



IS YOURS THE

E-mail, the killer application of the Internet, is here to stay. And e-mail clients are

Smail mail has failed. Electronic mail, touted as the killer application of the 90s, has evolved from being an alternative means of communication to being *the* means of communication.

The advantages of e-mail are obvious. It is fast and cheap. But it also has potential pitfalls. A new user, for example, will find it hard to manage the onslaught of messages from friends and clients, junk

mail and Internet mailing lists. In addition, there is no guarantee of a message reaching the recipient it was intended for. For a network or system administrator, yet-to-be-established standards and security concerns can make messaging seem like a minefield.

E-mail users can be divided into two categories. First, home and small-business users who rely on an online service or an individual dial-up account

using an ISP (Internet Service Provider). The second category comprises users in larger organisations that usually have company-wide messaging solutions.

In the case of big businesses, the messaging platform is typically part of a complete groupware solution such as Lotus Domino.

But for smaller organisations, groupware can be overkill. Another option is a mail server based on the IMAP4 (Internet



BEST CLIENT?

what bring this application to life...choose one with care

Messaging Access Protocol—Version 4) standard.

To use mail you need an e-mail client. Different electronic mail applications might have power features that would appeal to e-mail addicts; others might have options that can leave users baffled.

For better understanding, an in-depth look at the types of e-mail solutions and who they are meant for is necessary.

POP goes the client

The simplest and certainly the least expensive e-mail option is to opt for free mail facilities such as those offered by Hotmail, Yahoo! etc. This is an advertiser-supported e-mail service that you typically access using a Web browser and your existing Internet connection.

As more sites vie for your attention by transforming themselves into full-service Web 'portals', the number of free mail

services is expanding. Such free mail is ideal for users who do not send and receive large volumes of mail and can live without the features found in the more robust standalone e-mail clients.

Another advantage is that free mail lets you access your mail from any system with a browser and an Internet connection, be it a desktop computer at a client site or an airport kiosk.

Like most browser-based applications,

free mail services have quite elementary utilities. Users who spend a lot of time online or exchange large quantities of e-mail will want the added features of a standalone client.

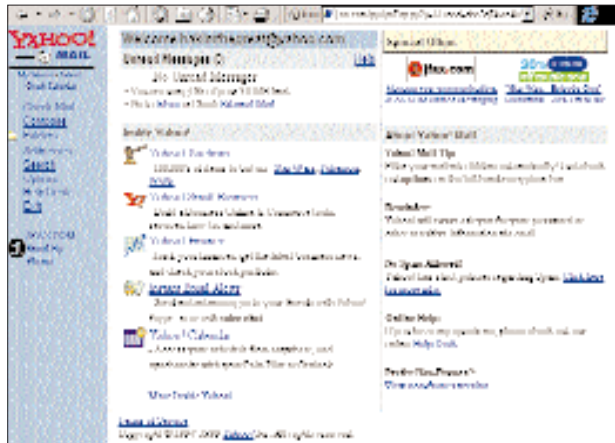
Today most standalone e-mail clients rely on a standard called POP3 (Post Office Protocol 3). All the e-mail clients reviewed here support POP3, which defines how a client PC can access mail from a server. POP3 lets the workstation either download mail, thus removing it from the server and storing it locally, or keep mail stored on the server.

It is a good solution for home and SOHO users who typically access their e-mail from a single system. And the POP3 clients are very capable. They allow you to set up multiple accounts, customise folders, and create filters to handle incoming mail automatically.

However, POP3 is not without limitations. It does not allow you to maintain

copies of a mail file, for instance.

This not only makes it inconvenient, it also makes it risky; especially when



Free e-mail: Yahoo Mail lets you access your messages from any browser any where in the world

messages are downloaded and permanently deleted from the server and you have no backup, messages are accidentally deleted, or the data on a desktop

system is lost or damaged, or a laptop gets swiped. If messages remain on the server permanently, workers cannot access or work with e-mail, without a network connection. And without the ability to file messages on the server, e-mail can quickly become unwieldy.

IMAP the saviour

IMAP4, a relatively new standard, addresses many of the inherent limitations of POP3, and brings groupware-like functionality to Internet e-mail. It lets users manage e-mail that resides on the server.

