

welcome



Welcome to your bumper issue of *PC Advisor*. But just in case you were wondering about the thinking behind this month's *Digital World* supplement, here's the lowdown

Why is there a supplement called *Digital World* with this month's *PC Advisor*? *Digital World* is all about making the PC the centre of home entertainment. This idea is hardly new – it's as old as the PC itself. But the PC is a digital Swiss army knife and there's always been a school of thought in the computer business that one day we'll be able to throw away all other implements – hi-fi, TV, phone, central heating controller, alarm clock – and just use the jack-of-all-trades PC.

The tin opener on a Swiss army knife can be a lifesaver if you're stuck up a mountain with nothing between you and starvation but a pack of survival rations. But to use this fiddly tool every day in the kitchen is asking to be one finger short of a handful by the end of the week.

It's the same with the PC: it can do TV, but it's not great quality. It can do music, but not as well as a stereo. It can do games, but not as easily as a console. The historical landscape of the consumer computer business is littered with the corpses of machines and companies that tried to make the ultimate PC home entertainment centre. So is this latest attempt to make the desktop system centre of the home equally doomed? We don't think so.

Most of the entertainment content we consume – music, movies, broadcast TV information – is digital. And the PC does digital better than anything else. Couple this with broadband internet access and suddenly you have a reason to make the PC a media distribution centre, gathering the various streams of entertainment and sending them to whatever device you want to consume them on.

Well, that's the theory. The practice will be messy and confusing. And that's why *Digital World* is bundled with this month's *PC Advisor*. It is not a coffee table book with glossy pictures of 'digital lifestyles'. There's no such thing as a digital lifestyle – just a bunch of products you can connect together and make work for you.

In *DW* we put that to the test. Welcome to the real digital world. ■

Andrew Charlesworth, editor

reader information

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