



In Praise of Tinkering

“...our own culture that frowns upon tinkering. Drummed into us since childhood through maternal admonitions like “Munna! Papa ka stereo mat touch karo!”

”

Ignoramus and Mastermind. The increasing friendliness of digital technology has divided its users into these two groups. The first, overwhelming majority consists of those simpletons who only use computers. And the second is composed of all-knowing specialists who develop the technology—programmers, designers, hardware engineers.

In such a clearly polarised world, there appears to be no third group.

Your local assembler sets up a new PC and all you need to begin is to click on the ‘Start’ button. Three-click-online Internet connections are being sold at ration shops and your computer comes pre-installed with idiot-proof movie playing software.

But what about those who love to tinker? Who are driven by the need to learn more? In a world designed for the convenience of digital dimwits, can this third group exist?

Indeed, it can. And it does.

Universities or industry alone did not power the scientific advancement of countries like the United States. The spirit of exploration engendered in their children fuelled it. This is in contrast to our own culture that frowns upon tinkering. Drummed into us since childhood through maternal admonitions like “Munna! Papa ka stereo mat touch karo!”

This censure becomes our theme song. We never really ‘learn’ to use common applications like Microsoft Word. We drift into them. A friend or colleague helps us get started, and after we learn enough to

help us type, format and print, we seldom go beyond. Never “...touch karo” anything but the essential. So we deny ourselves the value of Auto Correct, of Track Changes, of Embed Hyperlinks. Simply because we never tinker.

Tinkering catalyses the capacity for complex thought. It fertilises ideas. It begets a confidence born of independent action. It results in the joy that only serendipitous discovery can provide.

Tinkering pays practical dividends too. An incremental feature that we conquer may result in an exponential return in productivity. Imagine the modern workplace. Low error-tolerance, high pressure and perpetual deadlines. One person can unleash the unobtrusive ‘Forecast’ button in the spreadsheet that saves everyone ten hours of pointless effort.

This is why you should learn how to write macros in Word. To insert video in a PowerPoint presentation. To resume an interrupted file download from exactly the point where you were cut off. To faultlessly back up your digital diary on your computer.

So what will you say when you return from office to find that your eleven-year old has taken apart your computer?

Gaurav Jaswal

Executive Editor

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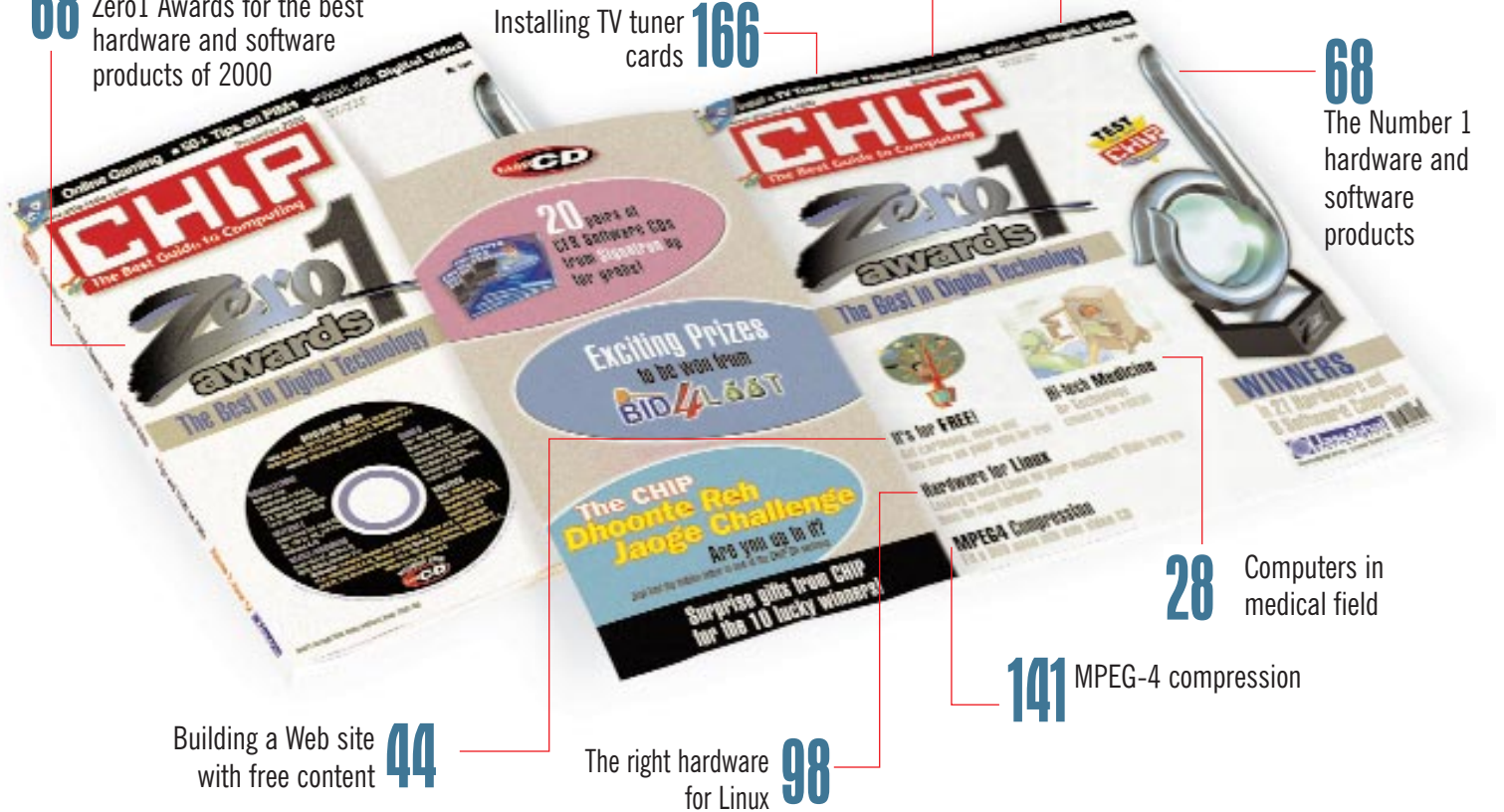
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From tracing outlines in images and video titles to racing against time, this CHIP CD has it all

