

## IE4 waits in the wings



Microsoft is about to release its next-generation Web browser Internet Explorer 4.0 (IE4).

At closed preview sessions held recently for UK journalists, Microsoft representatives demonstrated many of IE4's advanced new features.

The biggest change affects the interface, which now integrates extremely closely with the Windows 95 operating system. Instead of firing up a separate program to do your Internet surfing – as you do when you use IE3 or Netscape's Navigator – you can



can now display a search pane, meaning you can perform a search using any of the popular Internet search engines and keep the results displayed while you check each link.

Microsoft had originally planned to make the IE4 Platform Preview available for download from 17 March. Following recent security concerns over certain aspects of its predecessor, IE3, the release was delayed.

A Microsoft insider assured us that an early April release was all but definite.

Microsoft: 0345 002000  
Internet Explorer Web site:  
[www.microsoft.com/ie/ie40](http://www.microsoft.com/ie/ie40)



now browse within Windows Explorer, or directly from the Windows 95 desktop.

One very useful feature is an improved way to search the Internet. Windows Explorer

## Intel ready to release Pentium II chip

Intel is set to launch the Pentium II, an enhanced version of its Pentium Pro processor with MMX (multimedia extensions) technology.

Several major PC manufacturers plan to ship machines based on the new processor as soon as they get the all clear, rumoured for early May.

Codenamed Klamath, the Pentium II will initially come in

233MHz and 266MHz versions and will be supplied on a proprietary plug-in card known as a Single Edge Contact Cartridge (SECC).

As with its predecessor, the processor will be aimed at high-end business and corporate users likely to be running Windows NT and it is optimised for 32-bit programs.

Along with 57 new com-

mands to enhance multimedia, Pentium II features 32Kb of internal cache memory but, unlike the original Pentium Pro design, the L2 cache memory is external.

This cuts down on production costs but is likely to reduce overall performance, as external memory runs at a slower speed than the CPU.

Intel: 01793 431155



Psion has finally launched a backlit Series 3c in the UK. The 2Mb 3c is otherwise identical to the non-backlit 1Mb model and the back-light has little effect on battery life.

Psion: 0990 143050

Yahoo! UK has created a virtual polling booth on the GE97 General Election site: go to [www.ge97.co.uk](http://www.ge97.co.uk) to cast your vote on crucial election issues. Also, AOL members can find the latest election news at keyword: Election97.

AOL: 0800 279 1234

Eurosoft has produced a software utility that allows users to find out whether their PC will suffer from problems in the year 2000. It costs £5.88 plus p&p.

Eurosoft: 01202 297315

Hitachi has announced the GD-2000, which it claims is the world's first double-speed DVD-ROM drive. The company says the drive reads DVD discs twice as fast as rival systems, and also acts as a 20x CD-ROM.

Hitachi: 01628 585000

Symantec has launched a Web site dedicated to PC maintenance. The site has trouble-shooting tips, downloadable software and updates for Symantec applications.

[www.healthypc.com](http://www.healthypc.com)

Creative Labs has a 12-speed internal CD-ROM drive with an infra-red remote control. The drive has a sustained data transfer rate of 1,800Kb/s (kbytes per second) and comes at a cost of £129.

Creative Labs: 01734 344322

## Giants unveil more NetPC specifications

Intel and Microsoft have released the latest in a long line of 'reference specifications' for the planned NetPC standard.

The specifications, which have been given the backing of industry heavyweights such as Compaq and Dell, set out standards for NetPC hardware, upgradability and even case design.

To classify as a NetPC, a machine must be fitted with a minimum of a Pentium 100 MHz processor, 16Mb of RAM and a VGA-compatible display adaptor capable of a 640x480 resolution.

In addition, NetPCs must not have ISA expansion slots and the cases have to be sealed to prevent end-user modification.

The NetPC platform is widely seen as a joint Microsoft-Intel attempt at stalling Oracle's Network Computer (NC) concept before it even takes off.

In comparison to traditional PCs, NCs have very little hardware of their own and all software they require is downloaded 'live' over the Internet.

By retaining the PC architecture, NetPCs take this one stage further, allowing software to be stored locally.