For instance, users can sort messages into folders, delete messages, or scan the headers and select messages they want to download. More significantly, they can maintain separate copies of their mail files so that they can work offline and later synchronise these copies with the server.

HOW TO CHOOSE E-MAIL CLIENT

There is no such thing as the perfect e-mail client. What may be ideal for an e-mail-overloaded manager could be overkill for a home user. Before you pick one, you will want to answer a few simple questions.

How much e-mail do you send/ receive?

If you receive only a few messages in a week and don't use e-mail for business, think simple. You won't want to wade through long menu lists for every function. Opt for a basic client such as Outlook Express, which has a clean and uncluttered interface. On the other hand, if you are deluged by messages, consider a client with good filtering capabilities such as Eudora Pro 4.0 or Outlook 98.

Can you choose your e-mail client at work?

If you use e-mail at the office, you may not have much say in choosing the client. However, if you do have a choice, go in for a client that will make the most of your company's e-mail server. If your company uses Microsoft Exchange for instance, the client you should prefer is Outlook 98. It supports all the advanced Exchange features and lets you send and receive mail. If your company uses an IMAP server, you will need an IMAP-compatible client such as Eudora Pro 4.0. Finally, if your firm uses a standard POP-based e-mail server, any of the e-mail clients listed here will do.

Do you juggle multiple e-mail accounts?

It is not uncommon for a person to have more than one active e-mail account. If you too have more than one e-mail account, as do most people, make sure you choose a multifaceted e-mail client. Outlook 98, Eudora Pro 4.0 and Outlook Express all let you set up and check multiple accounts simultaneously. They also let you choose any account you want to send a message from. This feature can be a real bonus if your ISP won't let you send mail without being directly connected to its server. Netscape Messenger cannot be a contender here as it does not provide this feature.

Do you want e-mail to integrate with your contact and scheduling programs?

Many e-mail clients offer calendar and contact management features, either as a standard part of the package or as an option. Outlook 98, for example, lets you share schedules over the Internet. Eudora Pro 4.0 will connect with Qualcomm's Eudora Planner software. And Netscape Communicator Professional comes with Netscape Calendar, though many of its more advanced features require you to run the Netscape Calendar server. Outlook Express, meanwhile, offers only a basic address book.

How much do you want to spend?

Fortunately, a tight budget will never keep the best e-mail client

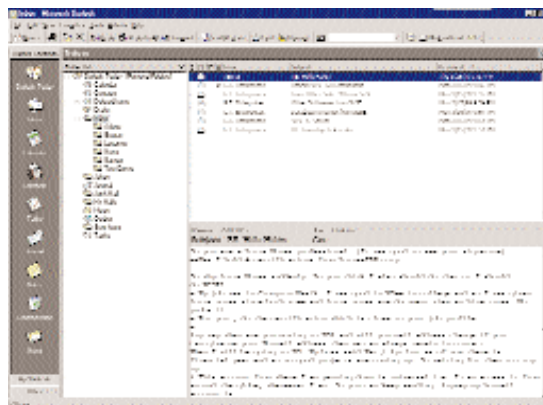
Outlook 2000

Outlook finally catches up

Microsoft entered the e-mail client market with Outlook 97—though the step was slightly premature as the calendar-cum-mail client was not quite up to mark. A hasty and massive upgrade called Outlook 98 which was offered free to all Office 97 users followed.

Outlook 2000 finally brings Microsoft's flagship e-mail client and desktop information manager on par with other Office applications. And unlike the earlier version of Outlook, this version is integrated with the Office interface, including customisable toolbars and menus.

Upgrading to Outlook 2000 is trouble-free, thanks to a wizard that deftly picks up settings, messages and address-book entries from most versions of Qualcomm's Eudora and Netscape Messenger, as well as any of Microsoft's mail clients. For users connected to an Exchange server, Outlook 2000 fixes one of the biggest



irritants of Outlook 98 by adding a button that lets you switch between Corporate/Workgroup and Internet Mail Only modes, on the fly.

Messages from the Net

Outlook 98 did introduce support for HTML messages, but it also forced users to choose one format for all messages. The new release of Outlook however, lets you choose plain text or HTML for any message.

It also lets you use Word as your e-mail

editor, and this option actually works—unlike the buggy, performance-sapping WordMail feature in the earlier Outlook versions. Dialog boxes and menus are streamlined. The Rules Wizard, once an add-on, now has message-handling rules and spam filters for any folder, at any time.

