leisure lines

Screenplay this month has a full-page review of two new games from LucasArts, the Star Wars inspired **THE PHANTOM MENACE** and the high-octane Racer. There's Puma Street Soccer and Sports Car GT, and role-playing strategy in Silver and **HIDDEN & DANGEROUS**. Our *CD-ROMs* section features two encyclopaedias about the natural world, and we welcome back **MAVIS BEACON** for the ninth — yes, *ninth* — time. Her legendary typing tutor has had yet more tweaks

◄ **LIGHTSABRES LOOM LARGE IN THE PHANTOM MENACE**

and Tipp-Ex and is looking good. Also looking good is you, after consulting the new Cosmo Virtual Makeover. In *Kids*, the feelgood factor is to the fore in Laura's Happy Adventures, and **LEGO CREATOR** is crammed with more bricks than you can build a house with. In *Books*, there are reviews of *Who's Afraid of HTML?* and the excellent **PHILIP AND ALEX'S GUIDE TO WEB PUBLISHING**, and a look back at *The Victorian Internet*. There's prizes aplenty in this month's *Competitions* — up for grabs are 20 copies of the easy DTP package Power Publisher, and ten copies of LapLink Professional. Plus, there's a £20 book token for the *Brainteasers* winner, and a Chambers Dictionary if you complete our *Prize Crossword*. Finally, in *Retro* we revisit those super seventies days of fire-buttons and flair (or should that be flares?) as **SPACE INVADERS** is resurrected on Atari's VCS.

▲ **BAD HAIR DAY? LET COSMO VIRTUAL MAKEOVER MAKE MORE OF YOU**

▲ **LAURA SPREADS A LITTLE HAPPINESS**
◄ **LEGO CREATOR HAS BUILDING BRICKS GALORE**

ETELKA CLARK, LEISURE LINES EDITOR
ETELKA_CLARK@VNU.CO.UK

The Phantom Menace/Racer

Those still hungry for Star Wars products may not be entirely satisfied by these new offerings.

As a child sitting in a darkened room one Christmas, I heard Alec Guinness say for the first time, 'May the force be with you'. Ever since that day, my secret ambition has been to be a Jedi Knight. I was hoping that maybe these two games, aimed squarely at younger players, would give me the opportunity.

In The Phantom Menace you have the choice of playing one of the four heroes in the film — Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, Queen Amidala or Captain Panaka. According to the back of the box, the aim of the game is to let you 'live the saga'. Each level is based on a scene or location in the film, and armed with a variety of weapons, including the familiar lightsabre and blaster, you work your way through a maze of levels, killing and avoiding droids and solving puzzles to reach the end. Your lightsabre can be used to defend yourself against incoming fire, and with practice you can deflect the shots back to kill your enemy.

Graphics are not of the same high standard as other LucasArts' output. The characters and scenery are rather crudely drawn, which is a pity considering that a 3D card is required to run the game. Sound is utilised well, however: avoiding the MIDI-based horrors of past games was a wise decision.

The soundtrack is a faithful reproduction of the film, with realistic voice characterisation and lots of hints. But underneath these effects, the game is actually a bit tedious. You're left feeling as though you're running around nothing more than a glorified maze.

point you can buy upgrades for your pod with the credits you've earned.

If you can imagine taking part in the chariot scene from *Ben Hur*, but in outer space, you'll have some idea of the feel of the game. And although it's initially very playable, it quickly becomes apparent that all the levels in Racer are very similar. It's only the Star Wars name and soundtrack that drag it above the average.

Racer is the better of these two games, but not by much. If you're expecting a good first-person shoot-em-up/puzzler or a good racing game, then you'll be sadly disappointed.

JASON JENKINS

Slightly better is Racer. Still with the same high-quality sound and better graphics, you play the role of Anakin Skywalker as he competes against other characters from the film. With over 20 levels in eight different worlds, you race round a series of initially very easy but increasingly harder tracks, while another character presides over the fun.

To progress to the next level you must finish in the first four places, at which

PCW DETAILS

★★★ **The Phantom Menace**
★★★★☆ **Racer**

Price *£34.99 each*
Contact *Activision 01895 456700*
www.lucasarts.com
System Specification *The Phantom Menace: Windows 95/98, 200MHz Processor, 32Mb RAM, 4Mb PCI or AGP Direct3D-compatible graphics accelerator, 16-bit sound card, 4X CD-ROM.*
Racer: Windows 95/98, 166MHz processor (200MHz recommended), 32Mb RAM (64Mb recommended), 4Mb PCI or AGP Direct3D-compatible graphics accelerator, 16-bit sound card, 4X CD-ROM.

Puma Street Soccer

Forget the glitz of FIFA and the FA — this is backyard football at its most rough-and-ready.

The latest in a seemingly never-ending line of football games, Puma Street Soccer attempts to recreate the beautiful game as it is meant to be played. No overpaid prima donnas, pop-star girlfriends or nervous breakdowns on show here; just a handful of players, a ball, and a variety of locations ranging from the car park to the docks. This is a brave attempt at doing something different with a tired genre, and the look-and-feel of the game is more akin to a fast-paced console title than a PC game. Indeed, with the size of the pitch and the fact that there are only four players on each side, the intended result is a speeded-up cross between a basketball game and a traditional football simulation. And, to start with, it's a lot of fun: the fast, well-animated graphics, nice touches like the 'super-shot' and the instinctive controls, make for a winning combination. But you'll soon tire of the limited range of passes and options, and the only viable tactics seem to be to punt the ball down the pitch in the vague direction of goal.