Intel: 01793 431155

Microsoft: 0345 002000

# IE security bugs breed

March saw the discovery of three more security loopholes in Microsoft's browser, Internet Explorer.

Like the ActiveX glitch that allowed German hackers to illegally transfer money over the Internet using Intuit Quicken

(see news story in April's *What PC?*), the loopholes allow PCs to be accessed remotely, without the owners' knowledge.

The first security gap was brought to light by students in Worcester, Massachusetts. If a Web site contained a link to a program on a user's PC, clicking that link would start the program. A Web site created by the students ([www.cybersnot.com](http://www.cybersnot.com)) demonstrated this with a link to the calculator program supplied with Windows – clicking the link started the program on the user's PC.



More seriously, links could also allow a batch file to be automatically downloaded and executed, all without the user's knowledge or consent.

This security bug was soon followed by two more – both variations on the Cybersnot discovery and both allowing unauthorised access to PCs.

Microsoft has provided a fix for the bugs – a patch is available for download from its Web site ([www.microsoft.com/ie/security/update.htm](http://www.microsoft.com/ie/security/update.htm)). Microsoft strongly recommends all Windows 95 users of Internet Explorer 3.0 to install the patch. Microsoft: 0345 002000

## High-spec monitors go on display

Three leading manufacturers have launched new, high-spec monitors, with screen sizes ranging from 15in to 29in.

In the middle of ViewSonic's array of new monitors are the G800 and the PT775.

Priced at £856.58, the G800 has a 20in screen and is designed for users of business graphics, desktop publishing and spreadsheets.

The PT775 is a 17in model,



suitable for graphics designers and desktop publishers, and costs £757.87. ViewSonic has also introduced a budget-priced 15in monitor and a 29in multimedia presentation model.

NEC has launched two 21in monitors, the P1150 and the E1100, both aimed at CAD/CAM users and desktop

publishers. Also new to the range is the 17in P750. All the new monitors incorporate NEC's CromaClear CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) for enhanced colour and image definition. Prices start at £999 for the 17in monitor.

From Microvitec comes a 17in, high-performance monitor, aimed at graphics and CAD users. The Pro-Scan 17SX is priced at £687.38.

ViewSonic: 0800 833648

NEC: 0645 404020

Microvitec: 01274 390011



**Panasonic** is aiming its PanaFlat LC40 liquid-crystal display (LCD) panel at professional PC and Mac users who have limited desk space.

The PanaFlat LC40 is built around a 14in TFT active-matrix LCD panel and measures just 365(w)x355(h)x149(d)mm, including detachable stand.

With its entire 14in diagonal viewable, the LC40 can display a maximum resolution of 1,024x768 pixels.

Usefully, the LC40 is designed to be flush-mountable, meaning it can be pushed up against a wall – or even your 'in' tray, if need be.

On sale now at £2,931.63 (inc VAT), the LC40 also boasts energy-saving features and image scaling to eliminate black borders at lower resolutions.

Panasonic: 0500 404041

**Hewlett-Packard** has announced its new PhotoSmart System. Comprising three, separately available components, it is designed as a complete home photography system.

First, you take photos into a PC, using either a digital camera or a PhotoSmart scanner, which can deal with negatives and slides, as well as prints. Then you work on the photograph with Microsoft's Picture It Software, which has facilities for removing red eye and for improving picture quality.

Finally, you can print the results onto the Photo Printer, specially designed to take thick photographic paper.

The PhotoSmart System will be available in early May. Hewlett-Packard: 0990 474747

**Microsoft** may have the answer if you're worried about your kids accidentally deleting important data on your PC. Microsoft Plus for Kids (£19.99) provides parents with the facilities to control which programs and files their children can access. At the same time it includes a number of programs designed to keep the little darlings amused.

Play It gives them an electronic music keyboard to play with, while Paint It provides a complete drawing package with dozens of different brushes. There's also a fun speech recognition package and 10 children's Windows Themes.

Microsoft: 0345 002000

**Canon's** latest Bubble Jet printer is the BJC-5500 (£880.08), an A2 colour printer that has a mono print speed of up to seven pages per minute. It can also print in colour and has an optional cartridge for fluorescent printing. It has both manual and tractor paper feed and two auto sheet feeders are available that increase the paper capacity to 100 A3 sheets per feeder.

