



## So, dear Santa...



**That time of year has come when Gordon Laing's wishful thoughts turn to all things Christmassy. But what you want is not always what you get, he says. Looks like he might have to make do with some festive fonts.**

It's Christmas time again in the merry land of Graphics and DTP. To be honest, I'm writing this in early October and the weather's just beginning to turn chilly, but I love the festive period and start dreaming of snowflakes and the spoils of the season shortly after my birthday in the height of summer.

Last year, I persuaded the *Hands On* contributors to write a festive wish list, and even though this section's responsibility has long since changed hands, the sentiment still remains. So please indulge me for a few columns as I rant and hopefully reason, but there'll be some space remaining for some serious festive fun: I've certainly got a couple of groovy, or should that be funky, fonts for your perusal.

### Christmas Wishes

I had a look over my wishes for last year, and funnily enough I'm still after the same things — admittedly more of them or bigger, faster versions — but the same principles. I suppose at least I'm consistent in my desires and the industry is consistent in not fulfilling them.

So, dear Santa...

**1. More RAM.** My number one wish last year was more RAM, and unsurprisingly the desire remains.

A year ago I upgraded from eight to 16Mb, and the difference was phenomenal. Windows 95 really loves those additional 8Mb, transforming a sluggish machine into one that feels

perfectly happy. At home, I have a 486DX4/100 with 16Mb and a PCI bus which runs Windows 95; doing its day-to-day housekeeping as fast as my P90 at work. Extra RAM refreshes the parts that many companies claim only a processor upgrade can. So where to go from 16Mb?

The obvious answer is 32Mb, and recently I was lucky enough to use a Power Macintosh 8100/80 with that amount. I thought it would only make a difference when working on particularly large graphics files, but I was surprised to see how much faster the system ran overall.

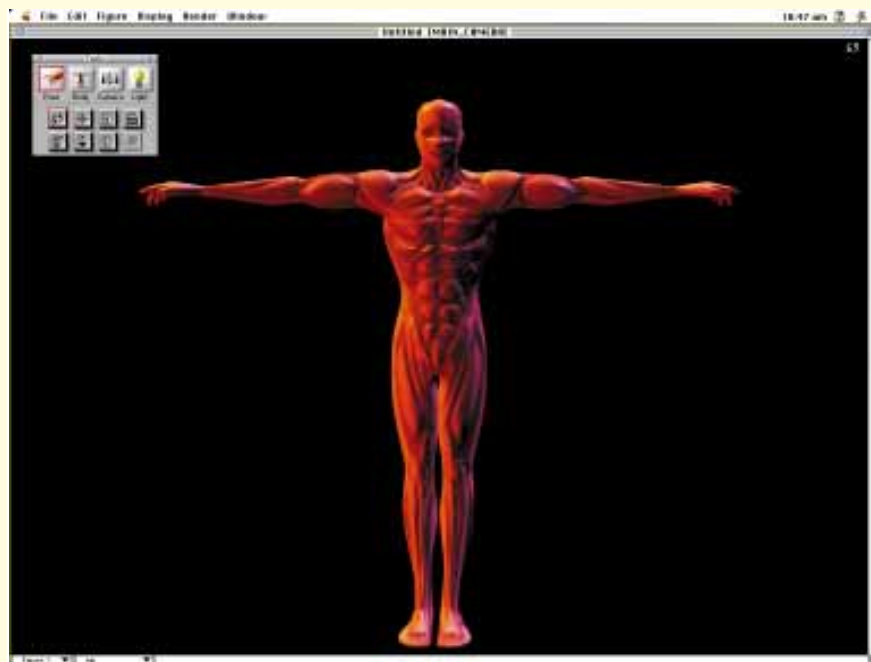
Different operating systems handle extra RAM in different ways, as do certain motherboards, but for an overall boost to your system, try fitting more RAM.

**2. Windows wishes.** Windows, particularly number 95, is a subject for several more wishes, so let's start getting them out the way now.

However much I love Macintosh, I still want to see more graphics developments on the PC. We've had Quark XPress, Adobe Photoshop, PageMaker (now under the Adobe wing), and FreeHand for Windows matching new Macintosh releases sooner or later, but that's where it all grinds to a halt.