Compared to the might of Fifa 99 and Actua Soccer 3, Puma Street Soccer starts to look more like the gaming equivalent of a rain-sodden match in the park rather than a run-out at Wembley.

OWEN GIBSON

PCW DETAILS

★★

Price £35
Contact Infogrames 0161 827 8000
www.infogrames.co.uk
System Specification *Windows 95, Pentium 100MHz processor (200MHz recommended), 16Mb RAM (32Mb recommended), 95Mb hard-disk space, Direct3D-compatible graphics card, 4X CD-ROM drive.*

Sports Car GT

Take your new Porsche for a spin on 11 of the world's toughest — and most realistic — circuits.

Sports Car GT is the most realistic racing-car simulation I've played on a PC. The handling feels so real, you genuinely perceive the weight distribution as rear ends lose grip and swing out on corners. Be gentle with that throttle or you could find yourself out of control, surrounded by clouds of smoke as your tyres desperately bite at the tarmac. Marvel at the reflections of brake and headlights on slippery surfaces, but not so closely that the wet conditions force you off the road.

Attention to detail is amazing. You'll quickly discover this is not a simulation on rails as you career into assorted signposts, spin uncontrollably on grass, and bounce into stacks of tyres; the cars even sink into soggy ground. Struck traffic cones are reassuringly tossed in random directions, and I urge anyone to switch to the TV-coverage-style camera just to see yourself from a safe distance flailing around. Listen out for faint commentary and announcements as you sail past tents and the grandstand.

The detail, particularly at 1024 x 768 resolution, is amazing, but for responsive play you'll want decent PC hardware. GT supports DirectX, 3Dfx, force-feedback controls and network play.

Hardcore arcade fans may prefer something a little less unforgiving, but in terms of realism, it doesn't get better than this.

GORDON LAING

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £39.99
Contact Electronic Arts 01753 549442
www.ea.com
System Specification *Windows 95/98, Pentium 166, 16Mb, DirectX 6.*

Silver

Run for your life — or rather, your wife's life — as you save her from the evil sorcerer's clutches.

You play the role of David, an unfortunate chap who's having a run of bad luck. In the first few minutes his wife is kidnapped by the evil sorcerer Silver, and you spend the rest of the game fighting and solving problems to win her back in this roleplay adventure.

The programmers have made a real effort to create a believable world. Each of the characters has a wealth of information to pass on, in the form of special moves, new powers and handy hints. You must speak to as many of the characters as you can to solve the puzzles, and to get a feel for the Silver universe. Controls for fighting are rather confusing, making combat something of a challenge to begin with. You have to push a strange combination of the control key and left or right mouse button, and then move the mouse in a certain direction depending on what move you want to make. I could never really get to grips with it, and ended up pushing keys and moving the mouse in a flurry of random activity, hoping that it would be all right in the end. But it didn't seem to make much difference.

The scenery in Silver is very well constructed with excellent use of colour. The characters are fluidly animated and the soundtrack is excellent. Overall, a good game if you like this kind of thing.

JASON JENKINS

PCW DETAILS

★★★★

Price £34.99
Contact *Infogrames 0161 827 8000*
www.infogrames.co.uk
System Specification *Windows 95 or Windows 98, Pentium 166 or compatible (Pentium II or compatible recommended), 32Mb RAM, 8X CD-ROM drive (12X recommended), 160Mb free hard-disk space, DirectX-compatible video card with (minimum) 2Mb RAM, DirectX-compatible sound card.*

Hidden & Dangerous

An atmospheric and addictive mix of action and strategy based on a theme of World War II.

Games with a military theme have always been popular, fulfilling our desires to be rough, tough and brave without having to endure any of the nasty bits like bleeding and lugging about unfeasibly large rucksacks.

Hidden & Dangerous is a cross between Commandos and Delta Force, pitting four men — all of whom you control at the same time — against German forces in six different theatres of war, from Italy to Norway. H&D is presented in immaculate and superbly detailed 3D, and is truly atmospheric.

Choosing either a first- or third-person camera perspective, you have to choose from an initial pool of 40 crack allied troops. A maximum of four of these will go on each mission, but you are the master of them all. This is no mean task — a single sniper bullet to the head is enough to kill you outright.

H&D is a curiously effective mix of action and strategy. The latter is of paramount importance, as any Rambo-style cock-and-bull sends you straight to your maker, but the action is fierce and addictive. The range of weaponry and vehicles, and the sheer beauty of the scenarios, sees H&D really stand out from the crowd.

Summertime, so long the preserve of strawberries and sunburn, has been given a new lease of life. Hidden & Dangerous is a sure-fire success.

JIM HARRYOT

PCW DETAILS

RECOMMENDED
PERSONAL COMPUTER WORLD

★★★★★

Price £40
Contact *Take 2 Interactive 01753 854444*
www.take2games.com
System Specification *Windows 95/98, Pentium 166MHz MMX processor (P266 recommended), 16Mb of memory (32Mb recommended), 10Mb free hard-disk space (160Mb for full install), 4X CD-ROM drive (12X recommended), DirectX-compatible sound and graphics cards.*

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing 9

The doyenne of all typing tutors is back after yet another facelift, and she looks better than ever.

