



REAR VIEW

It seems everyone these days has developed an interest in computers – bad news if you want to avoid nerds who can talk about nothing else.

Nerds used to be easy to spot: they read computer magazines, had dodgy haircuts and wore anoraks. Now everybody is at it. Every magazine yaks on about computers, footballers have dodgy haircuts (no change there) and Noel Gallagher wears an anorak – whatever the weather. Nerds are fashionable.

But like fur, a fashionable nerd is a fake nerd, and if you don't want to be sat next to a computer bore at a dinner party or strike up an impromptu conversation with one accidentally in the supermarket, you have to be able to distinguish a fake from the real thing.

The two may share similar hair styles, but real nerds look as if they never learned to shave properly. They have unkempt beards or razor burn. Or maybe, they are just so nerdy that hair never grows on their faces and they remain forever 14, in a permanent state of sweaty puberty.

Fake nerds sport facial topiary – nasty beards cut into shapes like the strips of dense fluff which get left behind when you strip old carpet tiles off the floor.

Both types of nerd can be found in Marks & Spencer, but in different departments.

Fakes are in the Food Hall looking for pickled red cabbage and sun-dried tomatoes for an evening's soiree. Real nerds mingle with the OAPs and Japanese tourists in the men's department looking for a comfy pair of grey slacks.

Fake nerds have jobs in 'the meeja': for example, a Web site designer for the BBC would be a fake nerd, whereas the Web site designer for the Welsh Association of Steam Train Enthusiasts (the WASTE-site) is more likely to be a real nerd.

Real nerds have narrow interests. They will babble incessantly about technology and maybe one other specialist subject, such as kites or military memorabilia. But on all others they fall quiet, especially in social situations where they sit hugging a glass of warm beer, stare lugubriously through their steel-rimmed glasses and pine silently for their computer.

Fake nerds are voluble creatures: politics, religion, the environment, music, fine art, the meeja... just like taxi drivers, fake nerds have an opinion on it, albeit a secondhand opinion.

On second thoughts, perhaps talking to real nerds isn't so bad. At least you can get a word in edgeways.

— by Andrew Charlesworth —

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Caption competition

Congratulations to rosscullen@tinet.ie for submitting the wittiest caption for September's picture. E-mail us your address

Ross, and we'll send you a copy of Power Goo. Winning caption: 'And now all we have to do is wait 64 million years for electricity to be invented.'

This month's picture (below) is from monitor manufacturer ViewSonic. It shows the ViewSonic parrots. We don't know why either. Captions to reach us at our usual postal or e-mail address (see page 4) by 7th November please.



WINNING CAPTION



Chips and beans

Not content with dominating the PC processor market, chip manufacturer Intel is now muscling in on the cuddly toy business. Available in a variety of colours, the Intel BunnyPeople™ are dolls modelled on the lab technicians seen prancing about in recent TV advertisements for MMX technology.

Launched as part of a promotional campaign by Intel for Pentium II PCs, the 8in beanbag dolls are apparently replicas – which raises questions about Intel employing technicians with no internal skeleton and a leguminous physiology.

Unfortunately, we couldn't confirm rumours of joint plans by AMD and Cyrix to launch the PointyPins™ accessory pack.



Next month

Affordable Pentium IIs

We test 10 top PCs boasting Intel's latest processor, on sale for under £1,500.

24x CD-ROMs

The fastest drives compared.

DTP software

Special report: Insuring your PC

On sale 6th November 1997

(Contents subject to change)