

246 GREAT WEBSITES INSIDE!

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➔ 17 March - 30 March 2005 ISSUE 105 £1.85 Everyfortnight

The UK's best-selling internet magazine!

Webuser

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A complete guide to superfast

broadband

DVD rental sites
WE PICK THE BEST

How to protect your online privacy

www.webuser.co.uk



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...trailers and clips
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SUBSCRIBE Get a fantastic deal on the UK's favourite internet magazine – see page 62 for details

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All the latest on the web this fortnight

SECURITY

Messenger worms on the rise

Worms that use instant-messaging software to spread have proliferated over the last month as virus writers look for easier routes to wreak havoc.

Earlier this month, the IMLogic Threat Center, which monitors virus attacks against instant messaging (IM) tools, reported a 50 per cent monthly increase in threats.

Seventy per cent of IM threats in the last month have targeted MSN or Windows Messenger customers, 18 per cent have hit the Yahoo Messenger software and 12 per cent were aimed at AOL Instant Messenger users.

According to Peter Cooper, technology consultant at anti-virus firm Sophos: "Part of the reason for the increase is that messenger software is freely available and many organisations use IM as a business tool. While many people have had it drilled in to them that opening unknown email attachments is unsafe, links and files are the kind of things you do get sent over IM."

Five recent worms – four Kelvir variants and Fatso.A – are programmed to spread via MSN Messenger. Fatso.A pretends to be a picture of a crazy frog, while the Kelvir worms use texts like: omg this is funny! (Kelvir.B) or lol! see it! u'll like it (Kelvir.C).

"If you receive a file via instant messenger that is out of context to the conversation, err on the side of caution and ask someone to confirm they did intend to send you something before clicking on it," said Cooper.

Last month Microsoft issued a security update for MSN Messenger customers. If you have version 6.2 or 6.1 installed on your computer, you need to download an updated version. www.microsoft.co.uk

DVD

Pixar Box-Set – The Incredibles/A Bug's Life/Monsters Inc./Finding Nemo

OUT: Friday 18 March

Pixar has proved quite a dab hand at hitting the spot with its computer animated films and now you can get a whole box-set of its classics, including *The Incredibles*, *A Bug's Life*, *Monsters Inc* and *Finding Nemo*. Alas, there's no sign of the *Toy Story* films, but apparently there could be a second box-set launching later this year. However, there's still 388 minutes of cartoon capers to contend with, so give your memory a jog at the official Pixar website (www.pixar.com/index.html), which has information and trailers for all its feature films, as well as a preview trailer for its next endeavour – *Cars*. For more in-depth stuff, try the individual sites www.theincredibles.com, www.abugslife.com, www.monstersinc.co.uk and www.findingnemo.com.



Box of del



BROADBAND

Superfast broadband trialled

As UK broadband celebrates its fifth birthday this month, several ISPs are gearing up to trial 8Mbps broadband.

Earlier this month, BT Wholesale said it wanted to recruit up to 2,000 businesses and consumers to test lines operating between 2Mbps and 8Mbps.

The 10-week trials will be held within exchanges in the Strathclyde region of Scotland

and in Greater London with lines identified by BT Wholesale and its providers.

Bruce Stanford, BT Wholesale products director, said: "Trials in different geographies are essential to ensure we fully understand how higher speed broadband services might be best deployed in the autumn."

"The ADSL 'max' services will mean people will be able to run more bandwidth-hungry

applications, including video, gaming and music downloads at the same time, as well as email and surfing the web."

BT Wholesale plans to open up the trial gradually to other areas, with higher speed services expected to launch across the UK in the autumn. www.bt.com

● **For the lowdown on the latest broadband deals, turn to page 20.**





Claire Woffenden
News Editor



Veronique De Freitas
Staff Writer

ights



BT is testing even faster broadband lines in Strathclyde, Scotland and Greater London

➔ BROADBAND

Wanadoo offers net calls

Free evening and weekend calls to any UK landline are now available to Wanadoo broadband customers who subscribe to the ISP's new internet phone service.

Wanadoo Wireless and Talk, which costs £4 a month, is designed as a secondary phone line for those who want to make or receive more than one call at once.

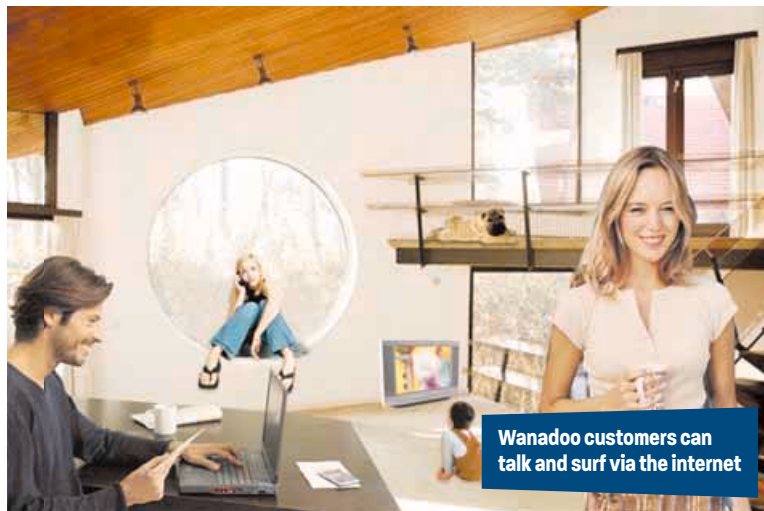
To use the service you need the Wanadoo Livebox broadband modem, which lets you wirelessly access the net. You connect a phone

to the Livebox so calls are made using your broadband connection rather than your phone line.

All evening and weekend calls to UK landlines are included in the monthly fee, with unlimited free calls to other Wireless & Talk customers available at any time.

According to Wanadoo, Wireless & Talk is the start of "a growing family of facilities" available over broadband via the Livebox, including mobile calls, video telephony and video on-demand.

www.wanadoo.co.uk



➔ MONEY

Loan exchange goes online

Key members of the team that served up online bank Egg are having a crack at a new UK online loans exchange.

Zopa puts borrowers in touch with lenders – the theory is that by cutting out the financial middleman everyone will get a good deal.

Richard Duvall, chief executive of Zopa, describes the site as a "refreshing alternative to investing with or borrowing from a faceless institution".

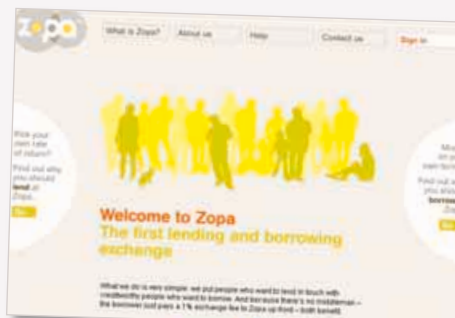
"Zopa offers a different type of solution to the banks, which often make people feel they are sitting outside the headmaster's study waiting for an answer," he said.

Described by some pundits as the eBay of

banking, the exchange permits lenders to choose their interest rate and the risk level of borrower they wish to deal with, while borrowers will also have more control.

"We think eBay changed the view of people buying and selling and we want Zopa to change people's view of lending and borrowing," said Duvall.

www.zopa.com



➔ New Napster

Napster UK has given its jukebox a makeover so you can now transfer ready-made playlists of up to 100 tracks to a device, watch full-length music video streams and shop at a new store selling MP3 players and peripherals. A new homepage will highlight exclusive content, new tracks and albums selected by the Napster UK team.

www.napster.co.uk

➔ DVD choice

ScreenSelect.co.uk has linked up with Virgin Megastores, Boots.com, Radiotimes.com, RealNetworks and Loot.com to offer its DVD rental service to these sites' customers. Each brand will offer different monthly subscription offers.

www.screenselect.co.uk

➔ Free domains

Madasafish is offering customers a free domain name. The .co.uk, .org.uk or .me.uk domain names come with no registration or hosting fees, unlimited email addresses and a 20MB website. The ISP recently introduced a 2Mbps broadband service for £17.99 a month, including a free modem, free connection and two months' free access.

www.madasafish.com



Bagle bother

A new variant of the Bagle Trojan horse prevents anti-virus and security software on an infected computer from working, warns Sophos. Bagle.DI-M also tries to stop you visiting anti-virus websites. As always, make sure your computer is kept automatically up to date with the latest anti-virus software.

UnPlugged

Web on the move

■ **Free Wi-Fi for Skype**

Internet telephony company Skype has linked up with Wi-Fi broadband firm Broadreach to offer free net telephone calls at Broadreach's network of 350 ReadytoSurf fixed and Wi-Fi wireless internet locations across the UK. Skype users will get free access to their accounts. Broadreach's locations include Virgin Megastores, Eurostar, Travelodge and railway stations.

www.skype.com

■ **3G radio**

Virgin Radio has launched a downloadable 3G radio player that lets you listen to its stations via your mobile phone. To access the stations including Virgin Radio, Virgin Radio Classic Rock and Virgin Radio Groove, you need to download a piece of software from the company's wapsite. Virgin says the service is best suited to those with an unlimited GPRS or 3G connection rather than pay-as-you-go data downloads, as an hour's listening would involve about 7.2MB of data.

<http://wap.virginradio.co.uk>

■ **Gizza Gizmondo**

British gaming gadget Gizmondo finally hits the high street on 19 March, having been available in limited quantities online since October. The device, which costs £229, plays games, movies, music and has a built-in digital camera. It also has a GPRS link to allow network gaming and Bluetooth.

www.gizmondo.com

■ **Hotspot trial**

PlusNet customers have until 31 March to register for a free trial of BT's Openzone Wi-Fi hotspots, which cover over 1,500 restaurants, hotels and rail stations. After the trial of PlusNet's new Wireless Broadband service ends, time online costs £8.80 per month for 120 minutes of access.

www.plus.net

→ **WEBSITES**

Delve into your past

If you've always wanted to know where your great great gran lived in 1861 or what your relatives sounded like in 1950, help is nobbut a stone's throw away online.

The 1861 census for England and Wales has been made available for the first time at genealogy website 1837Online. Until now, the data has only been accessible at the Family Records Centre in London or at certain libraries.

It provides information about all the people occupying English and Welsh households, vessels and institutions on the night of 7 April 1861.

Records for London, Middlesex, Kent and Surrey are available now, with data for Essex, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Worcestershire online from 30 March. Remaining counties will be rolled out over the coming months.

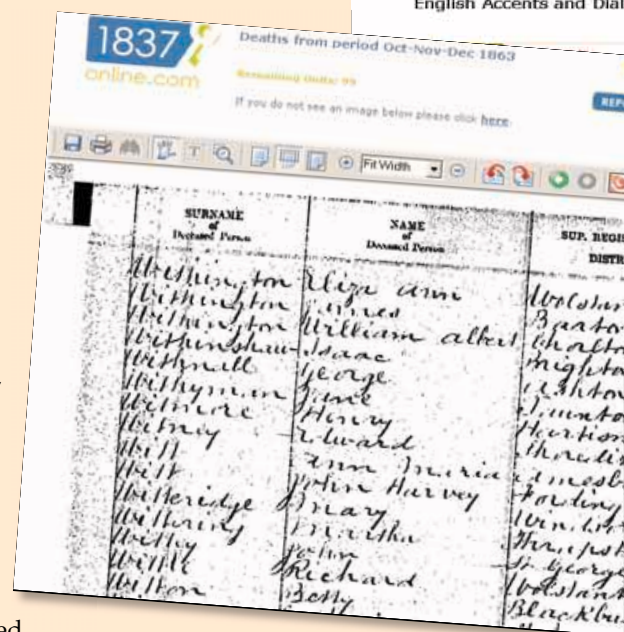
The British Library has also unveiled a new resource offering more than 650 sound recordings of English accents and dialects dating back to 1950.

It includes more than 55 hours of clips from more

than 250 locations in rural England – each recording has an online explanation so you can understand what the participants are saying.

www.1837online.com

www.collectbritain.co.uk/collections/dialects

→ **MUSIC**

Size doesn't matter for MP3

Just how important is size? According to new research, a whopping 98 per cent of storage space on MP3 players is either wasted or left empty.

A poll of MP3 player owners by WebTV Europe found that of the 5,000 tracks that can be stored on some devices, on average only two per cent is used.

Dana Philip Dunne, chairman of WebTV Europe, said: "To really get the best from these MP3 players and use all the space available, users could end up spending three weeks sitting listening to music 24 hours a day. This is simply impractical and puts the old adage of how 'size doesn't matter' back in fashion."

But, if you've got the room, Woolworths (www.woolworths.co.uk) has cut the cost of downloading the latest chart singles from 79p to 67p and albums from £7.99 to £6.80.

www.webtveurope.com

She's small, but how many Kylies can you fit on your player?

→ **SEARCH ENGINES**

Yahoo offers video search

Yahoo is testing a new video-search facility that lets you find and view clips from across the web, including music videos and sport highlights.

The search engine uses content from major providers such as the BBC and BSkyB and also invites publishers to upload clips directly into the index.

Every video clip you locate, which you can narrow down by specific video formats, size or length, can be viewed directly by clicking on the search results.

Mark Barlow, product manager at Yahoo Search UK, said: "Yahoo Video Search already lets you search millions of videos from across the web and we're building our relationships with broadcasters to offer even more access."

Separately, Google has formally launched its Desktop search tool, which lets you search for information on your computer. A trial version launched in October.

<http://uk.search.yahoo.com>

EXHIBITIONS THEMED TOURS SEARCH GO

• Collections • English Accents and

Advanced search | Search tips

The way we speak
Listen to England's changing voice. Extracts from the Survey of English Dialects and the Millennium Memory Bank document how we spoke and lived in the 20th century.

Online now.

Curator's choice
You can choose from the curator's favourites shown on the left, or click the links below to browse the whole collection, to read more about it, or select a different collection.

View whole collection

1837

The 1861 census is now available at 1837Online. You can also listen to voices from the more recent past courtesy of the British Library

SPORT

Live footy action

Football fans can watch international matches involving Scotland, Spain, Holland and Portugal for free via the net over the coming months.

Betting site Blue Square has secured the rights to broadcast 18 free-to-access World Cup qualifiers.

Blue Square will also offer live 'in-running' betting, so you can place bets during the matches. Earlier this year, the site attracted nearly 6,000 unique online viewers to a live darts contest in Holland.

Ed Pownall, press officer at Blue Square, said: "We have already offered exclusive darts and tennis

but football is huge in betting terms. This is a major coup for us and includes matches that are not only competitive but also of the highest quality.

"Cynics used to terrible internet images should be aware that the broadcast is a live television stream and so the quality should be far superior to normal internet images for broadband users."

The 12 matches include Bulgaria v Sweden on 26 March, Estonia v Portugal on 8 June, Czech Republic v Holland on 8 October and Slovenia v Scotland on 12 October.

www.bluesq.com



SPORT



England football kit unveiled

If you're desperate to see the new England football strip, you can watch live coverage of its official launch online.

UK sportswear firm Umbro is to screen footage from the unveiling on 23 March at the

Lowry Hotel in Manchester, which will see some of the England squad modelling the kit.

England's new kit goes on sale 24 March and will be worn against Northern Ireland in the World Cup qualifying game two

days later. The women's version will be worn during Euro 2005, held in England on 5 to 19 June.

You'll need Real Player or Flash Player 7 installed to watch the broadcast.

www.umbro.com

Inbrief



Holiday draw

To celebrate signing up its 100,000th broadband customer, Virgin.net will enter new customers who sign up to one of its 512Kbps broadband packages before 31 March into a prize draw to win a trip for four people to the Caribbean, worth £5,000. Virgin offers a choice of two 512Kbps packages: Plan 2 costs £17.99 a month and limits surfers to a 3GB monthly download usage limit, and Plan 1 costs £24.99 but offers unlimited surfing.

www.virgin.net

Stars in your eyes

Ask Jeeves has added a horoscope tool to its Smart Search features. Astrological surfers type in a star sign to get a box at the top of the search page that gives background on the star sign and the option to click through to a detailed horoscope for the next two days. Other Smart Search features include a dictionary, weather and famous people fact-finder.

www.ask.co.uk

Secure AOL

AOL has launched a Safety and Security Centre that provides members with a single online area from which they can set-up, manage and monitor online safety features such as anti-virus and anti-spyware protection, and parental controls. Using AOL Guardian, parents can receive regular updates on their child's online activities.

AOL Keyword: Security

NTL upgrade

As we reported in Issue 104, NTL has started upgrading existing customers to faster broadband services. The £24.99 a month 2Mbps and the £37.99 a month 3Mbps packages have a 1GB daily download limit, while the £17.99 a month 1Mbps service has a 3GB monthly limit. New broadband customers get a month's free access.

www.ntl.com

TypePad
Personal Weblogging Service

Share your world with people who are important to you. TypePad is easy to use, good-looking, and full of features.

Free Trial

FREE! 90-day subscription

& 20% Life Discount. Create your blog with TypePad™

Web User has teamed up with TypePad™ to offer a free trial of its advanced blogging tools.

● Register before 15 April 2005 at www.typepad.co.uk/webuser

COMMENT**Movie madness**

Richard Clark
Editor

As we reported in the last issue of *Web User*, the film industry is cracking down on film piracy, led by the Motion Picture Association of America which has begun suing peer-to-peer sharers of movies. MPAA anti-piracy supremo John Malcolm is quoted as saying it is taking such action to "avoid the fate of the music industry".

This has a familiar ring about it, and I suspect that rather than learning from the music industry's mistakes the MPAA is embracing those very same errors. An appetite for whingeing and thirst for litigation can at best delay the inevitable, and I would suggest it made better use of its time trying to develop legal

“The film industry's appetite for whingeing and thirst for litigation can at best delay the inevitable”

download services to satisfy the needs of the consumer.

So what has brought all this huffing and puffing from the corporate big-wigs? The presence of the rather wonderful BitTorrent software and its growing number of imitators has enabled huge amounts of data to be uploaded and downloaded between file sharers, making the piracy of movies and TV shows a simple and fast procedure.

It has been estimated that over one third of all data travelling the internet is using BitTorrent and if only a fraction of this is illegally shared material there could be an awful lot of courtroom action.

In no way do I condone theft, but wouldn't it be better for the film industry if it was to learn the belated lesson grasped by its music business counterparts? It needs to understand the revolution in content distribution and work to find a solution that is beneficial to their customers and the balance books.

Downloads of the fortnight

Better on broadband!



➔ **AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition 7.3**

The latest update to the AVG Free Edition anti-virus tool includes the Resident Shield, which provides real-time protection as files are opened and programs are run, the AVG E-mail Scanner, which protects your email and the AVG On-Demand Scanner, which allows you to perform scheduled and manual tests.

Download at: <http://free.grisoft.com/freeweb.php/doc/2>

File size: 20.3MB

Requirements: Windows 95/98/ME/2000/XP/NT

➔ **Opera 7.54 for Windows**

Opera Software has released the second beta version of its net browser, which includes new security features and a new interface. The browser displays security information inside the

address bar, located next to the padlock icon that indicates the level of security present on a site, which Opera says is crucial in countering phishing attacks.

Download at: www.opera.com/download

File Size: 3.50MB

Requirements: Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP

➔ **Word Whomp**



Can you outgun the gophers and spell tons of words in two minutes? Word Whomp offers three spelling games, where you show your dictionary skills by churning out as many words as you can from six scrambled letters. You can download a free version, which lasts for 60 minutes, but for longer play and more words you can buy a full version at \$19.95.

Download at: <http://get.games.yahoo.com>

File Size: 3.53MB

Requirements: Windows 95/98/ME/2000/XP

➔ **Panda ActiveScan**

This new free version of Panda Software's online scanner detects and eliminates spyware as well as viruses, worms and Trojans. It also includes the Genetic Heuristic Engine which analyses the code and characteristics of malware without the need for file updates.

Download at: www.pandasoftware.com/products/activescanpro/default.asp

File Size: 1.5MB

Requirements: Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP

➔ **Hangman Pro 2.0.3**

The developers describe this game for Macs as "a fun, secretly-educational, non-violent, colourful, soundful, expandable word-guessing game". This version features 70 categories of words.

Download at: <http://mac.tucows.com>

File Size: 1.4MB

Requirements: Mac Classic/OSX

What's hot

Camilla Parker Bowles

www.ebay.co.uk

The original *Spitting Image* puppet of Camilla attracted a £4,000 bid on eBay.

Computers www.yahoo.co.uk

Brits would rather have a PC than a cooker, TV or fridge.

Faithful Brits

www.cupidbay.com

Only one per cent of married UK men look for extramarital sex online.

Internet degrees

www.ukeu.com

e-University folded in 2004 despite spending an average of £44,000 per student.

Spam menace

www.emailsystems.com

Legitimate emails made up less than two per cent of all email traffic in February.

What's not➔ **PIRACY****UK file-share**

British record labels have vowed to continue taking action against people who distribute music illegally, after securing more than £50,000 compensation from 23 offenders.

The BPI (British Phonographic Industry) said the UK surfers agreed to pay up after sharing tracks via peer-to-peer networks. Two illegal file-sharers paid £4,000 each to settle their cases.

Geoff Taylor, BPI general counsel, said: "We hope people will begin to get the message that the best way to avoid the risk of legal action and paying substantial compensation is to stop



Everyone's clicking on...

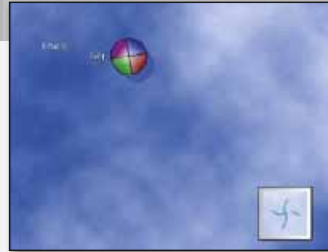
Our guide to this fortnight's most clickable sites

THIS GAME

Metaphysik 2

www.jmtb02.com/flash/metaphysik/metaphysik.htm

Our toes have been curling in frustration at this game, where you have to guide a ball through a maze and to the exit point in order to progress to the next level. You're quite right – it doesn't sound hard. But then we hadn't explained that the ball is in the grip of a strong gravitational pull and that you need to manoeuvre it without hitting the sides of the maze.



THIS TIME-WASTER

Catch flies with chopsticks

www2.abc.net.au/fly/flysui/flysui.html

This is not a game. A game, you see, is fun. You have a good time. This is not fun. This is a short ride to a padded cell. That or your P45, because this is the ultimate time-waster. Here you're challenged to emulate Mr Miyagi and snare bluebottles with a pair of eastern eating implements and, try as you might to resist, you'll be coming back for more.



THIS BIZARRE SITE

Rapid insanity test

www.frenzy.com/~jester/racecar.html

Many theories are bandied around that claim to tell if you're losing your mind. Some say it's when you start talking to yourself, others think it's when you utter the words: "Isn't Natasha Kaplinsky talented?" This site though is a sure-fire way to find if you've misplaced the plot – it's quick and very accurate indeed. If you do succumb, seek help immediately.



Each fortnight, one of the *Web User* team picks three of their favourite places on the web



Nicola Ponting
Advertising & Sponsorship Manager

Apple

www.apple.com/uk



I was totally petrified when I went into the new Apple flagship store on Regent Street, but this website does

make you feel like you can find out the basics before you enter into this strange world. Being a late starter in the iPod era, (my mortgage payments are huge I tell you!) this site is good as it spells out what you should know already and prepares you for world domination by Apple.

CDWow

www.cdwow.co.uk



I know CD Wow is as old as the hills and *Web User* readers have been using it since they were children, but I still love this site. You can sit at your desk, albeit briefly (only at lunchtime of course boss) and a lovely little package comes through your door a few days later. My only complaint is the 50p-off voucher after spending over £50 – it's a bit stingy.

EasyJet

www.easyjet.co.uk



I love my weekend breaks. Although people have mixed views about cheap flights and what they are doing to the ozone layer, but with 25 days holiday per year, I really don't have time to swim, so EasyJet does it for me. I really like the updated version of the site with the map and new routes, and got quite excited when I got the newsletter saying I can get to Ibiza for £13 this summer. Check it out, but don't book all the deals!

ers snared



illegal file-sharing and to buy music online, safely and legally, instead.

"We are going to continue bringing cases against people who distribute music illegally, whichever file-sharing network they use, for as long as it's necessary."

The BPI has filed 31 new cases against file-sharers on peer-to-peer networks, including Kazaa and Limewire.

Mark Mulligan, a senior analyst with Jupiter Research, said: "There really isn't any defence for file-sharers with the breadth and depth of legal content now available."

www.bpi.co.uk/piracy/content_file_79.shtml



Web User's clicking on...

Sites that have kept us busy this fortnight...

1 The French Disco Lift
<http://snipurl.com/cttu>
Nothing can ruffle this girl's Gallic cool.

2 She Hates Me
www.albino
blacksheep.com/flash/lockedme.php

A cover of a Puddle of Mudd song, this is an ode to instant messenger woe.

3 Build your own city
www.m-city.org/m-city/konstruktor/konstruktor_galeria.html

Not too keen on your local metropolis? Then escape to one you've built.

4 Synth Museum
<http://synthmuseum.com>
No doubt this is Gary Numan and Vince Clarke's favourite ever website.



Seen something silly, stupid or splendid? Email us now at seenthis@web-user.co.uk and visit www.webuser.co.uk/seenthis



LETTERS

Is there something you'd like to share with other readers? Are you hot under the collar about a burning issue? We want to hear from you, so send us an email or write us a letter



Star Letter

Hello internet telephony, goodbye BT



I was disappointed that your Group Test feature on VoIP services (Issue 104) failed to look beyond the initial appeal of cheap phone calls. Making such calls over the internet with a microphone and speakers is all well and good, but what about those who want to receive calls as well? My chosen provider, Gossiptel (www.gossiptel.com), offers 500 minutes to pretty much anywhere in the world for £9.99 a month.