The last time we saw **Mavis,** though basic in her appearance and approach, she was nevertheless extremely helpful. That was some time ago; today, she's like a new woman. Sophisticated and crisply turned out, she has added new dimensions to her demeanour.

When you have chosen your age range (from up to 11, 12-15 and 16 upwards), Mavis asks you to complete a typing test (optional) so she can determine your level. You then go on to learn the basic rules of typing, practising your accuracy and speed along the way.

The typing interface retains the classic Mavis style, with the hands on the keyboard at the bottom of the screen.

You can choose between Standard or Natural keyboard settings, and, as ever, you type the text as you see it, taking care to hit the right keys.

In the Media Centre you can practise your typing, customise your own lessons, link to the Mavis Beacon website, or watch videos on office ergonomics.

The Games Room employs ingenious ways of further improving your standards, testing your speed, accuracy and number-key skills using a variety of games, from shooting spaceships to feeding chameleons.

For the user who needs to learn or just improve their typing skills, Mavis Beacon continues to provide a teaching method which really does work.

HELEN FORTGANG

PCW DETAILS

★★★★

Price *£30*
Contact *Mindscape 01293 651300*
www.mavisbeacon.com
System Specification *Windows 95/98 or Windows NT 4.0, 486/66MHz, 16Mb RAM, 40Mb free hard-disk space, SVGA video card, 256 colours, sound card and speakers/headphones, 4X CD-ROM, internet access (optional).*

Encyclopaedia of Wildlife

Go wild in the country with this voyage of discovery through the wonderful world of nature.

Wildlife programmes have almost as strong a presence on TV as cookery shows: we've all watched enthralled as David Attenborough crawls through the rainforest to observe the behaviour of gorillas or some other unsuspecting animal.

The Nature Guides in this Encyclopaedia of European Wildlife won't have you on the edge of your seat in quite the same way, as the narrator doesn't have the same magnetic personality. But the content is good, and if you can forgive the sound quality you'll be given a good introduction to pollution, pollination and classification.

The real delights of this CD, though, are to be found in the Discoveries sections. In the Species Discovery or the Habitat Discovery, for example, you'll find a wealth of colourful photos and a good selection of videos — jellyfish in action, for instance.

You can quickly cross-reference from a species to its habitat and back again, or find out what other animal lives in a similar habitat. If you want to find something in particular, you can home in with the simple but powerful search engine — but you'll probably get distracted again when another entry catches your eye.

This is not the CD to give to a reluctant learner, but it would make a useful reference tool for any child of secondary school age right through to A-level, as well as being a fascinating resource for any adult interested in the subject.

SHEILA HILL

PCW DETAILS

★★★★

Price *£20*
Contact *BTL Publishing 01274 841320*
www.bradtech.co.uk
System Specification *Windows 95/98, IBM PC-compatible, P100MHz or higher, 4X CD ROM, 16Mb RAM, SVGA video card, 640 x 480 monitor resolution.*

Encyclopaedia Biosphere

Interactive learning on environmental issues, soberly presented and a good revision aid.

This is quite a daunting title — so much so that you might be put off. But once you start the program, you'll find that the Interactive Encyclopaedia to the Environment is nicely laid out and will encourage you to browse and learn. Take Judith Hann (of *Tomorrow's World* fame) as your guide, and set off on one of five tours around the environment.

Key topics include how to save the environment, and developments in the world of farming. The narrative is clear enough but, disappointingly, what you see on screen isn't closely related to what's being said:
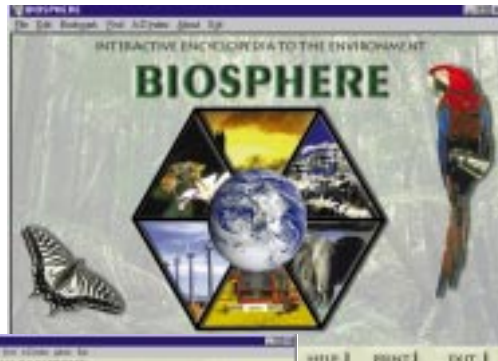
it would have been nice to see some video footage or even a few relevant photos. You can dive straight in to one of the seven main topic areas, including pollution, ecology and conservation, and study texts on-screen,

although presentation is a little dry. There are interactive touches to make your reading more enjoyable, however: click on a green word for an instant definition, or on a loudspeaker symbol to hear a word pronounced.

This CD is aimed at Key Stage 2 (7+) through to A-level, and would make a useful revision aid or reference source. It's not ideal for youngsters, though, as entertainment value is limited.

SHEILA HILL

PCW DETAILS

★★★

Price £20
Contact BTL Publishing 01274 841320
www.bradtech.co.uk
System Specification *Windows 95/98, IBM PC-compatible, P100MHz or higher, 4X CD-ROM, 16Mb RAM, SVGA video card, 640 x 480 monitor resolution.*

Cosmopolitan Virtual Makeover

Style challenge: freshen up with frosted pink lipstick and banish those bad hair days forever.

We first looked at Virtual Makeover in November 1998. So what's different about this one? Well, not much. It remains much the same, though this time there's a load of new looks. There's also a Kodak offer included for those who don't own a scanner or a digital camera, so you can get your photo developed onto disk.

