in brief

Products covered in our concise reviews this month include: a map of the London Underground system for the Psion 3a, a colour printer which can produce near-perfect copies of photographs, a bargain presentations package to rival Powerpoint and Freelance, and a censorship package for those who wish to restrict Internet access on a home PC

Mouseman 96

Logitech's latest PC pointing device is Mouseman 96. Designed specifically for use with Windows 95 (although it will work with MS-Dos and Windows 3.1), it has a middle button that can be programmed to provide quick access to frequently used Windows 95 functions.

Actually, the mouse part of Mouseman 96 isn't new – it's a standard three-button Logitech mouse. The Mouseware 7.1 software, though, is. Once installed, it creates a new Control Panel icon for the mouse that allows a wide range of mouse functions to be altered. In addition to the usual adjustments, individual commands can also be assigned to each of the three buttons. This is perhaps most useful for bringing the otherwise redundant middle button into use. As well as individual commands, it can also be assigned the Hyperjump feature. When the button is pressed, eight small icons appear, providing short cuts to such things as the Start menu and application window controls.

The software also features Smart Move, which automatically moves the pointer to the next logical command. For example, if a user chooses to print a document, the pointer will jump to the OK button when the print dialog box appears. This can prove a little disorienting, but it's handy if you have to click several OK buttons to confirm a command.

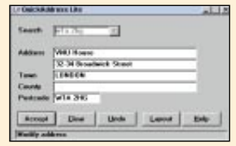
A reasonably priced and well-made mouse. Whether or not you find the added software useful, however, depends on how comfortable you are using the mouse for more than just the usual pointing and clicking.

○ £39 (incl VAT)
○ Logitech: 01344 891313
○ **FREE FACTS 135**

Mouseman 96

Build quality	5
Features	5
Value for money	4

Quickaddress Lite for Windows



Quickaddress Lite is a database of postcodes. This may seem like rather a pointless collection of information but for some people, it will prove invaluable. Using a postcode alone, Quickaddress Lite can find any address in the UK, right down to the street name.

Supplied on six floppy disks, Quickaddress Lite takes up around 6Mb of hard disk space. The program stays minimised when started and pops up when a key combination is pressed. Type in a postcode, press the Return key and the corresponding address appears in a split second. The database contains the address of every postcode in the UK – all 26 million of them. Since around 15 houses have the same postcode, the street number must be entered to get the unique address. This done, pressing the Return key minimises the window and pastes the address into the current application.

Completing an address from just two pieces of information (the postcode and street number) can result in up 80 percent fewer keystrokes for users who regularly use such information. Errors from mis-typed words are also reduced and as the addresses are Royal Mail-approved, they should also be accurate. The only drawback with the database is that it can't tell you a postcode for a given address.

If you regularly need to type addresses into a PC, then Quickaddress Lite can save you a lot of time and effort – providing you know the postcode, of course.

○ £116.33 (incl VAT)
○ QAS Systems: 0181 303 1232
○ **FREE FACTS 138**

Quickaddress Lite for Windows

Ease of use	5
Functionality	4
Value for money	3

Fotofun digital colour printer

The only problem with digital cameras and PhotoCDs is that you're restricted to looking at your photographs on a monitor. Try to print them out and an inkjet printer won't necessarily do them justice. The Fotofun digital colour printer, on the other hand, will – it's designed specifically for that purpose.

The Fotofun printer is a thermal dye-sublimation printer, which refers to the way in which it transfers an image to the page. It uses a three-colour film that is wound onto a roller and prints are made in three passes – one for each colour. The ribbon is only used once and is progressively wound on as prints are made. Using the standard print kit, consisting of a ribbon and 36 blank 'photos', a single print works out at about £1.20. Kits are also available for printing postcards and even mugs.

Once the driver is installed, the Fotofun is used just like any other printer. When an application has been set to print, the grinding of the printer's rollers indicates that it's ready to go and a 6inx4in blank has to be manually fed into the paper slot. About four minutes later, the print emerges, complete with a glossy finish. The final quality depends on the original, but a picture resolution of around 200dpi is adequate to produce a near-perfect photograph.

It may be expensive to buy and run, but the Fotofun digital colour printer is really an excellent way to get those PhotoCD and scanned images onto paper.

○ £492.33 (incl VAT)
○ Bannerbridge: 01268 419101
○ **FREE FACTS 136**

Fotofun digital colour printer

Ease of use	4
Functionality	5
Value for money	3

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing Version 4

The world of typing is divided into two camps – touch-typists and biblical typists ('seek and ye shall find'). A proficient touch-typist can rattle off half a page of text in the same time it takes a biblical typist to find the M key. Touch-typing isn't a black art, however, and Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing is a program that can teach you how to do it as you sit at your computer.

Mavis Beacon is supplied on CD, which includes both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 versions. When it comes to learning how to type, there's no replacement for finger drills and Mavis Beacon has no shortage of these. These take the form of exercises that require you to type in various letters and sentences, with the aim of teaching you such things as correct fingering, typing accuracy and rhythm.