But – and here's the clincher – you can choose a normal-rate phone number from a selection of popular area codes, so that people on the regular telephone networks can call your internet phone. You can do all this with a microphone and the right piece of software – or you can invest in a small adaptor box that connects directly to your broadband modem and allows you to use your existing home phone to make internet calls.

Unless you're sitting in front of your PC all day, there's little appeal to the services you featured beyond the initial novelty value. The real future of internet telephony is in the all-in-one, cost-effective landline alternatives that will

Three steps to Firefly™ calls!

Step 1.
Get your Firefly number
Register >>

Step 2.
Get Firefly
Download >>

Step 3.
Install Firefly, start calling!
Use Firefly >>

Calling Rates
Calls charged per second
Minimum charged call 1c
Prices are in \$AUD / min
More calling rates >>

Region	Country	Rate (\$AUD / min)
Oceania	Australia	6.9¢ / min
	New Zealand	6.9¢ / min
	Americas	
Americas	Canada	6.9¢ / min
	USA	6.9¢ / min
	Europe	
Europe	France	6.9¢ / min
	Italy	6.9¢ / min
	Germany	6.9¢ / min
	Greece	8.9¢ / min
Asia	UK - London	6.9¢ / min
	China	6.9¢ / min

Buy the FT102 USB Phone now

VoIP – where was Firefly?

I read with interest your feature on internet telephone technology and was surprised Firefly, which is available to download at www.freshtel.net, wasn't mentioned. It's a much smaller download than Skype and works very well on a dial-up connection – I can't get broadband here. It has all the features that Skype has, except you can't do conference calls. Although Skype does work on my dial-up connection, there is a long delay, which doesn't usually happen using Firefly. I've been using it for a couple of months and saved a lot of money. Definitely the best new technology for me!

Annie Riggs, Haverfordwest

Editor replies: Freshtel is an Australian company and the website quotes prices for Firefly in Australian dollars and it isn't promoting its product outside Australia as far as we can make out. However, thanks for the tip. We'll keep an eye on their service.

Why do eBay sellers demand early feedback?

I thought I would drop you a line with my thoughts on eBay's feedback system. I am predominantly a buyer on eBay and am trying to build up my feedback, but I get very annoyed when the seller asks for feedback before they give theirs out! The number of times I gave a seller feedback when I first started and got none in return was quite often. I see no reason at all why the buyer should give the seller feedback before he gets his, as the buyer completes their part of the deal in some cases up to a week or more before the goods are received, yet the seller still asks for feedback first. By rights the seller should leave feedback as soon as the item has been posted.

Rick, via email

Technical error spells trouble

I've just started reading Issue 103 and have noticed in the eBay news story on page seven

multiple spelling mistakes and gaps in the middle of words where there shouldn't be etc. I find this quite appalling as these kind of mistakes surely should be filtered out via some sort of spell checker, or even by the editor. I will now look forward to reading the rest of the magazine to see how many other articles contain these same mistakes and flaws! I just hope these mistakes are only in a select batch of these magazines as I am sure that it is very embarrassing for whoever is in charge of quality control of this magazine!

Terry Dowsing, via email

Editor replies: Well spotted Terry. We apologise for this error, which was actually caused by an unavoidable technical glitch – not a slackening of editorial standards.

Nokia eBay scam spotted

Please alert your readers to a scam I recently encountered on eBay. In it, an auction item shows a great picture of a Nokia 7600 mobile phone advertised as "brand new, unlocked" for a buy-now price of only £49.99. This is then followed by over 50 lines of product description telling you all the wonderful features this phone has. To read the whole phone description you have to scroll down three times, even on a high-resolution screen – so you tend not to bother reading every line.





Gossiptel
Got broadband?
Get **FREE** phone calls!

home my account learn more plans & prices support shop about us

Join Gossiptel Now!
Free PC Phone Download Now!

HOT GOSSIP: Gossiptel launches Unli

Free Internet Calls
Make free calls over your Broadband connection to any other Gossiptel user and more than a million other Internet telephony users worldwide! Friends and family abroad? Get them onto Gossiptel and never pay again for calls between you. [Learn more](#)

Low Cost Calls
Want to save money on calls to ordinary phones as well? We offer some of the lowest calling costs available. Top-up as and when you need with 'Free Gossip' or subscribe to one of our monthly packages for even greater savings. [Learn more](#)

Free Calling Features
With free Voicemail, Caller Display, Call Waiting, Call Diversion, 3-Way calling and much else, even if you don't subscribe to a package, we beat the competition on features as well as price. [Tell me more...](#)

finally allow us to junk our expensive old-school phone operators for good.

Tom Booroff, Ruislip

Editor replies: We looked at what we regard is the broadest appeal of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), which is using your computer to make free or cheap out-going calls. Although early adopters like Mr Booroff may be ready to

consign their standard telephones to the dustbin, we think most of our readers may still be a few steps away from such a major lifestyle change.

We have reviewed Gossiptel in the past – interested readers can find the review back in Issue 88 or in our reviews archive at www.webuser.co.uk/products/Gossiptel_review_2047-206.html.

A friend bid for the phone, tempted by the low buy-now price. After paying the money all he received from the seller was an email giving links

to websites where this phone can be purchased, www.nokia.co.uk for example.

Going back to the eBay item listing, a closer inspection of the description revealed on the last line: "This is a link you are not actually getting this phone – an email will be sent to you on where to get this phone". So be warned! Be sure to read every line of every auction listing you are interested in, or you may end up getting a lot less than you expected!

Alan Sheritt, via email



NOKIA 7600
BRAND NEW
UNLOCKED

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AS NO REFUNDS WOULD BE TAKEN
COMES WITH CHARGER, 3 SIM CARD, HEADPHONES, PLUS CABLE AND CD ROM TO CONNECT PHONE TO YOUR PC!

GREAT FOR VIDEO, MUSIC AND PHOTOS!
PLEASE SEE WWW.NOKIA.CO.UK FOR A DEMO!

Correction

Web User would like to confirm that the correct price for the F-Secure IS2005 reviewed in Issue 103 is £38.95 including VAT, not £53 as stated. For more information visit www.f-secure.com/estore/uk.

Hot Topics

These are the questions we pondered last issue. Here's what you thought on our forum at www.webuser.co.uk and in your emails.

1 Why do you think Norwich is the eBay capital of Britain?

There's no reason. It could have been anywhere. Somewhere has to come top. It's how statistics work. Sorry if there's no wacky reason.

Richie P, via Web User Forums

You would have thought that with all that eBaying going on they could have bought themselves a new football team. Still they say life is easier in the lower divisions.

Greysts, via Web User Forums

2 Are you drooling over the new broadband speeds?

The new speeds are great. When I first got broadband the fastest option I had was 512k – now I can double that (but will not pay Wanadoo £20 for the privilege). But what is the point of faster speeds with some of the caps the services put up? They are ridiculous. I mean, 1 or 2GB a month can soon disappear just by listening to the radio for a few hours a day.

Wild Thing 666, via Web User Forums

3 Which is the best DVD rental site?

I have been a member of ScreenSelect (www.screenselect.co.uk, which has now merged with Video Island) for nearly a year now and can say they are a pretty slick operation. I think the website is really easy to

navigate and find what you want. The personal recommendations it gives are pretty near the mark and this gets more accurate the more DVDs you watch. There is a huge selection and the few problems I have had have been dealt with very swiftly and efficiently. I don't think you can go wrong with ScreenSelect in my opinion.

The Bigg Fella, via Web User Forums

For a full review of DVD rental sites, turn to page 28

Webuser Newsletter

Sign up now for our free email newsletter – in your Inbox every fortnight. See www.webuser.co.uk/newsletter

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Great news! You can subscribe to Web User online: just visit www.webuser.co.uk and click on the 'Subscribe' link. There's no need to hunt for a stamp, write a cheque or phone a credit card hotline during office hours. Web User operates a secure site so you can buy with 100 per cent confidence.

Write to us!

Email us at letters@web-user.co.uk (include your name and full address in case you win the Star Letter) or write to Letters, Web User, Room 0305, IPC Media, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS.

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Site of the fortnight

WebSafe Crackerz

www.websafecrackerz.com

Our rating



WebSafe Crackerz, the MSN-owned online safety advice site designed by teenagers for teenagers, has been revamped. The site was already excellent at tackling topics including viruses and spam, cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying and sexual harassment, but perhaps overdosed on the 'hey, we're down with kids' approach, by talking incessantly in text speech and teen slang. Following feedback from teens on their experiences of the site, MSN has opted for a more mature tone and a focus on real-life experience and opinion, with less fictional content and 'u r gr8' stuff. The all-improved Websafe Crackerz is made up of a range of micro-sites offering tips for teens on handling various web situations. It includes a new section focusing on mobile internet safety and an e-zine looking at laws relating to the internet, as well as the inevitable games and competitions.



Can you crack the

Login: ☒ Remember me
Password:

Get a login here

The safe can be opened by collecting 1 quiz code from each cyber-world. To open the safe click here when the safe says unlocked.

Enter the worlds here...



BBB locked



S.P.A.M. locked



Nick-star locked



Don't Click Here locked



iB8u locked



InTransit locked

Sponsors and partners



Britten-Pears Foundation

www.brittenpears.org

Our rating



The Britten-Pears Foundation, established to promote the musical legacy of composer Benjamin Britten and tenor Peter Pears, has launched this new website. The site offers information on the pair, including extensive biographies, timelines and introductions to their works. Use the Performance calendar to find out about upcoming performances of Britten's work across the world or find out



about visits to and exhibitions at the Britten-Pears Library, which holds collections of books, manuscripts, printed scores and sound recordings. There are also links to sound samples and tracks to buy via Amazon. This extensive site is unbelievably thorough, easy to navigate and well designed.



Riskology

www.riskology.co.uk

Our rating



With the chance of winning fabulous top-of-the-range designer goods including a Ducati motorbike, it's not surprising Premier League footballers are flocking to play this online version of spot the ball (see issue 104). If you think you can outstrike them, you must confirm you are over 18, and register to pay £10-£15 per ticket. You then wait until 999 are sold for each game. Games currently online include unique rugby and cricket snaps taken by the site founders – you click where you think the missing ball should be, with an accountant and a magistrate judging the closest shot. The winner and losers are emailed the result.

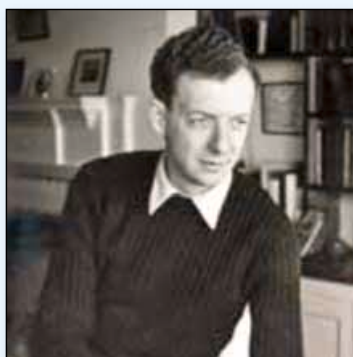
PARIS

www.info.autism.org.uk

Our rating



The launch of the Public Autism Resource and Information Service (PARIS) brings invaluable help to people with autism and their carers. PARIS, supported by the National Autistic Society, cuts out the hard work of hunting for assistance. Thousands of support services, including schools, outreach programmes and support groups, can be tracked down using the fantastic search facility, which offers detailed information about the results. You can also browse services in the directory from Advice and Help to Training and Events. The My PARIS section lets you bookmark searches to create a database within a database and the Autism Latest keeps you bang up-to-date with developments and autism-related news stories. A great use of the web.



of the best new and revamped websites



WebSafe Crackerz offers teenagers a wealth of advice on internet security in a colourful range of pages. It covers topics such as bullying, mobile phones and illegal music downloads



Smart to Go
www.smarttogo.co.uk
Our rating ★★★★★

The Smart car, which aims to help drivers nip through traffic and find parking spaces too small for other cars, has a new website. According to Smart, the new-look site reflects the "functionality, innovation and joy of life" its cars apparently offer. We're not sure if a visit here will add that much zest to your day, but these funky pages certainly fulfil the first aim. You can request brochures or test drives at a local retailer, create your own personal profiles of favourite cars and features, search for used models and download wallpapers, screensavers and videos for its latest ad campaigns, which include some intriguing animals. Functional and innovative.



The Ring 2
www.ring2-themovie.com
Our rating ★★★★★

The Ring 2 is the follow-up to the 2002 chiller *The Ring*, based on the 1998 Japanese cult classic *Ringu*. The idea of a good movie site is to entertain and engage a viewer with such thrilling features that they feel compelled to queue for tickets for the film's opening night. Yet this site is so spooky, you might get too scared to consider watching it. Make sure you're holding someone's hand as you enter a world of eerie music and flickering images of taps dripping, beating hearts and maggots. What it's got to do with the film is anyone's guess, but we're frightened. There is a UK site (www.uip.com/thering2), but it only had a trailer and crackling TV on our visit.

Reviews by Claire Woffenden, Lisa Kelly and Toby Earle

BlogOn

Sly Sports News <http://slysportsnews.blogspot.com>

Football, it's been said in the past, is a funny old game. Quite frankly, these days it feels like anything but, what with the obscene amounts of money flung at players and clubs, the often obscene amounts of money fans have to spend to follow their team and the relentless media hyperbole that surrounds the Premiership. Football these days isn't so much funny, more like a bad joke.

Recognising that something has gone awry, Carrie and Steph, the creators of Sly Sports News, have produced a blog where fawning coverage is off the menu. What spurred you to start the blog? "After spending months and years poring over the sports media and venting our spleens to each other, we wanted to step up a scale and at the same time produce something that we'd be interested in reading." So what can readers expect of the puntastic Sly Sports News? "There's only one rule on Sly – we mock where mockery is necessary. We'll turn our hands to any sporting issue that needs our very special form of analysis, and we're not afraid to speak our minds. We update it daily, so the site's topical, and if readers want us to look at a particular topic, they only have to ask."

Focusing on a wide range of sports, reflecting the authors' own varied interests, Sly Sports has a commendable ethos: "There's so much hype around top-level sport and frankly some people need taking down a peg or two – or at least they need the real world pointing out to them."



Planning Portal www.planningportal.gov.uk Our rating ★★★★★

Waiting for planning permission can mean that by the time you get the green light for your coveted extension, you're more likely to need a mausoleum built. This revamped portal letting people submit applications to local authorities online promises an easier ride. It can now deal with 12 times more traffic, offering a speedier service tailored to different users, with faster access to information such as guidance notes and maps. Check if your local authority lets you fully apply online or if you must print off a hard copy and use snail mail. Fortunately the site didn't need permission to build new services such as planning inspectorate appeals.



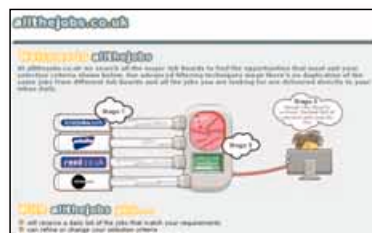
Yakult www.yakult.co.uk Our rating ★★★★★

Unlike the TV ad for the fermented milk drink containing friendly bacteria, this site doesn't have a nasty nerd trying to convince you of Yakult's health benefits. Instead, it sports cheerful illustrations and is awash with scientific information about the probiotic. Get a bellyful of reasons to drink it in the Digestive Health section, which includes an animated guide to the gut, a downloadable Good Gut Guide and a healthy-eating test. There are also plenty of links to sites offering help with gut-related ailments such as irritable bowel syndrome. A gutsy site.



Snatch It www.snatchit.com Our rating ★★★★★

Interactive TV company Eagle Road Studios, which broadcasts reverse auction channel Snatch It TV on Sky, has spread to the web. Eagle-eyed bargain hunters can swoop on items, which keep reducing in price until sold. The site runs more than 7,000 auctions a day, lasting around three minutes each, so you must click quickly before someone else snatches what you're after. Most of the items 'down' for grabs are jewellery. Novices should turn to the Help section, which guides you around the complicated-looking site and points out features such as forward bidding. Past TV customers can retrieve their existing account for use on the website.



All the Jobs www.allthejobs.co.uk Our rating ★★★★★

This recruitment site promises to take the hard work out of job-hunting by cherry picking positions from over 20 UK online job boards including Reed and Monster. Following free registration, you can create a job profile using selection criteria including sector, full or part-time and location. Specifying key words describing your dream job should help prevent unwanted vacancies filling your Inbox. As with any new contract, however, you should read the small print: by registering, you agree to All the Jobs and its clients sending you information about their products based on your stated interests.



Oliver Goldsmith www.olivergoldsmith.com Our rating ★★★★★

Moody models wearing glamorous shades pose on this site's homepage, but the View Products section has the full range of face furniture. Many designs have cheesy names like Drew and Chas and are accompanied by equally cheddary Oliver Goldsmith quotes. The prices also smell high – in the £200-plus range. If you want to find out more about how they can get away with it, click on About Us, which describes the craftsmanship behind the spectacles and lists style icons such as Audrey Hepburn and John Lennon who have worn them.



of the best new and revamped websites



Plant Cultures

www.plantcultures.org.uk

Our rating ★★★★★

From curry to cotton, south Asian plants are part of everyday life. Launched by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, this site brings to life the stories, folklore and facts behind 25 of them, including curry leaf, henna and indigo. The Stories section has anecdotes from

celebrities and includes a scrummy recipe for mango ice-cream from the BBC's Konnie Huq. You can contribute your own story so the site continues to blossom and grow. Pick out pictures in the beautiful online library of prints, paintings and

drawings from famous collections. Themed sections explain the cultural relevance of plants in our history, religion, health and cookery. Events, workshops and garden visits are also planned from mid-March to get visitors' sap rising.

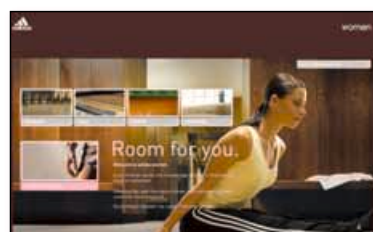


Write to Them

www.writetothem.com

Our rating ★★★★★

A cyber successor to FaxYourMP, this government-funded site aims to bolster democracy by making access to politicians easier. Enter your postcode and you get a list of your democratic delegates and their duties, from councillors to MPs. Click on your target name and a window pops up where you must enter your name, address and email before writing your message. After previewing and editing your missive, you have to leave the site to check your email and click on a link in a message from the site confirming you want to send your message, which is a bit of a palaver. There's also a list of Guidelines for campaigners who are planning to encourage others to send messages via the site.



Adidas Women

www.adidas.com/women

Our rating ★★★★★

Sportswear firm Adidas has unveiled a new site aimed solely at women. The site wants to inspire women to make more time to look out for themselves – with the mantra “find room for you” – and, of course, to offer them “a fresh perspective on the possibility of getting fit with Adidas”. The site focuses on four activities – yoga, tennis, swimming and training, with a special section dedicated to the new range from designer Stella McCartney. For each product, you can zoom in for a closer look and find further information on colours and related items.



Be Cool

www.mgm.com/becool

Our rating ★★★★★

Pulp Fiction stars John Travolta and Uma Thurman reunite in *Be Cool*, a sequel to the 1995 comedy *Get Shorty*. Travolta reprises his role as Miami mobster Chili Palmer in the upcoming film, but this time he turns his attentions from loan sharking to the music business. The music's hip and the images slick at this official website, but to say it offers anything amazing would be criminal. There are profiles of all the characters, wallpapers, a brief synopsis, AIM icons, and cast and crew information. The Mixing Board is a little disappointing, it's just audio quotes from the characters, but you should get a gist of what the film's about.

Give it a miss

Eldorado Lives

www.eldoradolives.com

Our rating ★☆☆☆☆

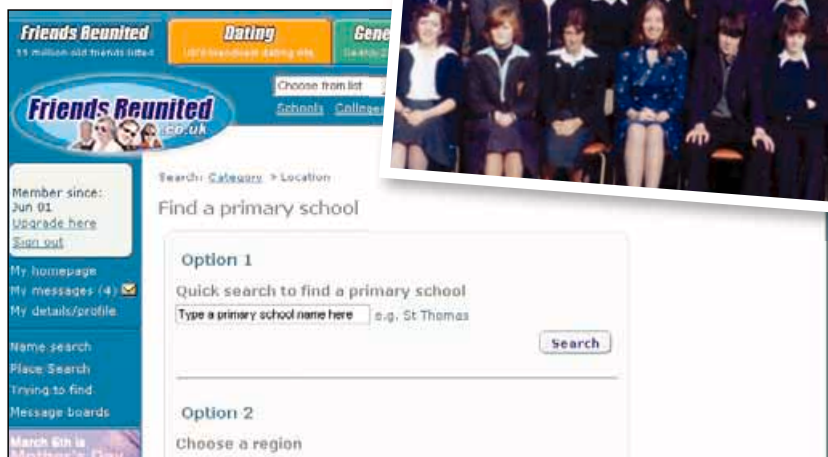
It's surprising how many people admit to watching the BBC's ill-fated Spanish soap *Eldorado* – especially as it was axed for poor ratings. Yet, love for Marcus, Pilar, Joy et al is evidently still strong with many a site dedicated to the flop sex-and-sangria show. But: *Eldorado* lives? Could it be so? We visited this site with such hope and excitement, but left feeling as glum as when the sun set in the final episode. Instead of a new version of the show, you'll find some Mills-and-Boon-esque waffle. Our sadness continues.



Rekindle those lost relationships by searching for friends, cars or pets online

1 Find primary school pals www.friendsreunited.com

There's no need to regret losing touch with old schoolmates, work pals or drinking partners any more, as with the help of the net you can find almost anyone online you've ever met, including the driver of that coach you took to Skegness in 1975. FriendsReunited is the mother of all reunion sites, helping you to track down your old pal in class 1B who let you copy their homework without question and was your 'bestest friend in the whole wide world'. As well as listing old friends from secondary schools, colleges and universities, the site has expanded to cover work colleagues, teammates, neighbours and ex-servicemen and women. It's free to register, but costs £7.50 if you want to contact someone.



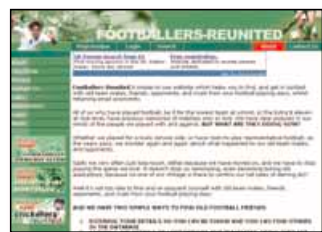
2 Backpackers get back in touch www.planetreunited.com

For those who've traipsed around the world like a snail with a fabric home on their back, or spent days cleaning chalets and skiing on hangovers, or have just worked abroad, this is the place to reconvene no matter where you are now. Searching for globetrotting chums or posting on the forum is free, but to reach out to those you met in Togo will cost you £5.



3 Catch up on old collars www.policereunited.co.uk

Former coppers needn't lose touch with their beat-pounding buddies once they've hung up their truncheons thanks to this site that keeps the boys and girls in blue in touch with one another. Hunt down ex-colleagues by searching for their name or by where they were stationed, which includes postings in Kosovo, South Africa, Hong Kong and, the lucky devils, Bermuda.



4 Relive moments of sporting glory www.footballers-reunited.com

While it's unlikely that Becks, Rooney and Gazza will disappear, legions of Saturday and Sunday league players who bravely shake off the previous night's pints to give 110 per cent often do. Don't bore your kids with that story about your perfect overhead kick – find your old teammates and let them remind you how the ball actually cannoned off your bum when you slipped in a puddle.



5 See who's number one www.bandsreunited.biz

Cosmic Sounds. The Oscillators. Bludgeoned by Blight. Just three of the many bands on this site who never made it to the top, but are keen to meet and find out where their standard charismatic frontman, tortured guitarist, moody bassist and drummer who was only in the band because he had a van, are now.



6 Recall bedside manners www.nursesreconnected.com

As laugh-a-minute shows like *Casualty* and *Holby City* demonstrate, nurses are always having unforgettable fun-packed adventures. Working in tough conditions often leads to tight-knit friendships that may be lost as nurses change jobs, but here past angels can link up with sisters and matrons from across the world.

7 Pursue your pooch www.doglost.co.uk

A heart-rending site, where owners can post details of their missing mutts. Don't cry though – the Reunited section shows successful searches.

8 Revisit past loves www.oldflamesreunited.com

A potential recipe for disaster or second chance at righting destiny, depending on how you see it, here former lovers can try to spark some magic. Again.

9 Search for your wheels www.classic-cars-reunited.co.uk

If you and your classic motor hit a fork in your relationship and went your separate ways, this might lead to motoring reconciliation.

10 Hunt-down jailbirds www.convictsreunited.co.uk

Lags who've done bird in Sing-Sing can keep in touch with their cellmates and see what they're up to now. Hopefully it's not more time.

On the other hand...

Go ex-directory

www.bt.com/talktous/answers.jsp?ID=PQA_193

Don't fancy an unsolicited telephone reunion? Reduce the chances of the school bully calling up to apologise and invite you out for a pint, by hiding your number from almost everyone. This web page offers BT's advice for protecting your privacy, whether it's by using one of its ex-directory options, or through other methods for dealing with malicious calls or double-glazing salespeople. Of course, these won't protect you from the odd wrong number, but you may be able to keep a few unwanted voices from the past at bay.



fast just got faster with AOL Broadband

We've doubled the speed of our premium broadband service -
at up to 2Mbps for just £29.99, it's now better value than ever.

Call 0800 279 6555 or visit www.aol.co.uk/platinum

Conditions apply. BT line required. Some alternative broadband products also available in ntl broadband enabled areas. Subject to availability and survey. 12 month minimum contract.
*Platinum packages previously up to 1Mbps now available to new subscribers at up to 2Mbps. See online for details.