No doubt those bad hair days keep on coming, and just how to pluck your eyebrows properly is beyond you. In a moment of hairbrush hell, Virtual Makeover should banish any doubt

about whether the Monica Lewinsky look is for you. However, if Sinead O'Connor is more your style, I'm afraid you'd have less choice. You could always try a moustache or a beard from the men's section.

The 300 hairstyles featured here range from short and functional to big and glamorous, though all except one are for European-type, mainly straight, hair. The makeup includes every standard product you're ever likely to use, although the accessories are quite sparse — a few hats and not much else.

There are some great tips included, though. You need to know the best way to apply makeup, or how to look after your brushes and eye-shadow palettes.

Although this collection is mainly suited to people of European colouring, many of the styles could be applied to Afro-Caribbean women. However, some users may prefer to try Essence Virtual Makeover. Additionally, there are loads more hairstyles for everyone on the Virtual Makeover website.

HELEN FORTGANG

PCW DETAILS

★★★

Price £30.00
Contact Hallmark 01664 481563
www.virtualmakeover.com
System Specification *Windows 95/98 or Windows NT, 16Mb RAM, 14Mb free hard-disk space, 16-bit colour, 8-bit SoundBlaster or compatible sound card, 2X CD-ROM drive, mouse, printer optional.*

Laura's Happy Adventures

Sugar and spice and all things nice, that's what this game wants little girls to be made of.

Laura's Happy Adventures has been designed specifically for girls aged between four and six. It aims to teach them to be pleasant, nice and generally sweet to people. Fine; but why is it that it's just girls who apparently need these skills?

The point of this Playmobil-branded game is that Laura has found a magic diamond, and in order to make all its sides shine, she must accomplish her mission of spreading happiness to her friends and family.

After a very pleasant introduction, the adventure starts in Laura's house. The user assumes her role and must guide her around the house, and then outside, talking to people and collecting objects as she goes. The charmed diamond speaks to Laura and gives her all sorts of tips when she needs them.

Laura must search the mysterious town for people to help, giving them the objects she has collected along the way in case they need them. The characters may tell her what they need, or give her tips about who to go to for more information.

This an engaging game full of twists and turns. It is, however, a very 'girly', production, with limited action. Graphically it is fairly well designed, though each new scene takes time to load, which becomes tedious and does tend to break the flow of the adventure.

HELEN FORTGANG

PCW DETAILS

★★★

Price *£29.99*
Contact *0181 944 9000*
www.ubisoft.co.uk
System Specification *Windows 95/98, Pentium 166 MMX or higher, 32Mb RAM, 6X CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card, 3D video card.*

Lego Creator

Every brick you ever wanted, including a few exploding ones. It just doesn't feel like the real thing.

Lego has fed the imagination of many a generation, and with Lego Creator it is turning its attention to the minds of the computer generation.

The idea is simple: the software includes every Lego brick, person, roofing-tile, window, door or accessory ever made, and each can be set to the colour you want, so you're never going to run out of yellow bricks halfway through your skyscraper again.

The great thing is that this means you have an unlimited supply of everything. The downside is that it takes a while to search through your stock, and while this was something you had to put up with using the original studded blocks, sifting through a pile was far more interesting than scrolling through a graphical list.

Lego Creator includes a number of new touches. It comes complete with a range of ready-made buildings and vehicles, so if your creative juices have dried up, you can still have fun. It also has a new kind of brick — the exploding brick. Build these into your models, and you have the satisfaction of blasting them sky high and never needing to pick up the pieces.

We liked the interface, which was friendly and easy to use, and controlled entirely by the mouse. What we weren't so keen on was the rather long load time each time you wanted to play. Overall it was fun, but apart from the fact that it's cheaper than buying a thousand real Lego bricks and your creations can be set to move on their own, we would really rather have played with the real thing.

Just as well Lego throws in a small (genuine) model for you to build while you wait for it to install.

NIK RAWLINSON

PCW DETAILS

★★★

Price *£24.99*
Contact *Media International 0181 600 7200*
*www.lego.com*
System Specification *Windows 95/98, Pentium 166MMX, 32Mb RAM, 6X CD-ROM, 85Mb free hard-disk space, Direct3D-compatible graphics card capable of 800 x 600 in 16-bit colour, DirectSound-compatible sound card, mouse, DirectX 5 (supplied on CD).*

Win a copy of Power Publisher!

GSP is giving away 20 copies of its new desktop publishing program, **Power Publisher**. Priced £49.95 each (including VAT), Power Publisher combines a fully reworked version of Pressworks with its sister graphics package, Designworks 3.5. Also included in the suite are web publishing tools, a photo editor, an electronic address book and 20,000 clip-art and photo images.

Pressworks has an excellent reputation for ease of use and stability, and is well known for its no-fuss approach to DTP. The latest version, 3.0, now combined with other DTP and graphics tools in Power Publisher, has undergone extensive improvements;
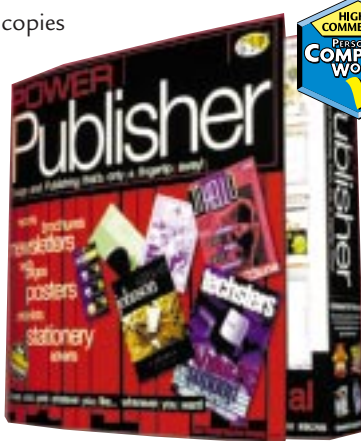
some have been made behind the scenes to improve the way it works, and many are completely new: advanced text and graphics tools, creating web documents, tables, mail merge, 3D PowerText, drawing shapes and lines, and working with and printing documents.