There are no features to hook into the emerging roster of Web-based scheduling sites.

Another surprising fact is that Outlook's keyboard shortcuts are irritatingly inconsistent with those in other Office applications.

- Free PIM
- Interface still intimidates

 Price: Bundled with Office 2000
 Contact: Microsoft India
 Phone: 011-6226420
 Fax: 011-6461117

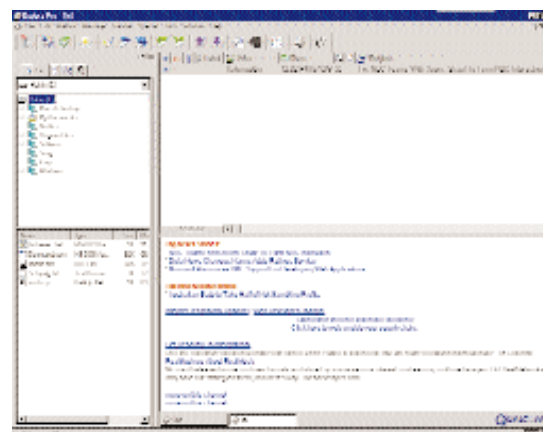
Eudora Pro

Qualcomm updates the classic

Call Eudora the Ferrari of e-mail applications. In the hands of a casual driver, it is fast and very able. And under the control of a skilled user, it is positively unbeatable. The two crucial changes in version 4.0 give Eudora the face-lift it should have had long ago. They are: support for a functional, three-pane interface (folders, message headers, and message contents—with a window each), and the ability to view HTML-formatted messages.

For managing an unrelenting influx of messages, Eudora has the best tools in the business.

Creating folders (and sub-folders) and filing e-mail is easy with **Filters**, and moving messages between folders is as simple as drag-and-drop. More importantly, Eudora's amazing tools handle e-mail automatically. The **Filters** option can also set up auto-responders, or colour-code messages. And what's more,



you can configure a new **Filters** option all by yourself.

Eudora 4.0 comes with an add-on called PureVoice, which allows you to append high-quality but highly compressed voice messages to your e-mail. Cool? Only if the recipient of your message has PureVoice installed.

Eudora Pro 4.0 is one of the few e-mail clients that can handle multiple e-mail accounts gracefully. So if you, like most people, maintain an e-mail account

at work and a few others on different servers, use Eudora to collect and manage all your mail. Setting up a 'personality' for each account is easy, and you will appreciate the convenience of having all your mail in one place.

Where Eudora failed

The Sort-by-Name feature, which, in Microsoft's Outlook Express lets you jump to a name by only pressing its first letter is missing in Eudora. However, in the long run,

Eudora has better features for serious e-mail users.

- Good filters
- Slightly intimidating for novices

 Price: Rs 2,250
 Contact: Microware Computer Services
 Phone: 022-8729725
 Fax: 022-8727446

Outlook Express

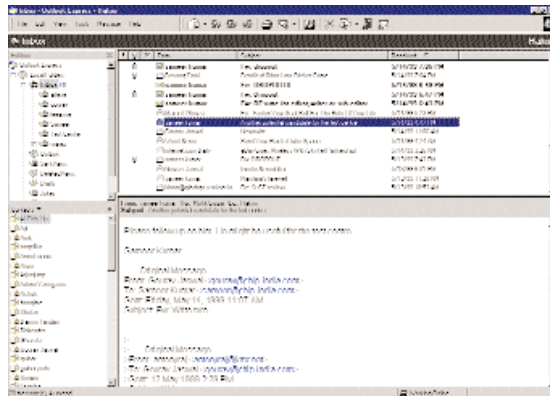
The winner has it all

Microsoft's low-end Internet mail product, Outlook Express, is a winner. It combines ease of use, a relatively rich feature set and good Web integration. Outlook Express helps define an e-mail client for home users and is free.

Outlook Express is part of the standard Internet Explorer 4.0/5.0 installation—you cannot avoid it unless you work on a Mac, in which case Outlook Express is available as a separate application.

Like other mail-clients, Outlook Express imports messages, address books and account settings from a variety of other mail products, including Eudora Light and Pro (to version 3.0) as well as Netscape Mail and Communicator. If you don't have e-mail already installed (or use a package that Outlook Express can import from), a simple Wizard can walk you through creating a new account.