Broadbanduser

News, views and reviews from the world of broadband

broadbandchoice

BBC Film Network www.bbc.co.uk/dna/filmnetwork



Budding film producers are showing their wares at this recently launched film site from the BBC in association with the National Film Council. BBC Film Network, which is on a six-month trial until June,

aims to provide a platform for up-and-coming film makers to get themselves noticed in their industry. However, it also offers a great selection of short films for the general public to enjoy. Divided into Drama, Comedy, Documentary, Animation and Experimental, each film is available to stream in broadband quality using either Windows Media Player or Real Player. Visitors are encouraged to register with BBCi, free of charge, so they can leave comments alongside films they have watched and feedback about the site.



broadbandbookmarks

GAME

Knight Rider

www.great-tv-shows.com/knighttrider/game



"Michael, I think I've made a positive identification." Go get him Kit, but don't mess with the Hasselhoff hair.

ODDNESS

Come Clean

www.comeclean.com



Picked your nose? Dropped litter? Pay a visit to Come Clean and have your conscience cleaned, or browse other people's often bizarre confessions.

VIDEO

TV For Us

www.tvforus.com



Superb collection of links to free broadband-quality TV broadcasts from around the world, plus a collection of recommended sites.



Mybroadband

By Andrew Craig

andrew_craig@ipcmedia.com



Internet by-pass

With so much talk about broadband usage limits, internet congestion and poor-quality video streams, I couldn't help but be intrigued by the promise of a new wireless technology that could by-pass the internet, and internet service providers, completely. It's called Broadband In A Box and its creator Memory Link (www.memorylink.com) claims it will let you set up direct broadband connections to your friends and family, without so much as sniffing the internet. Simply connect one box to your PC and one box to your friend's PC and the two will talk to each other through the airwaves.

There's a catch of course. Well, several catches actually, not least that your antenna needs to be able to 'see' the other person's antenna without trees, buildings and the like getting in the way. There are also questions about what frequency you could legally use in the UK. But let's brush these issues aside for now and ponder at this wonderful concept. Memory Link is primarily concerned with promoting its video conferencing technology, which apparently offers up to DVD-quality over this Broadband In A Box system. This has obvious uses in business and college campuses, or for telemedicine. But there are other possibilities too. How about gaming; connecting to your mates' games at blistering speed? Or what about streaming films directly from your local library?

This could of course be the Sinclair C5 of broadband: a great idea, but one we can quite happily live without. For starters, we'd all want a real internet connection as well, so it would be unlikely to save us money. But there's something of the free-for-all CB radio spirit that I like about it. Someone must be able to make something genuinely useful from it. But I won't hold my breath.

AOL



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- * Free email support via helpdesk
- * Telephone support
- * Comprehensive FAQ'S



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- * Daily backups
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- * CGI, ASP, PHP supported
- * Password protection
- * Easy to use control panel
- * Webalizer/Livestats Graphical Statistics
- * Unlimited mailboxes
- * Unlimited email forwarding
- * Unlimited aliases
- * Spam/antivirus scanning on email
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- * Comprehensive FAQ'S

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MARCH/WU

Super-speed BROADB

So far this year, it seems you can't click your mouse without hearing of another lightning-speed broadband service being launched. In this in-depth look at the major ISPs, **Steve Ranger** sheds some light on the latest 1Mb-and-above broadband deals

When the first customers plugged into broadband a few years back, 512Kb was considered a full-on fast-lane internet experience. But zoom forward to 2005 and all of a sudden you haven't even got out of first gear unless you're on a 1Mb line, while the really savvy broadband users are accelerating straight up to 2Mb and beyond.

Thanks to technical tweaks to the telecoms companies' – BT, NTL, Telewest and Kingston – networks and the sheer number of broadband users in the UK boosting competition, it's never been easier or cheaper to go faster. Much faster.

If you've not already revved up to 1Mb and beyond, there's a good chance that as a new or existing broadband customer, you'll be able to do so easily, and often free of charge. Switching from a sluggish 56Kb dial-up line to a 2Mb broadband line could cost just a few extra pounds a month for a breathtaking 40-fold increase in download speeds.

Watching videos, online gaming, music downloads and receiving giant emails all become a breeze at this speed.

Of course the low-priced services are not without limitations: many broadband services now feature usage limits, so while you can download faster, you have to be careful you don't exceed your limit and have your broadband dropped to dial-up rate for the rest of the month – or have to pay extra.

So if you are a broadband customer interested in finding a better deal, or perhaps you just want to know whether your ISP is offering speed upgrades, read on for our guide to the pick of the fastest broadband services.

Broadband heavyweights

Pipex

www.pipex.net

1 Solo 1000: free set-up and free connection for new customers, £23.44 per month, minimum contract 1 month.

2 Solo 2000: free set-up and free connection for new customers, £33.99 per month, minimum contract one month.

2 2Mbps Lite: free set-up and free connection for new customers, £19.99 per month (first 3 months at £14.99), 2GB usage allocation, minimum contract 1 month.

2 2Mbps Lite: free set-up and free connection for new customers, £23.44 per month, 5GB usage allocation, minimum

contract 1 month.

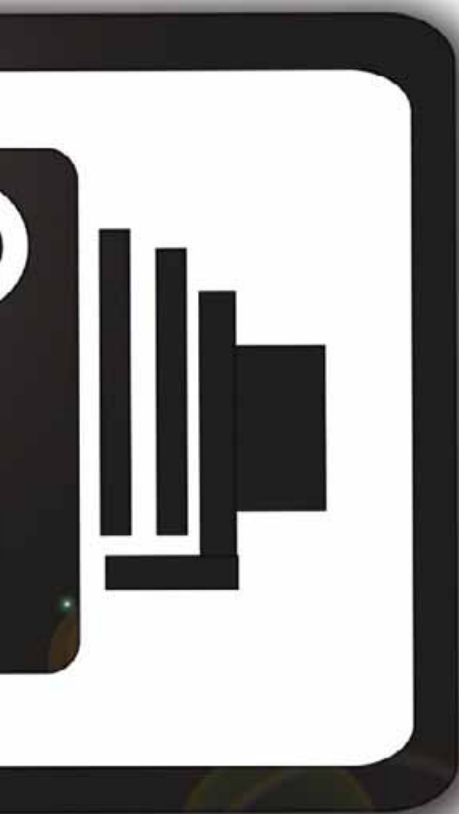
2 2Mbps Lite: free set-up and free connection for new customers, £27.99 per month, 15GB usage allocation, minimum contract 1 month.

Notable extras:

One week's holiday accommodation for new Solo customers before 31 March. Extra download allowance can be pre-bought in blocks



AND



of 1GB for £2.50.

Existing customers: "Majority" of existing customers will get their connection speed doubled at no extra cost, subject to line capability.

Wanadoo

www.wanadoo.com

Option 1:

1 Mbps comes with a free modem, free connection, £17.99 per month, 2GB usage

allowance, minimum 12-month contract.

Option 2: comes with a free modem, free connection, £22.99 per month, 6GB usage allowance, minimum 12-month contract.

Option 3: comes with a free modem, free connection, £27.99 per month, 30GB usage allowance, minimum 12-month contract.

Existing customers: Wanadoo increased the speed of its £17.99 package from 512Kbps to 1Mbps in August 2004. Customers on the 512Kbps service can upgrade to the 1Mbps speed as long as their phone line can accept it. There is a one-off migration charge of £20.



Bulldog

www.bulldogbroadband.com

Option 1: **1 Mbps** Alltime 1000: £58.75 line activation cost, £30 per month, minimum contract 1 year, no limit on downloads. Only available outside central London. 3-month contract term option an extra £50.

Option 2: **2 Mbps** Alltime 2000: £58.75 line activation cost, £40 per month, minimum contract 1 year, no cap on downloads. Only available outside central London. 3-month contract term option an extra £50.

Option 4: **4 Mbps** Bulldog start@ctive: £15.50 per month (requires Bulldog phone line, £10.50), 400 minutes online per month, extra minutes 2.5p per minute, no download limit, minimum contract 1 month.



Eclipse

www.eclipsebroadband.com

Option 1: **1 Mbps** Flex Home 1000: start-up cost £58.75, £29.99 per month, minimum contract monthly, no download limit. Customers can temporarily boost to 2Mbps at 8p per hour.

Option 2: **2 Mbps** Flex Home 2000: start-up cost £58.75, £39.99 per month. No download limit.

Option 3: **2 Mbps** Home Broadband: £14.99 per month, download limit 1GB per month. Customers receive an email warning before the limit is reached, then can pay £1.75 for a further 1GB data transfer, or speed drops to dial-up rate until next month.

Notable extras: Services also include free anti-virus checking on email and an anti-spam service. **Existing customers:** Those on Connect service or Flex Broadband with a 500Kbps or 1Mbps service line are currently charged £12.93 to be upgraded to a 2Mbps line.



V21

www.v21.co.uk

Option 1: **1 Mbps** £69.99 start-up cost on monthly contract (£58.75 with 12-month contract), £24.99 per month, no download limit.

Option 2: **2 Mbps** £69.99 start-up cost on monthly contract (£58.75 with 12-month contract), £39.99 per month, no download limit.

Notable extras: 5 email addresses and 10MB of webspace.

Existing customers: Customers from rival ISPs can migrate to V21 free of charge.

Plusnet

www.plus.net

Option 1: **1 Mbps** Light: Activation fee £70.50 for monthly contract, £58.75 for annual. £14.99 per month, 1GB download included. Additional downloads £1.50 per 1MB in advance, £1.75 afterwards.

Option 2: **2 Mbps** Light: Activation fee £70.50 for monthly contract, £58.75 for annual. £14.99 per month, 1GB download included. Additional downloads £1.50 per



1MB in advance, £1.75 afterwards.

1Mbps Premier: £29.99 per month, activation fee £70.50 for monthly contract, £58.75 for annual. Download allowance governed by fair-usage policy.

2Mbps Premier: £39.99 per month, activation fee £70.50 for monthly contract, £58.75 for annual. Download allowance governed by fair usage policy.



Demon

www.demon.net

1Mbps HomeOffice1000: free set-up and free modem, £29.99 per month, 12-month contract, no download limit.

Notable extras: Additional dial-up account to dial into email remotely, spam filtering and 20MB of web space.



Zen

www.zenadsl.com

1Mbps Home 1000: activation charge £50, £29.78 per month, minimum contract 1 month, no download limitations.

2Mbps Home 2000: activation charge £50, £38.29 per month, minimum contract 1 month, no limit. **Notable extras:** Back-up dial-up account, 1GB of webspace, 8 static IP addresses.

NTL

www.ntl.com

1Mbps: Installation, cable modem and activation currently free, £17.99 per month. Monthly usage allowance 5GB, 12-month contract.

2Mbps: Installation, cable modem and activation currently free, £24.99 per month. Monthly usage allowance 30GB, 12-month contract.

3Mbps: Installation, cable modem and activation currently free, £37.99 per month. Monthly usage allowance 40GB, 12-month contract.

Existing customers: Speeds to be increased from 300Kbps to 1Mbps, 700Kbps to 2Mbps and 1.5Mbps to 3Mbps free of charge.

Freedom2surf

www.freedom2surf.net

1024K Power User: Activation £59.99, £29.99 per month, 1-month notice period, no download limit.

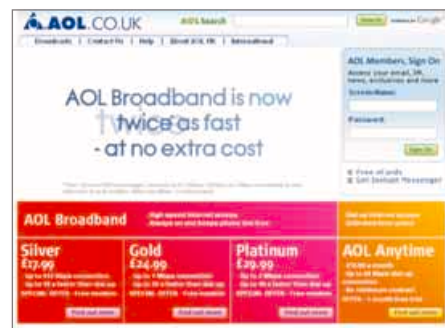
Freedom2surf Connect Lite: Activation £49.99, £14.99 per month, 1-month notice period, 2GB usage included.

Freedom2surf Connect: Activation £49.99, £19.99 a month, 1-month notice period, 10GB usage included.

Freedom2surf Connect Plus: Activation £49.99, £24.99 a month, 1-month notice period, 50GB of inclusive download.

2048K Power User: Activation £59.99, £39.99 per month, 1-month notice period, no download limit.

Notable extras: 50MB web space, 20 @f2s.com email addresses. Additional download allowance for Connect services available at £1.50 per 1GB.



AOL

www.aol.co.uk

AOL Broadband Gold: £24.99 per month, free modem for new customers, minimum 12-month contract, no download limit.

AOL Broadband Platinum: £29.99 per month, minimum 12-month contract, free modem for new customers, no download limit.

Existing customers: Automatically upgrading speeds for all existing members over a 6-month period.

UKonline

www.ukonline.net

Broadband 2000: Free modem for new customers, free set-up, £29.99 a month, minimum 12-month contract, unlimited downloads. Only available to new customers at the moment.

Broadband 8000: Free wireless router for new customers before 31 March, £39.99 a month, £50 set-up fee, minimum 12-month contract, 500GB download limit.



What type of broadband user are you?

Light user

If you use broadband for a bit of email and the odd bit of surfing you are probably best off with a 1Mbps service, as you won't really need any higher speed. And if you are doing two or three hours a week of surfing and sharing a few photos you are probably going to be okay with a 1GB or 2GB download limit as well.

Possible choices

- Pipex 2Mbps Lite with 2GB usage allowance
- Wanadoo 1Mbps Option 1
- Freedom2surf Connect Lite

Regular user

The average user – spending five hours a week online, downloading 40 photos, 20 music tracks and downloading some software might find themselves using 2GB of bandwidth. A 1Mbps service will probably be fast enough, for you especially if you choose a service without a download limit.

Possible choices

- Pipex 2Mbps Lite with 5GB usage allowance
- Plusnet 1Mbps 'Flex Home 1000'
- Zen Home 1000

Heavy user

For those of you working from home, doing some serious gaming and watching videos you could be best off with an uncapped service so you don't have to worry about the fun ending when you hit your download limit. And you're going to need a 2Mbps service to enjoy all that content as fast as you can.

Possible choices

- NTL 3Mbps service
- AOL Broadband Platinum
- UKonline 2Mbps 'Broadband 2000'

To calculate your ideal monthly download allowance, visit www.webuser.co.uk/bandwidthcalculator.php



Karoo

www.karoo.co.uk

15 Mbps Karoo 1500: set-up fee £39.99 (free in some areas), £34.99 a month, 12-month contract, no download limit. Free modem. Only available in Hull and east Yorkshire.

3 Mbps Karoo 3000: set-up fee £39.99 (free in some areas), £39.99 a month, 12-month contract, no download limit. Free modem. Only available in Hull and east Yorkshire. 384Kbps upload speed.

Tiscali

www.tiscali.co.uk

1 Mbps Tiscali Broadband x20: no set-up fees, £15.99 a month, minimum 12-month

contract, 2GB usage allowance (£1.50 per 1GB after that).

1 Mbps Tiscali Broadband x20: no set-up fees, £24.99 a month, minimum 12-month contract. Fair usage policy applies.

BT/BT Yahoo

www.bt.com

1 Mbps BT Broadband Basic: Free modem when you order online and free activation, £17.99 per month, 1GB usage allowance, available for new customers from 24 March.

2 Mbps BT Broadband: Free modem when you order online, £24.99, 15GB usage allowance.

2 Mbps BT Yahoo Broadband: Free modem when you order online and free activation, £26.99 per month, 15GB usage allowance, 11 email addresses included, personalisation, extra security.

2 Mbps BT Yahoo Broadband: £29.99 per

month, usage limit 30GB, available to new customers from 24 March.

Existing customers: Most customers will have their speeds increased to 2Mbps. Those with BT Broadband Basic will have their speed increased from 512Kbps to 1Mbps.

Madasafish

www.madasafish.com

1 Mbps 1Mbps: 1Mbps service, free connection, free modem, £29.99 per month with two months free. No usage limit.

2 Mbps 2Mbps: 2Mbps service, free connection, free modem, £17.99 per month with two months free. 2GB monthly usage allowance.



So you've decided your ISP just isn't giving you the best deal?

First the bad news – if you are still within your current contract term you may have to pay a fee to your existing ISP; so work out if it is better to stay where you are until that runs out.

If you decide to move you will need to contact your existing broadband provider and obtain a Migration Authentication Code (MAC), a unique reference code assigned to your broadband service. This is the code your new ISP will need when you sign up.

Some ISPs do not support the migration process so leaving them will be more difficult.

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Global blogging

The globe-shrinking effects of the blogging phenomenon means you can now read the innermost thoughts of people from all over the planet. Johnny Dee grabs his passport and treats you to the world's best English-language blogs

CANADA Bacon and Eh's <http://baconande6hs.blogspot.com>

Blogger: Kim

If you are looking for links to websites about hamsters in hats or juggling Jesus look-alikes then you have come to the right place. But what'll keep you coming back is Kim's slices of everyday Canadian life intermingled with a bizarre and friendly tone that's as comforting as a cup of tea in a warm kitchen.



ICELAND Iceland Eyes www.icelandeyes.blogspot.com

Blogger: Maria Alva

The first thing you'll notice about this Reykjavik-based blog is the brilliant snowy photography of Iceland – which truly does look like the coldest place on earth but also one of the most beautiful. The pics are a starting point for discovering loads of trivia about Iceland – from its hothouse tomato industry to the decommissioned whaling fleet.



JAPAN Tokyo Times www.tokyotimes.org

Blogger: Lee Chapman

Lee, a teacher from Manchester, went to Japan for a holiday but ended up getting married. That was seven years ago. His blog is an excellent look at the quirkiest end of Japanese life – strange inventions, customs and food – all viewed through the eyes of a slightly bemused exile. Where else can you read about the Japanese cake-lifting championship?



AUSTRALIA Man of Lettuce <http://jafablog.typepad.com>

Blogger: Adrian

The thought of a cabbie having his own blog might not sound terribly attractive, but rather than use his site to unload tales of rude customers this Aussie taxi driver ends his waking day by pondering the male menopause and government, and uploading his pictures of Sydney street life. Oh and there is a bit of moaning about traffic.



ZAMBIA 360 Degrees of Sky <http://360degreesofsky.blogspot.com>

Blogger: Claypot

Claypot is an Irish humanitarian aid worker reporting from what she describes as "the madness of the African bush". Most of the madness seems to revolve around mice-like things that occupy her home and the vast number of insects that share the "long-drop" toilet. We also learn plenty about her work and her cravings for a decent bar of chocolate.



CHINA Mask of China www.maskofchina.com

Blogger: Derek Chang

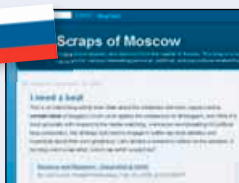
These tales of a Chinese-born Canadian living in Dalian (in north-east China) are full of wonderful pictures and travel stories such as his recent visit to the beautiful Iceworld in Harbin. There are also lots of brilliantly honest entries on adjusting to the local culture – the downside being corruption, the upside being barbecued duck. Not that bad then!



RUSSIA Scraps Of Moscow <http://scrapsosmoscow.blogspot.com>

Blogger: Lyndon Allin

As well as linking to quirky stories from his homeland and tales of the latest Moscow uprising, this American ex-pat has a great series where he travels to the ends of Moscow Metro lines and reports on his findings. Usually these seem to be made up of stray dogs, abandoned buildings and very sad looking shops.



IRELAND Planet Potato <http://planetpotato.blogspot.com>

Blogger: Roy

Just five months old but gaining a healthy following, this is a blog about the world seen through Irish eyes. There is lots of wry commentary on Irish politics, but also on rugby (especially after they tonked the English), music and humour. A recent entry on Things Not To Say To Your Girlfriend includes never asking "Is that a cold sore?" Sound advice.



UK I Like www.ilike.org.uk

Blogger: Anne

This blog has a fairly simple concept – it's about stuff Anne likes. What makes it different is that Anne likes some pretty wonderful, eclectic stuff and takes great joy in sharing it with us – everything from SpongeBob trivia to Tiki bars to Sixties packaging to cafes in her native Glasgow.



USA Screenhead www.screenhead.com

Blogger: D Resin

Part of the Gawker Media blogging empire, this is the primo place to visit if you want to witness the stupidest and weirdest corners of the web. With a guaranteed 10 links a day it covers everything from a man enduring four hours of the same Abba song to a skateboarding chainsaw juggler.



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* Speed may vary dependent upon line length

terms and conditions apply

Cash from clicks

Discover the money-making secrets of affiliate schemes and soon your website could be earning you oodles of cash. Paul Lomax shows you how to swell your bank account

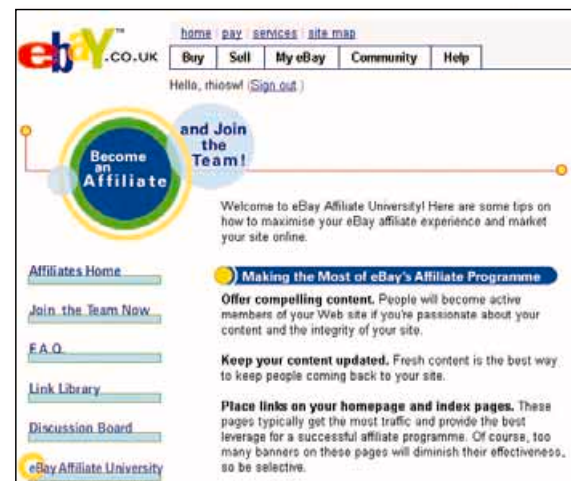


What are affiliate schemes?

Good question. They are schemes run by companies who offer commission in return for you promoting their products or services on your website. There are thousands of well-known household brands that advertise in this way, from Amazon to Zurich Insurance, and it can be an easy way to make your website pay for itself. All you have to do is give up a bit of empty space on your web page.

But my site is nothing special...

That doesn't matter. Whatever the subject of your website, there will be a potential advertiser to suit it. Does your site review PS2 games? Then you could get some commission from GameSpot (www.gamespot.com). Or maybe you run a fansite for your favourite band – why not promote their new album via CD Wow (www.cd-wow.com) and get some pocket money? A common choice of affiliate for many is eBay – you can find out how to make money by piggy-backing on the auction goliath at <http://pages.ebay.co.uk/affiliate/affiliateuniversity.html>.



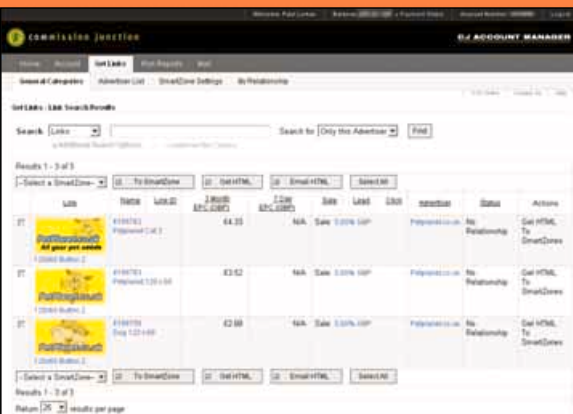
Okay, I'm interested. Is signing up easy?

Yep. The easiest way to become an affiliate is to sign-up with a broker such as Commission Junction (www.cj.com) or Trade Doubler (www.tradedoubler.co.uk). Once registered you can search for advertisers appropriate to your site. Try to think about the kind of products or services visitors to your site will be interested in. There are plenty of companies to choose from, and you can pick as many as you like.

How do I make money?

From the commission paid by your advertisers. This commission is usually calculated in two





advertisements you are thinking of displaying. Because they'll be paying you, you'll also need to provide some personal details, including your bank account number and sort code. Don't worry, they can only put money in, not take it out, and your details will be sent via their secure server.

However, to maximise your commission, you should create an Amazon shop (a panel displaying goods for sale on Amazon). These list, and provide links to, Amazon products. You receive 10 per cent commission from every sale resulting from visitors clicking on the link from your site. To download shop-creating software and tools visit AssociatesShop.com (www.associateshop.com) and Associate-O-Matic (www.associate-o-matic.com).

How easy is it to put the links and adverts on my site?

Simplicity itself. Each advertiser will provide a HTML link, which you just need to paste into your website. Place the advertisements near the top of

ways: from visitors buying products from the sites of your advertisers, and from visitors creating 'leads' when they register at a site. However, these commission rates vary quite a lot, so study them carefully. You may see a figure for 'EPC' or 'Earnings Per Click', which are estimates for how much you'll make from each visitor-click.

Within a few days of selecting an advertiser you should get an email telling you whether or not you've been approved for their scheme – some companies, such as banks, are very fussy about where their advertisements get shown. The next step is picking actual advertisements to display. There are lots of different sizes, such as the 'standard banner' (468 x 60 pixels) or 'button' (120 x 60), text links, or even search boxes.

What about the Amazon Associates scheme I've heard so much about?

Some companies run their own schemes, one of the best being the Amazon Associates programme (www.amazon.co.uk/associates). The great thing about the Amazon scheme is that it suits a broad range of sites – simply by listing your favourite books, CDs and DVDs, you should become suitable for an Amazon link, and thus commission payments.

The sign-up process is straightforward, and most importantly won't cost you anything. You'll be asked for your website's URL, a brief description of the site and what kind of



your site so people don't have to scroll down the page to see them. If you've selected a number of different advertisements, you can set it up to 'rotate' them and display one at random. To do this use web-management tools such as Commission Junction's Smart Zones, or Trade Doubler's Pools.

How do I keep track of revenue?

If you've signed up with Commission Junction or Trade Doubler you can get reports to find out

how much money you've made so far, and which advertisements are getting the most clicks and sales. You can use this information to improve the performance of the links on your site – by dropping advertisements that aren't paying out, or seeing what kind of advertisements are popular and finding more of the same.

Where can I get advice and tips from other webmasters?