Unlike competing entry-level DTP programs, Power Publisher offers you more power and flexibility when working with clip-art and photographs. You can:
• **include textures** or photographs as a backdrop to a frame;

• **rotate** and flip images;
• **convert** all white pixels in a bitmap to transparent;
• **ungroup vector graphics** so that they can be edited and coloured; and
• **undo and redo** to your heart's content.

Power Publisher can be bought from most high-street PC retailers including PC World and Tempo, or may be purchased direct from GSP Customer Services on **01480 496575**.

☞ **To try your luck at winning a copy, simply answer the following question:**
How many clip-art and photo images does Power Publisher include?
A)   20
B)   200
C)   20,000

◆ *See the panel below for details of how to enter the competition.*

Win a copy of LapLink Pro!

This month we have ten copies of the award-winning remote access software, **LapLink Professional**, to give away. Each copy is worth £149.95 (including VAT).

Building on Traveling Software's patented remote access technology, LapLink Professional supplements the award-winning LapLink 7.5 features with first-to-market USB cable support. Now users can connect two computers at network-like speeds of up to 6Mbits/sec, many times faster than the 500-800Kbits/sec of traditional file transfer products.

LapLink Professional is also the first remote access product optimised for Windows 98. It takes advantage of Windows 98 features — allowing users to expand their desktop on to multiple

monitors, making a large virtual desktop, and allowing them to schedule a file transfer using the Task Scheduler provided in Windows 98 and Microsoft

Internet Explorer 4.0. LapLink Professional also gives users the option of controlling the display-intensive aspects of Windows 98, which can hinder remote control performance.

Other major enhancements include support for all Windows platforms in one box (98, NT, 95, 3.1) and a free CE client via the web, connection via Fast Infra-red (FIR) and print reduction.

☞ **To try your luck at winning a copy, simply answer the following question:**
Of which new operating system's features does LapLink Professional take advantage?

How to enter the competitions

Write your name, address and daytime telephone number on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope. Mark your card(s) 'PCW/GSP Competition' or 'PCW/LapLink Competition' and send to the following address by Friday 30th August 1999:

Personal Computer World
Building 960
Sittingbourne Research Centre
Sittingbourne
Kent ME9 8AG

◆ *Competitions open to residents of the UK only.*

⌑ *Please state clearly on your entry if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies.*

Rules of entry

These competitions are open to UK readers of *Personal Computer World*, except for employees (and their families) of VNU Business Publications, GSP and Traveling Software. The Editor of *Personal Computer World* is the sole judge of the competition and his decision is final. No cash alternative is available in lieu of prizes.

Video vault

For the budding game boy like Gordon Laing, the Atari VCS was where the action really started.

1977 was a vintage year all right. There was loads going on, but for the average child, the release of both Star Wars and the Atari VCS made it a magical time to remember.

Atari's Video Computer System was simply a classic. With only basic black-and-white pong games (masquerading as electronic tennis) preceding it, the VCS was arguably the first proper home games console. Sure, it was to be followed by Mattel's IntelliVision, CBS's ColecoVision and Milton Bradley's Vectrex, all boasting superior technical performance. But none could match the sheer charm of the VCS.

We could just marvel at the corrugated case and fake wooden finish and leave it at that. It was a piece of furniture, a work of art to be adored, a design classic representing all that was naff about the 1970s. What about the six silver switches which set the display to black-and-white or selected a level of difficulty? Who could forget the phenomenal anti-climax of a finished game just sitting there cycling through its colour palette?

And what were all those variations about? You may have thought you'd bought one game, but with as many as 100 pointless tweaks and variations to choose from, the fun never ended. Then again, if it weren't for the variations, we wouldn't have had guided bouncy bullets in Combat, or the futility of invisible Space Invaders.

It's impossible to mention the VCS without paying homage to those two games. Bundled with the VCS when it was launched (for £169) in the UK in 1978, Combat alone, with its hopelessly sluggish biplanes and fiendish tank mazes, was a good enough reason to own the console.

Space Invaders, though, was Atari's turning point. A worldwide craze was born when Taito launched the arcade game in 1978. Atari saw its chance and negotiated for the exclusive home rights.

By 1980, it had its killer application (with 112 variations). Space Invaders, and a reduced price of £99 for the VCS, allowed Atari to sell no fewer than 125,000 consoles and over 500,000 games in the UK in 1980 alone.

In 1981, Atari released Asteroids for a fraction under £35. Along with Space Invaders and Missile Command, it became one of the VCS's bestselling titles. But it wasn't all shoot-'em-ups: the success of the

▲ PAC-MAN AND SPACE INVADERS OFFERED HUNDREDS OF POINTLESS VARIATIONS ON A THEME

VCS saw the very first graphical adventure games. The all-time classic was Atari Adventure, in which the player had to find keys to release the golden chalice while avoiding three increasingly tough dragons and a mad black bat. The graphics may have been blocky, but a game involving actual long-term exploration and problem solving was unheard of on a games console.

