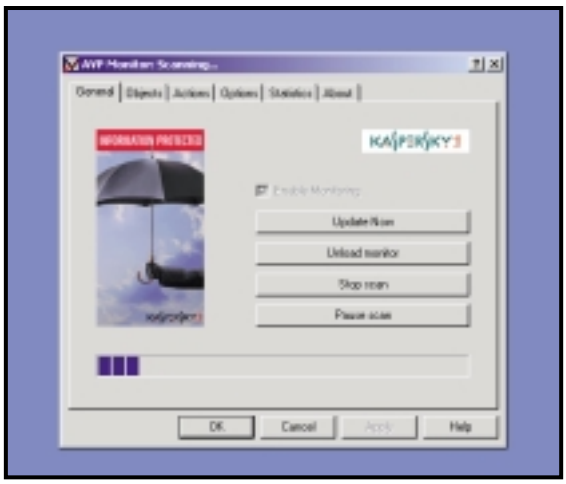
Making the upgrade

Windows 2000-related upgrades have turned Terence Green into Jesse from *The Fast Show*.

This month I have been mostly coming to terms with upgrades triggered by Windows 2000. I've upgraded memory, the anti-virus scanner, and my tape backup drive. A video card upgrade is in the works and did I mention the larger hard drive? So far, around £500 has been lavished on a couple of PCs to better support Windows 2000, but it doesn't look like ending there.

Adding memory turned out to be a no-brainer. I run Windows 2000 on a variety of systems, one of which is an IBM ThinkPad 770 which had been running Windows NT like a dream. It got a whole lot better after being upgraded to the Windows 2000 beta 3, so when Windows 2000 was released with full support for the ThinkPad I went ahead and upgraded. The 770 only has a P166MMX processor and 96MB of RAM, but that seemed enough during the beta. I usually discount beta performance problems, assuming performance will improve with the finished product. It didn't. 'Big' applications such as word processors and spreadsheets slowed to a crawl, so the ThinkPad got another 64MB of RAM which made a huge difference. The memory was sourced from www.crucial.com after a tip-off from a friend – Crucial was radically cheaper than most of the other sources. It's too early to make definitive judgements about the amount of RAM Windows 2000 needs, but it's likely that slower processors get much more pound for pound from extra RAM.



AntiViral Toolkit Pro in action

Most anti-virus scanners need to be upgraded to handle Windows 2000. Being kind of slow on the uptake, I was still using the old scanner that IBM sold to Symantec a while back. It's served me

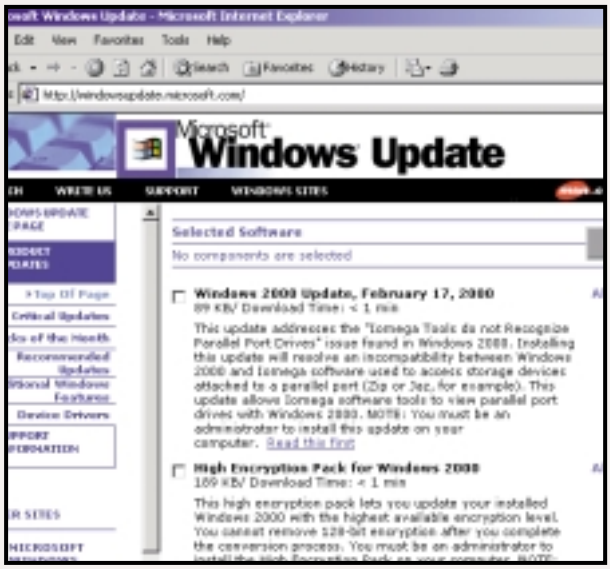
Where's that Zip drive?

Windows 2000 will probably refuse to notice your Iomega parallel port Zip drive, but you can work around the problem by using the Device Manager.

To do this, right-click on My Computer, select Manage from the popup menu and highlight Device Manager. Open the Ports list and right-click on the parallel port. Select Properties, go to the Port Settings tab, and click on the 'Enable legacy Plug and Play detection' check box. Close Device Manager so that Windows 2000 can spot the Iomega drive and install the drivers. So far so good, but the Iomega tools still won't be able to see the Zip drive.

This problem is fixed by a Windows update which you can download from the Windows Update website. Click on Start/Windows Update to go online to the Windows Update Home Page. On the first visit you have to download an analyser that checks your system to see which updates apply. Then the update list appears. Critical Updates, the ones Microsoft thinks you really should apply, are at the top. Scroll down for the rest. The Iomega update is listed as 'Windows 2000 Update, February 17th, 2000'.

While you're here you may want to select the Compatibility update as well. This updates Windows 2000 support for a long list of games and a few productivity applications. Click on download when you've made your selections and the files will be retrieved and automatically installed. Afterwards you need to reboot. When Windows 2000 restarts, you should be able to use the Iomega tools with your Zip drive.

