

# One Last Compile...

## *Delphi 4, here I come*

Oh cripes. I mean, I was just starting to get the hang of Delphi 3, having moved up from Delphi 1 about three months ago, and now I'm being mailbombed about upgrading to the delights of Delphi 4. And I know that I won't have figured out more than about twenty per cent of D4 before D5 comes out. I feel like a hamster on a wheel.

The big selling points of D4, as I understand them, are to do with CORBA. It seems only weeks ago that I was fiddling around with DDE trying to talk to an Excel spreadsheet, which was a bit like trying to launch a javelin with a blowpipe. Then OLE briefly hove into view, which meant I could now at least talk to Excel in its own language, even if the whole thing still moved like a spider in treacle. Then that too was yesterday's acronym, and COM became the phrase to bandy around. And despite the fine efforts of Mr D Jewell, COM remains about as clear to me as the ways of women.

CORBA, from my detailed reading around the subject, is something to do with distributed objects. I have no idea what the merits of them are, but I love the imagery: I envisage these beasties lurking in trenchcoats at various points around the network, looking cool as they chat to each other and occasionally zooming off in a low-slung convertible to go and deal with some data emergency in the outer reaches of a workgroup. My chances of figuring out CORBA before it's replaced by something else? About as good as the England team winning on penalties. (Yeah, I know it's a long time ago now, but at the time of writing it seems highly topical.)

So, should I upgrade? No question about it. Of course I'll upgrade. For one thing, I've been told that the new BDE is smaller, mainly because they took out a load of stuff that they realised nobody was using. (If my company did that we'd decimate our product line.) If I can do installations with even one less floppy disk I'll be a happy man. Installing the BDE on networked machines is one of the great mind-numbing exercises of our time: it's not difficult, or even particularly lengthy, but it's just involved enough that you can't trust your users to do it. I have nightmares about going into an open plan office the size of Wembley stadium and being asked to install the application on every single desk. By about the thirtieth desk they'd have to cart me away, bug-eyed and crazy, chanting my little mantra of 'Disk 1, Disk 2, Disk 3, Map the network drive, configure the aliases, set up the network directory for the paradox net file, scream quietly, move on.'

But the main reason I'll upgrade is because I think Inprise are lovely and I want to give them my money. No, sorry, that was a cheap space filler and completely untrue. Actually I find the upgrade price pretty steep considering I'm not going to understand any of the new features, but that's hardly Inprise's fault. I'll upgrade because I want to be on the cutting edge, and to have the latest version of something is always to be cooler. I admire all those IT managers stubbornly keeping all their users on Windows 3.11 because of 'business issues', but I bet they're all playing with Windows 98 on their machines at home.

Of course I have doubts. It's a sad reflection on our industry that those of us in the know (and I generously include myself in that group) always regard upgrades and new releases with suspicion. It's a trade-off. Will the benefit of the bugs that have been fixed outweigh the downside of the new bugs that have been introduced? Well, after careful and detailed consideration, I decided any company that can come up with something as neat as tooltips (okay, the delay drives me crazy too, but it's still damned clever) deserves the benefit of the doubt. I just wish I could get my customers to think the same about me.