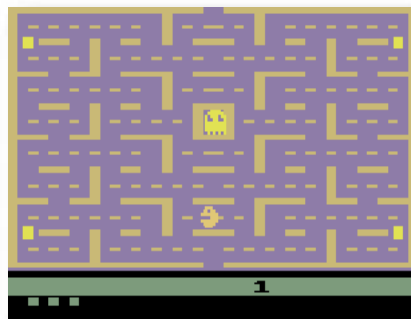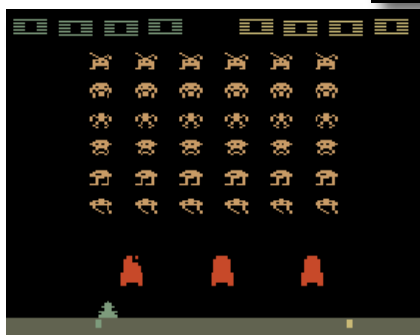Also in 1981, Activision released the first third-party VCS games. Activision was also responsible for the graphically superior Pitfall! adventure game.

Hardware-wise, the VCS drove its 6507 processor at a blinding 1.19MHz, and backed it up with 128 bytes of RAM and up to 4Kb of ROM. It featured an RF TV output socket and a pair of 9-pin serial ports for its games controllers, and came with two joysticks and a pair of analogue paddles, the latter requiring only a single port — perfect for Breakout-style games.

Despite its initial success, Atari began to experience difficulties shortly after its release of Pac-Man. The VCS couldn't keep up with newer products, and by the time the Japanese had invaded the console market, Atari had focused all its attention on home computers with its ST range.

The VCS, however, lives on today. The hardware is readily available second-hand, and emulators have been written for PC and Mac. Countless websites pay homage (try stella.atari.org) and some people are even developing new games. Browsers of the Argos catalogue may have spotted a TV Boy, costing £25 and squeezing over 100 (renamed) VCS classics in a case only a little bigger than a joypad controller.

Go on, relive those heady days... you know you want to. ☐

▲ THE VCS: A PIECE OF SEVENTIES KITSCH THAT GAVE ATARI THE HOME GAMES MARKET

books

The iMac for Dummies

Despite Apple's emphasis on simplicity, the publishers of the *Dummies* series feel that iMac users could still do with a helping hand. Bundled inside this distinctive yellow cover are hints and tips on how to get the most from the colourful little computer.

Anyone who has unwrapped a brand new iMac will know that it comes with both an easy-to-follow manual and a handy troubleshooting guide. But if you're still struggling, or want to get that little bit extra from your iMac, then this is the book to turn to.

It kicks off by outlining the basics for iMac novices — and when we say basics, we mean just that: this first step takes you through turning the thing on. The simple instructions are accompanied by clear screenshots to give you an idea of how things should look on-screen.

To help you follow the text, and to stop you from getting bogged down in unnecessary detail, the pages are littered with helpful icons. These point out

technical information, useful shortcuts, hands-on exercises, explanatory notes, and features found in Mac OS 8.5.

While this book is ideal for absolute beginners, don't throw it out as soon as you've mastered the fundamentals. It holds your hand through all the software you get with your iMac — though the US bias is evident here as it explains Quicken finance software, which isn't available for the Mac in the UK. It also takes you through key packages from Microsoft — Word and Excel 98 — that you might want to load up.

Other chapters enlighten you on the mysteries of the internet, connectivity options offered by the USB and ethernet ports you'll find on your iMac, and gadgets you can plug in to add extra functionality. But perhaps the most useful chapter is the one that covers troubleshooting, because the easy-to-follow instructions really come into their

own when you're faced by an inscrutable error message.

The perfect companion to your iMac, this book's user-friendly style mirrors that of the computer. The 358 pages should take you from iMac innocent to aficionado.

URSULA TOLANI
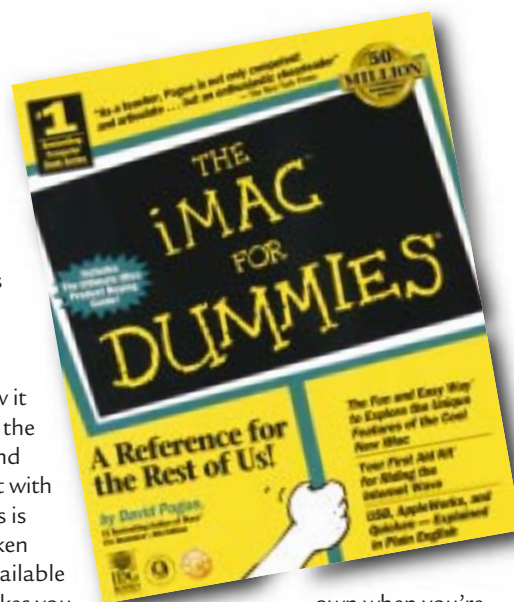
PCW DETAILS

★★★★

THE IMAC FOR DUMMIES
Author *David Pogue*
Publisher *IDG Books Worldwide*
ISBN *0-7645-0495-9*
Price *£18.99*

The Victorian Internet

What did nerds do before computers were invented? You have to go way back to find something that might have satisfied today's surfer or programmer; and there you will find the telegraph, described in Tom Standage's book as 'The Victorian Internet'.

