



Life beyond the Y2K bug, if it exists, will be filled with PC wonders.

Stop bugging me

With the Millennium now just four months away (count 'em — one, two, three, four!) I'm starting to show signs of 'Millennium Meltdown Fatigue' syndrome. The symptoms of this particular distemper are Y2K Bug Warning Weariness and a Fatalistic Abandon. Quite frankly, let the millennium bug bite, I say. Let's get the partying over with and we can all pick up the pieces while we nurse our hangovers.

The Millennial Period looks like being a classic case of mixing pleasure with pain. Currently, I'm seduced by the prospect of the London Eye (the Ferris Wheel on the South Bank) and the magnificent Greenwich Dome. I'm not too excited, though, about the real possibility of water supply and sewerage disruption, rioting in the streets, and computer meltdown in A&E departments and police stations. Compared to the doom and gloom of widespread civil disruption, the fate of our PCs pales into insignificance. Or does it?

It may be that making sure you have a bug-free machine at home in the early days of the new Millennium will be a lifesaver: if stores have run out of stock because automated replenishment systems in supermarkets have succumbed to the Bug, will we really turn to TescoNet and the like for home deliveries? That is, of course, assuming our ISP services are fully operative, and we can place orders.

PCW is aware that many home and small-business PC users are muddling

through on their own — no overpaid consultants here — and so we've teamed up with the government agency, Action 2000, to ensure that free advice is available. Action 2000 offers a range of helpful information on its easily

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navigable websites. Check out our *Online Resources and Projects* section at page 510 for more details. And on our Cover Disc this month, we're reproducing Action 2000's Software Status Database, for readers who don't have web access.

For me, the big question is just how much damage the Y2K Bug will do to the long-term reputation of the PC industry. We appear to be on the verge of a mass market in information-access devices — computers that cost £200 or less and give email and internet access, but strip out all the application software. The Microworkz iToaster is already here <www.microworkz.com>, and Dixons has put down a marker for a web-access device by Christmas. There is also talk of 'web slates' that will be given away free to anyone signing up to a web service.

The doom and gloom merchants, those who have always sneered at PC anoraks, are now predicting that these machines will lionise the PC industry. Hardly! In fact, I'd predict the opposite will happen. Cheap access devices will make PC usage more widespread as people become more IT literate and less inclined to pass off 'computing' as the preserve of the techno-nerd. Web-access devices will help attack the prejudices among the current crop of PC-refuseniks or have-nots. In the new millennium, PCs will continue to be the appliance of choice. They'll also become hip, be wearable, engage us in conversation and be populating other planets alongside us. Beyond the Bug lies a brave new world.

Bobby Pickering, Editor