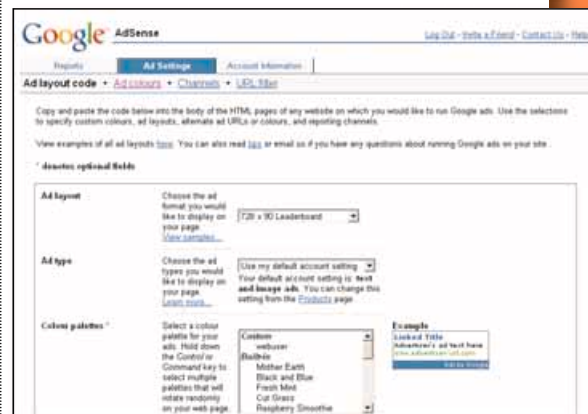
By eavesdropping on web forums such as The Affiliate Lounge at www.a4uforum.co.uk, which had 29,000 posts when we visited. For general hints, tips and advice it's worth visiting Commission Junction's University section (<http://cju.cj.com>).

Anything else I need to know?

You should consider using Google's AdSense scheme, which requires very little effort on your part, because Google targets the adverts for you, selecting those appropriate for your site. Signing up is quick, easy and free at www.google.com/adsense.

Unlike affiliate schemes, you actually get paid every time somebody clicks on an advert link –

they don't necessarily have to buy something. Google will pay you by cheque (in US dollars), but remember that unless you're making over \$100 a month, you won't get paid until the end of the year. And don't try to cheat by clicking on your own advertisements – they do check!



So, to recap... Top tips for running affiliate schemes

- Pick advertisements and offers that your website visitors could be interested in – keep them relevant
- When choosing links, remember commission rates do vary
- Take advantage of seasonal trends and events such as Mother's Day or summer holidays by picking the right advertisers
- Keep track of which advertisements are getting the most clicks and sales, and promote the ones doing well
- Consider removing advertisements with high click-through rates but low 'conversion' rates
- Make sure you remove out-of-date offers
- Position advertisements for maximum at-a-glance visibility
- Create a regular email newsletter for visitors to your site to subscribe to and include relevant affiliate offers
- Write content that puts your affiliate links in context, such as book or DVD reviews
- Make sure you read the policy for any affiliate scheme or individual advertiser – they may have conditions dictating where you can put their adverts
- Paul Bausch's book *Amazon Hacks* is packed with superb tips and priceless advice, and can help you squeeze the full potential out of the Amazon Associates programme. The cheapest online price we found was £14.00 (with free delivery) from www.bookfellas.co.uk.

Web User cash for website owners

Generate money for your website with our new ReaderGetsReader service. Simply place a button on your website pointing to a Web User subscription page and for every Web User magazine subscription purchased through that link you'll earn a healthy commission. To hear more, send an email including your website URL to readergetsreader@web-user.co.uk.



DVDs ON YOUR DOORSTEP

One of the biggest web success stories of the last 12 months has been the rise of online DVD rental sites – because they're cheap, easy to use, and save you the hassle of trekking to the video shop. But which site best suits your film-watching needs? **Toby Earle** finds out



Plying prone on a sofa in front of a movie you've been itching to see, surrounded by film-friendly food and with the phone stashed in the airing cupboard – it's one of the finest ways to relax after a day at the coalface. Yet during the last century film fans found attaining this state of movie-watching nirvana was undermined by the need to traipse to a video rental shop, where they'd doubtlessly find that all the flicks they wanted to watch were on loan – meaning they had to settle for *Highlander 2*. Again.

Thankfully, inhabitants of the 21st Century need no longer suffer this deflating fate. The eruption of DVD rental sites means film fans can now have movies delivered straight to their doormat. Registration to the sites is less painful than having to fill out forms in the video store, plus there's no waiting for a

laminated membership card that you lose within five minutes.

This rapid growth in sites has meant that film buffs are presented with a dazzling choice and it's not easy to know which rental service will best suit your movie-watching needs. The problem is that the reasons why people choose a rental service vary greatly – for some film buffs money is the key issue, for others it's the site's range of DVDs. Over the last month we signed up to a wide range of rental sites on the web, our mission to rank the best sites in different categories – such as cost and DVD range – and discover the subtle details that make one better than another. It wasn't easy as the majority of the sites offer very similar services, so we had to use all our investigative powers. But we did come to a verdict. Read on to see which DVD rental site deserves your hard-earned money.

THE DVDS WE PICKED

To test both the websites' reliability in sending out DVDs and the extent of their range, we rented DVDs spread across a selection of decades and genres. Here's what we chose. . .

The Hollywood blockbuster: *The Day After Tomorrow*

The foreign film: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

The cult hit: *Withnail & I*

The TV show: *Little Britain*

The all-time classic: *The Godfather*

The vintage gem: *King Kong – The Eighth Wonder of the World*

The box-set: *Star Wars Trilogy*



LoveFilm www.lovefilm.com

Built on the foundations of the now defunct DVDs On Tap, this reasonably fresh-faced youngster on the scene exudes a seductive charisma that any film fan would find alluring. Its vital statistic of 28,500 movies helps too. Featuring 3,000 reviews from *Time Out* and regular articles by *TO*'s film editor Tom Charity, LoveFilm feels like the place Barry Norman might come to rent movies.

Such a broad choice of DVDs can be baffling though, so to help you peruse its vast library there are all manner of lists, from Editor's Picks to the public-voted Top Rated. But the most innovative of all these genre-picking sections is Moods where all the hard work is done for you – films are neatly grouped into a considerable number of sub-sections like Conspiracy (sample film: *The Ipcress File*), School (*Heathers*) or Hair (*Shampoo*) to suggest films that match

your mood (but what, in the name of Vidal Sassoon, is a "hair" mood?).

Nosey parkers will enjoy peering at the Queue Voyeur section which lets you see what other members are hiring. If that's too much like effort, then use the Recommendations system. Once you've rated the films you've seen, the site matches your opinions to those of similar-minded members and suggests flicks you might want to rent.

There's nothing groundbreaking at LoveFilm, but what it does so ingeniously is make the process of renting DVDs so engaging that you can't but help develop a greater interest in film.

AND NOW THE DETAILS...

What's the cost? £9.99/£14.99/£19.99 per month for unlimited rentals of one/three/four discs at a time.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range? Tipping the scales at a whopping 28,500, this is the heavyweight of the bunch. All the DVDs on our list were present and correct.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

There's nothing that makes you gasp in amazement, but the various lists of the latest releases and most popular films, festival



rundowns and the excellent Moods section are slickly executed.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

Very. The first film dropped through our door two days after we joined. LoveFilm's khaki envelopes became a regular sight most mornings.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

Searching for a film is as easy as extending your arm to pick a title off a shelf. You can use LoveFilm's standard Search option, or browse by decade or letter for the film you're after. Next to every film is a Rent Now button which will update your film queue when clicked.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

You can rent an unlimited number of films under the one or three-disc option of the 14-day trial.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 26/30





Mailbox Movies <http://dvd2.mailboxmovies.com>

Pipped at the finishing post, this excellent and very orange site has a unique character, and boasts a wealth of features that render other sites bland in comparison. While it has the usual list of genres, clicking on a category will open a sub-menu to help narrow down your search. As it's now part of the DVDs365 family, it also offers genre-specific sections such as Sword Play, Films Originally Banned and 50 Best Chickflicks that leave you in no doubt as to what you'll be watching.

However, it's when Mailbox Movies thinks outside the (DVD) box that it starts to score serious points. Uncovering the hidden extras (aka Easter Eggs) on DVDs is a splendid touch and appeals to the film-geek in all of us. What film fans also love is the chance to discuss, debate and deconstruct films, so Mailbox Movies' inclusion of a members' forum is an inspired touch that elevates the site above a merely functional service.

You won't run out of suggestions for DVDs to rent, as one click of the Pot Luck button instantly throws up 10 films at random, and there's a good chance at least one of them will tickle your filmic fancy. Even so, if you do tire of watching films (impossible, surely?), you can rent a game for your PS2, Xbox, GameCube or even the now-vintage PS1.



AND NOW THE DETAILS...

What's the cost? £9.47/£12.97/£14.97/£20.97/£24.97 per month for unlimited rentals of one/two/three/four/five discs at a time. You can hire one film for a week at £2.97, or pay £5.47 or £7.47 per month to hire two or three DVDs respectively. It has some deals which work out cheaper than LoveFilm's – a crucial point if money is the dominant factor in determining which site you register with. Plus there is a greater variety of deals.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

A mighty 24,000 strong, and all the DVDs we wanted were here to rent. You can email the site with a request for a film you can't find too.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

We've already mentioned the Easter Eggs section, the games-hire service and the forums where film buffs can discuss the merits of Vin Diesel. On top of that you can send free text messages too – probably so you can text friends apologies for failing to heed their words when they advised you to not rent a Vin Diesel film. And you can request films too.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

Two days after we signed up, the films began to arrive and then continued to do so roughly every other day.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

The search facility is a bit clumsy and can be frustrating if you're not sure what you're looking for. But you won't be tearing your hair out.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

For two weeks, you can try any of the monthly unlimited subscriptions, including the super-sized five-DVD rental package.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 25/30



Blockbuster www.blockbuster.co.uk

Edging just ahead of a very tight field, Blockbuster shaved the Bronze award by a nose. Although the website feels as soulless as one of its branches, Blockbuster delivers DVDs at a frighteningly quick pace and has one great trick – the Movie Mix – up its sleeve. This natty option, explained below, should keep the entire family happy, as should the site's impressive range of 22,000 titles. On top of that, its reputation is based on providing the latest movie hits to the masses, so they're always going to have plenty of copies of the latest releases.

AND NOW THE DETAILS...

What's the cost? £13.99/£20.99 per month for three/five rentals.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range? Over 22,000 titles available to rent.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

A neat idea to pacify any potential domestic

disagreements is the Movie Mix. It lets you pick films from three different genres to be sent to you in one delivery. Say dad likes action, mum's into martial arts and little Timmy digs comedy – selecting the Movie Mix option would ensure that you always had one film from each genre at home.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

Better than clockwork.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

Putting on your seatbelt before you drive to your local Blockbuster store is tougher.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

Blockbuster offers free trialists just the one option – three DVDs at a time for a month. One whole month of free flicks is not to be sniffed at.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 20/30



THE BEST OF THE REST...

Screenselect

www.screenselect.co.uk



A stalwart of the DVD rental market, Screenselect remains one of the favourite sites with movie addicts.

What's the cost?

£7.99/£9.99 per month for one/two DVDs at a time with a maximum of four/five a month. For unlimited rentals, it's £9.99/£12.49/£14.99 per month for one/two/three DVDs.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

Over 29,000 titles – enough to wear out your DVD player.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

Listed films are accompanied by a 'Hide' button. Click it and the title will disappear from your list of potential DVDs. Technically this means you can force your partner to hire *100 Best FA Cup Goals* by hiding the remaining 27,999 DVDs. The Guess the Film and Quote games are diverting enough too and may lead you to something you might have missed.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it? Extremely efficient.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

The pages feel a little busy, but choosing what you want to see is problem-free.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

Whichever subscription you choose you're entitled to four DVDs for free, and the trial expires after you hire the fifth DVD or 28 days pass. Which is a bit miserly.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 19/30

PostaDVD

www.postadvd.com



This eye-catching purple and blue site does exactly what it says in its web address.

What's the cost?

£9.75/£11.75/£13.75 per month for rentals of one/two/three DVDs respectively, or annually it costs £107.25/£129.95/£151.25.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

Over 18,000 titles, but we couldn't find *Little Britain* or *Star Wars*.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

You can also hire PS2 and Xbox games, and there's a loyalty scheme where you accrue points by writing reviews or watching DVDs and then net a £20 voucher when you have amassed 250 points. Which means that if you don't write any reviews, it'll take 250 rentals (movies or games) to net the cash.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

Its postal services brought to mind neither the tortoise nor the hare, but the DVDs arrived at a steady rate.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

No rocket science required.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

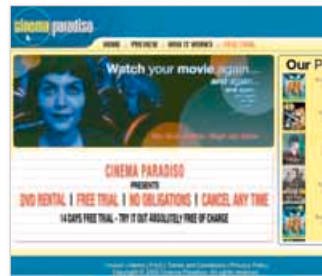
Feast yourself on a deluge of DVDs (but no more than three at a time) for 14 days.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 18/30

Cinema Paradiso

www.cinemaparadiso.co.uk



Named after the classic Italian movie, this site isn't bursting with swish extras, but it's easy to browse its titles and its delivery is super-quick.

What's the cost?

£8.99/£11.99/£13.99 for unlimited rentals of one/two/three DVDs, or pay £5.99 to hire three DVDs a month, one at a time. There is the option on all packages to pay for a six or 12-month membership: £32.35/£64.69 for limited rentals, £48.55/£97.09 for one DVD, £71.94/£143.88 for two DVDs or £83.94/£167.88 for three DVDs.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

A modest 16,000, but it had all seven titles we were looking for.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

Feel like watching *Planet of the Apes* in Hebrew? Here you'll find an Audio/Language list that details all the DVDs that cater for different dialects.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

As prompt as a nervous bridegroom.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

The clean, unfussy design makes it a doddle to use.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

The 15-day trial allows you to sample either the two or three DVD options.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 16/30

Continued overleaf...

FIND DVD HIDDEN EXTRAS

Hunt down Easter eggs – the hidden bonus material tucked away on DVDs – with the help of these sites.

■ The Easter Egg Archive

www.eeggs.com



Home to more eggs than you'd find on a battery farm, this site also has sections on hidden music tracks and buried meanings in books and works of art.

Site's best egg: There are well over a thousand to choose from, but the sight of Gollum freaking out, taken from the MTV Music Awards 2003, is always good fun (www.eeggs.com/items/40724.html).

■ DVD Easter Eggs

www.dvdeastereggs.com

Head to the forums here to submit your egg discoveries or chat about films, games and comics.

Site's best egg: If you can handle it destroying your treasured childhood memories, the *Star Wars* gag reel on the bonus material disc is an archive of unseen footage (www.dvdeastereggs.com/modules.php?name=Reviews&rop=showcontent&id=52).

■ Egg Heaven 2000

www.eggheaven2000.com

Don't worry – even though it's 2005, these eggs haven't gone off!

Site's best egg: Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* has an interview stashed away – much like the diamonds from the heist (www.eggheaven2000.com/detailed/1853.html).

■ DVD Review

www.dvdreview.com/html/hidden_features.shtml



Choose from this list of films and television shows on DVD to hear and see extra content.

Site's best egg: Hidden audio commentaries and an audio blooper reel are all concealed in the discs of *The Simpsons Series Three* box-set (www.dvdreview.com/eastereggs/collect/509.html).

THE BEST OF THE REST...



Zoovies

www.zoovies.net

We think the title is a gag about holding movies in captivity (any other suggestions on a postcard please), and that's about as unusual as this site gets.

What's the cost?

£8.99/£11.99/£13.99/£17.99 for unlimited rentals of one/two/three/four DVDs. Pay-per-rent costs £3.75 per DVD for seven days' rental. Pre-paid Top Ups cost £14 for four rentals, £20 for six, £35 for 11 and £50 for 16.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

A collection of 5,000, but the force isn't with them – there's no *Star Wars* to be seen.

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

Nothing spectacularly innovative, but no obvious features missing.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

The postman cruised through our list at a steady pace.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

If you've used a mouse before you'll be fine.

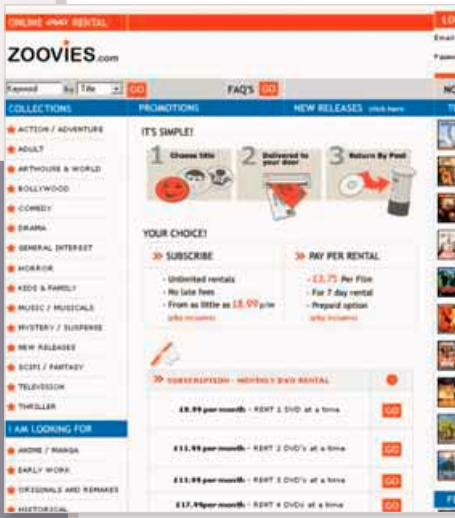
Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

It's a two-for-one deal – the first month is free with the one/two/three DVD package.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 16/30



MovieMine

www.moviemine.com

Excavate the flicks you want without using a torch or a canary.

What's the cost?

£9.99/£12.99/£14.99/£17.99/£19.99 for unlimited rentals of one/two/three/four/five DVDs. Yearly membership is available for all packages costing £119.88/£155.88/£179.88/£215.88/£239.88 for one/two/three/four/five DVDs.

Score: ★★★★★

How broad is the DVD range?

When we rang MovieMine to ask, we were told that isn't the kind of information they would divulge, but their man estimated "up to 18,000".

Score: ★★★★★

Any special features?

The More Fun section has trivia questions and a hangman-style game to tax your brain and lead you to flicks that might have piqued your curiosity. By choosing Autoselect and denoting which genres you like the most your list will be automatically topped up.

Score: ★★★★★

How reliable is it?

We received the first film on our list the morning after we joined, but then the films dried up. We later learnt that you have to keep 25 films in your selection to keep the flicks coming.

Score: ★★★★★

Easy to use?

Needing to keep 25 films in your queue is aggravating and time-consuming.

Score: ★★★★★

How good is the free trial?

For 15 days you can choose any of the deals apart from the five-DVD plan.

Score: ★★★★★

Total: 16/30



FIVE TOP DVD PLAYERS...

...and where to buy them cheaply online

Panasonic DMR-E85HEBS

A versatile DVD recorder with a built-in 80GB hard disk. In Extended Play mode it will record up to 142 hours from the TV.

Cheapest online price: £307.69 from www.digitaldirectuk.com



Philips PET700

Portable DVD player with a 7in LCD widescreen and three-hour battery life. Plays both standard and recordable DVDs and CDs.

Cheapest online price: £169.95 from www.prcdirect.co.uk



Toshiba SD-140E

Slimline, budget DVD player. Compatible with a variety of disc formats, it also features virtual 3D surround-sound.

Cheapest online price: £29.95 from www.richersounds.com



Sony DVP-NS355

Sleek, multi-region player with built-in MP3 decoding, and high image quality. Also plays DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW discs.

Cheapest online price: £49.99 from www.amazon.co.uk



JVC DR-MV1S

For those who can't let go of VHS altogether, this multi-region model features a built-in VCR as well as a DVD recorder.

Cheapest online price: £299 from www.cramptonandmoore.co.uk

FREE DVD RENTALS!

Plus get 1 of these great DVDs FREE if you decide to join us at the end of your trial.

Just log on to www.lovefilm.com/webuser and sign up using promotion code WEB837. You can rent up to three DVDs at a time from **28,500 classic and new releases**. Make a list of the films you want to watch and your first three DVDs will be posted to you first class. When you've finished watching your DVD, return it in the pre-paid envelope and another DVD from your list will be sent out to you. You can rent as many DVDs as you like for the whole of your **three week trial** absolutely free!

Online DVD rental is convenient and easy



1 Sign up and order films online.



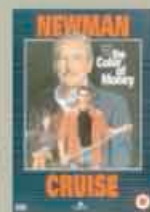
2 Receive them by mail. Free postage both ways.



3 Keep them as long as you like.



4 Return them to get more.



Combine this with the **latest film and entertainment news, competitions, giveaways and the latest trailers**, and LOVEFiLM.com simply offers you more!

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UK's best value domains

Online control panel, instant registration, professional email

1 Register your domain at the UK's lowest prices and enjoy full online control.

ALL INCLUSIVE

Great value domain registration with no hidden charges

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.org.uk .me.uk

£2.95

Total price per year

.com
.org .net

£8.89

Total price per year

.info £8.89 per year
.biz £8.89 per year
.name £8.99 per year
.plc.uk £2.95 per year
.ltd.uk £2.95 per year
.tv £30.99 per year

Includes all registration fees. Excludes VAT

FREE with every domain:

- FREE** Email forwarding
- FREE** Website forwarding
- FREE** Dialup internet access
- FREE** Web based control panel
- FREE** Name server changes
- FREE** Custom DNS changes

2 Add business class email to your domain with LiveMail from just £1.25 per month.

- ✓ Virus and spam protection
- ✓ 24 x 7 phone, email and online technical support
- ✓ Webmail and easy mobile device access
- ✓ Complete control of your own email

- ✓ Mix Exchange and standard email on the same domain
- ✓ Free Outlook 2003 with every Exchange mailbox
- ✓ Shared calendars, tasks and address books
- ✓ Upgrade to full web hosting at any time

Powered by
Microsoft Exchange 2003



Sign up now at
UKreg.com



Moneyextra Financial Planner
<http://financialplanner.moneyextra.com>



Personal finance website MoneyExtra has launched a free new online tool that claims to let you "take control of your financial destiny".

How, exactly? By giving you a "clear personalised action plan to achieve financial goals".

In English...? Basically you enter the details of whatever money matter you want to "take control of", whether it's a mortgage, loan, insurance, savings, investments, pension or all of them. Then you decide where you want your finances to go (up, ideally) and the software compiles your very own wealth check and action plan.

That sounds a bit time-consuming.

Au contraire. It takes about half an hour to complete, and saves you the hassle of trudging to the bank and pretending to understand what the personal finance advisor is talking about. It's also completely independent: for example, there are 8,205 mortgage deals in the database, from 127 different providers.

What if I want to talk to a real person?

There's a team of trained and qualified telephone advisors on hand to help out. If you're unsure about anything the tool suggests, fill in the online form and they'll give you a ring.

What else does Moneyextra do? Plenty.

The site offers advice on subjects ranging from travel insurance to tax self-assessment, and you can get the latest money news via a free email newsletter. It's one of the UK's longest-established personal finance websites, with 500,000 unique users and more than 10 million page views each month.

Brightspark

Black Circles www.blackcircles.com



You'd think there wouldn't be any gaps left in the online retail market, but 24-year-old Mike Welch spotted a big

round black hole in 2001 – you couldn't buy tyres online. The canny upstart struck a deal with Auto Trader and set up Black Circles to save customers the hassle of travelling to a tyre-fitting centre only to find their tyre is out of stock. You order which tyres you require and Black Circles delivers them to one of 900 garages nationwide. The company now boasts a 20,000-strong customer base, and Mike is the proud owner of the Shell Livewire Young Entrepreneur of the Year award.

Cashpoints

We comb the web for tips on stashing, splashing and making more cash

shopping challenge

What we're shopping for

Dyson DC11 Vacuum Cleaner

Each issue we scour the net to find the best deals on a popular product such as this bag-less vacuum cleaner. If you've got a challenge, let us know

Not to be confused with the more expensive DC11 Allergy, the all-floors DC11 is a classic among vacuum cleaners. Its cylinder shape makes it ideal for hard-to-reach areas and hard flooring, and it has a 'lifetime filter' so you never have to go out and buy more. The cleaner is approved by the British Allergy Foundation. Find out more at www.dyson.co.uk.

winner

amazon.co.uk
 Mum's the Word
 Dyson DC11 steel yellow all floors cylinder vacuum cleaner
 Was: £219.97
 Our Price: £208.97 & this item Delivered FREE in the UK with Super Saver conditions.
 You Save: £10.00 (4%)
 Availability: usually dispatched within 1 to 2 weeks.
 2 New & Used from £208.97
 Pay 0% p.a. interest for 6 months on balance transfer
 ASIN: B0000YQ1A4
 Amazon.co.uk Sales Rank: 379



Amazon

www.amazon.co.uk

It was almost beaten by whippersnapper QED-UK, but again Amazon just manages to sneak this Shopping Challenge by a couple of pence. All your vacuuming needs and many more are met by the site that just used to sell books. The Kitchen & Home section is truly enormous, with up to 50 per cent off high-street prices on many products.