GAMES

V-Rally 2



Get behind the wheel of some superfast cars to complete your sole objective of becoming the World Rally Champion. V-Rally 2 pushes the boundaries of realism to the extreme with animated drivers and co-drivers. Watch your cars get damaged and dirty, in real time...

Path: \games\vrrally\setup.exe

Hitman: Codename 47

You must use stealth and tactical skills to execute your assignments with maximum effectiveness. You can use maps to plan and



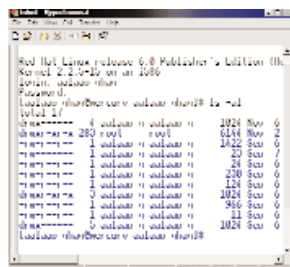
choose from a variety of weapons. You end the mission with an amount of money commensurate with your proficiency.

Path: \games\hitman\hitmandemo.exe

UTILITIES

HyperTerminal Private Edition (HTPE) v6.0

A more powerful version of the HyperTerminal dialing and telnet package that comes with Windows, it includes automatic re-dial, ZModem crash recovery, VT220 and VT320 support, and better support for foreign characters.



Path: \utilities\misc\hpt6\hpterm.exe

HOME/LEISURE

MindManager Standard

A mind-mapping program that lets you display ideas and the relationships between concepts. It helps you to break down a complicated project into its details until each one of them is easy to understand, outline, plan or manage. The main topic is placed in the centre of the mindmap while your ideas are placed on branches which radiate



out from this focus.
Path: \home\mindmanager\mmt40std.exe

INTERNET

MantaDB v2.02

A suite of eight tools that integrate seamlessly into your Internet Explorer browser and add extra capabilities to it. These include LinkChecker, Personal Sidebar, Page DeFramer, Web,



Font Sizer and Sensible Colors tools.

Another extremely useful tool is the Web Page Indexer. MantaDB can scan Web pages as you view them and build a searchable index out of the words they contain. Searching is fast and works just like an Internet search engine except that the content is built out of pages you have viewed. So you can always return to a page that you have viewed before.

Path: \internet\mantadb\MANTADB.EXE

MSN Explorer

An all-in-one, AOL-style interface for browsing the Web, managing e-mail, instant messaging, listening



to music and more. It offers Microsoft's integrated desktop, a cool new Web interface, support for searching and playing music and video clips, support for multiple users and access to online shopping. It also includes a powerful interface for accessing your Hot-Mail account and a personal home page.