Fortunately, a number of games provide a welcome respite from the monotony of typing 'flak jags gall' over and over again. These crop up between lessons and good use of sound and graphics is made to reinforce key points. The Car Race game, for example, uses your words-per-minute rate to drive a car and each time you make a mistake, flies splat on the windscreen and block your vision.

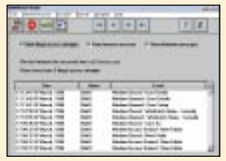
It makes perfect sense to learn touch-typing while you're sitting at your PC and Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing is an excellent way to do it.

○ £34.99 (incl VAT)
○ Gameguide Publications: 0161 248 8772
○ **FREE FACTS 137**

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing

Ease of use	5
Functionality	5
Value for money	4

Winwatch Home



The self-deregulating nature of the Internet means that any global attempt to limit access to its content is almost certain to fail. Local censorship, however, promises to be more successful and Winwatch Home is a program designed to do just that. It allows access to Internet sites from a PC to be restricted, as well as access to files and applications already on the PC .

At the core of Winwatch is the Command Centre, where the 'supervisor' grants access to users using a combination of user names and passwords. A user must then enter these during the Windows startup procedure and the degree of freedom he or she has depends on the access rights they have been allotted. For applications, these can range from a complete block, or just to parts such as New or Print. Internet access can be restricted to certain times of the day and week, sites can be individually blocked by name and keywords can be used to restrict access still further. Any attempted violations of these restrictions are logged and can be viewed by the supervisor at a later date.

Winwatch Home sounds like a godsend to concerned parents everywhere and indeed it would be if not for one problem – the password system is easily bypassed with Windows 95. By the time you read this, however, there should be a fix available for this problem.

If you're concerned about how people are using your PC, then Winwatch Home is a useful 'big brother' solution. It takes a while to configure, however, and it needs a fix to be fully functional.

○ £46.99 incl. VAT
○ Solution Point: 0345 400300
○ **FREE FACTS 139**

Winwatch Home

Ease of use	3
Functionality	3
Value for money	3

MAG DX1595 monitor

This 15in monitor is fairly conventional in appearance, eschewing the futuristic excesses of many of its competitors. It has digital controls mounted on the front panel to adjust the width, height and position of the picture, and brightness and contrast are set using ordinary rotary controls. Although there's no on-screen display of the digital settings, a row of green lights above the controls is sufficient to show which function has been selected.

The default picture size leaves quite a wide black screen border, resulting in a picture diagonal of just under 13in, but by adjusting the horizontal and vertical scaling this can be increased to just over 14in with very little edge distortion. This is thanks to the control that allows the picture to be adjusted to prevent the pincushion effect often apparent when a monitor's display area is extended to the edges of the screen.

The technical specifications are fine for a 15in unit. The monitor can handle 1,024x768 resolution (non-interlaced) at vertical frequencies up to 76Hz. which provides flicker-free viewing. There's a degauss button and the monitor is programmed to remember up to 13 size and synchronisation settings at different resolutions.

A decent monitor with easy-to-use controls. You wouldn't complain if it came badged with a new PC, but as an upgrade there's little to make it stand out from the crowd apart from its keen price.

○ £339.58 (incl VAT – street price)
○ IMC: 01344 872800
○ **FREE FACTS 140**

MAG DX1595 monitor

Ease of use	4
Functionality	3
Value for money	4

Stretchercise

Stretchercise is designed to pop up at fixed intervals to remind you to take a break and get some exercise. Common sense tells you that sitting at a computer for too long is bad for you, and repetitive strain injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis are well documented.

Although you know all of the above, and you can feel your eyes are tired and that your back aches, it's hard to break off from your computer if you're working to a deadline – or even if you're just bucking for the high score in your favourite game. Stretchercise is there to nag you back into the real world.

You can set the frequency of Stretchercise's appearance to be a fixed number of keystrokes, mouse clicks or minutes. When the reminder pops up it encourages you to join in with one of thirty-five exercises, each illustrated with a tiny video clip, and all designed to be carried out at the computer.

The clips are tiny, so don't expect Mr Motivator, but this at least keeps their size down so that the entire program, including videos, only needs around 10Mb of hard disk space.

A nice idea, reasonably well implemented, but it's all too easy to ignore Stretchercise's warnings – so it could end up increasing feelings of guilt rather than reducing stress.

○ £29.32 (incl VAT)
○ IMSI: 0181 581 2000
○ **FREE FACTS 141**

Stretchercise

Ease of use	5
Features	3
Value for money	3

Hijaak for Windows 95

Hijaak gets its name from its Dos and Windows forerunners, which were designed to steal (hijack) screens from other programs. Grabbing screens from Windows programs is a simple matter of pressing the Print Screen key, so Quarterdeck has virtually re-invented the program for Windows 95.