Basic price: £208.97

Delivery charge: Free

Claimed delivery time:

Dispatched in 1-2 weeks

Returns: Within 30 days

How to pay: Visa/Delta/Electron/MasterCard/Switch/Solo/Eurocard/Amex/cheque



QED-UK

www.qed-uk.com

Basic price: £201.23

Delivery charge: £7.76

Claimed delivery time:

Within 3-5 working days

How to pay: Visa/Delta/MasterCard/Switch/Solo/Amex/cheque

TOTAL PRICE: £208.99



Comet

www.comet.co.uk

Basic price: £216.33

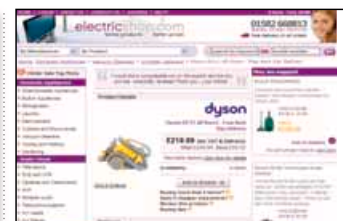
Delivery charge: Free

Claimed delivery time:

Within 5 days

How to pay: Visa/Delta/Electron/Mastercard/Solo/Switch/Amex

TOTAL PRICE: £216.33



Electricshop

www.electricsshop.com

Basic price: £219.99

Delivery charge: Free

Claimed delivery time: Will call to arrange within 48 hours

How to pay: Visa/Delta/Mastercard/Solo/Switch

TOTAL PRICE: £219.99



Edited by Daniel Booth (daniel_booth@ipcmedia.com)

17 - 30 March 2005

downloaded

What to download and where to find it



The Bravery

Full-length gig (video) F

Available: Now

From: www.fabchannel.com

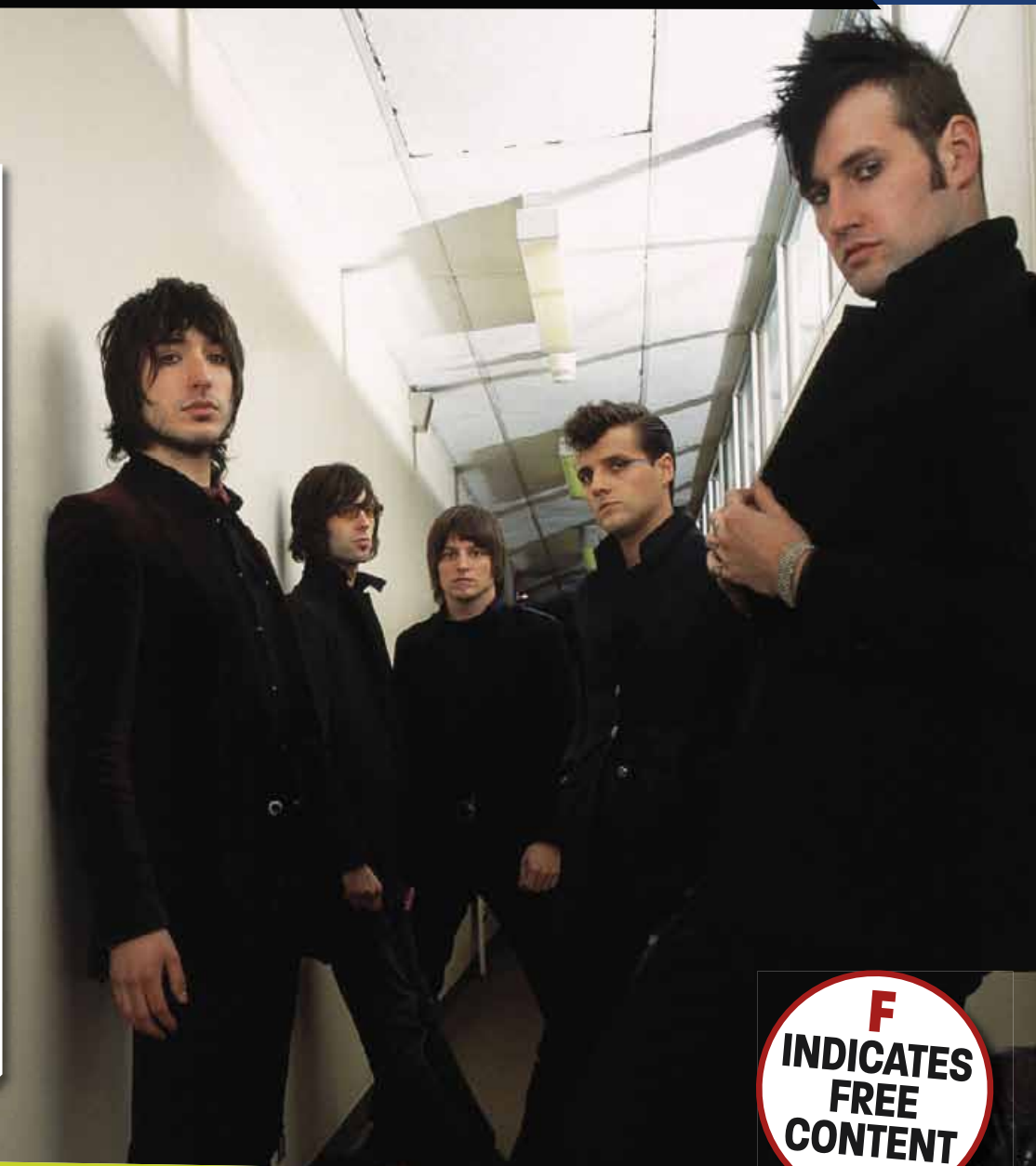
Live session (video) F

Available: Now

<http://uk.launch.yahoo.com>

Let us introduce you to The Bravery. You may not have heard of this New York five-piece, but you won't be able to avoid them during 2005. Their eponymous debut album has just been released and is bound to be huge. Their last single – *An Honest Mistake* – swaggered into the charts at Number 7, and singer Sam Endicott's mega-quiffed appearance will become a ubiquitous presence in magazines and on TV.

The reason that stardom awaits is that they've succeeded in pairing the twitchy synths of The Killers with the spiky guitars of The Strokes. You couldn't get a more 'now' band if you grew one in a laboratory. To see if you're going to fall for The Bravery's charms visit Fab Channel and watch this superb 40-minute gig recorded earlier this year at the Paradiso in Amsterdam. We can't recommend Fab Channel highly enough – it has a stunning archive of gigs stretching back to 2000 (scroll down for a recent Snow Patrol gig). Then, for a Bravery dessert, head over to Launch to watch an exclusive session performance of the band's 2004 limited edition single *Unconditional*.



Music

36 Watch a host of indie bands perform live on Xfm's video special, hear web-exclusive Absolut DJ mixes and new albums by Queens of the Stone Age, Morrissey and Moby.



Television & radio

39 Watch the first episode of *Battlestar Galactica* and the entire series of *Full Metal Challenge*. Plus the best online radio and interactive TV content.



Film

40 Watch clips and interviews with the stars from new releases including *Miss Congeniality 2*, *Robots* and *Constantine*. Plus our favourite five short films online.




Games

42 Play Flying Heroes for free and check out fantasy combat game *Severance: Blade of Darkness*. Plus new downloadable extras for *Unreal Tournament* and *Doom*.



Where to find this fortnight's best music downloads



Absolut DJ mixes

Download-only mixes (audio) **F**
Available: Now
From: www.absoluttracks.com

Here's something a bit different. Vodka giant Absolut has launched a music player featuring specially-commissioned mixes from a wealth of high-profile producers such as Spain's Wally Lopez, Russia's DJ Vadim and Germany's Monica Kruse. As well as downloading the music, you can access videos, interviews and artist images.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

MyTunes

Putting your iPod or MP3 player on random is a great way of getting a cross-section of your musical tastes. Here are the first 10 tracks that appeared randomly on the iPod of Web User Editor Richard Clark. Tell us what's on your music player on the Open Forum at www.webuser.co.uk/forums.

PJ Harvey – *This Mess We're In*
 REM – *Losing My Religion*
 Coldplay – *God Put a Smile On Your Face*
 Bob Dylan – *Idiot Wind*
 Radiohead – *High and Dry*
 Snow Patrol – *How to Be Dead*
 Damien Rice – *Delicate*
 Smashing Pumpkins – *Disarm*
 Dire Straits – *Sultans of Swing*
 Led Zeppelin – *When the Levee Breaks*

Highlights

singles & videos

Classic Albums

DAMIEN RICE
Single: Volcano
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

NATALIE IMBRUGLIA
Single: Shiver
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

AVRIL LAVIGNE
Single: He Wasn't
Thur 17 March: TOTP **F**

NAS
Single: Just a Moment
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

LEMAR
Video: Time to Grow
Thur 17 March: TOTP **F**

HOT HOT HEAT
Single: Goodnight Goodnight
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

ESTELLE
Single: Go Gone
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

KASABIAN
Single: Club Foot
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

FINN BROTHERS
Single: Edible Flowers
Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

Adam Ant – *Friend or Foe* (1982)
Available: Mon 21 March
 Re-release of Adam Ant's first solo album, packed with unreleased and rare tracks.
From: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

M People – *Northern Soul* (1992)
Available: Now
 M People's debut album, featuring their first single *Colour My Life*, is reissued with four bonus tracks.
From: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO



Better than iPod? Tatung Elio

The iPod Photo seems to be the latest target for Apple's rivals to try to emulate, with numerous music players now featuring colour screens and offering picture storage. The Tatung Elio is one such photo jukebox, allowing you to view your digital images on its bright 2.2in display. Its 20GB hard disk stores around 5,000



tracks in MP3 or WMA format, or 7,000 JPEGs, with an SD card slot for transferring shots directly from your camera. It measures 113x73x19mm and costs £230. You can find full details at www.tatung.com. Our rating ★★★★★

Music on the move



IPOD ISOLATOR EARPHONES
 Nothing spoils an otherwise peaceful train or bus journey quite like the tinny, hissy noise of somebody else's personal stereo. Avoid turning you and your iPod into a public nuisance with the aid of these 6i Isolator Earphones. Created by Etymotic Research especially for Apple music players, they form an airtight seal over your ears, keeping the bass in, not out. This means you can enjoy your music without distraction, and no fear of disturbing others. Order them from www.widget.co.uk for £99.99.

F – INDICATES FREE CONTENT. All other content is paid for at rates set by the site

Key

There are so many music sites offering downloads that we have to use abbreviations to fit them all in. Use this key to decipher them:

HMV – HMV Downloads: www2.hmv.co.uk/pmenu/downloads MSN – MSN Music Club: www.entertainment.msn.co.uk/music MCM – myCokeMusic: www.mycokemusic.com
 NP – Napster: www.napster.co.uk TISC – Tiscali Music: www.tiscali.co.uk/music TOTP – Top of the Pops: www.bbc.co.uk/totp VIRGIN – Virgin.net: www.virgin.net/music/digitaldownloads
 VZ – VidZone: www.vidzone.tv WDOO – Wanadoo: www.wanadoo.co.uk/music W – www.wippit.com WL – www.woolworths.co.uk XFM – XFM: www.xfm.co.uk



Also online

50 CENT

Live performance (video) **F**

Available: Now
The American rapper performs his new single *Candy Shop*.
From: <http://uk.launch.yahoo.com>

BRENDAN BENSON

Album: *Alternative to Love*

(audio) **F**

Available: Now
If you're not sure whether to buy the third album from Detroit singer-songwriter – and friend of Jack White – Brendan Benson, you can hear it in full free at XFM's Listening Post feature.

From: www.xfm.co.uk

EVERCLEAR

Live performance (video) **F**

Available: Now

The American post-grungers perform their 1996 hit *Santa Monica*.

From: www.rollingstone.com/videos

THE DIRTY FEEL

Live performance (video) **F**

Available: Now
Three tracks and an interview from this new funk-rock trio.
From: www.tiscali.co.uk/music/showcase/the_dirty_feel.html

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Live performance (video)

Available: Fri 18 March
Josh Homme's American rockers speed through new single *Little Sister*.
From: www.aol.co.uk/music

WILL YOUNG

Live performance (video)

Available: Fri 18 March

Full-length gig recorded live at Wembley Arena

From: www.aol.co.uk/music

BASEMENT JAXX

Special edition album (audio)

Available: Mon 21 March
You can download Basement Jaxx's new album *The Singles*, plus the special edition bonus disc containing rare remixes, for just £15.98 from PlayLouder.
From: www.playlouder.com/artist/~basementjaxx

JIMMY EAT WORLD

Internet-only single (audio)

Available: Mon 21 March
Download *Sparkle*, the new web-exclusive track from the American emo-rockers.
From: www.napster.co.uk

LEMAR

Live session (video)

Available: Fri 25 March
Four tracks from the British soul sensation.
From: www.aol.co.uk/music

GLASTONBURY HIGHLIGHTS

Live performances (video)

Available: Fri 25 March
Some of the best recent Glasto performances, including Robbie Williams's *Angels* (1998) and Coldplay's *Yellow* (2002).
From: www.aol.co.uk/music

NEW ORDER

Album preview (audio)

Available: Fri 25 March
New Order are AOL's Artist of the Month for March, a bonanza that ends with your chance to hear the new album *Waiting for the Sirens Call* in full three days before it's release.
From: www.aol.co.uk/music

THE SUBWAYS

Internet-only track (audio) **F**

Available: Now
Download a special acoustic version of the teenage three-piece's new single *Oh Yeah (Draussen Version)*.
From: www.nme.com/features/111631.htm



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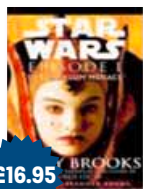


Audio books

Spoken-word highlights from iTunes (www.itunes.com)

→ Best new release – fiction

Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace
– Terry Brooks
(read by Alexander Adams)

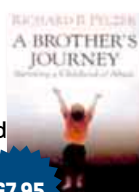


£16.95

9hrs 34min
Novelisation of the first *Star Wars* film, based on George Lucas's screenplay. Feel free to skip the chapters featuring Jar Jar Binks.

→ Best new release – non-fiction

A Brother's Journey – Richard B Pelzer
(read by Joshua Gates)



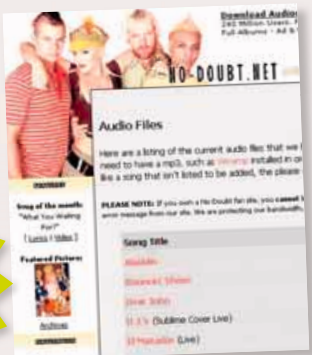
£7.95

3hrs 20min
Richard B Pelzer – brother of Dave Pelzer, who wrote the best-selling *A Child Called 'It'* – tells the harrowing story of his abused childhood.

Hiddengems

NO DOUBT – Gangsters (live) (audio) F

www.no-doubt.net/audio
Gwen and the boys cover The Specials' ska classic in an energetic live performance.



F – INDICATES FREE CONTENT.
All other content is paid for at rates set by the site



X-posure Live indie gig (video) F

Available: March 21

From: www.xfm.co.uk

This video special from XFM includes superb footage from the multi-band gig to celebrate the 6th anniversary of its show *X-posure Live*, held at the Camden Barfly last month. You can watch entire sets from the indie bands Your Code Name is: Milo, The Cherubs, Clor, Maximo Park (the best of the bunch – quirky indie from Newcastle, pictured below), Dogs, Eastern Lane and Metro Riots.

WEB EXCLUSIVE



Unsigned bands

FOKKEWOLF – Time to Kill F

www.deadlybeefburger.couk.com/downloads.htm

From: Nottingham

Sound like: Fast and furious turbo-punk, recorded for a John Peel session.

Sample lyric: "Give me the keys I've got time to kill – a-ha!"



off the beaten track

CUBAN MUSIC

www.timba.com/music

Timba, from which this site derives its name, is a modern version of Cuban mambo and salsa. Here you'll find music from some of Timba's best exponents, including Pachito Alonso, whose *Chiquitica Bum Bum* sent the Web User office into salsa heaven.



Highlights Albums

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Lullabies to Paralyse

Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

MORRISSEY

Live at Earls Court

Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

Hyperactive Workout for the Flying Squad

Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

MOBY

Hotel

Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

BECK

Guero

Mon 21 March: HMV, MSN, MCM, N, TISC, VIRGIN, WDOO

Key

There are so many music sites offering downloads that we have to use abbreviations to fit them all in. Use this key to decipher them:

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NP – Napster: www.napster.co.uk TISC – Tiscali Music: www.tiscali.co.uk/music TOTP – Top of the Pops: www.bbc.co.uk/top VIRGIN – Virgin.net: www.virgin.net/music/digitaldownloads
VZ – VidZone: www.vidzone.tv WDOO – Wanadoo: www.wanadoo.co.uk/music W – www.wipit.com WL – www.woolworths.co.uk XFM – XFM: www.xfm.co.uk



Where to find this fortnight's best TV & Radio downloads

TELEVISION



FIRST EPISODE AND DELETED SCENES
Battlestar Galactica F



Available: Now

From: www.scifi.com/battlestar/33_full_episode

No, it's not the original episode of the fondly remembered Seventies sci-fi epic that rode on the coattails of the success of *Star Wars*, but the brand new 're-imagining' that's been wowing audiences Stateside. The original premise is roughly the same, with a disparate bunch of humans searching for Earth while under attack from the Cylons, yet it's been tweaked to give the story new directions. The biggest shock of all is that Starbuck, the dashing pilot first played by *The A Team*'s Dirk Benedict, is now a woman. Heresy!



The best of interactive TV

INTERACTIVE PICK OF THE FORTNIGHT

PLAY NEW SHREK GAME

Sky Gamestar

Available: From Thur 24 Mar

Transform yourself into the grumpiest, surliest and most Scottish ogre in fairytale lore and set out on a quest to rescue your true love Princess Fiona, the endlessly nattering Donkey and other characters from the films who have been captured by the wicked Fairy Godmother.



CAST YOUR TV OPINIONS

BBC 4

Available: From Sun 27 Mar

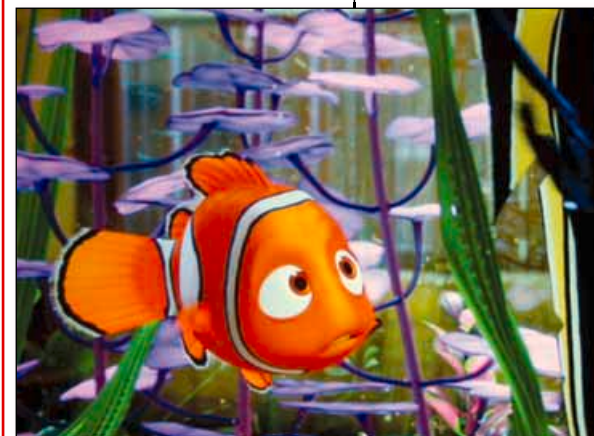
Set over a week, the show *TV On Trial* is an interactive experiment that looks at the past six decades of square-eyed entertainment and asks viewers to decide which television decade was best. The perfect opportunity to express your belief that today's TV is the best ever or drearier than an *EastEnders* storyline involving Ian Beale and lost cutlery.

PLAY FINDING NEMO GAME

Available: From Thur 24 Mar

Sky Gamestar

Cuteness alert! By setting missions that involve making new friends, defeating villainous fish (we've never trusted guppies) and finding enough food to prolong your gameplay, this game manages to make Nemo even more adorable than he was on the big screen.



ENTIRE SERIES

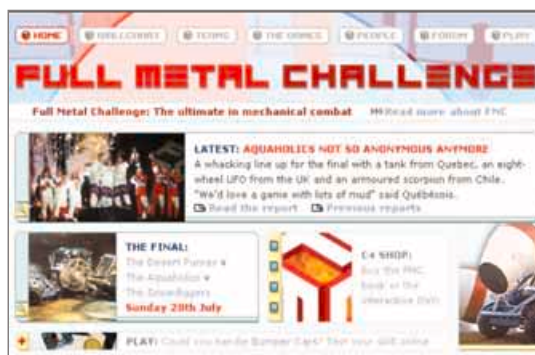
Full Metal Challenge

Available: Now

Fee: £4.95 monthly subscription

From: www.channel4.com/broadband

Taking *Scrapheap Challenge* one brutal stage further, this engineering game show sees international teams designing and building fearsome machines to tackle punishing tests, such as ramming each other's cars into submission. The sound of squealing metal has never been so enjoyable.



ONLINE RADIO

Station of the fortnight

Solar Radio

www.solarradio.com

Right about now, funk soul brothers should head to Solar Radio, a station where smooth operators ease out grooves from a variety of funky and soulful genres, playing tunes that are all too often ignored by mainstream stations. We found it impossible to resist the show called 'Strawberry Jazz'. Should make for a good jam session.



ALSO ON THE AIRWAVES...



SAMURAI FM

www.samurai.fm

A brilliant moniker made even better by the fact it broadcasts from Tokyo. Streams ultra-cool, cutting-edge dance music.

KALX

<http://kalx.berkeley.edu/>

College sounds from the University of California.

YLEQ

www.yle.fi/yleq

We couldn't understand a word these Finnish DJs were saying, but they were playing classic Bowie tracks when we tuned in.

DOWNTOWN

www.downtown.co.uk

A surprising mix of indie, rock and pop from County Down.

Where to find this fortnight's best film downloads

Mistress of disguise



Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous (Interviews and clips) F

Available: Thur 24 Mar

From: www.mymovies.net

Nearly girl Sandra Bullock returns in this sequel to the 2000 original, in which she once again dons numerous outfits and disguises to rescue her kidnapped friends. Expect more costume changes than plot.

Freaky footage

WHEN DRIVERS GO WEIRD

www.kontraband.com/show/show.asp?ID=1113&rtm=main-topten

For reasons best known to himself, this American gentlemen tries to demonstrate how good a driver he is by climbing onto the roof of his truck. We would love to see his insurance claim after he suffers the oh-so inevitable mishap.



Melinda and Melinda (Interviews and clips) F

Available: Thur 24 Mar **From:** www.mymovies.net

Woody Allen's latest festival of neurotic banter looks at the story of a woman from two opposite angles: one comedic, the other tragic. We think the hidden message is "Life is all about how you view it".

Sneaky Peek



TOP FILM TRAILERS

Sin City

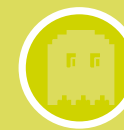
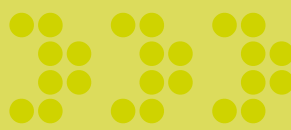
UK release:

April 2005

www.apple.com/trailers/miramax/sin_city

This adaptation of the original comic book is set to be utterly faithful to the source material because the creator – Frank Miller – is one of the directors. It's overflowing with stars, too, including Benicio Del Toro, Bruce Willis and Elijah Wood.



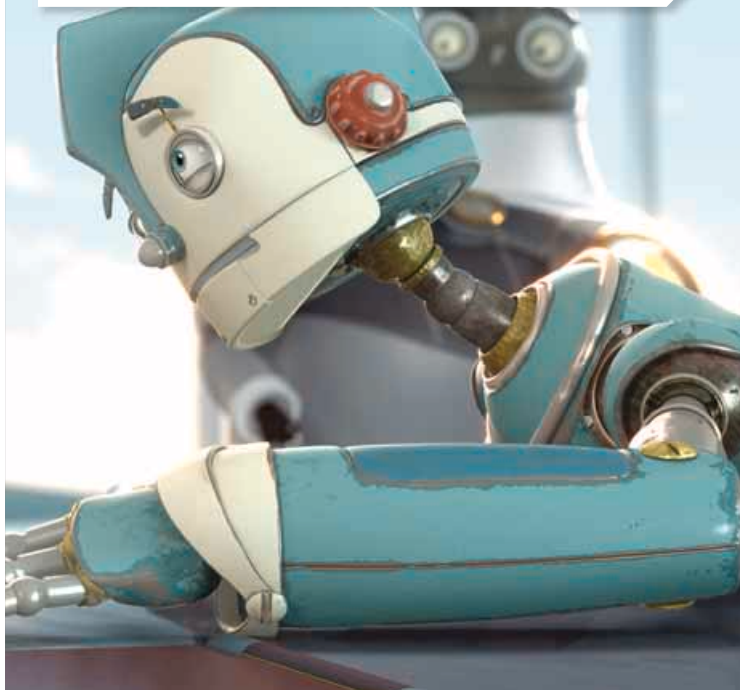


Robots (interviews and clips) F

Available: Thur 17 Mar

From: www.mymovies.net

Hardly a month seems to go by without another star-studded animation reaching our screens, and this adventure in a world populated by robots is the latest offering. Ewan MacGregor and Halle Berry have top billing, but Robin Williams is bound to steal the show.



Highlights short films



1 War

www.atomfilms.com/af/content/war

Proving good ideas never need to be flashy, this crudely animated short acutely captures the futility of conflict. We love the thumping techno soundtrack.

2 Return of the Hero

www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2655014

A wannabe filmmaker with delusions of fame heads back to his hometown to make a documentary about where he grew up. It turns out he'd have been better off staying well away.

3 Static

www.atomfilms.com/af/content/atom_554

After losing two friends in a minefield, a lone soldier hears the telltale click of a landmine underneath his foot. Unsure what to do, he stands still and ponders his next move. Expect some colourful language.

4 The Pigskin

www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2531946



Two chums own a piece of American Football history, but when one of them falls on hard times and wants to sell it off, the other friend objects. Their obsession with the precious memorabilia careers towards violence, and some coarse language too.

5 Head Breaker

www.atomfilms.com/af/content/headbreaker

A normal journey for a cabbie turns into a tense ride towards what might be his final destination thanks to his passenger's offbeat sense of humour.



Constantine (interviews and clips) F

Available: Thur 17 Mar

From: www.mymovies.net

Adapted from the comic book *Hellblazer*, this supernatural thriller stars Keanu Reeves as John Constantine, an investigator of the paranormal with lung cancer who teams up with a police officer (Rachel Weisz) to investigate her twin sister's apparent suicide.



The Machinist (interviews and clips) F

Available: Thur 17 Mar

From: www.mymovies.net

Before he dons his Batman mask, watch Christian Bale's incredible turn as an emaciated industrial worker racked by a year of insomnia, who fears his workmates have instigated a conspiracy against him.



Where to find this fortnight's best games downloads



Flying Heroes F

Available: Now

From: www.freeloder.com

This month's free Freeloder game might sound like a World War 1 dog-fighting simulation, but it's far more surreal. Flying Heroes is an airborne arcade death-match affair which is essentially a cross between classic games Magic Carpet and Quake. The player zooms around on various craft (including dragons and flying machines), engaging in a more strategic death-match than the average shooter offers.



Severance: Blade of Darkness

Available: Now

Fee: £4.99 monthly subscription

From: www.freeloder.com

Severance is a thoroughly absorbing fantasy-combat role-playing game in which you

select one of four mighty warriors and indulge in some bloody third-person swordplay. The fighting flows thick and fast throughout the game's many varied levels.



Insane

Available: Now

Fee: £4.99 monthly subscription

From: www.freeloder.com

Fancy some extreme off-roading? Then play Insane, which boasts wild sprawling tracks crammed with plenty of jumps from which you can launch your 4X4 into orbit. There are multiple modes of play including an in-depth championship option.



Game extras New levels, new gameplay, new content



EscOnline (for Unreal Tournament 2004) F

From: www.esconline.org

This mod really is something different – a virtual nightclub where you can chat to other people and bust some moves on the dance floor.