Standage recounts how finding a way to send messages along electrical wires had been exercising some of the era's finest minds when, in 1832, a Massachusetts portrait painter called Samuel Morse found the last piece of the jigsaw. During a transatlantic voyage he devised the system of short and long electrical signals known as Morse Code. Then, in 1844 he erected a 40-mile stretch of wire from Washington to Baltimore

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

THE VICTORIAN INTERNET
Author *Tom Standage*
Publisher *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*
ISBN *0-2978-4148-3*
Price *£14.99*

and astounded onlookers by transmitting the world's first telegraphic message: 'What hath God wrought?'

Like the internet, the telegraph was hailed as a force for good that brought people and countries together. Morse was toasted at a banquet for having 'annihilated both space and time'.

Also like the internet, the telegraph network became congested and people complained of delays. Online romance flourished as lovers sent each other coded messages. There was fraud too. Punters even tried to beat the bookmakers by bribing operators to hold

back race results. The telegram also became the standard way to plead for cash or arrange to be met, until well into this century.

But then, the telephone, at first called the 'speaking telegraph', was invented and the telegram's days were numbered. Now, even Morse Code has beeped its last: it was replaced in February 1999 as an international maritime distress system by satellite communications.

It's hard to imagine, but some day, the internet too will be but a memory. The question is, what will replace it?

NICOLE SEGRE

Who's Afraid Of HTML?

The apparent complexity of HTML documents — the code that sits behind all web pages — has allowed companies such as Microsoft to make a fortune from selling HTML creators. But as this book aims to show, it's not all that difficult — even if all you have is a simple text editor. *Who's Afraid of HTML?* is aimed at people who hope to create web pages without splashing out, and who don't know where to start. It even comes with a CD of HTML and graphics editing tools. It differs from the standard approach by throwing in dialogues between the author and a novice, allowing feedback to be generated. At times this works very well and gives a new method of explanation, but it can get in the way of the real point of the book — learning HTML.
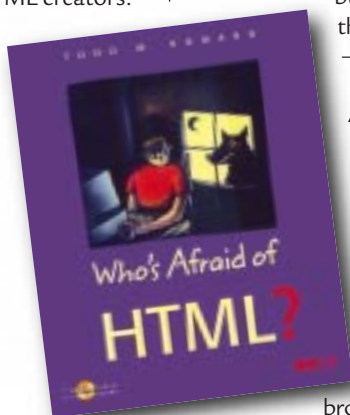
After a long but necessary overview of the web, the author, Todd M. Howard, gets round to the structure of HTML and how the tags that you put into a document relate to the final appearance through a web browser. New tags appear in bold text and have an explanatory paragraph to accompany them. But the book is let down by a lack of code samples: after all, the best way to learn this subject is to type-in examples and view the output on-screen. There's rather more talk than action, and there are bigger and better books on this subject out there.

DAVID LUDLOW

PCW DETAILS
★★★
WHO'S AFRAID OF HTML?
Author *Todd M. Howard*
Publisher *Morgan Kaufmann*
ISBN *0-45-356915-X*
Price *$39.95*

Philip and Alex's Guide to Web Publishing

Not only is this book a good read, it's beautifully presented, too. When your parents told you to take care of books and treasure them, it was this sort of weighty tome they were talking about. It's a shame we can't show you any of the pages: the author, Philip Greenspun (that's him on the left; the dog on the right is Alex) is not only a resident of MIT, where he's used the same email address for 22 years, he's also a keen photographer.

And the pictures aren't there to distract the reader from limp writing. What we have here is a well written, straightforward guide to web publishing. Greenspun is an accomplished programmer and guides the reader clearly through the complexities of database implementation and web programming. He peppers the text with personal comments, and illustrates key points with practical examples. In examining four types of site, for example, he produces ballpark costings for each, outlines what the user will need to produce them, and suggests how they can make money.

I'd urge anyone serious about web development to rush out and buy a copy of *Philip and Alex*. It's insightful, entertaining and beautiful, and an essential read for the web professional.

NIK RAWLINSON

PCW DETAILS
★★★★★
Philip and Alex's Guide to Web Publishing
Author *Philip Greenspun*
Publisher *Morgan Kaufman*
ISBN *1-5586-0534-7*
Price *£24.95*

TOP 10 books

1. **Transact — SQL Programming**
O'Reilly
£29.95

2. **Dreamweaver 2 Visual Quickstart Guide**
Peachpit Press
£14.99

3. **The Internet: The Rough Guide 1999**
Rough Guides
£5.99

4. **ATL Internals**
Addison-Wesley
£33.99

5. **Flash 3 Creative Web Animation**
Macromedia Press
£22.99

6. **Web Design in a Nutshell**
O'Reilly
£15.95

7. **Apache: The Definitive Guide**
O'Reilly
£23.50

8. **Writing Excel Macros**
O'Reilly
£18.50

9. **Introducing Windows 2000 Server**
Microsoft Press
£23.99

10. **Business @ the Speed of Thought**
Penguin
£18.99

Prices include VAT on disks and CD-ROMs. List supplied by The PC Bookshop, 21 Sicilian Avenue, London WC1A 2QH.
Tel: 0171 831 0022
Fax: 0171 831 0443

brainteasers

☛ **Quickie**
Can you arrange four £1 coins so that there are two straight lines with three coins in each line?

