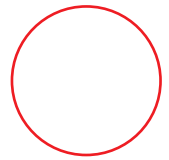# letters

Write to *What PC?* Editorial, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG. We offer a £20 book token for the best letter each month

Where was BT?

I use both Virgin Net and BT Internet and I am surprised that you did not include BT Internet in your review of Internet Service Providers (*What PC?*, April) as it claims to be the number one service provider in 1997.

Of the two companies I find that BT offers the faster service, as I have experienced many problems downloading pages via Virgin Net, which sometimes totally fails to respond.

While both companies offer tele support, I find that it is almost impossible to get through, but I am currently finding BT the better overall provider. So why did you not include this ISP in your report?
Gary Everett,
Gary.Everett@btinternet.com

BT was invited to take part in the ISP group test but although we requested its software in January, we still hadn't received it in April. After talking to BT, it turned out that our request had somehow slipped through its tracking system. BT would like to point out, however, that its response time for software requests is now five working days.

Virgin offer ends

After careful perusal of the review of Internet Service Providers in your April issue I decided to ring Virgin Net and place an order for the software required to join, as I thought that this was the ISP for me.

Upon ringing Virgin Net, who answered the call after only one ring, I gave them my details and then enquired about the features as listed in your article, only to find that the three months free offer finished on

Tea and updates

In the April issue of *What PC?* one of your readers, John Tsangalakis, wrote with a problem concerning the cost of disk-based virus updates ('Not such a good buy?').

Although I now have the facility to download the monthly virus updates via the Internet and Norton AntiVirus's LiveUpdate directly, I used to visit a local Internet café to download the updates to disk. This cost about £4 per month for 30 minutes on line – an effective saving of £68 over buying the updates on disk from Symantec – and has the added benefit that you can use the remaining 25 minutes or so to download any other updates or patches your programs may need.

However, considering that I was spending £4 a month to use the Internet for just half an hour, I decided to buy a modem and pay an extra £6 (and the extra phone charges!) per month to have the flexibility of Internet access when I wanted it.

I think, while we're on the subject, that we should commend Symantec for supplying the latest version of Norton AntiVirus to Mr Tsangalakis – I doubt very much that other software houses would follow suit.
Nick Mortimer, nick@spoofonline.demon.co.uk

If you're lucky enough to have a local Internet café then getting software updates this way is a great idea, especially if it saves you money. And you're absolutely right about Symantec too – we can't think of many other companies who would go so far to satisfy a disgruntled customer.

14 March and that the 10Mb Web space facility was not yet up and running, but would be soon.

This would seem to be a cunning plan by Virgin Net to get people signed up on the promise of 10Mb of Web space and a £10-a-month fee, which is cheap compared to others. Virgin Net also offers a cheaper £6 per month for a five-hour on-line access, much like CompuServe, which I already use.

I also noticed that you have named two different Web browsers for Virgin Net. In the review you say it uses Netscape, which is correct, but in the table you listed it as IE.
Steve Pimm,
101471.3614@compuserve.com

Virgin Net's three-month trial offer unfortunately expired a couple of days after the April issue of *What PC?* went on sale. The 10Mb of personal Web space, however, is now available. As for Virgin Net's

Web browser, it is Netscape Navigator (as stated in the body of the review) and not Internet Explorer 3 (as stated in the table).

Be warned!

Just to warn your readers of two rather nasty scams.
Scam 1: Some rather unscrupulous individuals are telephoning people pretending to be carrying out some sort of computer survey. They offer free software, ask about your computer system and when would be a good time to come round and install it. However, what they are really asking is how nice is your computer and when would be a good time to burgle you. So be warned.
Scam 2: An e-mail propagating message, subject heading

'Penpal Greetings'. If you open this it seems to be a friendly message asking you to be a penpal – however, it also loads a virus program which trashes your hard disk and forwards itself to anyone whose e-mail address is in your mailbox. Don't read it, delete it.
Danny Jurmann, London NW6

***What PC?* itself carries out surveys to find out what people are using, as do many legitimate companies, some offering software in return for your time. So one cannot assume that all such surveys are scams. If you are in any doubt, however, you should decline to answer any questions. If you suspect you may be a potential victim, contact the police.**

The so-called 'Penpal Greetings' virus is actually a hoax, but it's always a good idea to be wary of e-mails from strangers. For example, we've had reports of a very dangerous 'virus' which comes attached to an e-mail congratulating you on winning an online subscription for free. Run the attachment and it will erase your hard disk.

You can also write to us via e-mail at:
whatpc@vnu.co.uk
Please note that any letters sent to us by e-mail will be printed along with the sender's e-mail address, unless we are specifically instructed otherwise.