ZOOW: Alien Dimension (for Doom) F

From: <http://zoowad.doomrepublic.com>

The final version (2.07) of the nostalgic Alien Dimension has just been unveiled. This mod is for the original Doom and it features 10 new maps and two story endings.

Demo of the fortnight



GTR F

From: www.gtr-game.com

Petrol heads and serious motor-racing fans everywhere should have a gander at this excellent GTR demo, which features a dusk drive at the Spa track. Click on the Downloads link for the demo.

MOST WANTED

The latest hot kit on the net

By Robert Irvine



MOBILE PHONE

Virgin Mobile Nokia 6670, £330

If you demand more from your mobile phone than basic calling, messaging and image-snapping functions, feast your eyes on the Nokia 6670. Packed with powerful features, it's a stylish smart phone that's surprisingly simple to operate. Its built-in camera lets you capture one-megapixel photos, zoom in by a factor of four and edit your shots on-screen with crop, frame and auto-fix tools. You can also record up to ten minutes of video and send 15-second clips by MMS. A document viewer allows you to read email attachments in Word, Excel or PowerPoint format, while

the web browser supports PDF files. Add to this 44 polyphonic ringtones, downloadable games and Bluetooth and you have a handset that does everything but make the tea.



Where to see it: www.virginmobile.com/mobile

MOST WANTED

The latest hot kit on the net

By Robert Irvine



MP3 PLAYER

Thomson PDP2812, £200

Considering it was co-creator of the MP3 format, Thomson has taken its time introducing a mid-range digital audio player to rival the iPod Mini. Fortunately, the PDP2812 appears to have been worth the wait, offering a solid range of features within a smart, compact design. Its 5GB hard disk is capable of storing up to 170 hours of music in MP3 or WMA format, though it seems Thomson is no longer pushing its MP3pro technology, once touted as the superior successor to MP3. The player also stores up to 25,000 JPEG photos (at the lowest resolution), which you can view on its high-resolution 1.5in colour screen. It sports a thumbwheel and joystick for easy track navigation and connects to your PC via speedy USB 2.0.



Where to see it: www.thomson-europe.co.uk

WIRELESS ADAPTOR

US Robotics USB805422, £30

As we move ever closer to a wireless world, there's never been a better or cheaper time to set up your own home network. Besides your broadband connection, all you need is a wireless router, of which there are many low-cost models to choose from (see our round-up of broadband options on page 46), and an adaptor such as this US Robotics device. Delivering speeds of up to 54Mbps, the USB805422 simply plugs into the USB port of a desktop or laptop PC, bestowing it with instant wireless connectivity.

This allows you to share internet access, files and peripherals such as printers with the host computer, and nary a cable in sight. You can also use it while travelling to connect to the net in a bar, hotel or other Wi-Fi hotspot.



Where to see it: www.usr-emea.com





COMING SOON!

Sony Ericsson Walkman phone

Although many mobile phones offer MP3 playback, the Sony Ericsson W800 promises to be the first truly integrated handset-cum-music player. Bearing the Walkman brand, it offers 512MB of storage, stereo headphones and easy file transfer from your PC. See www.sonyericsson.com for details.



6GB iPod Mini

Responding to the recent flood of rivals to the iPod Mini, Apple has announced an improved version of its world-conquering MP3 player. The new models feature 6GB hard drives (up from 4GB) and a battery life of 18 hours (up from eight). Priced at £169, find out more at www.apple.com/uk.



5-megapixel mini-digital camcorder

Mini-digital camcorders were all the rage last year but none were quite as small or powerful as Sanyo's latest. The Xacti DMX-C5 is only 23mm thick and weighs just 145g, yet packs in a five-megapixel sensor and 6x zoom. Available in three shiny colours, keep an eye on www.sanyo.co.uk for updates.



MP3 PLAYER

Aigo F660, £70 (128MB), £90 (256MB)

With the iPod Shuffle, even Apple has acknowledged there's as much demand for lower capacity, Flash-based MP3 players as there is for mega-gigabyte behemoths. Aigo realised this long ago, and its F660 model is merely the latest in its impressive range of high-quality digital audio devices. Available in 128MB and 256MB versions, it stores roughly 25 or 50 tracks respectively, lasting for up to 14 hours on a single AAA. Beneath its robust magnesium exterior and 'how does that work?' mirrored screen, you'll find such useful features as an FM radio with 20 presets, a voice recorder for capturing meetings and verbal notes, and a line-in port for direct MP3 encoding. Not bad at all for under a hundred quid.



Where to see it: www.aigo.co.uk



Networkers

A wireless broadband router can turn a simple internet connection into a powerful home network, we put five of the best through their paces to find the best options for you

When you first got your ADSL connection, you were probably supplied with a simple broadband modem. These hook up to your computer using a USB port, and build a bridge between your computer and the internet so you can surf, email and download. However, this is

the most basic of options. If you want to do more with your broadband connection, you need to consider a wireless broadband router.

These devices act as the gateway to your internet connection. Like a modem it provides a bridge to the internet, but it can divide your connection between a number of computers or

internet-enabled devices (like games consoles), either using Ethernet cables or its flexible Wi-Fi wireless networking options. There's also the added benefit that your networked devices can communicate among themselves, so you can share printers, transfer files, and play multiplayer games all around your house.

BT Voyager 2100 Wireless ADSL Router, £89.99

www.bt.com/homenetworking



With the Voyager 2100, BT has gone for a no-frills device that covers the basics well. With it you can create a Wi-Fi

network that adheres to the 802.11g standard, with a maximum speed of 54Mbps. It can also connect via cables to up to four computers using its Ethernet sockets and there's an off switch – probably the simplest way of ensuring no-one else can use your internet connection via Wi-Fi while you're not using it.

Installing the device doesn't require a set-up CD, you simply follow the quick-start installation instructions to connect the hardware and use a web browser to complete the set-up. Built into the device itself, the installation software loaded as easily as a web

page by simply typing 'voyager.home' into the Address Bar. Having no installation CD is a liberating experience – all hardware should work like this. Because BT knows exactly which settings your ADSL connection will have there are no further complications – enter your username and password and bingo, you're on the net.

To keep things as simple as possible, all wireless security options are switched off so you'll want to alter that immediately. The web interface is relatively simple, with plenty of online help, but it might still be a touch over-whelming for the complete beginner.

Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★



Thomson SpeedTouch 716g, £116.99 www.speedtouch.co.uk



The SpeedTouch people have seen the opportunities offered by VoIP internet telephony and hit the ground running. The 716g

is the first wireless broadband router we've seen with the sockets to plug a telephone in, so you can use a standard phone handset to make calls over the internet and save money on your bill.

Its features don't end there – the router is a perfectly capable standard 802.11g model (54Mbps) with the added option of connecting to your main computer via USB, as well as the usual Ethernet and wireless options.

Should you need to configure things, such as adding Wi-Fi security – which is turned off by default – the web interface is fairly standard. It has plenty of odd-looking numbers and jargon to send the uninitiated off kilter, but nothing to trouble those familiar with Wi-Fi's terminology.

If giving internet telephony a go is something that's on your 'to do



list' and you've been wondering if you could use a standard handset to do it, this is certainly a handy all-in-one solution that will also wirelessly network your house and connect it to broadband.

Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

Netgear 108Mbps Super G Wireless ADSL Router, £159.99 www.netgear.co.uk



For most people, a 54Mbps wireless network is likely to be enough. But if you live in a mansion, have thick walls, or just want a Wi-Fi network that's twice as fast as everyone else's, then this is your device. Having said this, you'll need to ensure that all your other devices are compatible with Netgear's Super G system, though if not, it's also compatible with the usual 802.11g and 802.11b Wi-Fi standards. The main downside to all this is the price tag.

Like most modern routers, it doesn't require a set-up CD – you use a browser to initiate the web-based installation software built into the device itself. What's more, the device sniffs out your basic broadband settings direct from your connection, so all you need to do is type in your broadband username and password and you're connected to the net.

Security is inactive by default and you're likely to want to turn this on, which involves navigating



the web interface, which isn't quite as straight-forward as the installation.

Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

2wire BT Wireless Home Hub 1800HG, £79.99 www.2wire.com

This device, manufactured by 2wire, broke the mould in terms of design – it's the only wireless broadband router we've tested that stands upright and proud.

The unit comes with a CD pre-configured to BT's broadband offerings, making installation simple if BT is your ISP. Advanced users can by-pass this and install the device with any ADSL-based ISP, but this isn't supported by BT and certainly shouldn't be attempted by anyone who doesn't know exactly what they're doing. If you have a BT connection, raise the ease-of-use score below to a full five stars.

Wi-Fi security is on by default so you can surf in safety from the beginning. There's also an easy to configure firewall and a handy self-filtering option, so you can stop computers on your network accessing certain sites.

The device comes with four Ethernet ports for wiring computers



directly, along with a USB port should you find your computer lacking. The Wi-Fi works with the 802.11b and 802.11g standards.

Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

US Robotics SureConnect ADSL Wireless Gateway 9106, £119.99 www.usr-emea.com

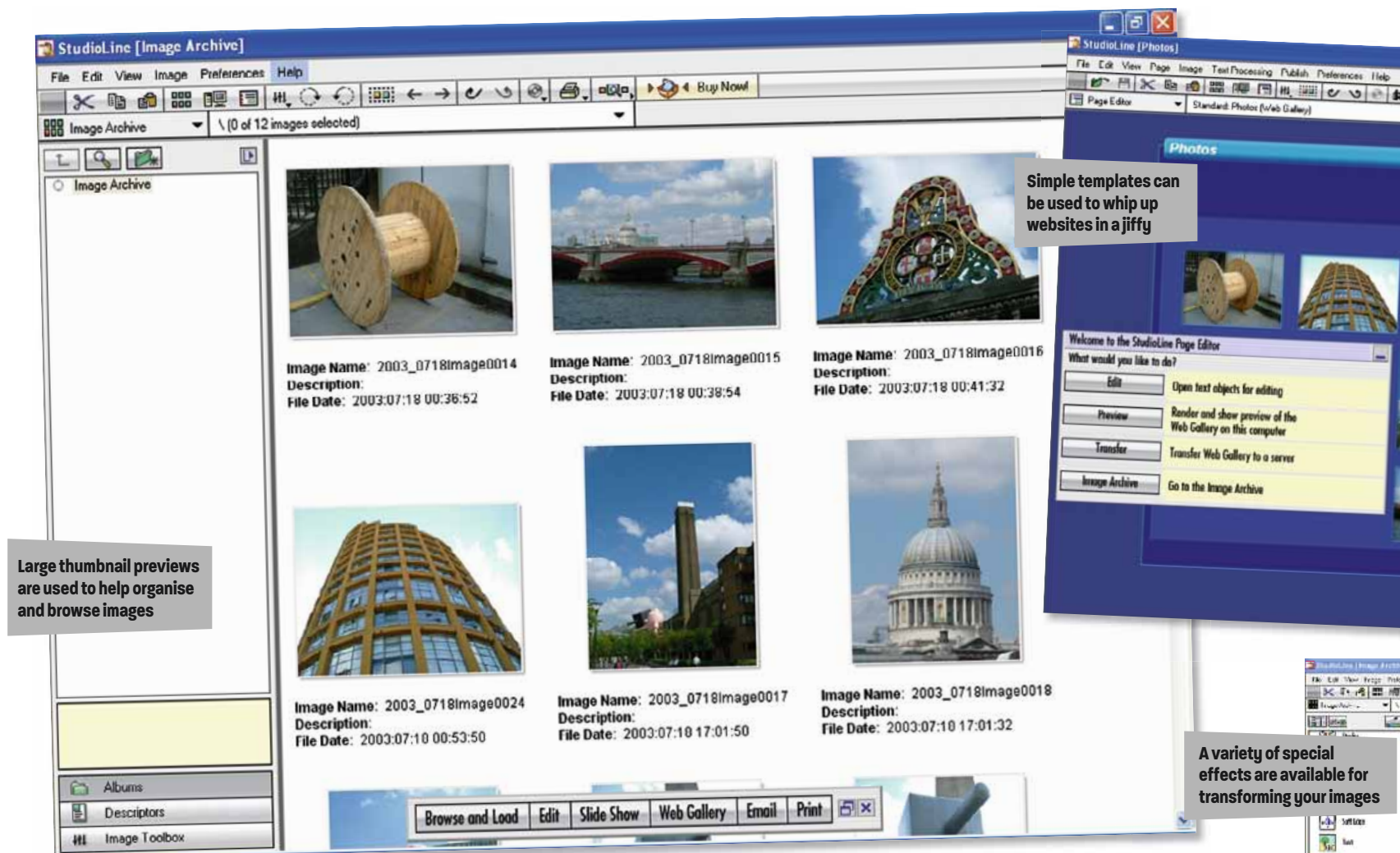
This is the old man of wireless broadband routers, undergoing no major change since it won a Web User Gold award in Issue 77. However, there are some areas where its rivals have caught and surpassed its high standards.

Installation is still slick, though it uses the now old-school system of a step-by-step wizard on a CD, but the once seemingly simple web interface has been surpassed by better designed offerings. The 802.11g-compliant Wi-Fi aspect sticks to the standard 54Mbps, which might disappoint if you've got other Wi-Fi devices from US Robotics that can be boosted to 125Mbps.

These are minor niggles though and the US Robotics device has stood the test of time, proving it's still a sturdy base on which to build a network around your broadband connection.



Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★



Free thinking

We check out the latest free image editor to rival the likes of Picasa and Irfanview

Not so long ago, free image editing was restricted to the humble, but excellent Irfanview (www.irfanview.com). Now, with competition from the likes of Serif's PhotoPlus 5.5 (www.freaserifsoftware.com) and Google's Picasa 2 (www.picasa.com), the free image-editing arena has exploded. The latest addition is a free version of H&M Software's StudioLine but, with so much choice on offer, is it worth the download?

Features

★★★★★

As is becoming increasingly popular with image software, this isn't solely for editing pictures, but can be used to organise them too. The two functions are integrated seamlessly, letting you collate and order your pictures one minute, then quickly start editing when you've found the images you're interested in. There are also useful tools for sharing images via email and for creating web galleries.

Performance

★★★★★

As a photo organiser, StudioLine is more than capable, offering lots of fields for sorting your photos by a range of categories, from personal descriptions and ratings to photographic information. The editing functions are also handy, offering a range of useful tools. Rotating, removing red-eye and simple cropping are well catered for, as are overall changes to a photo such as brightening an image or applying effects. Where it's lacking is in the ability to select and work on specific areas of an image, so it isn't possible to create cut-outs or composite images.

Ease of use

★★★★★

StudioLine ditches Windows' standard look and feel, and replaces it with its own. Although this makes it well suited to the image editing for which it has been designed, it feels clunky in places and can stand in a user's way. On the

positive side, once a picture is imported into the software, all changes are made on copies of the image so there's never any danger of accidentally over-writing it.

Value for money

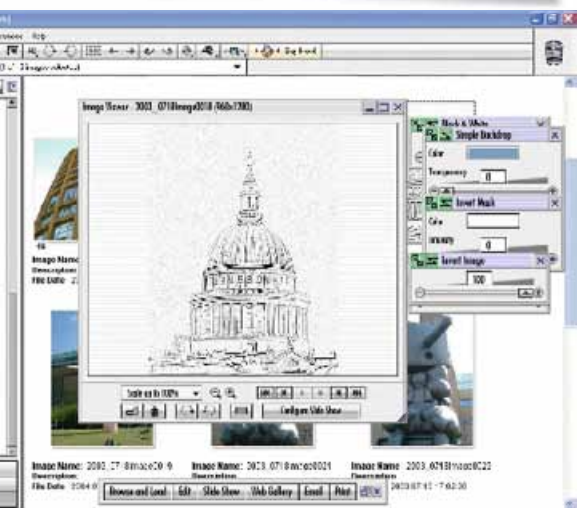
★★★★★

If you're looking for the catch as to how this program can be offered for free, an email address has to be supplied when you download it so expect to receive information about H&M's commercial products in your Inbox. There's also a nag screen on start-up that tries to sell upgrades to the latest version but this can be easily clicked through. Considering what's on offer, it's impossible to complain about the odd reminder of other available services.

Verdict

★★★★★

Perhaps of most interest to those looking to catalogue an extensive collection of photos



rather than seriously mess around with them, this is a useful piece of software. The no-cost price tag makes it even more of a no-brainer, though the competition is stiff: those looking for a more powerful editor might be better off with PhotoPlus, while the casual photographer might find Picasa's simpler interface more convenient.

StudioLine Photo Basic Free

For Something for nothing ■ Excellent image organisation tool, especially for larger collections

Against Shortage of editing tools and quirky interface might make its rivals more useful for certain users

What you need Pentium III 800MHz or better ■ Windows 98 or better ■ 256MB of memory ■ 150MB of hard disk space

Contacts H&M Software, www.studioline.biz

Prevx Pro 2005

By Andy Shaw

Bolster your defences

You've got firewall, anti-virus and anti-spyware software installed. But is it enough?



While your firewall protects you from hackers and your anti-virus software stops viruses, the company behind Prevx Pro suggest that these measures are not enough. It claims that malicious programs like rogue diallers, new Internet Explorer vulnerabilities and 'Zero Day' attacks (brand new viruses that haven't had anti-virus definitions written for them yet) can be designed to foil the existing security on your PC.

Features

Prevx Pro is a last line of defence against anything untoward running on your PC. It questions any process that it deems important, allowing the user total control over what happens to key files, effectively providing a shield against hackers, worms, viruses, Trojans, spyware and adware.

Performance

Try installing a new program with Prevx installed and you'll witness the level of protection on offer. The software asks whether you want to allow each change to the Registry or file system on your computer as the installation is progressing, which can get a bit tedious (though you can easily turn it off if you're installing a trusted program) but is certainly thorough. This basically means that Prevx can protect you against any known type of attack, even if it's so new that not even the big anti-virus companies have had a chance to track it. On the downside, this level of protection requires a high level of user interaction, so you need to be totally devoted to the security of your computer. If you're the type to let through programs when your firewall queries them because you presume they'll be OK and can't be bothered to check, this isn't the software for you.

Ease of use

One of the best things about Prevx is its look and feel, which has been designed to appear secure and functional. Running the program is much like running a firewall. Working in the background, the program will halt any suspect procedure and ask whether you want to stop it or let it through.

You can also tick a box to stop it from asking the same question about the same program at a later date. The only downside is the amount of work you have to do to allow your trusted software through, but without this, Prevx simply wouldn't be able to offer the same level of protection.

Value for money

With the exchange rate what it is, there's no better time to nip onto the internet and purchase a bit of American software – the \$20 program will cost you just over £10 to download. This is a great price for such a useful piece of software. If you balk at paying there's also a free version available – Prevx Home – though this sends information on potential threats back to Prevx HQ, which is then shared with ISPs and the like, with an obvious impact on your privacy.

Verdict

Most people will find a firewall, an anti-virus program and a bit of common sense to be enough to ensure most internet threats are kept at bay. However, if you want to guarantee that every single possible gap is plugged and that nothing untoward can happen to your computer without your consent, Prevx is a sturdy, useful tool.

Prevx Pro 2005

\$19.95 (around £10) inc VAT

For Great price thanks to weak dollar ■ Can provide an impenetrable barrier to your computer

Against Requires significant user interaction and some knowledge to ensure that nothing can slip through

What you need Pentium III 600MHz or better ■ Windows XP or 2000 ■ 128MB of memory ■ 12MB of hard disk space

Contacts Prevx, 01908 255563, www.prevx.com

INSTANT EXPERT GUIDE TO... Instant M

The internet has spawned a communication revolution. From publishing sites on the web to writing a quick email, the amazing thing about the net is how it has changed the way we talk to one another. Instant messaging (IM) is an immensely powerful tool that uses simple software to let you conduct a quick chat over the internet. Whether you already use an instant messenger or have no idea what we're talking about, here's our guide to what you can expect and how to get more from MSN Messenger – our current favourite.

Downloading MSN Messenger

You can download the latest version of MSN Messenger directly from Microsoft at <http://messenger.msn.com>. The download is 5MB and you'll need a Hotmail or .NET registered email address at the ready to access the MSN Messenger system.

If you're feeling particularly adventurous or just like to have the latest software, you can also download MSN Messenger Beta. The latest version gives you a hint of what's to come in the world of MSN Messenger and includes new animated emoticons, drag-and-drop backgrounds and the ability to set your online status before you log onto the network.



MSN Messenger is a popular instant messenger that is easy to download. You could also try the latest beta version to get an idea of what's new

What's it all about?

The idea is simple: install instant messenger software on your PC and you can type simple messages to any friends and family who have the same software installed.

What's the difference between IM and email?

All communication with IM is done in real time, so you can have instant text conversations with any of your friends who are currently online. Using email, everything is done at a slower rate – messages are longer and are saved by the email service provider until they are collected. Instant messaging is a bit like sending a text message on a mobile phone, except it's free, it's quicker and you can tell if the recipient is around before you send it.

Does the other person have to be online?

Yes. For proper real-time communication to take place, they have to be online. Most services will allow you to send messages to people who are offline, but they may be diverted to an email address.

Do I need to be able to chat in 'txt spk' (text speak)?

'Txt spk' has been created by the mobile phone text-messaging generation because the keypads on mobiles are too small to type properly on. You don't have to use this highly compressed form of English – your PC's keyboard makes

There's a choice of backgrounds for Messenger, or you can add your own

typing messages significantly faster. As a result, you can type in standard English, Cockney rhyming slang or any other language you fancy.

Who can I talk to?

You can talk to anyone who is online and has the same IM software installed as you. Just make a note of that person's chat identity or email address and you can add them to your list of contacts.

Can I speak to more than one person at a time?

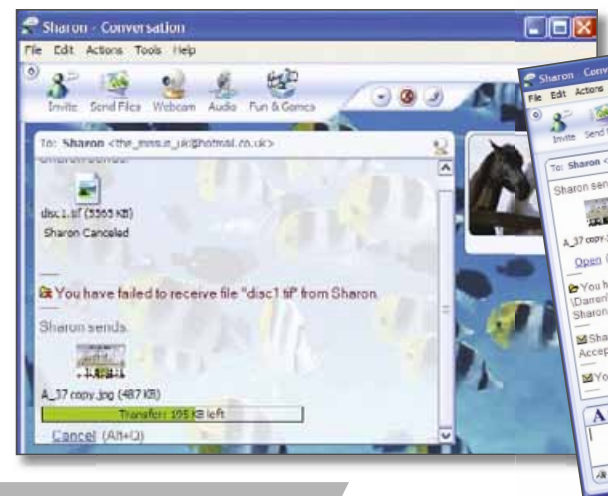
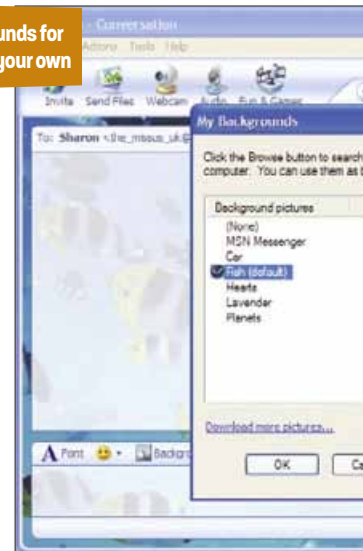
You can speak to as many people as you can maintain a conversation with – you just open a separate chat window for a private session or invite them into your current chat.

How much does it cost?

You don't get much for nothing these days, but instant-messaging software is free.

Is instant messaging limited to text?

No – you can also use it to have voice or video conversations, or send your friends files such as pictures and music.



The easiest way to chat with friends and family while you're online is with instant messaging software. **Darren Lock** spells out how to use it

essaging

Getting More from MSN Messenger

Customising the MSN Messenger window

To change the way your chat window looks, click on Tools then Create Backgrounds, which you can access via the main Messenger window or the chat screen. You will be given the choice of changing the background to one of a number of pre-selected screens. Don't worry if you don't like them – you can click on the Browse button and direct the file browser to a picture of your own instead.

For an even quicker virtual paint-job, you can click on the Backgrounds button in the chat window and all the available backgrounds are displayed, ready for you to choose. One of the other customisations you can perform on MSN Messenger is adding your own profile picture to the chat screen, which you can change by selecting the Change My Display Picture option on the picture box at the bottom right-hand side of the chat screen.

Sharing files and photos

One great thing about MSN Messenger is how easy it is to share files with others. You can share anything including documents, photos, videos

and music, and it's really easy to do. In the chat window, click on the Send Files button and then direct the browser to the files you want to send. The application will then tell you the status of the file transfer and give you the option to cancel it. When receiving files, a message appears asking you if you want to Accept, Save As or Decline the transfer. If receiving image files, a little thumbnail preview appears to illustrate what you are accepting. Files are automatically saved in the My Documents/My Received Files folder, though you can override this by using the Save As function and saving the file exactly where you want it.

Video and audio messaging

You can also use MSN Messenger to have audio and video conversations – just like on the telephone or in a videoconference. Before you start you will need to run the audio/video wizard, but this automatically starts up when you click the Webcam or Audio buttons for the first time. The wizard makes sure your equipment is connected properly and allows you to set the microphone and speaker volume.

Starting an audio or video conversation is just a matter of clicking the Webcam or Audio buttons and waiting for your recipient to accept. Like sharing a file, you can cancel the process by clicking the Cancel link in the chat window, and your recipient can either Accept or Decline your connection. The video will then appear in a small panel to the mid-right of the chat window and you can adjust the size of the video picture and the volume of the audio stream.

Other instant messaging software

There are a multitude of messaging applications out there for you to use. The granddaddy of them all is ICQ (www.icq.com), the very first instant-messaging program. It's done well to keep up with its competitors and offers video messaging and a massive community of users.

