

Paul Smith is visited by **technical revelations** as he shrugs off the shadows of the Jurassic age.

Supernatural sightings



Epiphanies, eh, who needs 'em? I tell you, I've had two this month, and frankly, they both turned out to be just a bit, well... *disappointing*. Certainly, anyone with even a passing acquaintance with this whole technology thing — anyone

who's even been in a room with someone who used to know someone who'd seen a computer once — will be aware of the problem. If I was the bloke in charge of making up names for these things, I'd call it the Next Corner Problem, the eternal promise held out by the industry that, if you'll just make do with the current product, all your problems will be solved by the next version "which is just around the corner". Of course, when you get to the corner, it turns out to be a long gentle curve that never ends.

To the first epiphany. For years, I've searched high and, for the sake of thoroughness, low for the ideal HTML editor. How they can write Word and WordPerfect, but can't produce a simple editor for the limited features of HTML is, like most things, I guess, beyond me. Still, you have to use one application for a WYSIWYG (I think you can guess what that stands for) view of the text, another to arrange images, something else to view applets, and then two browsers that will show it all completely differently anyway.

So, like any real man, I use Notepad. Then along came FrontPage 98. I tried it on a whim. Actually, having tried previous versions of FrontPage, it was more of a personal dare. But what an epiphany! It was so easy to use, it did all your internal navigational links automatically, on the fly, and changing or creating themes is a doddle. Of course, use it a couple of times and the limitations soon turn up. I quickly found out that there were many things you can't do, such as create navbars to bookmarks. I know that a good critic doesn't criticise what something isn't, but this is an obvious limitation. "Ah, good idea," the Microsoft FP technical support person told me, faking the voice of someone who'd never considered this idea before. "We should put that in the next version. Which is just around the corner."

Epiphany the Second? Well, this turned up just before our recent holiday in Turkey (and here's a hint to

avoid those "Where shall we go this hols?" blues: always go to Turkey. Hot, great food and so hospitable. Easy!). Along comes the Ericsson SH888 mobile phone, with dual-band, infra-red and built-in modem. Up to now, I've been using an old Nokia 5.1 (you won't remember it; it's from before they had phones). Indeed, it was the source of some humiliation when I recently called Nokia for some software that goes with its phones. When I told the PR person I used a 5.1, she laughed. At *me*, techno-king of the known world, gadgeteer to the masses and owner of nothing older than two years, including my marriage certificate (which, that reminds me, expires next Monday). Anyway, the SH888 allowed me to slough off the last vestigial remnants of prehistory and, better still, meant I could go on holiday without a notebook. Just a phone and a Palm III. Place one near the other and you're online. Cool.

So, imagine my disappointment when I get to Turkey to find that, of the two cellular networks there, the one serving our mountain village didn't want to know about GSM data calls at all. Actually, even getting a voice call through was no Turkish delight. There's a myth out there that what people chant from those

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minarets — one of which, of course, had to be right outside our bedroom window — periodically throughout the day, is some sort of religious incantation. Actually, I suspect that is was the Turkish GSM backbone, and that the muezzin were in fact shouting 1s and 0s at each other in some sort of verbal digital protocol. What I really want to know is: who is it that feels they need to make a phone call every single morning at sunrise?

So, I never did get online in Turkey. I'm taking my phone to Germany tonight to see if it works better there. Meanwhile, unfazed, I await my next epiphanies. I even know what they will be: BT's Home Highway and its ADSL trial. I deserve to be on that trial. After all, I had to marry someone in west London to get in the trial area.

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