sounds? Check out *The Italian Job*, in which Benny Hill perplexes Turin's traffic computers which in 1969 were making the same strange sounds as used in *Forbidden Planet* as long ago as 1956. Sadly, whether comedy or serious thriller, these obscene noises were to stay with us for years to come.

Take *Wargames* in 1983. I'll happily suspend disbelief that a kid can hack into a chess-loving war simulator, but why did this huge box of electronics still have to make the same guttural electronic sounds of movie computers almost 30 years old? Still unconvinced? Just about every James Bond film features an electronic device, identifiable to the audience by its bright flashing lights and loud bleeping sounds. Espionage at the height of discretion...

Speaking of subtlety, why do all movie computers make a continuous "beep beep beep" sound for every character that appears on the screen? This is particularly evident in scenes where the system announces that access to confidential files has been denied — not surprising, considering the actor's



random bangings on the keyboard. The most outrageous example is in *Star Trek 4*, when Scotty graphically describes how to construct transparent aluminium by blindly hammering away at the keyboard for five seconds. And you thought his accent was unforgivable.

Of course, it goes without saying that starting-up any computer is a long and tedious task, which is why most directors dispense with the process. But that's no excuse for James Cameron to have Arabian Windows 3.1 make the Mac sound when Arnie kicks a system into life in *True Lies*. And don't even get me started on the little girl who, after seeing that Jurassic Park is running on a couple of Mac Quadra 700s, announces that the amazing 3D interface she's

◀ **THE MALIGNANT MAINFRAME FROM SUPERMAN 3. AND YES, IT BLEEPED AWAY LIKE THE BEST OF 'EM**

confronted with is a familiar Unix system... Although to be fair, it could be an obscure version of Linux.

Believe me, I'm not looking for perfection. It's just that computers have now become so mainstream that they should perhaps be given the benefit of a little more authenticity to make them believable, even in the context of the movies.

Alternatively, perhaps in an act of life imitating art, Microsoft should produce a set of desktop themes that simulate movie computers. That way, I can mindlessly bang away at my keyboard while my PC makes blooping noises as it inadvertently stumbles upon the government's hidden space-alien files. No, hang on, my access has been denied.

IVOR BUGBEAR

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#### ACROSS

7 Video 8 Cell 9 Port 11 Sector  
12 Explorer 13 Java 15 Bug 16 Crash  
19 Scanner 20 Default 23 Pixel  
25 OCR 26 Gate 28 Netscape  
30 Serial 32 Wave 33 Slot 34 Table

#### DOWN

1 Mime 2 Restrain 3 Revenge 4 Slope  
5 Uproar 6 True 10 Trebles 14 ASCII  
17 Split 18 Depress 21 Algerian  
22 Somehow 24 Easter 27 Pause  
29 Elan 31 Ally

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