Path: \internet\msnbrowse\msnsetup_min.exe

FIND IN MAGAZINE

VCDCutter v4.03

VCDCutter is used to play movie files in .mpg, .vcd, .dat, .avi, .mlv, .mpv and .mov formats. It can extract frames from .vcd or .mpg files, letting you cut your favourite part of a movie to disk. You can even extract just the audio from a .mpg movie and save it as a .mp3 file. Other features include the abilities to import/export a playlist or clip list; drag-and-drop support; conversion of .avi files to .mpg format; and control playback size, performance and



speed. If you're looking for an easy-to-use utility that can not only play popular movie formats, but perform basic editing chores, check out the VCDCutter today.
Path: \home\vcdcutter403\setup.exe

GAMES

Hitman: Codename 47
Escape From Monkey Island

DEVELOPERS' NOOK

Adobe LiveMotion v1.0.2

HOME/LEISURE

MindManager Standard 4.0
ArcSoft PhotoPrinter 2.0 LE

OFFICE/BUSINESS

Flow! v4.0 LE
602Pro PC SUITE 2000b

UTILITIES

MusicMatch Jukebox v6.0
(beta)
MP3 Manager v2.0

FIND IN MAGAZINE

VCD Cutter
WS_FTP LE



CHIP CD Contents

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Anet Help Tool v5.0.0 [free]
BrowserSizer v1.1 [free]
Inf toolkit Lite [free for personal use]
Adobe LiveMotion v1.0.2 [Trial 30 days]
IMS Web Dwarf [free]
WinMerge v1.5.1 [free]

DEVELOPERS' NOOK (Section - Tutorials)

VB6 tutorial
Graphics in C++ tutorial

GAMES

Blair Witch Volume 1: Rustin Parr [Demo]
Hitman: Codename 47 [Demo]
Escape From Monkey Island [Demo]
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 [Demo]
Recon [Demo]
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis [Demo]
Trioxid [Free]
V-Rally 2 [Demo]

HOME/LEISURE

ChiBrow v4.5 [Free]
Crosstrainer II v4.5.5 [Trial (30 days)]
MindManager Standard 4.0 [Trial]

ArcSoft PhotoPrinter 2.0 LE [Free]

VCD Cutter v4.03 [Shareware]

OFFICE/BUSINESS

Flow! v4.0 LE [Free (Lite version)]
602Pro PC SUITE 2000b [Free]
Camtasia v2.1 [Trial (30 days)]

RESOURCES

Acrobat Reader v4.05c [Free]
AVG 6.0 Free Edition update file [Free]
DirectX 7.0A [Free]
Windows Media Player 7 [Free]
Visual Basic Runtimes [Free]
WinZip 8 [Shareware]
Internet Explorer 5.5 Service Pack 1

INTERNET

Bullet Proof FTP [Shareware]
CuteFTP [Shareware]
WS_FTP LE [Free]
WS_FTP Pro [Shareware]
Netscape 4.76 [Free]
Canine Mail v.99 [Trial (30 days)]
DESKcam [Free for personal use]
MantaDB v2.02 [Free]

MSN Explorer [Free]

WebStripper v1.34 [Free]

Yahoo! Messenger (from ZdNet India) [Free]

UTILITIES

MISC

Babylon v3.1 [Free]
HyperTerminal PE v6.0 [Free (for personal use)]
Magellan Explorer v2.3 [Free (adware)]
NetPad SE v3.4 [Free]

MULTIMEDIA

Formula Graphics 97 [Free (feature restricted)]
MusicMatch Jukebox v6.0 (beta) [Free (beta)]
MP3 Manager v2.0 [Free]
PhotoStudio 2.0 SE [Free]
Sonique v1.808 [Free]

SYSTEM

DirectDrive [Free]
EasyRecovery v5.0 PE [Trial (Feature restriction)]
File Attributes Manager v1.0 [Free]
QNX Realtime Platform (RTP) [Free (for personal use)]
SIGuardian v1.2 [Shareware]
VCatch Virus Catcher v3.0 [Free]
Virtual CD



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EDITORIAL

Products for Test/Review

Send a complete working copy of the product (not a 'trial' or 'demo' version) to the CHIP Test Centre. Only products that are currently available in the Indian market will be considered. The products must have the complete name of the manufacturer or developer, details regarding the name of the model and its type and the end-user price. Product brochure and a complete specification sheet must be included, along with the name of a person to be contacted for information.