Hijaak's new features fall into two broad groups: image management and image conversion. Both are achieved slickly by Hijaak attaching itself to Windows 95's built-in controls. In Explorer, for example, when you highlight a graphics file and use the right mouse button to pop up the context menu, you'll see six new options that let you view, print, copy or convert over 75 different types of graphics file.

Hijaak's approach to viewing files is very interesting. It can be set to work in the background converting large graphics files into tiny thumbnail images. These can be displayed anywhere in Windows 95 where you'd normally see only an anonymous icon. If you click on one of these to view the file at full size, you can also perform a certain amount of image editing and correction without having to load a separate program.

Finally, Hijaak still offers screen capture facilities, letting you grab any part of the screen and send it automatically to the clipboard, printer or hard disk.

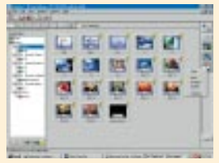
Hijaak is a great idea and works well on memory-rich Pentiums, but the performance penalty of using it on 486/8Mb machines makes it less attractive.

○ £58.69 (incl VAT)
○ Quarterdeck: 01245 496699
○ **FREE FACTS 144**

Hijaak for Windows 95

Ease of use	3
Functionality	4
Value for money	3

Fanfare Presentations



So much software crosses our desks at *What PC?* that it's difficult not to make a preliminary judgment based on cost. Fanfare Presentations belies its £34 price tag by providing not only a presentation system to rival Microsoft Powerpoint and Lotus Freelance, but also the basic elements of a multimedia authoring system.

Fanfare follows the normal principles of presentation design by letting you load in graphics, sounds, videos and audio CD clips to make up the individual screen pages (slides) of a presentation. Multiple slides are represented by thumbnail images you can click to edit. Once a series of slides has been created, the slides can be either presented sequentially or you can add interactive buttons and hot spots to give the viewer control over how the presentation progresses.

The finished presentation can be automatically compressed, encoded and compiled for distribution to other people, and there's a royalty-free runtime viewer you can bundle with it.

Unlike a genuine multimedia authoring program, there's no facility to run other programs from within a finished presentation, but Fanfare does boast an on-screen launch bar that lets you start your favourite utilities and editing programs without leaving Fanfare.

If you own one of the big suites of office software you'll already have a presentation package, but if you're on the lookout for a separate program you won't find better value than Fanfare.

○ £39.99 (incl VAT)
○ Softkey: 0181 789 2000
○ **FREE FACTS 142**

Fanfare Presentations

Ease of use	3
Features	4
Value for money	5

Tube (for the Psion 3a)

SW Systems has come up with an intelligent version of the London Underground map you can load into your Psion 3a palmtop computer.

The map is a licensed version of the real thing, so it all looks very familiar. In normal view it takes around six of Psion's screens to display the entire Tube system but there are several shortcut keys to scroll the screens quickly, and pressing the space bar centres the map instantly.

It depends on your eyesight and the ambient lighting, but we found the names of stations hard to read. A 2x zoom feature makes the text legible but it doesn't provide any extra detail. Pressing Psion-K pops up a key to the bewildering patterns used for each tube line.

The program can work out your journey between any two stations. It may not suggest the best route but generally it gives you a sensible one. Other features include being able to find any tube station and highlight it on the map, and there's a database of information about public buildings and other places of interest. The program needs 128Kb of space on a Ram disk and 100Kb of memory when it is running.

Given the limitations of the Psion's screen, the program is easy to use and makes a decent stab at route finding. Unfortunately, its memory demands make the program impractical for 256Kb models.

○ Floppy: £29.95 (incl VAT) solid state disk: £34.95
○ SW Systems: 01793 872146
○ **FREE FACTS 143**

Tube (for the Psion 3a)

Ease of use	5
Features	3
Value for money	4

Corel Super Ten (entertainment/ reference)

This pack is a collection of ten entertainment and reference CDs from Corel, bundled with a single manual, and all for the amazingly low price of £39.

The pick of the crop is undoubtedly Corel's All-Movie Guide, which presents a slick point-and-click means of interrogating a massive database of movies, actors, themes, cast lists and many other film-related topics. Internet Mania is a useful set of utilities for Internet users with Windows 95, and Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn is a multimedia biography of the eponymous film star.

The pure reference titles include Classic Books – 3,500 literary classics; the Complete Shakespeare – all the plays, poems and sonnets; Barron's Study Notes – a guide to 101 classic and contemporary works; and The Complete Bible Reference – the full text of the Bible along with audio and video clips and 300 illustrations. The three remaining titles are a mixed bag of games and screen savers and an interactive guide to learning Windows 95.

The movie guide, Internet utilities and Herman screensavers require Windows 95; the rest will run on Windows 3.1, provided you have 8Mb of memory. The movie guide, Marilyn Monroe biography and screensavers also work on Macintosh computers.

If only two of the ten titles appeals to you, you'll get your money's worth. If you like them all, you'll never find a better bargain.

○ £45.82 (incl VAT)
○ Corel: 0800 581028
○ **FREE FACTS 145**

Corel Super Ten

Ease of use	4
Functionality	4
Value for money	5