If you're an AOL subscriber, you are

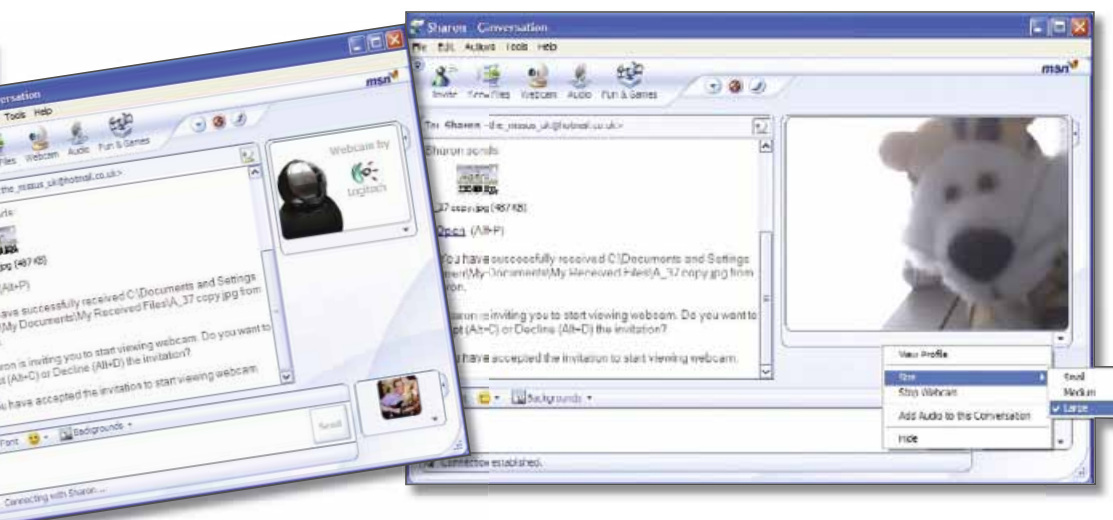


probably already familiar with AOL Instant Messenger (AIM – www.aol.co.uk/aim), but you don't need to be an AOL subscriber to use it.



The same can be said for BT Yahoo's Communicator (www.bt.com/communicator). All of these applications offer similar features – check which one your friends are using though, as unfortunately, messengers from different companies don't work with one another.

You're not limited to text conversations with MSN Messenger: it's also a really easy way of sending files, such as photos, to your friends and family, and you can hold video conversations between your cuddly toys (below right)



Why choose?



A



B

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Register today and get free unlimited wireless minutes until April 1st.

Learn more and register at www.plus.net/choose

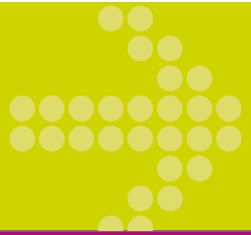
*Terms and conditions apply. See website for details E&OE



Voted Best UK Consumer ISP

Future UK Publishing Awards 2004

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The smarter way to broadband



PracticalWebUser

Web User's Practical pages help you get the best out of the web – whether answering your queries or showing you new techniques. For an index of previous Practicals, visit www.webuser.co.uk/practicals

PracticalFeature

Stay anonymous by hiding your IP address

53

WebBuilder

DIY websites/Readers' websites

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ProblemSolver

Q&A/Readerhelpsreader

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Workshop

Download multiple files simultaneously

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Hints&Tips

The best tips sent in by readers this issue

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Essentials

The web's best products and services

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PracticalFeature

You can now download selected Practical Features and Workshops in PDF format. More details at www.webuser.co.uk/workshops

Protect your privacy online

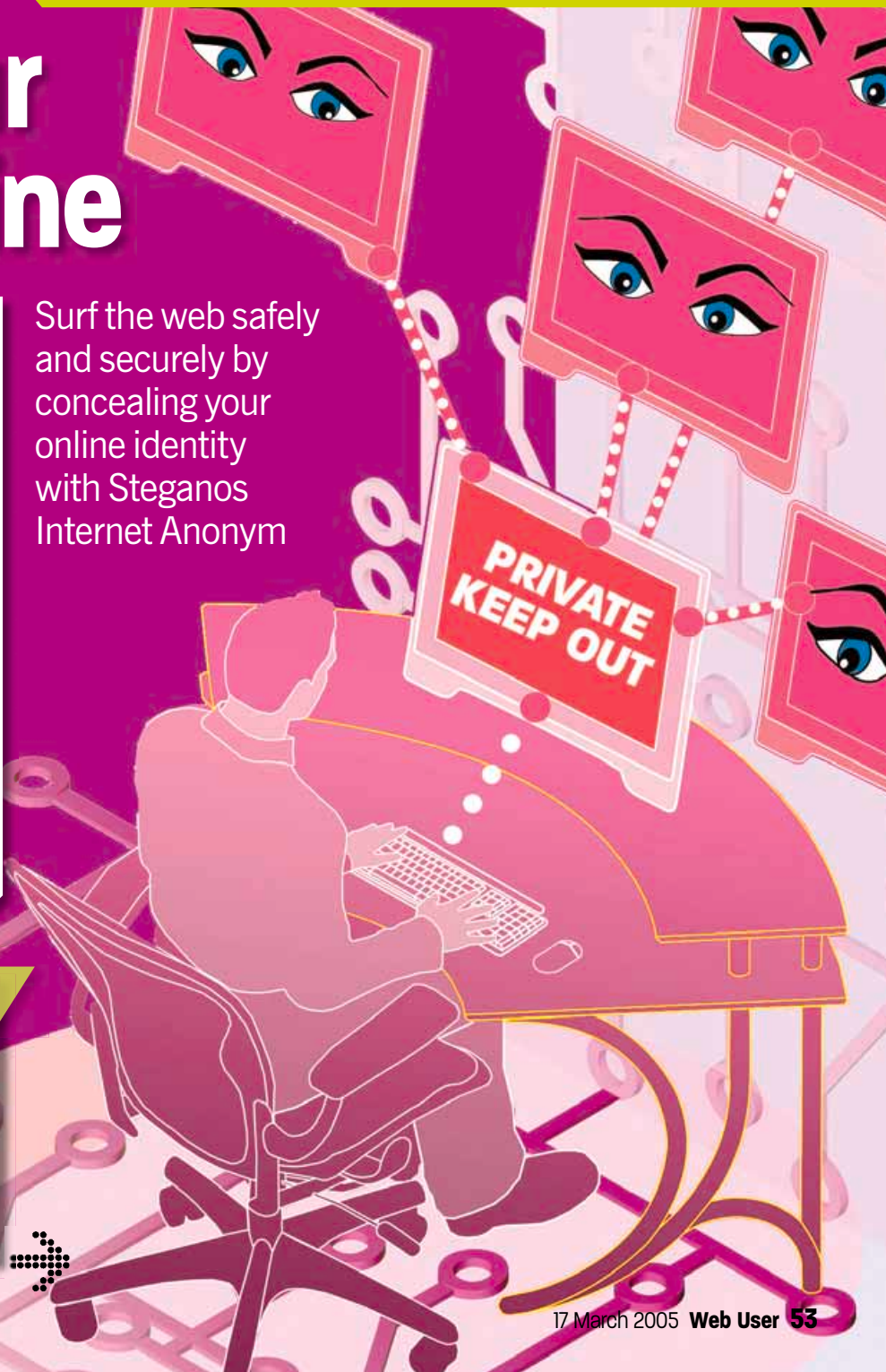
With hackers, spammers and virus-writers prowling the net, web users can be forgiven for feeling a little paranoid. While up-to-date firewall and virus software provide the best means of protecting yourself against these pests, another method is to hide your IP address. This is the unique address for your computer, which is revealed to websites you visit, whether you like it or not.

Steganos Internet Anonym is specifically designed to disguise your online identity and stop your IP address being readily disclosed. It does so by making it appear that your internet connection is coming from random locations around the world, changing every second to keep snoopers at bay. It also stops web elements such as cookies, scripts and referrers capturing data about your browser and browsing habits, and maintains a locked and encrypted list of your Favorites. Note that surfing anonymously does slow down your connection. Also note that some sites, such as forums, forbid anonymous surfing.

Surf the web safely and securely by concealing your online identity with Steganos Internet Anonym

Steganos Internet Anonym 7.1

Internet Anonym is available as a 7.3MB download from www.steganos.com and also in boxed form. It costs £17.28, but you can try it free for seven days without registration. A more advanced version, Internet Anonym Pro, which also removes browsing traces from your PC, can be ordered for £28. The program is compatible with Windows 98 and better, and requires at least 32MB of memory.



1 When you first launch the program, you'll see a map of the world, **1** below which is the message 'Camouflage deactivated'. **2** This means the program's identity-concealing function is turned off and other people on the web can find out where and even who you are. To turn it on, click on the Activate link in the box in the top-left hand corner. **3**



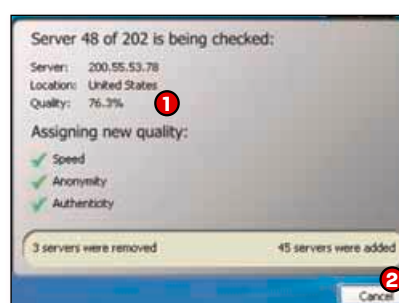
2 Camouflage will now be activated and the world map will light up. **1** In the box below, you'll see your real IP address, accompanied by the country that is currently being used to disguise it. **2** This changes every second and is highlighted by a red circle on the map. To check your identity is being fully concealed, click the 'Checking your anonymity' button on the left. **3**



3 A web page will now open in your browser displaying detailed information about your current IP address. In the Anonymity box you should see the words 'You are surfing anonymously', **1** while 'Your faked IP address' **2** should be completely different to your real one. **3** If not, the program may not be working correctly; try adjusting your firewall settings.

IP ADDRESS	
Your IP address tells a lot about you: your location, Internet provider, and in some cases, it is even possible to identify you personally.	
Anonymity	You are surfing anonymously 1
Your faked IP address	83.103.52.194 2
Computer name	Unknown
Your real IP address	172.202.6.77 3

4 Back in the main Internet Anonym window, you can view information about the servers used to disguise your identity in the 'Anonymous Proxy servers' box. **1** To ensure that all are doing their job properly, click the 'Check servers' button on the top toolbar. **2**

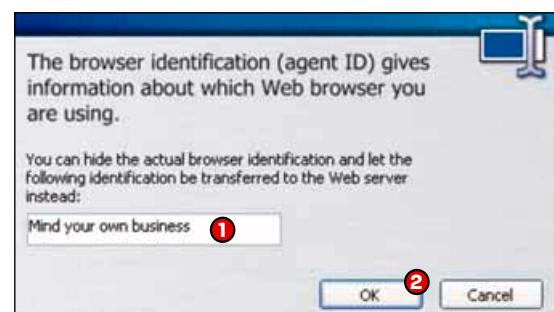


5 Your servers will now be checked for availability and quality, **1** with any unreliable sources being removed. This process can take some time so you can either continue with other activities while you wait or click Cancel **2** to finish early.

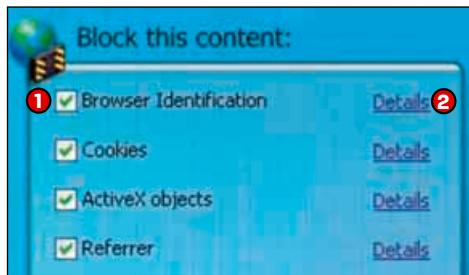
6 You can now set up Internet Anonym to filter web elements that encroach on your online privacy. The program will then block these objects even when you're not camouflaging your IP address. To access these filters, click the Comfort & Security button on the top toolbar. **1**



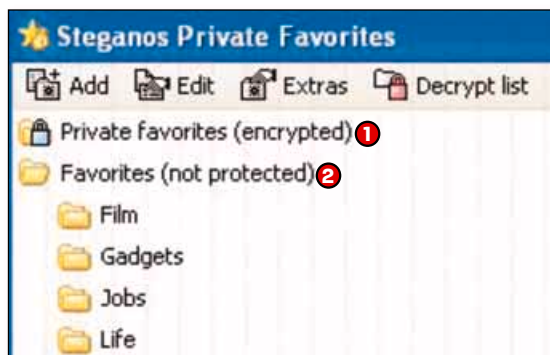
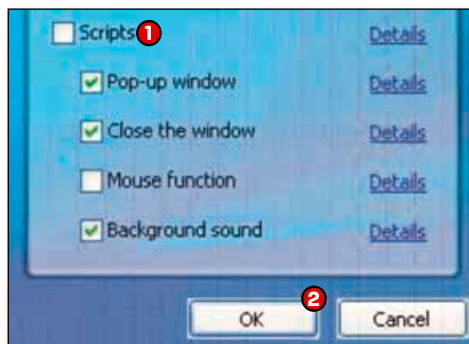
7 The first option in the Block this Content list stops people finding out which browser you're using. Click on the Details link next to Browser Identification, then type in what you'd like them to see instead of your browser type. **1** Click OK. **2**



8 Back in the block list, check the box next to Browser Identification to activate the filter. **1** Do the same for any of the next three web element types you'd like to block: Cookies, ActiveX objects and Referrer. If you're not sure what a particular option means, click the Details link next to its name. **2**



9 The fifth option in the list, Scripts, **1** is divided into four sub-options. You can choose whether or not to block individual elements, or tick the Scripts box to filter them all. Click OK to confirm your choices. **2**



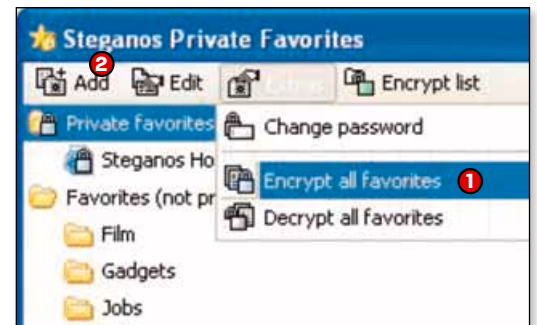
10 Next, you can set up a Private Favorites folder to keep your bookmarked sites secret. Click on the Private Favorites window on the top toolbar. A window will open showing both an encrypted but empty 'Private favorites' folder **1** and your current, unprotected Favorites. **2** Click on the Private folder.

and your current, unprotected Favorites. **2** Click on the Private folder.

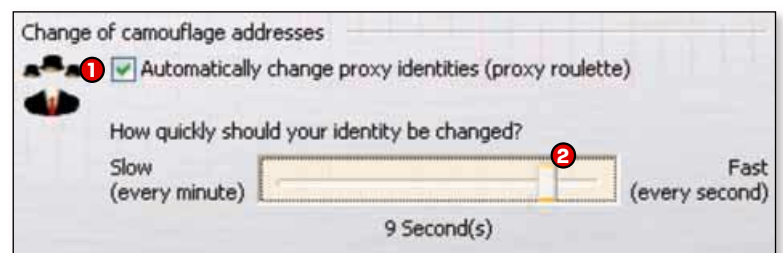
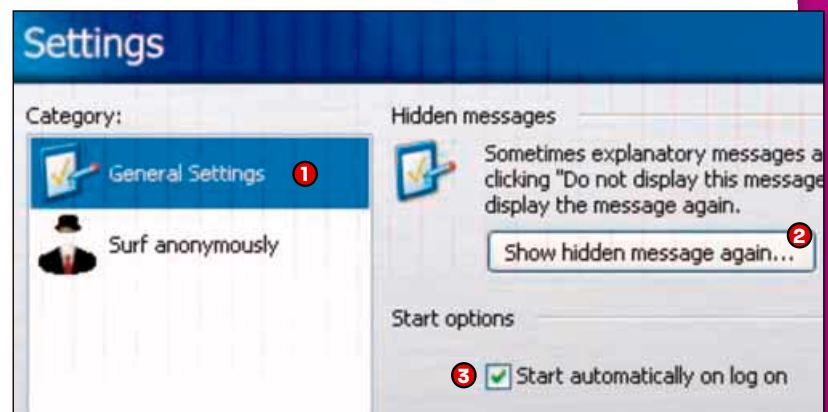


11 You'll now be asked to enter (and re-enter) the password with which you will encrypt your Private Favorites. **1** The program also advises you of poor-quality, easy-to-guess passwords. **2** When you're happy with your choice, click OK.

12 You can now move your unprotected Favorites into the Private folder. The quickest way to do this is to click on the Extras menu and select 'Encrypt all favorites'. **1** Alternatively, you can click on the Add button **2** and type in web addresses individually, or simply drag-and-drop Favorites from one folder to the other.

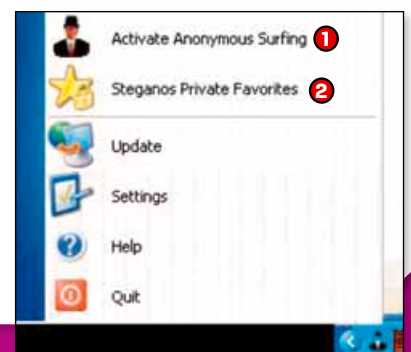


13 Finally, you can fine-tune the settings for the program by clicking on the pen-and-paper icon on the toolbar. When the Settings box appears, click on the General Settings category. **1** Click the 'Show hidden message again' button **2** if you want to view occasional explanatory messages from Internet Anonym. Then either select or deselect the 'Start automatically on log on' option, **3** depending on your preference.



14 Next, click the Surf Anonymously category. Here you can choose to have your proxy servers change automatically when surfing anonymously **1** and use the slider bar to set how quickly your identity should change. **2** Click OK to confirm.

15 Now you're all set up, you can minimise the main Internet Anonym window. To quickly turn anonymous surfing on, simply right-click on the program's icon on your Taskbar and select Activate Anonymous Surfing. **1** You can access your Private Favorites in the same way. **2**



Program: LeechGet2004 Time: 10 mins

Manage your downloads

Broadband's generous bandwidth may have increased the speed of downloads but it can't prevent technical hitches such as server crashes. Fortunately, help is at hand in the form of download managers, of which the best current example is LeechGet from www.leechget.net. Rather than crowding your Desktop with File Download windows, you can download multiple programs via a central interface into pre-selected folders on your hard disk. This marvellous tool also seeks out the fastest and most reliable web servers, allows you to split large files to make them quicker and easier to download, and even lets you schedule downloads for a date and time of your choice. Best of all, it's free to use and, unlike many download managers, contains no adware.

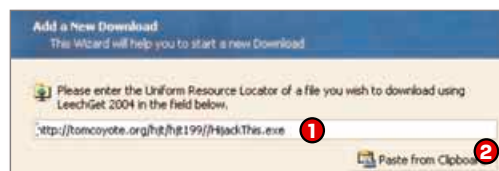
STEP 1

Once you've installed LeechGet, you can start downloading files straight away. Open the program and click on the File menu. Move the mouse pointer to New Download **1** and select Start Wizard **2** from the side menu.



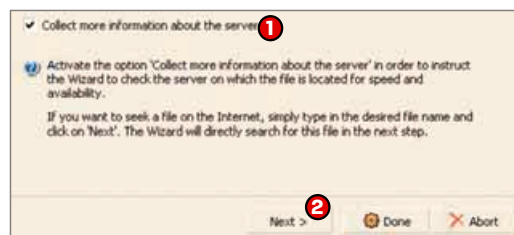
STEP 2

When the Download Wizard opens, type in the URL of the file you want to download. **1** Alternatively, right-click on the download link on the web page, select Copy Shortcut and then click the 'Paste from Clipboard' button. **2**



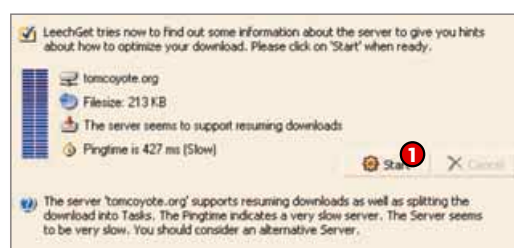
STEP 3

Tick the 'Collect more information about the server' option **1** if you want LeechGet to check the server on which the file is located for speed and availability. Click Next **2** to continue.



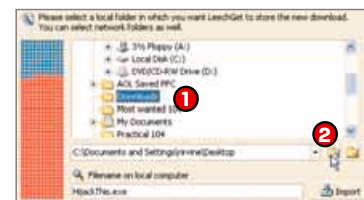
STEP 4

Click Start **1** and LeechGet will connect to the server and tell you how you can optimise the download, for example by splitting it or by using a different server. You can do the latter by selecting 'Look for alternate servers' and clicking Next to continue.



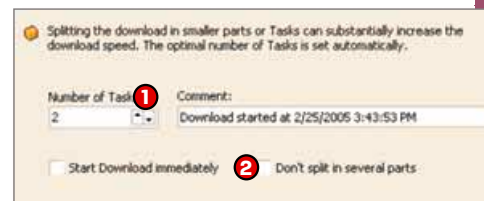
STEP 5

With the best available server selected, you now need to specify a download location on your hard disk. Either click on an existing folder in the list **1** or click the New Folder button **2** to create a new one. Type in a different name for the file if necessary, and then click Next.



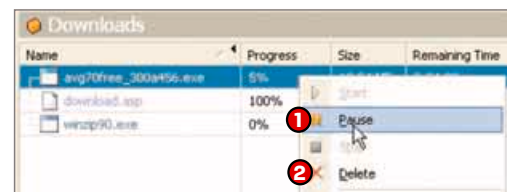
STEP 6

If you're downloading a large file, the next screen allows you to split it into smaller Tasks. Use the arrows in the Number of Tasks box **1** to decide how many pieces to split it into or select 'Don't split in several parts' **2** to keep it intact. Click Done to start the download.



STEP 7

Repeat these steps to have up to eight files downloading at the same time: these will be displayed in the main Downloads window. Right-click on any file name to Pause **1** or Delete **2** the download



STEP 8

If you want to schedule your file downloads to begin at a specific time, click on the Extras menu and select Download Timer. Use the arrows to set the date **1** and time **2** you want to begin downloading, and then click the Set button. **3**



STEP 9

You don't even need to have LeechGet open to use it to download a file. Simply click a link on a web page and a box will open automatically asking where you want to save the file. You can also specify the 'Number of Tasks' to split it into **1** and even bypass the program to use Internet Explorer instead by clicking the Use Internet Explorer button. **2**



Useful advice to help you start and improve your website from Andy Shaw

Readers' websites

Inverclyde Views www.inverclydeviews.co.uk

Campaigning for improvements to your local area is a great reason to start a website, and Robert Henry of Inverclyde has done just this. His site is about the potential for urban rejuvenation of his home town – something clearly very close to his heart. Using his own photos to show how dilapidated his corner of Inverclyde has become, he certainly puts forward a strong case, supported by visitors' comments in his guestbook.

The site starts with a Flash animation, then goes straight into the photo archive of his pictures of the local area. Only when you're half-way through the site do you notice that it's a campaign, which we thought was a little off-kilter. Some kind of initial introductory page would be useful, to help guide visitors through the site and explain what it's about earlier. Overall though, Inverclyde Views is a powerful site with



Powerful images of dilapidated buildings help the cause



Although it looks nice, the Flash intro adds nothing to the site

lots of useful information for locals and those looking to help the campaign for regeneration.



Email details of your not-for-profit website to readerswebsites@web-user.co.uk or find more tips on web building on our Readers' Websites forum at www.webuser.co.uk/forums

Blogger improves comments

Blogger has changed the way it deals with comments, providing a more powerful way for your readers to leave their thoughts about your posts. You can now choose whether your comments appear as a pop-up window or in amongst your blog, and whether users' pictures should be tagged on, giving the blog more of a community feel. Also, users can now add their own name and website info to a comment without needing to register with Blogger first. As before, bloggers can still choose whether to include comments on their blog, restrict those who can post them and select where to receive email announcements when a comment has been posted.



Allowing comments on your blog gives it a community feel

Inspect a website

All webmasters should be concerned about how their sites look to the outside world, and services that check your site for technical errors are particularly useful for spotting things the human eye can easily skip past. SiteMorse (www.sitemorse.com) is a newcomer to the game, offering a free trial service that will scour



Check your website for errors with the meticulous SiteMorse

a handful of your website's pages for a wide range of problems and errors. It could be argued that it's hyper-critical, even flagging things such as relative links that don't use a complete URL to point to elements that are in the same folder on the server, but at least this way you can choose to ignore results if you wish. If the free trial isn't enough, get a full report for £94.

phpbb bug

Users of phpbb's free forum software should make sure they've downloaded the latest version



Make sure your forum is up to date, or it could be taken over

from www.phpbb.com. Previous versions have been found to contain a security flaw allowing anyone to take over as an administrator on a forum. For more information on where to download the fix or how to correct the problem, check out phpbb's own forum at www.phpbb.com/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=14&t=267563.

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GENERAL PC

Free facts

Although you probably remember what the components of your PC are on the day after you bought it, down the line it can be easy to forget what type of hard disk or graphics card you own. If you need to find out what your PC is made

of, perhaps to check that some software will work on it, there's a free download you can get called Belarc Advisor (www.belarc.com/free_download.html). Run it and see what is inside your PC.

Joe Wilkinson and Bob Lindsay, Preston



Forgotten which components are in your PC? Get detailed system information with a free download from Belarc

FIREFOX

Firefox power tips



A simple script typed direct into your browser's address bar can tell you when a site was last updated

I have just started a research job and am using the internet a lot more than usual. To start with I wanted to find out if there was a way of improving Firefox's speed, what with all the extensions available, there has to be something, right? Well, there is. First open Firefox, then in the address bar, type 'about:config' (without the quotes). Start by finding 'network.http.pipelining' and double-click it to read 'true', and then do the same for 'network.http.pipelining.maxrequests' and change the value to 10. Also (maybe unsurprisingly) setting 'browser.turbo.enabled' to 'true' will also help Firefox run faster.

