letters

NET PROPHET

Brian Clegg's *Business Matters* column [*PCW May*] struck a chord with me, having spent the past few months speaking to CompuServe and US Robotics/3Com technical support. To cut a (very) long story short, I discovered that my second BT line was incompatible with V.90/x2 standards. I made a few attempts to find out about the condition of the line, but BT couldn't tell me anything. Several months passed, and then I read Brian's column about his problems with DACS boxes. I phoned BT that weekend and was told that I had a DACS box on the line which could be removed — for free. The box was taken off last Thursday, without BT needing access to my house, and I am now surfing at a 'fast' 48,000. Not quite 56K, but close enough!

JAMES SRINIVASAN
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Net hopes scotched

Why does Scotland not have a top-level domain name? It wasn't assigned one when all the other countries were, although neither was Ireland (ROI) which now owns the top level of '.ie'. Ideally, we (the SDNS team) would like .sco or similar as a top-level domain, but we understand that it is unlikely to be formed. We emailed Nominet requesting whether 'scot.uk' or 'sco.uk' could be sold, or given to u (we cannot simply register it, as they only register names at the third level) but Nominet responded with: 'We would consider it but at this time we do not think there would be sufficient demand for such a service and that it would not be commercially viable'. Well, I am trying to prove them wrong. Please send a quick email to draal@plexity.net to support this. If there is sufficient response I will send the list to Nominet UK.

ROSS MCKILLOP
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Dr Willie Black, md of Nominet UK, replies > *Nominet UK is the national registry for all internet domain names ending with '.uk'. It was established in 1996 to manage the .uk top level domain and is recognised by internet users and the internet industry in the UK, and the UK government.*
The creation of a country code top level domain (ccTLD) for Wales or Scotland is not within the remit of Nominet UK. The delegation of all ccTLDs is the responsibility of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) whose work is currently being transferred to a new not-for-profit organisation called ICANN, based in the USA. Historically, its practice has been to allocate ccTLDs to those countries listed under the international standard ISO 3166 — that is, those recognised as independent by the UN.
It would, however, be possible for Nominet to create a second level domain such as 'scot.uk' or '.sco.uk' if there were sufficient demand. Such a request would have to be approved by the membership of Nominet UK. This currently comprises some 1,000 organisations and individuals, including all the major national and Scottish ISPs. The details of any such proposal would first be debated by Nominet's policy advisory board and we will pass on to them any comments received from PCW readers or by Ross McKillop and his colleagues.

Nominet@nominet.org.uk

TYPECAST

I have been following the correspondence [*Letters passim*] about IT in schools. As a parent and school governor, I have long complained about one glaring omission: we teach our children to form letters and write correctly, so why on earth do we not also equip them with the skills to use a keyboard properly? We are well on the way to producing yet another generation of two-finger typists!

KHORSHED DINSHAW
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PORN AGAIN

Adrian Burgess hit the nail on the head when he wrote [*Letters, May*] that Michael Hewitt knows little about the internet. Michael's reply stated that he was 'too busy downloading pornographic gifs' to reply. Any fool knows that porn pictures are JPEGs… er, or so I've been told.

ANDY DAVIS
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…letters

TUTTI FRUTTI

Simon Pendrey [*Letters, May*] remembers 'other' computers which had been named after fruit at the dawn of personal computing, which brought to mind Commodore's excellent advertisement of that era. Under a large picture of an onion it read: 'Just because it isn't called after a fruit…'

TOM BELL-RICHARDS
LITTLE BARRINGTON, GLOS

CELINE DREAM

For a long time now I have used a shareware copy of Audio Grabber, a software program designed to rip data from audio CDs. I use it mainly to amuse myself, copying songs from Celine Dion CDs and then speeding them up. Other than that, I really couldn't see the point, since standard wav files are far too large to be able to have any quantity of them on your hard disk. Not only this, but the only facility I had for running more than one of them simultaneously often distorted the files when playing. I did notice a little button, though, which read 'MP3', so out of interest I pressed it: 66 files and 116Mb later, I have managed to create a large library of all my favourite tracks. I know many people have said MP3 just doesn't stack up to CD quality, but I can't tell the difference, except of course that the files are between 20 and 30 times smaller. I would seriously recommend anyone to create some MP3s on their hard disk, as it is so much easier than having to constantly change the CD and it really doesn't take up that much space.

JAMES STORMONT
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PCW replies > *It seems that more people are currently using MP3 for hard-disk music libraries than downloading tracks onto solid-state personal players like the Diamond Rio. PCW's own Ian Robson is a great fan of this process, and boasts several hours' worth of popular beat combo hits to play off his ample hard disk.*

INTEL US THE TRUTH

Intel's PIII processor may well be very fast, but does the company really believe that it will 'bring the internet to life'? A very fast processor cannot increase the speed of the internet if the transfer rate is abysmal — as it usually is at peak times. Even when the internet is running quickly, a fast processor rarely makes a difference. The computers we use at college are only P100s with 32Mb of RAM, running NT4, but because they have an ISDN line the internet usually runs faster than on my AMD K6-2 400 with 64Mb of RAM. Maybe Intel and various other firms which use their processors should be realistic about how a fast processor will affect the speed of the internet. Until then, inexperienced buyers will waste their money buying the latest processors based on the incorrect assumption that it will speed up the internet.

PATRICK GOVIER
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Gordon Laing replies > *Intel's claim that the Pentium III brings the internet to life refers to the quicker decompression of complex online audio and video files, particularly if using KNI optimised code. From personal experience, the only real way to bring the internet to life is to have a fast connection and use it when everybody else has gone home. I usually find, working for a large company with T1 leased lines, that accessing the web out of office hours normally does the trick.*

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

PCW uses SYSmark98 and other benchmark software to measure the speed of different PCs. I would like to know the SYSmark score for my own machine. From where can the SYSmark software be downloaded?

MATT GARRETT
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Gordon Thorn, VNU UK Labs manager, replies >

SYSmark98 is a real-world test. It comprises 14 applications covering areas from 'office' to 'productivity'. As the software packages are all commercially available, they are covered by copyright and so SYSmark98 is not available for free download. Although we appreciate that readers may wish to have tests which are freely available, VNU Labs needs to use the highest quality tests available which produce results with a true meaning. If you really want to know how your machine compares, you can purchase SYSmark98 for $199. Purchasing details can be found on the BAPCo web site at www.bapco.com. The complete suite of BAPCo tests will cost you around $1,000.