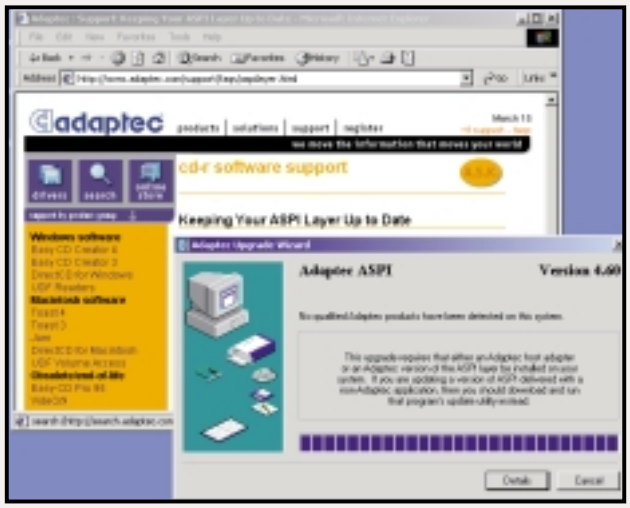


Visit the Windows Update Home Page for Win2K updates

Solving ASPI layer problems on CD drives

Many people have experienced problems with CD-R drives and software under Windows 2000. Usually, the CD-recording software can't see the drive, but there are also glitches in the applications.

As a first step, check the CD-R/CD-RW drive manufacturer's website or that of the software vendor. Most drives need tweaks or updates, and once you get the basic software working you may still find some features inoperative. That's the case with the WinOnCD 3.6 software I use, anyway. The WinOnCD website wasn't very helpful, but eventually I found advice in the CD-R newsgroup on Usenet. WinOnCD installs its own ASPI layer, a required interface for CD-R devices, which is incompatible with Windows 2000. You can disable this in Device Manager. Open the Computer Management console (right-click on My Computer, select Manage) and open the View menu. Select 'Show Hidden Devices' and open the Non-Plug and Play drivers list. Right-click on C2ASPI and disable it. If this doesn't work, there's a problem with the ASPI layer.



In order to update the ASPI layer you must have either an Adaptec card or ASPI layer installed

The good news is that you can download an update from the Adaptec website that will solve the problem, not only for WinOnCD, but for all CD-Rs and applications. The bad news is that this update will only install if it discovers an Adaptec SCSI card or Adaptec software, such as EasyCD, on your system. Some people work around this by searching the web for 'ASPIDLL' to locate an earlier version of the ASPI layer, install that, and then use the Adaptec upgrade, but this contravenes Adaptec's licence.

For more on this and to download the ASPI update, visit the Adaptec site at www.adaptec.com/support/faqs/aspilayer.html.

well for several years, but doesn't cope with Windows 2000. Microsoft arranged a special Year 2000 offer, through which many anti-virus vendors provided time-limited versions of their products.

Having tried a few, I settled on Norton Anti-Virus (NAV) 2000 and Antiviral Toolkit Pro (AVP). Both work well on Windows 2000. I've heard good reports about Sophos as well. In the end I went for AVP (available from www.avp.ch) as it requires minimal maintenance and does find the occasional macro virus in documents emailed to me.

It came as a blow to realise that my venerable Colorado Jumbo tape backup had come to the end of its useful life, because Windows 2000 doesn't support floppy- or parallel-interface backup devices. The manufacturer may decide to write the necessary drivers, but surely not for long-obsolete products.

Fortunately, I managed to find an end-of-line Travan 4 drive online. As it has a SCSI interface, it's fully supported in Windows 2000 and with a much larger capacity there's less tape shuffling as well. By the way, other parallel port devices, such as the Iomega Zip drive, are being supported in Windows 2000. (See Iomega Parallel boxout, opposite) The larger backup capacity was a good match for the new 20GB hard drive, too. However, the cost, around £100, was risible. How do drive manufacturers make any money?

The large drive was necessary to install multiple instances of Windows 2000 for testing. PartitionMagic 5.0 from PowerQuest helped to transfer the contents of the old drive to the new. PM5 doesn't yet work with Windows 2000 but does support DOS, Windows 9x and NT. An update to deal with Windows 2000 is rumoured, but in the meantime it can be used from DOS or from a supported platform on the same system.

The video card looks like it will have to go. It's a Diamond Monster 3D II based on the 3dfx Voodoo 2 chip. According to Microsoft and 3dfx, (the Diamond website is silent on the subject) the Voodoo 2 will never be fully supported by Windows 2000. It's a 3D-only card with no support for VGA and has to be coupled to a pukka VGA card with a pass-thru cable. Windows 2000 currently doesn't support this mode of operation or the SLI feature which allows two Voodoo 2 cards to be aggregated. As a result, the Voodoo 2 will probably never gain Windows Hardware Quality Labs certification and be officially supported.

Some hacked Windows NT drivers have been available from http://ntgamepalace.3dfiles.com/3dfxfaq.htm for a while but 3dfx has now produced its own set of 'hacked NT' drivers at www.3dfxgamers.com. The 3dfx beta drivers support Glide/OpenGL and SLI but only support 3D software acceleration in DirectX, not full hardware acceleration. Whether full support will ever be offered is debatable. 3dfx doesn't think so, even though there are masses of Voodoo 2 cards out there. So, time to buy a new card. To be continued...

CONTACTS

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