The trouble is that you need all the little utilities and extensions as well. Adobe Dimensions and Fractal Designs Poser are two applications I would love to see on the PC. That's not to say that similar or, in some cases, better apps are not available under Windows, but it's nice to see some familiar faces and perhaps a little

*Fractal's wonderful Poser, sadly a Macintosh-only product. Let's have more of this sort of thing for Windows, please*



### Ho ho ho



Hopefully this won't frighten too many young children... I've finally got around to designing my own Christmas card which you can see here. I must admit to being inspired by a few fifties kitsch cards I saw in the shops recently, but a little plagiarism is no bad thing. The original festive photograph is myself many years ago, a little the worse for wear at a university ball — the hat was sadly not added later. I scanned the original into Photoshop, cut out the edges, placed it on a rusty red background and added a feathered border; an effect I'd seen used before. All the objects scattered around are real — the holly, tinsel and baubles were placed directly on the scanner, and the beers taken from magazine shots. All were arranged using layers, then the type (Tape-Type) added in FreeHand, converted to curves and placed on top of the final, merged TIFF in Quark XPress — Merry Christmas.



cross-platform compatibility. Which leads me neatly onto the next wish.

**3. I wish...** This really is pie in the sky stuff — I'm talking about seamless cross-platform file exchange. Latest versions of XPress, PageMaker, Photoshop and FreeHand quite happily open documents created on another platform, but with varying degrees of success.

The first hurdle to overcome is file naming conventions. Up until Windows 95, PC users were limited to 8.3 file names and Mac users would laugh at the inadequacies. Going from Mac to PC the latter users would only see the first eight characters; often not giving much clue as to the file's identity. Windows 95 is not much better across platforms unless you use an NT server in between (or so I'm told).

Once you've worked out which is your desired file from a few nondescript characters, your problems are either over or they have only just begun. In the case of bitmap files, going from Windows files to Macintosh and vice-versa is pretty much foolproof. Even Photoshop 3 PSD files with multiple layers open seamlessly from one platform to the other.

The files that are problematic are the ones with fonts in them: most commonly DTP and drawing packages. Normally these files contain pointers to the font

outline files and instructions on what to do with them, such as: "put these words this big, over here, in this colour, and use this font which you can find in this folder".

It's when you try to open these files on a different machine or platform that you get into difficulty. Either they don't have the fonts installed, or else they have something similar enough to get away with, but differently named. The result is a substitution which causes reflowing and completely messes up your design.

Dear Santa, please sort this out for me. Alternatively, I'll have a good old think, talk to some so-called experts and write a column about this infamous topic in the very near future.

**4. And another:** Here's a good one: a new version of Adobe Illustrator for Win-

*Quark's official internet web site, complete with updater files for the latest revisions; one of them's bound to work*

dows. Missing — presumed dropped for good. At least let us know what's going on, Adobe. Oh, and how about totally bug-free versions of CorelDraw in the future — dream on.







*It's a Photoshop fake — Seriously though, wouldn't Windows 95 be so much better if thumbnails were used for graphic file icons like the Macintosh?*

**5. Quark.** This one's even less likely: review copies of Quark XPress and a little bit of friendly UK Quark PR... No, that's ridiculous. How about a working copy of XPress 3.3, on either platform? — Hmmn still extremely unlikely.

In fairness to Quark US, I had a fairly positive internet experience lately. I had vanilla XPress 3.3 for Windows, which failed to work post Windows 95 installation — imagine my surprise. I tried several third party internet ftp sites offering so-called revision updates, but none worked. Then very recently, Quark opened its official web pages, complete with downloadable updates. Within minutes, I had updated to 3.31 revision 5, working rather quickly under 95, but no long filenames yet.

Quark's website also had email technical support. I emailed a question about my 95 problems and got a reply by return of bytes — very helpful, friendly, and hopefully the way forward for Quark. I speculated last year that it would be able to purchase FreeHand, which it didn't, and the bitmap retouching XPosure hasn't turned up on my desk yet, so for the moment, Quark has to ensure the XPress user base is happy.

**6. Thumbnails.** Still on Windows 95 and equally unlikely to happen, but thumbnail icons for graphics files would really be a touch. A few months ago, I mentioned this and illustrated my point with a Macintosh window to show how it should be done. In

*Fonts of the month come from Swifty Typographics; also responsible for this record sleeve, designed by Ian Wright*

temporary defeat, I commented that the Quick-View feature of Windows 95 was a fair compromise, but ironically its graphic capabilities appear to have disappeared on the final release.

Many people kindly wrote or emailed me to explain how thumbnails can be created for BMP files, but what we really want is a solution for *all* file types. Hopefully, Adobe may implement this in the next version of Photoshop, or perhaps even Microsoft may have

plans for Windows 96: 2096 that is.

**7. Suitable receivers.** Back to the dual or multi-platform problems. I'm lucky enough to have a PC and a Macintosh on my desk; both connected to the same, wonderful, Taxan 2100LR monitor which boasts dual inputs. I simply press a button on the front panel to switch between operating systems. Oh, and one small thing I forgot to mention — I also have to swap keyboards, mice, and double up every other peripheral.