When it comes to the basics, it is hard



to beat Outlook Express. The slick little application loads quickly, downloads and filters mail fast, and then gets out of your way. Spellcheck, encrypt e-mail and sign messages digitally—all at the click of a button. If you are looking towards making your mail message fancier, you could edit any of the non-business 'stationery'—preformatted graphical message templates. As with Outlook 98, however, you can only use stationary if you send HTML mail. (Eudora Pro lets you create station-

ary templates using plain text.) You can also create a signature file or 'vCard' business card that automatically attaches itself to all outgoing messages.

A right-click of the toolbar lets you quickly add and remove various buttons to suit your needs. You can also right-click folders and messages to call up menus of the most common options.

Outlook Express is free, easy to use and does practically everything a home user could desire in an e-mail client...What more could you ask for?

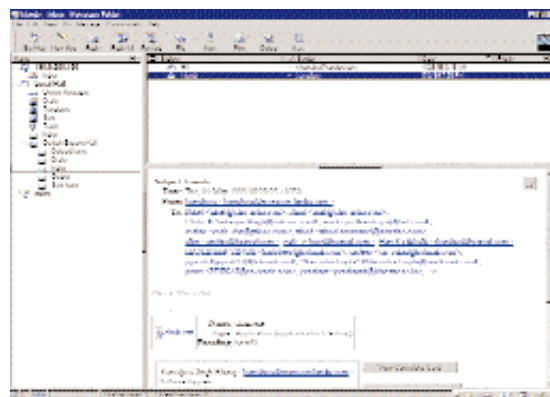
♦ Ease of use
 ♦ Requires IE to be installed
 Price: Bundled with IE 4.0/5.0
 Contact: Microsoft India
 Phone: 011-6226420
 Fax: 011-6461117

Netscape Messenger

If you are using Messenger, it is likely that you got the complementary e-mail client with the Netscape Navigator browser. And if your needs are limited, you might even find it an entirely adequate mail package.

Messenger 4.0 does not import settings, address books, or messages from any e-mail package besides Netscape Mail (though you can import all of the above from Eudora if you download Messenger's Import Utility for Eudora). The later version, Messenger 4.5, allows you to get the address and mail from Outlook Express, Outlook 97 and other popular e-mail clients.

For the most part, Messenger performs the basics with ease. It supports sending and receiving both plain text and HTML-formatted e-mail messages. It lets you secure messages through S/MIME, and drag-and-drop multiple file attachments into a message. Also, IMAP users will appreciate the ability to quickly download



folders and messages for offline use.

Messenger's preview pane displays HTML-formatted and Inbox direct messages, and unlike Outlook 98 and Outlook Express, it streams in graphics and text as they are downloaded—you do not have to wait for an entire image or page to load. Messenger includes the ability to access common e-mail actions, such as reply, forward, or delete with a right-click. You can also instantly add addresses to your address book by right-clicking on a mail message.

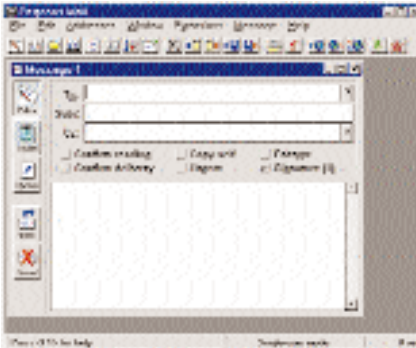
Messenger's toolbars are nothing special. While you can grab the bars and hide or reorder them, you cannot customise the buttons. Worse, the Help system loads slowly, can be confusing to search, and even produces an occasional JavaScript error message. Like Outlook Express, Messenger is merely part of a complete Internet suite that includes a browser and a newsreader. The latest versions of Communicator also come complete with America

Online's Instant Messenger buddy list program. This is not such a big plus when you consider that anyone can download Instant Messenger for free.

