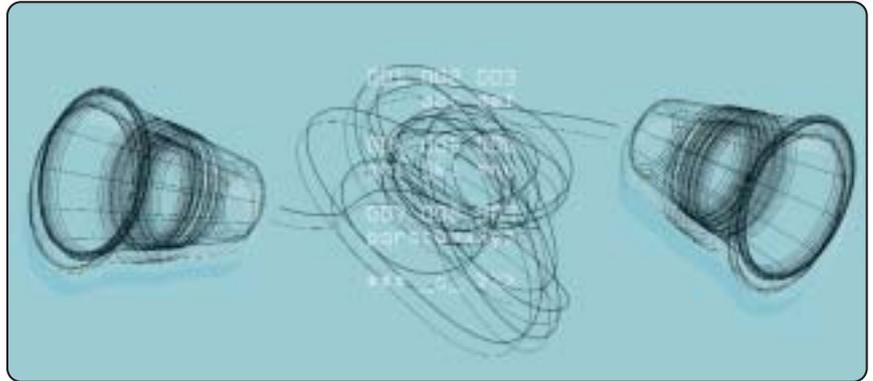


byteback

It's so funny how we don't talk anymore

Everyone's so busy texting, surfing, playing and, most recently, picture messaging each other, the poor old mobile phone hardly makes a call these days. Simon Easterman wonders what happened to simpler times



It may seem a strange question for a technology journalist to ask, but when did mobile phones stop being just for making calls?

There was a time when those of us who finally accepted that we had to have a mobile to make any headway in the modern world were quite happy if their new 'cellular telephone' stored a few phone numbers, didn't ruin the line of their jacket too much and, of course, made phone calls.

Now these indispensable lifestyle accessories have turned into the electronic equivalent of Sport Billy's bag, offering applications ranging from astrological charts and origami tutorials to financial services and all-over deep body massages.

Who decided that, as we sprint through modern life from meetings to the gym to the snack bar to the bus queue to the stress therapist, we need desperately to grab a few seconds to shuffle the furniture round in our handheld virtual feng-shui simulator? I'd like to shake that man.

It all started with the games, of course. Everybody knows that the main physiological effect of playing computer games is to shut down as many areas of the brain as possible. So man, in his inestimable wisdom, quickly invented phones that also included simple but effective neural incapacitators.

This made them doubly appealing to the teenage generation already addicted to text messaging, as it meant they had two

reasons to stare deeply into their mobile screens while ignoring everyone around them over the age of 18.

But it doesn't stop there. In fact, the advent of all-singing, all-dancing mobile phones that allow you to play games and listen to music, surf the web, text your mates and send them emails could well boost our multitasking skills – albeit they are limited to a device no bigger than a box of playing cards.

But now mobile operators have come up with yet another way to part us from hard-earned cash each month – picture messaging. What's that all about? What happened to talking to other people? Or thinking quiet thoughts to yourself? That's what this gipper wants to know. ■

next month

may issue on sale 3 april

features

Easy PC speed tweaks

From clearing out your system's clutter to selecting more sensible settings, adding extra memory and optimising the way you work, *PC Advisor* shows you a host of ways to get your PC working better than ever. And the best part? These tips are so simple even a novice could use them.

workshops

Backing up your data

We outline why it is important for PC users to implement a regular backup routine, either locally on a hard disk or to an external device.

consumerwatch

PC World Healthcheck revisited

Six months ago, *PC Advisor* went undercover and posed as a regular customer putting a PC through PC World's Healthcheck diagnostic testing process. We were less than impressed with the level of testing and the advice given. Has PC World now pulled up its socks?

reviews

Flatbed scanners

Which is the slickest and quietest device on the market today? And which will deliver the sharpest, most faithful and detailed scans? The latest models are put to the test.

Budget PCs

Budget PCs are designed to perform to the max but not cost the earth. The best of the bunch go head-to-head in the battle for *PC Advisor's* Best Buy crown.

Technofile: digital video cameras

You no longer need to spend in excess of £1,000 to get your hands on a digital video camera. We outline essential specs and explain the jargon so you don't get caught out by the salesman's patter.

Reader's choice

We help choose a multifunction device to suit a family.