Canon has also reduced the price of its entry-level BJC-240 colour Bubble Jet. It now costs £210.33 and comes with a copy of Dorling Kindersley's Dinosaur Hunter CD-ROM.

Canon: 0121 680 8062



# HP reveals WinCE HPCs

Hewlett-Packard is on the verge of launching the UK's first Windows CE-based handheld PCs (HPCs).

The 300LX and 320LX PCs both feature HP's 'wide-screen' LCD panel. Capable of a 640x240 pixel resolution, the machines sport the largest screens of all the HPCs available anywhere in the world.

Both machines are powered by Hitachi's SH-3 32-bit RISC processor running at 44MHz, and they come pre-



installed with Windows CE, Pocket Word and Pocket Excel. The 2Mb 300LX and 4Mb

320LX share the same basic specification, which includes a built-in infra-red communications port and a Type II PC Card, but the 320LX has the added luxury of a backlit screen.

UK pricing has yet to be set but a spokesperson for Hewlett-Packard told us that the 300LX and 320LX will cost around £440 and £615 (inc VAT) respectively.

Hewlett-Packard: 0990 474747

## Intel satellite shock for modem makers

Intel has sent shock waves through the modem industry by announcing plans for a satellite-based communications system capable of download speeds around 700 times faster than a modem.

The chip-making giant has teamed up with Société Européenne des Satellites (SES) to form European Satellite Multimedia (ESM), a company chartered to deliver multimedia content directly to PCs via the Astra Satellite System.

The new service will be known as Astra-Net.

Using Astra-Net, PC users with domestic satellite equipment (which you may already have in your home) will be able to download information from the Internet at 38Mbits/s. Today's fastest modems manage just 56,000bits/s.

The main stumbling block for the Astra-Net service is the lack of any kind of 'back channel'. Domestic satellite systems can only receive information, but you must be able to send (ie, issue commands) in order to surf the Internet.

Intel and SES are looking at some form of modem/satellite hybrid as a possible solution, with the modem providing the back channel.

Intel: 01793 431155  
www.intel.com  
www.astra.lu

# Compaq adopts MediaGX

Compaq has taken up the new Cyrix MediaGX processor, which incorporates graphics, sound and memory control into a single chip, for use in its Presario 2000 range of PCs.

Priced at just £1,099 including VAT, the Presario 2110 is targeted at families who want to buy a second PC, or who have resisted buying one because of high prices or low specifications.

Looking like a very res-

pectable first-time buy, it runs at 133MHz and has 16Mb of RAM, a 2.0Gb hard disk, an 8x CD-ROM drive and integrated stereo speakers.

The 2110 comes in a sleek, black case designed to blend in with other home electronic devices. It has a 40 percent smaller casing than traditional desktop cases, and is easy to set up, with just four cables.

Paired with it is the new 14in Presario V400 colour mon-

itor. Also included in the package is a set of software titles from Microsoft, including Microsoft Works, Money and Encarta World Atlas.

By integrating sound and graphics on a single chip, Cyrix claims that the MediaGX offers faster performance and much lower production costs than rival Intel Pentium-based systems with separate adaptors.

Compaq Customer Information: 0990 134456

## Macromedia casts new Web Director

Macromedia has announced Director 6.0, the latest version of its award-winning multimedia development package.

Along with a redesigned interface, the package boasts a horde of features designed for use with the Internet.

Chief among the new features is support for Streaming Shockwave, allowing Web site developers to deliver interactive movies that start playing the instant they are activated.

These movies then continue to download in the background without any delays. Shockwave compression can also be used on all Director files, considerably reducing file sizes.

Other additions include support for Java applets, DirectX and MMX technologies, the ability to drag and drop behaviours onto Sprites, a new look Score with 120 Sprite channels, and a Wizard for creating custom buttons, as seen in Authorware.

Macromedia Director 6.0 costs £1,173.82, and the Director 6.0 Multimedia Studio, comprising Director 6.0, Sound Forge, Extreme 3D 2 and Xres 3.0, costs £1,408.82. Users of previous versions of Director or Studio can upgrade for £351.32 and £468.82 respectively.

