Books

The Big Basics Book of PCs (Second Edition)

Lisa A Bucki. 586pp. Que. £18.49. ISBN 0-7897-1339-X.

Billed as the most complete guide for beginners, *The Big Basics Book of PCs* is now in its second edition. Packed with pages, it claims to be both a tutorial and reference guide, with easy-to-follow illustrated lessons and helpful hints.

At first glance, the book certainly seems to fit the bill, with chapters covering everything from buying a machine to using Windows 95. Sections are divided into topics such as How to and Do It Yourself, and each step is explained clearly. So far so good.

Unfortunately, things fall down a bit when it comes to the presentation. While every step is fully illustrated, *The Big Basics...* is printed entirely in black and white on what can only be described as horrible paper. It feels more like a telephone directory than a reference book, and its overall appearance is likely to have new users running for the hills. At £18.49, it's also expensive.

A potentially useful beginner's guide badly in need of a redesign.

Internet Explorer 4 Bible

Christopher Negus. 598pp. IDG Books. £33.99. ISBN: 0-7645-3042-9.

Internet Explorer 4.0 (IE4) was one of the most significant software releases of 1997 and millions of people have down-loaded it from Microsoft's Web site in the few months it's been available.

Predictably, the computer sections of the nation's bookshops are crammed with meaty tomes covering a program that, in all honesty, needs few instructions. The latest of them is the *Internet Explorer 4 Bible*, nearly 600 pages worth of in-depth information.

True to the book's title, *Internet Explorer 4 Bible* does take in every aspect of IE4 – from installation to creating dynamic HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) pages – and in no small measure. The book's other selling point is that the text is written in an easily digestible style, so everyone from beginners to the more advanced can get some benefit from it.

The problem as far as we're concerned, though, is that apart from a few clued-up techies nobody needs a guide of this length or depth.
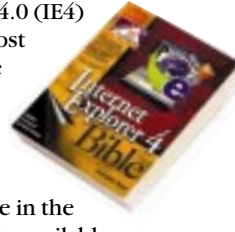
Cut the Jargon

Damien Bhanj. 82pp. Take A Byte, 87 Waterhouse Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2TZ. Omen@globalnet.co.uk £9.95 + £2 p&p.

Any book designed to give advice on buying a PC is out of date almost as soon as it's printed and so Damien Bhanj has taken a different approach with *Cut the Jargon*. He aims to produce an updated version every six months or so.

The sacrifice such frequent publishing makes is in print quality and the book is merely a bound set of A4 pages printed on an inkjet printer. That does not affect the quality of the information, however.

The book starts with questions you need to ask before buying a computer, explains what you get, and then takes you on a short tour inside its case. Later chapters cover how to decipher adverts for PCs, peripherals, and give tips on such things as the Internet.

Nothing is explained in much detail but this is no bad thing. The book is more of a 'Getting Started' than 'Complete Guide' and its avoidance of any overtly technical terminology makes it useful reading for complete novices but more informed readers (or indeed Mac users) are better served elsewhere. ●

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