☛ **This Month's Prize Puzzle**
Regular readers will be familiar with the island of Tonterias, which I have mentioned in previous puzzles.

On the north side of the island there are three villages — Alexos, Banaris, and Calares — which comprise a training circuit for the many keep-fit fanatics who visit Tonterias for their holidays.

One such person walks from Alexos to Banaris, jogs from Banaris to Calares, and cycles from Calares to Alexos, in a total of 15 and a half hours. If he jogs from Alexos to Banaris, cycles from Banaris to Calares and walks from Calares to Alexos, he can do it 12 hours.

If he walked all the way, it would take him 22 hours; if he cycled all the way, he would need eight and a quarter hours, and if he jogged all the way, 11 hours. He can walk a mile, jog a mile and cycle a mile in 30 minutes.

Assuming constant speeds by each means of travel, what are his respective speeds, and what are the distances between the villages?

Answers (to the Prize Puzzle only) on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, to: PCW Prize Puzzle — September 1999, PO Box 99, Harrogate, N. Yorks HG2 0XJ, to arrive not later than 20th September 1999.

We also accept solutions by email. Send the solution, your name and an address only, to:
jj.clessa@btinternet.com

☛ **Winner of June 1999 Prize Puzzle**
One hundred and twenty entries for our June puzzle, which asked for the smallest number which had exactly 50 factors.

Some of you claimed it was impossible, many solved it analytically; others used the Clessa approach and let the computer do the work!

The required answer was **996,624** and the winning entry, selected at random, came from a previous winner — Mr John Stephenson, of Bolton — who carried off the prize in September last year. Congratulations again, Mr Stephenson, your prize is on its way. To all the rest, keep trying — it could be your turn next.

● *If you send an email entry, remember to include a postal adress for the prize, should you be a winner.*

JJCLESSA

◆ Have you sent off for the latest **Clessa Quickie book** at the reduced price of £2.25 each? Quite a few of you already have. For further information you can write or email me at the puzzle entry address [*main text, left*] or you can visit the new JJ Clessa website at http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/jj.clessa. It contains, among other things, answers to earlier quickies, a difficult puzzle (but not of the *PCW* kind that can be solved by whirring computers), hopefully a few readers' comments, and a bit of this and that — oh, and a plug for the latest Clessa Quickie books! Hope you'll call in.

prize crossword
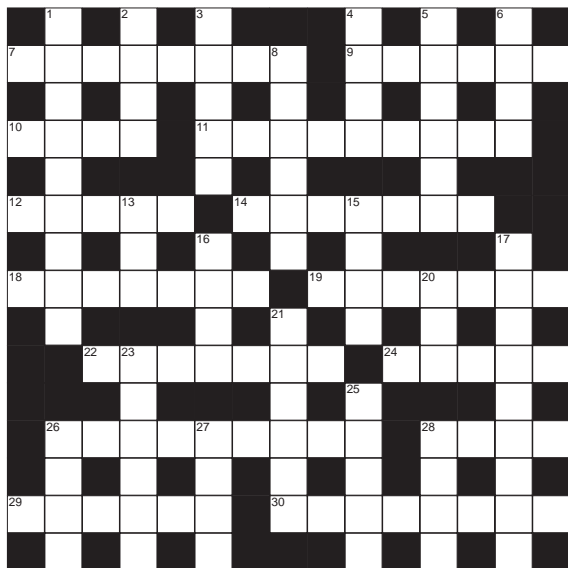
ACROSS
7 Information superhighway (8)
9 Opposite of digital - in American form (6)
10 Optical or floppy? (4)
11 Letter or other font item (9)
12 Local ones push data around the processor (5)
14 Digital image copier (7)
18 Begin working on the PC (5, 2)
19 Battery component (7)
22 Screen's pixel-change speed (7)
24 Digital communication (5)
26 Closed versions of the 7 Across (9)
28 Printer's paper carrier (4)
29 Non-desktop computer (6)
30 The P of ISP (8)

DOWN
1 Times past (9)
2 Look for (4)
3 Hit, rap (5)
4 Fete (4)
5 Conflict (6)
6 Fly high (4)
8 Stupor (6)
13 Spike of corn (3)
15 Metal spike (4)
16 Jelly substitute (4)
17 Disfigured (9)
20 Sing tunelessly (3)
21 Slumbering (6)
23 Landed property (6)
25 Famous racecourse (5)
26 Saddam's country (4)
27 Electrical units (4)
28 Rear part (4)

Each month, one lucky *PCW* Crossword entrant wins a copy of the new *Chambers Dictionary*.
The winner of July's puzzle is: Mr R Morgans, of Twickenham, Middlesex.
This time, it could be you. Send your completed crossword to:
'PCW September - Prize Crossword', VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG, to arrive not later than 31st August, 1999.
• *Please state clearly on your entry if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies.*

Solutions to August's crossword

ACROSS
7 Typesetter 8 Boot 9 Chipsets 10 Design
11 Clicks 13 Imports 15 Platten
17 Standby 19 Process 21 Mosaic 24 Screen
26 Portable 28 Bits 29 Technology
DOWN
1 Mythical 2 Delphi 3 Fete 4 Stash 5 Grid
6 Sought 8 Bassoon 12 Keeps
14 Motto 16 Tickets 18 Backlogs 20 Recoil
22 Arable 23 Speck 25 Note 27 Rank