Computers Unlimited: 0181 358 5857

# LineOne on-line service makes debut

Internet Service Provider (ISP) Springboard Internet Services (a joint venture between News International and British Telecom), has launched a new on-line service.

LineOne features 24-hour news, entertainment, education and shopping, together with on-line editions of *The Sun* and *The News of the World*.

Although LineOne provides traditional dial-up Internet access and e-mail, its UK-specific content is available only to subscribers, in much the same way as CompuServe's and MSN's Web-based systems.

In addition to normal Web browsing, LineOne subscribers

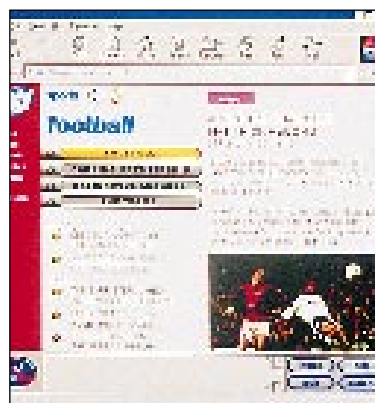
can also personalise the service using its Intelligent Agent technology.

Once users have specified their areas of interest, the Agent will then deliver relevant links and news articles that are regularly updated.

LineOne also features on-line games and has areas dedicated to use by children.

The basic tariff for LineOne is £9.95 for five hours a month, with hours additional to this being charged at £1.50 each.

Alternatively, £14.95 per month buys unlimited access.



Existing ISP account holders can also have content-only access for £6.95 per month. LineOne: 0800 111210

# Designer Mac arrives as more jobs go

In a surprising double move Apple has unveiled a limited-edition designer Macintosh, and laid off 2,700 of its workforce in the same month.

The 20th-anniversary Macintosh boasts an ultra-slim polished metal case with a 12.1in active-matrix screen, 250MHz PowerPC 603e processor, 32Mb of RAM, 2Gb hard disk, and 33.6Kbits/s GeoPort modem. It also includes a keyboard with detachable track-



pad, SCSI ports and an FM radio/TV tuner. Only 12,000 machines will be made this August and will cost around

£5,760. Customers who buy them will also receive a special Concierge Service, with three years on-site warranty and technical support.

Meanwhile, the troubled company has cut almost 25 percent of its permanent workforce in a bid to restructure and return to profitability.

The layoffs are the second set of cuts in the 13 months since Gilbert Amelio became chief executive. Apple: 0800 127753

**CIBAVision**, a leading eye-care specialist is targeting its new VitalEyes conditioning eye drops at Internet surfers who spend hours glued to their monitors.

Apparently VitalEyes will 'replenish your eyes' natural moisture balance, bringing instant refreshment and soothing relief to mega-tired eyes; and it does all this while you're busy 'breaking through the frontiers of the wired world'.

You can buy a 10ml bottle of VitalEyes for £3.49 from most chemists and supermarkets, but we've got together with CIBAVision to give away 500 bottles to lucky *What PC?* readers.

If you fancy having your eyes revitalised for nothing, send a postcard with your details to *What PC?* Offer, VitalEyes, 12c Hillreach, London SE18 4AW.

www.cibavision.co.uk

**Videologic** has launched two new graphics cards, addressing both the consumer and professional markets.

First up is the GfixStar 410, an entry-level graphics accelerator based on the new S3 Trio 64V2 controller. Offering full video scaling for good-quality AVI movie playback and resolutions up to 1,600x1,200 pixels, the card is expected to retail at just £64.

For a more advanced solution, the Gfixstar 550 is a 2D/3D card based on a Cirrus Laguna3D controller. Offering either

2Mb or 4Mb of fast Rambus memory (RDRAM), the plug-and-play card has an expected retail price of around £116. Videologic: 01923 260511

**TopLevel Computing** has announced that it will be releasing a new version of its popular Office Forms package in June.

Office Forms 2 will be compatible with Microsoft Office, allowing the user a choice of 97 and 95-style interfaces. There will be increased support for the Internet as well as for different e-mail systems. In addition, it will be possible to create completely standalone forms, which can be run on PCs without Office Forms.