CHIP CD

Contact V. Ravi Shankar, Co-ordinator, Multimedia (v_ravishankar@jasubhai.com)



for inclusion of software on the CHIP CD. A write-up detailing the features of the software, complete loading instructions and a letter certifying that the product is original must accompany the software. The software must also have the complete address, telephone number and e-mail of the developer.

CUSTOMER/ SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

E-mail: Any queries or problems regarding the CHIP CD, subscriptions

Pager: 9623-987273 at Mumbai

Pager: 9624-329229 at Pune, Hyderabad and Bangalore

or other problems can be mailed to help@chip-india.com

Post: If sent by post, please mark 'Customer Service'. In case of subscription problems, please mention the subscription particulars.

MARKETING SERVICES

IT companies whose products have been declared winners in a CHIP Test can use the CHIP Test Centre logo. They must address their requests for licences, reprints and bulk orders of CHIP to **Suneel Yadav**, at our Nerul office in Navi Mumbai.



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CHIP

Dear Readers,

Those of you who are unemployed enough to read these pages in detail every issue, will remember that we recently unleashed a storm of controversy. It started innocuously enough with a reader who argued vehemently that we should have significant programming content in CHIP. We differed and explained why we thought that programming was a specialised discipline that would be irrelevant for many of the magazine's readers.

That was it.

More than a hundred readers wrote in strongly arguing each side of the case. We published a sampling of the letters in the November issue and promised that we would announce our final conclusion this month.

Well, here is our decision.

We will NOT introduce programming content in CHIP. It is clearly established, and this view is supported by many readers, that such expert content does not find a place in a digital technology navigator like CHIP.

But, the entire experience has also proven to us that there are

thousands of readers in the country, who are looking for insightful, authoritative and reliable content related to programming. Currently, they have no content source in India.

We are therefore, pleased to announce that our parent company, Jasubhai Digital Media, has entered into a collaboration with CMP Media, USA to bring to our country, the global bible of programmers—*Dr. Dobb's Journal*.

Developers all around the world sit with *dhoop* and *agarbatti* in front of *Dr. Dobb's Journal*, such has been its quality and influence for the past few years. This magazine will be launched in the coming months in India and details will be announced in the January issue of CHIP. As a 'Thank You' gesture for raising awareness about this need, our colleagues in *Dr. Dobb's Journal* promise us that all CHIP readers will get a charter subscription offer at a special price lower than for others.

So wait another month for details, and please, do NOT bother us or our Customer Service people with queries.

We have had %\$!&# enough of programming for a while!

Cheers,
The CHIP Team

The CHIP
Timepass Futurist of the Year
Award
goes to Ravi 'Ratlami'
for his prescient observation:

Dear Gourav,
May I take an opportunity to predict what your clear, definite and unambiguous answer will be regarding programming content on CHIP? A new 'CHIP' for programmers within 6 months or so. An instant hit! A dedicated programmers' monthly is what is most wanted among programmers and students—from NIIT to the 'Local Kampooter Center'.

Ravi

Via E-mail

CHIP

Dear Ravi,
Congratulations for out-guessing us. You win a free one-year subscription (or an extension on your current one) to CHIP. Sorry, not yet to *Dr. Dobb's Journal*.

Just send your complete name and address to
gourav_jaswal@jasubhai.com

Look out for the
Special Subscription Offer for
Dr. Dobbs Journal in CHIP,
January 2001



E-mail? What E-mail?

Dear Gourav,
In a previous issue of CHIP, few readers complained of not receiving CHIP on time. To this you had written that as soon as you dispatch the subscribers' copy, you send e-mail to your subscribers informing them of the date, consignment number and other details. I have given my e-mail address at the time of subscribing but I still do not receive such e-mail.

Can you tell me why?

Anirban Chattopadhyay
Via E-mail

CHIP

Dear Anirban,
Several readers had queries like yours. We have started this system of e-mailing subscribers three months ago. We can send dispatch details to only those people who had mentioned their e-mail ID in the order form.

But when we do our monthly mailings, about 5 per cent of the mails bounce back from the mailer daemon.

Here is what happens. Some readers give their e-mail ID and then change it, without realising that they have given a different one when they subscribed.

