

after hours: *on line*

In his last surfing session for this column, Terry Pinnell catches up with the latest live radio and relaxes with a few crosswords

The Mini

Car of the century, the Mini is still going strong today. If you've never had the chance to customise your own, check out this great official Mini site. Here you get to design your own Mini and enter it for viewing and voting on by other surfers. Those in the top 10 get to the The Hall of Fame. You can also download your design as a background wallpaper, game and screen saver.

• www.mini.co.uk/comp/index.html



1.1Mb, an easy download with a 28.8Kbits/s modem – which you will need anyway in order to get

broadcast-quality audio.

If you're one of the lucky few with ISDN or LAN connections, Progressive reckons you will get close to CD performance. In practice, with 28.8Kbits/s, the stereo sound is certainly pretty good – way ahead of that scratchy stuff

RealAudio

Back in the technological dark ages of 1995, a UK company called Progressive Networks made Internet headlines by announcing a technology called RealAudio. This made it possible to listen to sound (music or voice) while it was actually being downloaded, rather than having to wait for the whole file. The process was tagged as 'streaming', giving rise to the term 'streamed audio'. The user software (or 'client' as the techies tiresomely insist on calling it) was RealAudio 1.0 – and now it's at version 3.0, with a beta of version 4 also available. The beta is about



getting started

In six easy steps...

- 1** Install a fast modem on your PC (preferably 28.8 or 36.6Kbits/s).
- 2** For full Internet access, open an account with one of the many Internet Service Providers (ISPs), within local call range.
- 3** If you can afford the extra cost, extend your scope by opening another account with a general on-line service provider, within local call range. You may be able to combine **2** and **3** with a single provider, but separate services generally provide better performance.
- 4** Install software for browsing the Web and using other Net and on-line services, plus off-line utilities.
- 5** 'Internet connectivity kits' are available which package the above elements into one bundle.
- 6** Revise your phone budget and free up a lot of hard drive space.

Glossary

popular gobbledegook

FTP	File Transfer Protocol; an 'FTP site' is a source for downloading files.
HTML	Hypertext Mark-up Language; for making Web pages.
IRC	Inter Relay Chat; using the Net like a CB radio.
IP	Internet Protocol; an addressing system.
ISP	Internet Service Provider; sometimes confusingly abbreviated to IP.
JPEG	Joint Photographic Experts Group; popular graphics file format (JPG).
PPP	Point-to-Point Protocol; communications program.
SLIP	Serial Line Internet Protocol; another program for communications.
UUE	UUEncoded files used with Internet News Groups.
URL	Uniform Resource Locator; Web addressing system.
Winsock	Windows Socket; standard interface between applications (like Netscape) and networking protocols (like PPP).

Contacts

major on-line services and ISPs

Pipex 01223 250100
CompuServe 0800 289378
CIX 0181 296 9666
Microsoft 0800 750800
AOL 0800 376 5432
UK Online 01749 333300
Demon 0181 371 1234
Pinnacle 01293 613686
Direct Connection 0181 297 2200
BT 0345 776666
Cityscape 01223 566950
Global Internet 0181 957 1003

that was being raved about a year or so ago. You can also use the same program for video, although in this case a 28.8 modem doesn't cut the mustard, as you may be able to see from our screenshots on the previous page. 'Newscast-quality video at 28.8' – not really!

There's masses of stuff to see and hear, most of it easily accessible from these sites. On the UK news front there's Independent Radio News for 24 hours a day. You can regularly hear Virgin Radio's album chart, presented as a live rundown of the week's top sellers, and Capital FM uses RealAudio too. From live concerts to recorded sound bites and hit album extracts, it's all there for the streaming. However, although it's a clear indicator of the rapidly up-and-coming convergence of music, video, information and computing – which will have fantastic potential – for the time being I reckon a conventional radio and CD-player are still far ahead in convenience and quality.

- www.real.com
- www.real.co.uk
- www.timecast.com
- www.liveconcerts.com

Crosswords

Most of us enjoy an occasional crossword, and for some addicts they're a consuming passion. The Web has hundreds of pages coming at the subject from one angle or another.

At Bryson's site you'll find details of software for crossword solvers and setters, and the Electronic Alveary which allows you to search lists of words for those matching a pattern, plus many other word games. The reference section is packed with links to pages on specimen puzzles, books,

word lists, and classics such as *The Times* on the Internet – the on-line version of the world's most famous crossword. The other site below offers an even longer list of crossword links. Out-and-out enthusiasts of an intellectual bent should check out the Mind Sports Olympiad page. The competition is to be held in August and includes a crossword puzzle tournament.

- www.bryson.demon.co.uk/
- www.imada.ou.dk/~sik/Crossword_page/Links.html

Downloads galore

One of the most important benefits of the Internet for many users is that it's a convenient, fast source of evaluating new software. That's how I've come across all sorts of excellent programs, often being able to try them out within minutes of reading about them on Web pages or in Usenet newsgroups.

A good example is TextPad, a superb general-purpose editor available as shareware, written by Keith MacDonald of Helios Software UK. We reviewed it in our February issue. There's also Forté's Free Agent, and the commercial version Agent which combines a newsgroup reader and e-mail program in a superb package. Since first trying these a couple of years ago, I've used the Web to download several upgrades – an altogether tidier and speedier business than ye olde phone and post office.

- www.textpad.com/
- www.forteinc.com/

Feedback welcomed:

You can e-mail Terry Pinnell at terrypin@dial.pipex.com or send your comments to us at *What PC?*: whatpc@vnu.co.uk