Priced at £117.44 (inc VAT), Office Forms 2 will be available from 10 June. Anyone buying Office Forms 1 after 1 April will be entitled to a free upgrade to the new version. TopLevel Computing: 01453 753955

**Hewlett-Packard** has launched a low-cost colour flatbed scanner. The ScanJet 5p replaces the 4p and costs £339.58 (inc VAT).

The ScanJet 5p is a 24-bit colour/8-bit greyscale scanner with a 300dpi optical resolution, interpolated to 1,200dpi. It has a push-button front panel to automatically start scanning and is plug-and-play compatible for straightforward installation. Connection is via a SCSI interface, so a PC will need a SCSI expansion card before the scanner can be used.

The scanner comes bundled with HP PictureScan 3.0 for scanning text and images and includes HP's AccuPage technology

for OCR (Optical Character Recognition). Hewlett-Packard: 0990 474747



**Lotus** has at long last released SmartSuite 97, the latest edition of its flagship office software suite.

The full retail version of the product is now on sale at £468.83 (inc VAT), with an upgrade from earlier releases of SmartSuite

costing just £175.08.

The line-up has changed slightly from the earlier beta versions we've looked at, as Lotus is now bundling Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser on top of Netscape's Navigator.

The main applications remain the same, however, with 32-bit versions of 1-2-3, WordPro, Approach, Freelance, Organizer and ScreenCam all present.

As an added bonus, the box also includes a free-of-charge 30-day Internet trial.

Lotus: 01784 455445

**Insignia Solutions** has launched a new 'Internet-ready' version of SoftWindows 95, its Windows 95 emulation software for Power Macs. The new version 4.0 enables Mac users to

easily access PC content both on line and via corporate Intranets using Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Version 4.0 also provides a badly needed 30 percent performance increase, and boasts support for Adobe Acrobat, RealAudio, Macromedia Shockwave, Java and ActiveX data. There is support for 32-bit drivers and new file-sharing software, giving users the ability to read long filenames from the Mac in a Windows environment and vice versa.

SoftWindows 95 4.0 costs £386.57, which includes 30 days of free technical support.

Insignia Solutions 0800 667706  
www.insignia.com

**Microsoft** has announced some major enhancements to its Internet Gaming Zone, the Web site where you can find partners to play a variety of games.

With over 200,000 users, the site now has improved ZoneMatch lobbies, allowing players to find each other easily. At present, games include both competitive and social forms of card and board games. Some Microsoft games, including Golf, can already be played via the Zone and promised for the summer is a selection of Hasbro games including Monopoly, Risk and Scrabble.

Microsoft is also developing games exclusively for the Internet, and these will carry subscriber fees.

Internet Gaming Zone: www.zone.com/  
Microsoft Games Web site: www.microsoft.com/games/



**Aiwa** has launched speakers designed specifically for mobile use – its cables retract inside the speakers, which lock together for easy transport. They cost £19.99 (inc VAT).  
*Aiwa: 0990 902902*

**Apple** is to start shipping its Macintosh 8500/200 and Performa 6400 models with internal Zip drives. Developed by Iomega, these drives allow 100Mb of data to be stored on inexpensive, removable cartridges.  
*Apple: 0800 127753*

**Diamond Multimedia's** Monster Sound audio accelerator promises 3D sound with full support for Microsoft's DirectSound. The PCI-based card will be available in April priced at around £152.  
*Diamond Multimedia: 01189 444400*

**RX Laboratories' Infra-print** infra-red printing adaptor plugs into any printer's parallel port to allow printing from an infra-red-capable notebook PC or electronic organiser.  
*RX Laboratories: 01823 660429*

**Vision**, the specialist insurer, has launched a new policy aimed at mobile computer users. Full accidental damage and theft cover can be arranged instantly by phone or over the Internet.  
*Corporate View: 0990 848484*  
*www.vision-pc.co.uk*

**The Microsoft Network** has teamed up with **Gateway 2000** to turn 23 houses in London into a 'cyber-community' on MSN, in a six-month study to see how easy Internet access could affect a street.  
*Gateway 2000: 0800 302000*  
*Microsoft: 0345 002000*

# Motorola uploads x2 rival

Motorola has started to ship modems that support K56Flex.