Checking our records, we found that while subscribing you had given your e-mail id as anprban007@yahoo.com but your current one is different.

Chor! Chor!

Hi,
A friend of mine lives in Malad (Mumbai) and is a regular reader of CHIP. He told me that he can now buy CHIP for Rs 80 through a person from a courier company. My friend got the September issue on the 2nd of the month and at a discounted price, while I got mine on the 8th at the regular price. He was told that since CHIP sends the replacement issues to subscribers immediately, this particular courier company does not deliver some issues and sells them. I did not believe this first, but then I realised that I was to receive three free issues from a contest on ZDNetIndia, but I had got just one. Even the issue that I received this month had name of some other subscriber on it.

Tushar,
Mumbai

CHIP

Dear Tushar,
As Dharmendra would have said about these courier company 'Kuuuuttttttey!'

But it's not really surprising. I remember the amusement with which I watched the brisk trade for cinema tickets in 'black' for Kamal Hassan's Tamil film called *Indian*, running housefull for the 18th week in Bangalore. What struck me as incongruous was the fact that the 'message' of the entire film was that each individual is responsible for fighting corruption.

So how do I react to this information from you? One, with some pride that in certain quarters, our product is at least as popular as Hrithik. The second, give me the name of the *&^%\$# courier person and we'll make life miserable for that %&#&@^!

Send your letters marked
'Readers Letters' to the CHIP office:
D-222/2, MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate,
Om Sagar Building, Nerul, Navi Mumbai 400 706
Phone: 022-7629191/9200; Fax: 022-7629224
E-mail: readersletters@chip-india.com

GOOF-UPS OF THE MONTH

▲ In November issue, for the book review of *WAP with WML Programming* we mentioned the cost as Rs 99 (with CD). The book actually doesn't come with a CD at all.

Send in your entries for "Goof-ups of the Month" to goof@chip-india.com

You Said It!

Dear CHIP,
I serve you with the following notice... the magazine 'CHIP' published by you has caused a deadly sickness. My husband is suffering from convulsions. Starting the 1st of every month, he gets dysentery of the eyes causing him to make frequent visits to the mailbox at our gate. He progressively gets insane and starts tearing his hair especially when he visits the news-stand where he reads the cover page of CHIP. The cure comes around the 10th of the month by when he receives his own copy. I hereby request you to please arrange for subscribers to get their magazines on time, thus preventing this deadly disease.

Cheryl Mascarenhas
Via e-mail

CHIP

Dear Cheryl,
May we serve notice upon you that e-mails such as yours have a dangerous effect upon us? We squirm, we stutter, we grow red with embarrassment, we work harder and we promise that we will solve the problem!

The Brain is Mightier than the Pound

Hi Gourav,
Currently, 'e-governance' involves spending large amounts on computers and expensive software. I would like to share a different story.

My father is the Vice Consul at the Consulate General of India in Edinburgh, Scotland (UK). The Indian Government started a 'Visa-in-a-Day' scheme, meaning that you got a visa to India on the same day you applied for it.

This is a very cumbersome task, as after getting the visa application, there are a lot of processes to be completed, including a security check to see if the person applying for the visa is not a terrorist or wanted by Interpol.

Naturally, complete 'computerisation' was the answer. Our Embassies in Manchester and Birmingham had these, but a software consulting company charged 18,000 pounds for it, plus 650 pounds to fix any bug (which came up every 2-3 months).

My father, a hobbyist VB programmer, decided to write the software himself, taking help from the Internet. He also connected all the PCs in the office into a small network (taking help from a CHIP issue with an article on building a home network) to make data sharing easy. The total cost was 150 pounds for the licensed copy of VB 6, plus 100 pounds for creating the network. Voila! A system that could issue visas in a maximum time of 2 hours, compared to the 1 day before, for a cost of 250 pounds, compared to the 18,000 pounds the consultant company was charging. Also, his code had no bugs and also fixed the aforesaid problem.

Maybe our other bureaucrats should learn too. Instead of spending lakhs of rupees, making the software companies rich, the babus should be tech savvy, so they can solve little problems themselves.

Thanks,
Shantnu Tiwari
Via E-mail

CHIP

Dear Shantnu,
Bravo! Thank you for sharing with us this very insightful example. I like it especially as it expands upon the theme of my editorial this month—doing it yourself!