♦ Ease of use
 ♦ Needs Navigator to be installed
 Price: Bundled with Netscape
 Contact: Netscape
 Web site: www.netscape.com

Pegasus Mail

This full-featured e-mail client offers special support for Novell networks, and also requires no setup for NetWare. It reads the bindery to obtain user information, eliminating the need to set up



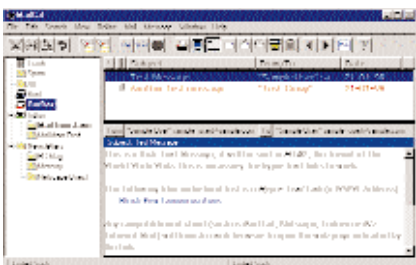
users and mail directories. As a stand-alone application, it can transfer Internet mail via TCP/IP Winsock through a POP3 server. On a network, it can forward Internet mail through a gateway. Full MHS and SMTP support is offered, along with bulletin boards, which can be used as public message areas on a LAN. Other features include distribution lists, carbon and blind carbon copies, a built-in spellchecker, hierarchical mail folders for sorting and saving mail, an address book, and a mail filtering feature. Pegasus Mail is one of the most comprehensive e-mail programs available.

Rating **HHHH**

Web site: www.pegasus.usa

MailCat

This offline e-mail reader enables you to create messages in the familiar Windows 95 environment, connect to the Internet, send your messages, read mail waiting for you, store it and then disconnect. It enables you to review and organise your mail at leisure. You can



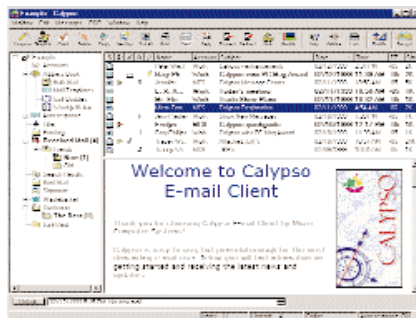
file, print, forward, and delete incoming mail by keywords in any specified part of a message. You can also drag messages to the filing cabinet, printer, or trashcan. MailCat provides selective highlighting of messages by keywords, interactive and batch searching of messages, rich-text support, multiple address books and import of Eudora 3.x and vCard address books, and support for HTML anchors. New features in the beta (Find it in this month's CHIP CD) include Multiple Mail Servers, which allow you to access any number of mail accounts. Mail can be sent, retrieved and previewed for all, select or individual accounts, in one pass.

Rating **HHH**

Web site: www.blackpaw.com

Calypso

Calypso is a premium e-mail client that offers a friendly multi-window interface with an Explorer-style folder system of mailbox management, message listing, and message viewing—all on one screen.



It offers multiple accounts, automatic reply, an automatic tool to check spelling, multiple signatures, filtering and more. You can import and export your existing address books from other mail clients. The Setup Wizard handles the accounts and mailbox easily—whether direct connection or dial-up. There are configurable window layouts, dockable toolbars, advanced message filtering, spam control, message follow-up, signature insert, dial-up networking, built-in backup, PGP, vCard business card archiving, and links to attachments, so you always have a current document. The HTML help file makes it easy to find answers to any questions.

Rating **HHHH**

Web site: www.mcsdallas.com

Postman

The Postman (Personal Edition) e-mail application is designed to send and receive e-mail from multiple accounts, and is most suitable for offices or homes where more than one person needs to access



e-mail from the same PC. Setting up an account is easy—you just have to fill in the blanks on the account screen. The program checks for new mail at one or at all the accounts you choose. You can also set up an address book and launch your Web browser from within the program.

Rating **HH**

Web site: www.creativenet.net/postmans

CONCLUSION

Microsoft provides the answer

No single e-mail client can satisfy both a power user and a novice. But one company can and that is Microsoft. Whether you are a high-end user looking for the most powerful, business-ready e-mail client or a beginner looking for the simplest way to manage a few messages a week, Microsoft has the answer.

Microsoft's updated Outlook 2000 is more than just a well-designed Exchange client: It is the best-of-breed Internet mail client for the most advanced e-mail users. Outlook 2000 manages to maintain a solid grasp on the basics, while also providing outstanding filtering and search capabilities—and a slew of extra features, including Net-based calendar sharing.

But Outlook 2000 will remain in the beta phase at least till July 1999, so till then you could use Outlook Express. It's free. It's easy. And it will get the job done, for most users. The biggest drawback to both, of course, is that Microsoft requires users to install Internet Explorer 4.x to use either product. This may be more than some users would want to swallow—or rather, choke their hard drives with.