

# letters

Send your letters to >

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## FULLY-COVERED

After all this hype with the Y2K bug, it seems strange that people offering advice on how to deal with the bug are few and far between. However, I have just seen a bit of advice that fits the bill. Where was this? In an

Action2000 pamphlet? In the pages of your magazine? No. It was on the front cover of *Quill*, the hardware magazine that arrived in the office today ([www.quilloffice.co.uk](http://www.quilloffice.co.uk),

0800 496 0644). It said: 'If in doubt... Print it out... Back it up... File it.' In other words, make contingency plans so that if your computers go 'Pftt' on the big '00', you will at least be able to work without them, until you can fix the problem. Nowhere else have I seen this simple, understandable advice.

PETER STREET



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Timely Intervention

I purchased a £1,500 system from Time Computers a year ago. Included was an LG Electronics Studioworks 771 monitor. Unfortunately teething problems ensued whereby the system was returned, resulting in a fortnight's non-usage.

Following a year's usage, the monitor fizzled and died. I thereafter attempted to contact the Time helpline and two days and approximately 80 calls later was eventually informed that, as I had failed to purchase an extended warranty on the original purchase, my warranty had lapsed by some six days.

Having explained that I had 'lost' two weeks usage of the system and therefore felt that I was morally covered by the original warranty, I was informed the company was no longer responsible and that I was left no alternative than to purchase a new monitor or pay repair fees. There was no suggestion of LG carrying a three-year warranty with their products.

Luckily, prior to purchasing a new monitor, I ascertained that LG monitors carried a three-year manufacturer's on-site replacement guarantee. I contacted Tom Brands Electrical in Greenock which arranged for a replacement at my house within 16 hours. Removing the moral obligation from my experience and excellent services by LG, I wonder what would have happened had I agreed to pay Time £300 for a replacement monitor. Fellow readers beware.

GORDON MACMILLAN

## AVOIDING BEING BRANDED

I always believed screensavers were used to prevent static images from 'burning' the monitor screen.

This doesn't seem to be true of some. A case in point is the BBC dinosaur screensaver. How many doting parents are going to leave this screensaver on for their kiddies only to find they have burnt the BBC logo and 'WALKING with DINOSAURS' onto their screens. Programs such as this should be issued with a Screen Health



Warning. Perhaps PCW could do an article on screensavers listing the good and bad/best-avoided ones?

PETER ROOKS

### WILL HEAD replies >

*Unfortunately, most screensavers are designed by marketing departments to advertise products or brands for free, on your screen real estate, with little attention paid to the effectiveness of their original purpose. The likelihood of a modern monitor suffering phosphor burn is fairly low, but a really effective screensaver is to turn off your monitor when you're not using it (you'll even save money on electricity).*

## EGG LEAVES YOU FEELING HARD-BOILED

Why did the chicken cross the road? Perhaps to distance herself from the actions of one of her offspring.

I have a telephone-based savings account with Egg. One advantage is meant to be the ability to manage my account via the Internet. The only trouble is, it doesn't work. I have tried many times in the past few months, and each time, having entered my security details, I have been shown a

page apologising that my details cannot be accessed and suggesting I phone up instead! This is not a case of entering wrong security information.

The situation has got worse recently: the Egg website has become grass-grow slow since they started advertising their new credit card and online-only savings account.

Some hens do 'ave 'em.

ALAN THOMAS

## DO YOU FEEL THE NEED, THE NEED FOR DVD?

Let us say grace: 'Thank you 7th Guest and Rebel Assault, for this software we are about to install.' Do you think that when feeding your computer over 700MB on a 5in silver disc?

Without these two games, it would be realistic to think you would be feeding in the same software on 150 floppy disks.

I've been on the lookout for the titles that will catapult the DVD-ROM drive to must-have status. I'm still waiting. Since the success of the 3D-video card, all game titles have become formulaic and easily fit on a CD-ROM. Wing Commander IV is on DVD, but a game that interrupts the action with non-interactive video clips won't set the world on fire. There are two encyclopedias on DVD, but I'm not tempted to get a DVD for that purpose alone. What about all those

movies? Well I watch them on my full DVD player, which is hooked up to a 32in widescreen TV and a Dolby Digital sound system.



Seeing them on a 17in monitor with poor sound won't entice me either.

No, it looks like the only reason I have for buying a DVD-ROM is that movie studios are holding me to ransom with the DVD films I buy. Many new titles come with enticing ROM-only material, access to the script on the *Blade* DVD or the theatrical trailer to *The Matrix*. The list grows weekly. Needless to say I am disappointed no-one in the computer

industry has been able to entice me into upgrading to DVD-ROM and it has fallen to a rather ill-suited bedfellow – the movie industry, whom I would have thought would have tried to keep their films away from the copyright-infringing PC generation. Look at all those high-quality screen grabs on those movies websites!

PAUL O'DONNELL

### RIYAD EMERAN replies >

*It's true, we've yet to see a compelling software-based reason to buy a DVD-ROM drive, and until a major release ships on DVD-ROM only, there won't be. It's unlikely any software company will make that decision yet as it will be cutting off such a massive chunk of the market. However, even though you say you would never watch a DVD movie on your PC, many PC owners are buying DVD-ROMs for that reason, as the cost of a home cinema setup is prohibitive. If enough people buy drives for this reason, software houses might consider it worth while to write for DVD instead of CD.*

## NO TRUCK WITH LINUX



There has been a lot of discussion in the computer press (*PCW* included) about how powerful and flexible Linux is.

Then the 3D and Graphics section of *Hands On*

talked about free-

ware 3D-modelling tools for Linux.

Fired and excited, I bought SUSE Linux.

What a complete disaster and waste of money. My problems started with the installation – Linux would not automatically recognise the mouse! So even on the first configuration screens for setup, I had no mouse and was expected to know which device to configure. Even the 'terrible' Windows (as the Linux-heads would have it) gives the user a working mouse pointer! I have enough experience of computers to get the thing loaded.

I was then treated to the delightful graphical interface. Remember GEM? Well that's what it looked like. Clumsy and inelegant. Changing some options required recompiling the kernel. I know this 'highly-configurable' mechanism is the point of Linux, but it is misleading to suggest it is close to a consumer OS.

Whatever you think of Windows, it works for millions of people. Even a novice can install Windows quickly. Just compare that with the horrors of Linux.

There was little hope of using my HP colour Deskjet, my scanner, sound card, or video capture board under Linux. In the end I took the thing off and was glad to see the comforting face of Windows. And it doesn't crash every five minutes!

Unless you're a computer masochist – don't buy Linux. With luck, interest will die and it will go back to the 'specialist' hacker/tweaker sector where it belongs.

BRANDON FLETCHER

### WILL HEAD replies >

*Linux was built by enthusiasts for enthusiasts and there's no escaping this fact. If you want*

*to enjoy the flexibility, power and stability that Linux offers, you have to put in the effort. Linux provides an ideal server platform and some people prefer it on their desktop, but it's not suited to everyone. As far as the GUI goes, Linux doesn't have a standard windowing system, you're free to choose. Some do look a little clunky, others very professional.*

### CLARIFICATIONS:

● **Proxim** has just informed us that the Symphony Wireless Network Card reviewed in the October issue is not yet available for purchase as it has been held up in the approvals process. An answerphone service has been set up to deal with any questions you may have on 01235 861 200.

● In December's Upgrading feature all prices were taken from October's *PCW* and were correct at the time of going to press. Since then memory prices have risen dramatically. Unfortunately this has meant the prices stated in the feature are no longer realistic.