Second, my research also requires me to check how often websites are updated. There seem to be various ways of doing this, but here's something very simple. Load a web page into any browser, then in the address bar, type 'javascript:alert(document.lastModified)' and hit Enter.

Jerome Turner, via email

WINDOWS

Quick tabbing

If you have more than one window or program open at any one time and need to keep switching between them, hold down the Alt key and press Tab. A box will appear with an icon of all the open windows on your computer. Just keep on

pressing Tab until the window you want is highlighted. I use this all the time at work when I have to take information from one program and put it in another. If you only have two programs running, as soon as you hit Alt and Tab the next program will pop up.

Peter Brady, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

SECURITY

AVG Rescue Disks

If you use the free edition of Grisoft's AVG anti-virus software and Windows XP, don't bother trying to make the rescue disks as they won't work – only Windows 95, 98 and Me are supported. If you have got one of these older operating systems, the recovery disks will span five floppy disks and should ideally be recreated after every virus update.

Roger Mordue, via email



AVG's recovery disks will not work with Windows XP, only with older versions of Windows

INSTANT MESSAGING

Animated emoticons

In the beta (test) version of MSN Messenger 7 you can create your own animated emoticons. First, find an animated image that you like – either one from a website or one you've made yourself. If it's on a website you'll need to right-click on the image and save it to your hard disk.

Then load MSN Messenger and start a conversation with someone. Click the smiley face to select an emoticon, then click More. Click the Create button followed by Find Image. Browse to your saved image, select it and then create a keyboard shortcut to your saved image, such as



Create your own animated emoticons in MSN Messenger

'>laugh'. You can then type this in your message to get the emoticon to appear. Click on OK and when you click the emoticon button you should see your new emoticon flashing away on the screen.

Chris Armstrong, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

WINDOWS

Tiling windows

If you right-click on the Taskbar, it gives you the option to tile open windows vertically or horizontally; this can be useful for comparing folder contents or working on two things at once.

Keith Roberts, via Webuser.co.uk/forums



Rearrange your windows by right-clicking on the Taskbar

Each fortnight our experts answer your questions about the internet and email. If you're puzzled by a problem, we're here to help. Contact us at problemsolver@web-user.co.uk

ASK OUR EXPERTS



Andy Shaw



Robert Irvine

GENERAL COMPUTING

Can't open JPEG files

Q About a month ago I downloaded Macromedia Flash as a 30-day trial. I didn't use it very much apart from trying one or two effects. Two days ago I had a pop-up message telling me my trial had terminated and asking if I wished to purchase the program for \$195, which I declined. I now cannot open any JPEG file – when I click on one I am told that flash.exe is required to open it. If I send emails with JPEGs attached the recipient is faced with gobbledegook in WordPad. Can you help?

Les Nicholas, via email

A This is a common problem related to File Type Associations. To solve it, right-click on the icon for a JPEG file and select Open With from the shortcut menu. If the option doesn't appear, hold down Shift on your keyboard as you right click. Choose a new program to associate your JPEG files with, preferably an image editor or viewer. If you don't have a favourite, choose Paint or Windows Picture Viewer, and if you can't find the program you want on the list, click on Browse and select it from your hard disk. Tick the box next to 'Always use the selected program to open this



If you're having problems opening a certain type of file, try associating it with a different program

kind of file' and click on OK to associate it with JPEG files permanently.

BROWSERS

'Page has expired' error message

Q Often, when I click the Back button of my browser while searching www.amazon.co.uk, instead of returning to the previous page, I get a blank screen with the following message on it: 'Warning: Page has Expired. The page you requested was created using information you submitted in a form. This page is no longer available. As a security precaution, Internet Explorer does not automatically resubmit your information for you. To resubmit your information and view this Web page, click the Refresh button.' This happens even if I have only been on the site for a few minutes. The bar at



Change your security settings to make your browser save encrypted web pages

the top of the screen reads About Working Offline. Is there a way to prevent this happening? It only happens on this site.

Sean Lynch, via email

A The problem may be caused by Internet Explorer not storing the viewed web pages because they are encrypted for security. Click on the Advanced tab of the Internet Options panel and scroll down to the Security section. Deselect the option 'Do not save encrypted pages to disk' and click OK. It might also be the case that your browser is not saving the page you have been viewing previously in its cache because it has run out of space. Try emptying your Temporary Internet Files folder, by clicking on the Tools menu and selecting Internet Options, and then clicking the Delete Files button.

WINDOWS XP

Print Screen key doesn't work

Q I run Windows XP but cannot work out how to make the Print Screen button work. There are quite a few occasions when I would like to be able to print on-screen

content but simply pressing the Print Screen key doesn't work.

Derrick Brown, via email

A The Print Screen function doesn't print straight to a printer, it saves an image onto the clipboard. If you want to capture the whole screen, press the Print Screen button on your keyboard. To capture only the active (front) window, press Alt and Print Screen. In both cases, you should then be able to open a graphics program or image editor, paste the contents in and print the screen from there.



In Windows XP press Print Screen and the Alt button, then paste the captured image into a graphics program

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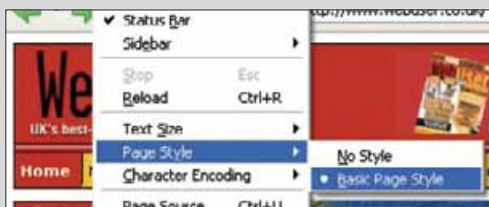
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BROWSERS

It's a style thing

One thing is foxing me with Firefox: on my Yahoo webmail page I lost the graphics, so all I had was a plain text version of my mailboxes. The Yahoo homepage displayed OK, but I noticed one or two other websites were displaying as 'Plain Text' as opposed to the unique type they normally display. I re-started Firefox and re-started the PC to no avail. Then, on another day my mailbox was displaying properly again. If it's a missing plug-in problem, wouldn't the graphics have always been absent? One thing I've never had on my Yahoo mail page (even when it's otherwise displaying correctly) is the row of buttons in the Compose window so I can change fonts, point size, bold and so on. This is mildly annoying since I have to switch back to



Try altering Page Style if web pages display as Plain Text using Internet Explorer when I write an email from here.

Spiral, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

Sounds like the CSS styling has been set to Plain. Try clicking the View menu, then Page Style and Basic Page Style.

Egancs, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

EMAIL

Old AOL emails

I have an old desktop computer that I need to restore, but before I do, I'd like to save my 'AOL Saved PFC' (saved emails) and put them on my new computer. Can someone give me directions? On the old computer, I see a file icon named 'AOL Saved PFC', but the folders within don't mean anything to me and can't be opened and read. I'm assuming this is what I need to save to CD and then load on the new computer. Once there, though, how do I access it?

Tab, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

You'll find that the mail waiting in the Inbox is held on AOL's mail server and you can access it on any computer. Your address book is held there too. The old mail that you want to transfer is easy to do with AOL 9.



Store your emails on AOL's server and you can access it anywhere

First open your mailbox, click on the Manage Email tab and in the left-hand pane move down the tree until

you come to the label 'Saved on my PC'.

This is the area where all the saved mail is stored and it is the only item that can be right-clicked for a menu. From that menu choose 'Save as...' and by default it will make a file called Email.pfc, which will be small enough to email to yourself or copy to a floppy disk. This option saves the last seven days of messages, plus any personal folders. If you choose to rename the file as 'Saved on AOL' then your mail is saved wholly on AOL's server and you can access it from anywhere.

BedstorfromAP, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

SECURITY

Fixing AVG

For some reason I am getting this message when I try to access AVG: 'Could not initialize AVG Anti-Virus interface. Application cannot run.'

Partickt, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

Try running a repair install: locate the AVG file you downloaded and run it again. It will recognise that it is installed already and when given the opportunity, select 'Repair' and finish the wizard. Since this will replace all files that may have been corrupted, update your AVG after it finishes.

Bricat, via Webuser.co.uk/forums



Minimise iTunes when connected to the net and the program should import track names automatically

MUSIC

iTunes issues

My problem is that iTunes won't import my CDs. It's weird because after a restart it will do one disc but no more.

Eric 4130, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

I had a similar problem. Stay connected to the internet, minimise iTunes and insert your CD. You should now see a box saying 'Querying database', and then, when you restore iTunes, your CD should be visible with its track names ready for importing.

Kkk666, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

GENERAL COMPUTING

Signing out and switching off



Ensure your PC is safe to turn off by selecting Log Off from the Start menu

I'm using Windows XP SP2 and when I shut down my PC I no longer get the message saying 'It's now safe to switch off your computer'.

The message only seems to appear when my PC is in hibernation mode.

Mr Bloke, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

Try going to the Start menu and selecting Log Off then Log Off again in the box that comes up. When it says that Windows is saving your settings, click on Turn Off Computer at the bottom left-hand side of the screen and again in the box that comes up in the middle of the screen. The PC should then switch off automatically.

Madeline, via Webuser.co.uk/forums

Can you help?

I purchased a Mesh Matrix M2600+ desktop computer. The computer only came with a 2.1 NVIDIA R nForce sound card, so I bought a 5.1 channel CMI8738 PCI sound card and some 5.1 speakers. After fitting the sound card and installing the software drivers that came with

the card, I now have no sound from my new speakers, whether I play a DVD or a CD.

Neil, via email

I'm having problems hosting a game where people need to connect to port 7171. I've let it

open on the Windows firewall, but when I use an online port scanner, it says 7171 is closed. I'm using Windows XP (Home Edition) and AOL Broadband, with the BT Voyager 105 Modem.

Nathan Hopkings, via email

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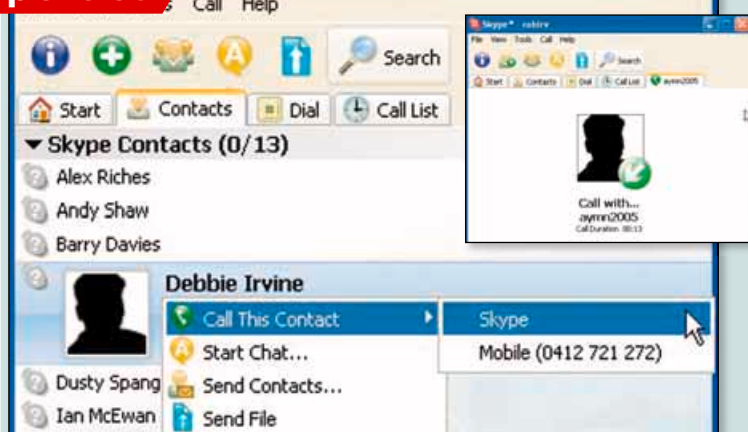
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→ INTERNET TELEPHONY

Skype, £7 per 20 hours of international calls

www.skype.com

From the creators of Kazaa, Skype has quickly established itself as the leading internet telephony service. From speedy installation onwards, it's not hard to see why even the most technophobic web user will find this software simple to use. A friendly, intuitive interface is complemented by self-explanatory options for adding contacts and making calls, connecting you with the world within seconds.

Sound quality is excellent and network congestion surprisingly rare, considering the reported 23

million people using it. It even works reasonably well over a dial-up connection. Notable features include the ability to conduct conference calls with up to four other people, and send and receive files of up to 4GB in size.

Any calls you make to other Skype users are completely free, but calling landline telephones, whether local or abroad, requires purchasing credits for the SkypeOut service. 10 euros (approximately £7) buys you around 10 hours of calls at the Global Rate, which covers such popular destinations as Australia, most of Europe and the US.

Our rating ★★★★★

user-friendly, providing easy access to a variety of shooting modes.

Our rating ★★★★★

→ PRINTERS

HP Photosmart 7450, £80

www.hp.com/uk

An excellent balance of features and price for home digital photographers, with a built-in memory card reader and great quality prints.

Our rating ★★★★★

Canon Pixma iP3000, £90

www.canon.co.uk

A cracking printer, from its silence while printing to its good all-round results. Has the added bonus of an efficient ink system.

Our rating ★★★★★

Epson Stylus C86 Photo Edition, £100

www.epson.co.uk

This Photo Edition printer comes bundled with a memory card reader, plenty of creative software and some sample photo paper for printing on.

Our rating ★★★★★

Lexmark Z815, £80

www.lexmark.co.uk

An easy-to-use printer, though it's light on extras and it fails to live up to the extremely high-quality prints of some of its rivals.

Our rating ★★★★★

→ SCANNERS

HP Scanjet 3970, £90

www.hp.com/uk

Not only does this scanner offer excellent scans at a high speed but it's also a cinch to use.

Our rating ★★★★★

Epson Perfection 2480 Photo, £79

www.epson.co.uk

If high-resolution scanning is what you're after, the 2,400 x 4,800 dpi resolution of this scanner is

unbeatable for the price.

Our rating ★★★★★

Xerox OneTouch 4800TA, £80

www.xeroxscanners.co.uk

Particularly fast at automatically scanning documents and a unique sideways-on design lifts this scanner from the pack.

Our rating ★★★★★

BenQ 6550T, £70

www.benq.co.uk

A good all-rounder, this scanner can perform the usual functions but also manages A3 and transparency scanning.

Our rating ★★★★★

→ NETWORKING

BT Voyager 2100 Wireless ADSL Router, £89.99

www.bt.com/homenetworking

A no-frills wireless broadband router that covers the basics well and can create a Wi-Fi network that adheres to the 802.11g standard.

Our rating ★★★★★

Thomson SpeedTouch 716g, £116.99

www.speedtouch.co.uk

A wireless broadband router with a socket for a telephone, so you can use a standard phone handset to make VoIP calls over the internet.

Our rating ★★★★★

Devolo MicroLink dLAN Ethernet Starter Kit, £97

www.devolo.com

The easiest networking equipment we've seen, this uses your existing electric cabling and Ethernet ports to create a simple home network.

Our rating ★★★★★

TerraTec Noxon Audio, £100

www.terratec.com

Moves music from your computer to another set of speakers via your Wi-Fi network.

Our rating ★★★★★

hardware

→ DIGITAL CAMERAS

Ricoh Caplio R1v, £230

www.ricoh.co.uk

A truly pocket-sized camera with a lot of functionality and great picture quality, that's ready to shoot at a moment's notice.

Our rating ★★★★★

Pentax Optio 30, £150

www.pentax.co.uk

Small, light and automatic, this 3.2 megapixel camera is ideal for first-time buyers or those looking

for a good value upgrade.

Our rating ★★★★★

Fujifilm FinePix A340, £190

www.fujifilm.co.uk

Packing four megapixels into a slim, comfortable body, the FinePix A340 strikes a good balance between power and simplicity.

Our rating ★★★★★

Genius G-Shot P433, £186

www.geniusnet.co.uk

A decent budget camera that's very

software

⇒ INTERNET TELEPHONY

Skypewww.skype.com

(See Top Choice, left)

Our rating ★★★★★

Babblewww.babble.net

With Babble, online calls to people using the same software are free, but calls to 'real' phones can be paid by subscription or pay-as-you-go.

Our rating ★★★★★

Wow-Talkwww.cd-wow.com

Make unlimited calls from your computer to anywhere in the world for £1.99 per month, though landlines and mobiles carry additional charges.

Our rating ★★★★★

BT Communicatorwww.bt.com/btcommunicator

Integrated with Yahoo Messenger, BT Communicator packs a range of online communication tools into a slender interface.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ IMAGE EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0, £70www.adobe.co.uk

The latest version of Adobe's consumer image-editing software that now incorporates an excellent image management system.

Our rating ★★★★★

Ulead PhotoImpact XL, £45www.ulead.co.uk

One of the best value image-editing programs on the market. Powerful, but not recommended for beginners.

Our rating ★★★★★

Paint Shop Pro 9, £100www.jasc.com

Feature-packed and powerful, this image processor can be used to correct almost any photograph.

Our rating ★★★★★

Microsoft Digital Image Suite 10, £80www.microsoft.com/uk

Something for those who prefer ease of use over some of the hardcore features of its rivals.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ DESKTOP SEARCH

MSN Toolbar Suite Beta, Free<http://beta.toolbar.msn.com>

Neat package of search tools which will scour your PC for emails, music, documents, pictures and more.

Our rating ★★★★★

Google Desktop Search Beta, Free<http://desktop.google.com>

Although basic in comparison to some Desktop Search newcomers, Google has maintained its edge in speed and ease of use.

Our rating ★★★★★

Yahoo Desktop Search Beta, Free<http://desktop.yahoo.com>

Requires some fiddling to get to its full potential, but it's currently the most powerful Desktop search tool.

Our rating ★★★★★

Blinkx, Freewww.blinkx.com

Blinkx has put the greatest amount of effort into the way its search tool looks, with a cool pale design that is bound to impress onlookers.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ VIDEO EDITING

Pinnacle Studio 9 Plus, £69.99www.pinnaclesys.com

An excellent video-editing package for the intermediate user, with lots of powerful options.

Our rating ★★★★★

Microsoft Movie Maker 2.1, Freewww.microsoft.com/uk

If you're just starting out, it's well worth giving Movie Maker a go, as it comes pre-installed on every Windows XP computer.

Our rating ★★★★★

Roxio Videowave 7 Pro, £54.99www.roxio.co.uk

Great software for beginner to intermediate editors, balancing ease of use with plenty of great features.

Our rating ★★★★★

Magix Movie Edit Pro 2005, £49.99www.fasttrak.co.uk

Movie Edit Pro's no-nonsense approach and powerful features are impressive, but it's not particularly easy to get into.

Our rating ★★★★★

websites

⇒ SHOPPING

UK Camera Storewww.ukcamerastore.co.uk

Looking for a new digital camera? Check out the prices on UK Camera Store, offering savings as high as £100 on retail prices.

Our rating ★★★★★

Cometwww.comet.co.uk

The electrical superstore has lots to offer, including some special web-only deals and free delivery so you never pay more than you're expecting.

Our rating ★★★★★

Gadgetshopwww.gadgetshop.com

A wonderful collection of toys for boys (and girls) all under one website, whether you're looking for digital video or RoboSapien.

Our rating ★★★★★

Moonpigwww.moonpig.com

Save the leg-work of going to the shops and get personalised greetings cards direct from the web.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ INFORMATION/EDUCATION

WebSafeCrackerzwww.websafecrackerz.com

Following feedback from its users this online safety advice site has a more mature tone, but still has a good line in advice for teens on the internet.

Our rating ★★★★★

PARISwww.info.autism.org.uk

The launch of the Public Autism Resource and Information Service (PARIS) brings invaluable help to people with autism and their carers.

Our rating ★★★★★

Plant Cultureswww.plantcultures.org.uk

This site brings to life the stories, folklore and facts behind 25 South Asian plants, including curry leaf, henna and indigo.

Our rating ★★★★★

Planning Portalwww.planningportal.gov.uk

This revamped portal, letting people create and submit applications to local authorities online, promises to speed up the laborious process.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ ENTERTAINMENT

Britten-Pears Foundationwww.brittenpears.org

A site established to promote the legacy of composer Benjamin Britten and tenor Peter Pears.

Our rating ★★★★★

Pooh's Heffalump Moviewww.disney.go.com/disneypictures/heffalump

There's something mysterious going on in the Hundred Acre Wood but all is revealed at this official website for upcoming cartoon flick *Pooh's Heffalump Movie*.

Our rating ★★★★★

Riskologywww.riskology.co.uk

An online spot the ball competition with the chance of winning fabulous top-of-the-range designer goods including a Ducati motorbike.

Our rating ★★★★★

Gary Rhodeswww.garyrhodes.com

The relaunched website of celebrity chef Gary Rhodes is a tasty mix of new ingredients.

Our rating ★★★★★

⇒ TRAVEL

My Villarenterswww.myvillarenters.com

Cut out the middleman by renting a villa direct from the owner. This site features some great properties in fantastic locations.

Our rating ★★★★★

Travel Republicwww.travelrepublic.co.uk

Itching to fly the coop? Land on this site offering real-time searches for charter flights to over 90 destinations from 20 different operators.

Our rating ★★★★★

Kids in Towwww.kidsintow.co.uk

Puts some excitement back into the family vacation, whether it's learning new activities, improving sports skills or exploring new places.

Our rating ★★★★★

Premier Travel Innwww.premiertravelinn.com

Travel Inn and Premier Lodge recently merged to form Premier Travel Inns and this is the new joint website that lets you book any of its 450 hotels with incredible ease.

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Home & garden

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B&Q Online www.diy.com
B&Q moved fast when domain names became available, didn't they? This site won't just tell you how to put up a shelf – it will also sell you anything you could possibly need to keep house and home together.

Doctor Greenfingers
www.doctorgreenfingers.co.uk

The enthusiasm of this garden tips site ("gardening is sensual, fun and trendy!") makes it a joy to visit. Section names stick with the medical theme: there's an Operating Theatre for well-illustrated

advice on plant care and A&E for expert queries.

Hints & Things

www.hintsandthings.co.uk
Forget Martha Lane Fox – June Jackson is the web's true goddess. The self-confessed little grey granny has seen her site grow into a mass of tips and resource material on all things home-related. Shame there's no search box, though...



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Lowering the Cost of Printing

"As anyone who owns a printer will know, replacing your ink cartridges can be a very costly exercise. There was a time that the only choice for computer users was to buy expensive new cartridges or the cheaper, but less reliable, refilled variety. Often, the poor quality of printing and the myriad problems associated with re-using a product designed for one use effectively cancelled out any cost benefit, meaning that many users simply had to bite the bullet and pay over the odds for new, original cartridges made by the printer manufacturer.

However, the field has recently been blown open by third-party manufacturers who produce their own branded cartridges from scratch and then sell them at much lower prices than so-called 'originals', or cartridges made by the printer manufacturers themselves. These 'compatible' cartridges are produced in the same sort of high-tech, dust-sealed environments as originals, and are guaranteed to perform just as well. In fact, an independent test by the national magazine 'Digital Photo' recently gave compatible cartridges from 'Premier Ink Supplies' (Britink.co.uk) a '5-star' rating, concluding that the printed photo results were almost indistinguishable from that of the Epson originals.

Despite the obvious benefit of huge savings on ink, many PC users are still wary of using compatible inks, often because they are uneasy about using a product with an unfamiliar name or fear that using a compatible cartridge will affect their warranty. However, this is not the case, and should anything go wrong (as it can with any cartridge), the ink supplier covers the cost of any maintenance work. These guarantees of reliability and quality have led to an ever-increasing number of satisfied customers for the providers of compatible ink cartridges, and are creating a headache for the printer manufacturers who can no longer rely on a captive market.

Whilst the number of compatible cartridge providers is still relatively small, there are several different brands on offer, and it can be confusing for the first-time buyer to know which to purchase. The supplier featured here, Premier Ink Supplies (Britink.co.uk), stocks the compatible cartridges that achieved top ratings under independent testing, and provides all the guarantees of quality, reliability and service that should assure any customer wary of venturing onto this unfamiliar territory. In addition, they offer free technical advice for anyone still unsure about exploring compatible cartridges, and a 100% no-quibble money back guarantee for anyone not satisfied by their products"

Independent on Sunday, September 2004

BEST IN TEST

In a comprehensive test of Epson compatible ink cartridges, conducted by Digital Photo Magazine in August 2004, cartridges from 8 manufacturers were tested. Our cartridges were the ONLY Epson compatible ink cartridges awarded a full 5 star rating, and received the prestigious "Best in Test" award.

Digital Photo Magazine's verdict was that our cartridges "offer the most natural colours we've seen in budget inks and come closest to producing the colour palette of the Epson inks. They provide a decent greyscale for the black and white enthusiast and give some really bright, zingy colours throughout the range"

"an extremely good buy and truly deserve our 'Best in Test'"



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THE Google™ WHACKING CHALLENGE

This issue's challenge is to find a Googlewhack containing the word:

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When you've found one, email it to googlewhacking@ipcmedia.com by 24 March. Senders of five randomly chosen Googlewhacks will be honoured on Web User's Hall of Fame at www.webuser.co.uk/googlewhack.

In Issue 104 we asked you to find a Googlewhack containing the word 'Rupturewort'. Our favourite Googlewhack was 'Rupturewort Supernovae'. For an explanation of Googlewhacking rules, visit www.googlewhacking.com/rules.htm.

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BEAT WEBUSER: RACE 3D

<http://brackeen.com/home/race3d>

Can you beat our time of 50.13? If so, email the proof to daniel_booth@ipcmedia.com and we'll honour the best in Issue 107.

Congratulations to Gareth Roberts from Warrington whose 34,150 was the best score we received for Springfield Snow Fight (<http://thesimpsons.com/snowball>) featured in Issue 103.


Revisit previous Beat Web User games and high-scores at www.webuser.co.uk/beatwebuser



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No.70 BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

www.camscrape.com/cgi-bin/go.pl?id=956



Hit the 'full screen' option to see this bird's-eye view of Bucharest's River Dambovit. It crosses the city from west to east, before joining the Arges River, which ultimately leads to the Danube and the Black Sea.

Revisit previous webcams at www.webuser.co.uk/80webcams

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Webuser

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Thursday 31 March


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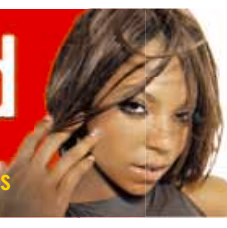
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