This technology, developed by Motorola and Rockwell Semiconductor, allows a modem to download information at speeds up to 56Kbits/s over a normal telephone line.

Upload speeds are still limited to 33.6Kbits/s.

Although K56Flex works in a similar way to US Robotics' x2 technology, the two are not thought to be compatible.

A 56Kbits/s standard is expected within the next 12

months but, meanwhile, Motorola's 'Tidal Wave' program will allow existing Motorola K56Flex modem owners to upgrade as and when new standards are ratified. The program also enables existing 28.8 and 33.6Kbits/s modem users to upgrade to K56Flex.

Three Motorola K56Flex modems are currently available. The ModemSURFR Internet Solution (£169) includes a trial BT Internet account and LineOne (see page 16) software. The VoiceSURFR Home/

Office solution offers a full duplex speakerphone and answering machine facility, and costs £189. The VoiceSURFR Internal Modem is an internal version of the VoiceSURFR.

Meanwhile, 300 Internet Service Providers worldwide have pledged support for US Robotics' 56Kbits/s technology, x2. A Flash-upgradable Sportster modem costs £229 and the x2 upgrade should be available for download now.

*Motorola: 01635 564467*  
*US Robotics: 01734 228200*

# IBM beefs up its ThinkPad notebooks

IBM has expanded the features and functions of its ThinkPad 365 and 560 series of notebook computers.

The improvements include over 100 percent larger hard drives, higher processing power and CD-ROM drives.

The basic 365X model now comes with a substantial 1.08Gb hard disk and 8Mb of RAM. It has an 11.3in DSTN screen with 256 colours and the option of a CD-ROM drive.

Weighing in at 5.9lb, it costs £1,848. At the top end



of the 365 range, the XD model, also at 133MHz, has a

superior 11.3in TFT screen, with 64,000 colours. The hard disk is a hefty 1.35Gb and a 6x CD-ROM drive is included in the price of £3,005.

The super-slim 560 series notebooks come with a choice of TFT or DSTN screens and have detachable floppy drives. Prices start at £2,025.

All of IBM's ThinkPad notebook PCs come with Lotus SmartSuite on CD-ROM and are equipped with infra-red transceivers for wireless data transmission.  
*IBM: 0990 727272*

## Top 20 software packages according to Romtec figures

Position	Package	Publisher/supplier	Type	Last month
1	MS Windows 95	Microsoft	Operating system	2
2	MS Office V4.2 Standard	Microsoft	Office suite	4
3	MS Windows NT Workstation	Microsoft	Operating system	1
4	MS Office Pro 4	Microsoft	Office suite	6
5	MS Office Pro 7	Microsoft	Office suite	11
6	MS Office 7 Standard	Microsoft	Office suite	3
7	cc:Mail for Windows	Lotus	E-mail	7
8	Lotus SmartSuite V3/4	Lotus	Office suite	8
9	Lotus Notes for Windows	Lotus	Groupware	5
10	PK ZIP for DOS	Atlantic Coast	Utility	9
11	MS Office Pro for Win 95 upgrade	Microsoft	Office suite	—
12	MS Exchange for Windows	Microsoft	E-mail	—
13	MS Office V7 upgrade	Microsoft	Office suite	15
14	Microsoft Plus for Windows 95	Microsoft	Utility	—
15	MS Word for Windows	Microsoft	Word processor	19
16	MS Windows for Workgroups	Microsoft	Operating system	12
17	First Aid for Windows 95	Cybermedia	Utility	20
18	Microsoft Windows	Microsoft	Operating system	—
19	MS SMS for Windows	Microsoft	Network management	16
20	MS Publisher for Windows 95	Microsoft	Desktop publishing	13

Figures for January 1997, source Romtec. Business application and desktop operating systems unit sales only, OEM sales excluded. Romtec figures are calculated by grossing up sales from resellers. If you are interested in joining Romtec's Reseller Panel and finding out how as a reseller you can benefit, call direct on: 01628 414013.