Apple kind of solved this problem with

its DOS card for a couple of selected Macs. The card boasted a 486 processor but shared every other resource including monitor, CD-ROM drive, network connection, keyboard (and using the Apple extended keyboard under DOS and Windows was such a treat), mouse, and so on.

I realise that there are separate connections on a PC for the mouse and keyboard, while the Apple ADB system daisy chains all to one socket, but it would be so nice if there were some way around this sharing problem. We've seen some really neat infra-red keyboards and pointing devices; perhaps the PC and Mac could have suitable receivers, each for a single input device. And let's make them decent ergonomic devices too.

Apple's asking price for its extended keyboard may seem like extortion but it really is so much better than any other I have ever used — I wish I had one with a PC plug on the end.

**8. Storage:** that place you, er, store things. That place which fills up at a frightening rate. Yes, I wish I had more of it. Fortunately this *is* an affordable wish.

Hard disk prices are dropping at an incredible rate and are getting faster and faster. Numerous removable, re-recordable devices are fighting it out for mass acceptance (see last month's round-up), and while none have been universally

chosen as standard, at least this competition has driven prices right down.

Even CD writers have finally broken the grand barrier. Hewlett-Packard's SureStore 4020i comes complete with software and SCSI card for just over £800 — remarkable, and reviewed in this issue's *First Impressions*.

Oh, one last thing: how about some miraculous CD-ROM drive which can open the biggest PhotoCD file in a few seconds? Impossible I'm afraid, since the encoding used by Kodak appears to slow the opening of images to nothing faster than quad speed. Bah.

**9. Best resolution.** Whoops, it's inevitably back to our old friend Windows 95 once more. Windows 95 is a remarkable product in that it manages to turn what used to be the most difficult tasks into a doddle to set up — but in return sometimes makes the easy ones a nightmare.

I'm talking about graphics card drivers, which, to be fair, weren't *that* straightforward under any other version of Windows. My ninth Christmas wish was to have at least all the common video drivers sorted out in time for the autumn release of '95, but since that has passed, I'll make do with the very near future. In the meantime, many users have been forced back to working in VGA, or SVGA, when they've got hardware capable of so much more.

That's another wish by the way, that all computer suppliers set their machines up to run at the best resolution the supplied monitor will accept. So many get shipped out with decent 2Mb cards and capable monitors, yet are set up to run at VGA — and that really annoys me.

And while I'm having a gripe — here is a bugbear that has echoed back and forth across the hallowed walls of PCW, many other offices throughout the company (and in fact most of the rest of the world judging by the amount of mail I've had on the subject). Diamond Stealth 64 is probably one of the most common video cards available, and one of the weirdest to currently get working under Windows 95.

I ended up getting the answers from one of Diamond's pages on the internet, but the gist was that Windows 95 guessed the type of chipset incorrectly. Oh, and you also have to run a little DOS program every time you boot up — obvious really.

**Fonts of the Month**

# DOLCE VITA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ&1234567890

# Miles Ahead

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz&1234567890

**10. Books.** One thing I always loved about Christmas were all the little goodies (oh no, I'm not shallow or missing the point), so here's the latest crop to catch my eye.

Books are always wonderful gifts, and in the field of design there are loads. Font fanatics should definitely have a comprehensive type bible, such as my favourites: Agfa's *Type Reference Book*, or FontWork's *FontBook*.

Also recommended, for a bit of history and background, are Lund Humphries' *Typographers on Type* and *Twentieth Century Type Designers*.

Techies could go for encyclopedias of graphics file formats or PostScript code reference books to while away the long winter nights.

Beginners should take a look at the numerous guide books like the "... for Dummies" series, from IDG books.

Fonts are always a good bet. Enthusiasts should call FontWorks for details on the fabulous FUSE issues, each with a disk of innovative typefaces and a poster of information; now available for both Mac and PC platforms

#### Font of the month

A few months back, Swifty's Funky Fonts caught my eye. I eventually got hold of the

pack called Command [z], which features two fonts designed by Ian Swift, (aka "Swifty"). The two faces, Dolce Vita and Miles Ahead are this month's Fonts of the Month. Swifty's Funky Fonts cost £30.50 and are accompanied by a beautifully produced booklet. They're Mac only now, but a PC version is hoped for in the new year.

Swifty and several other designers make up Swifty Typographics, responsible for loads of excellent work, including much for the Talkin' Loud record label. I'm a big fan of Talkin' Loud and sorted through my records to find a good example of their work. The sleeve reproduced here is for the Incognito cover of "Don't you worry 'bout a thing", released in 1992, and designed by Ian Wright.

Here's a final bonus wish: I wish Apple the best of luck in 1996.

#### PCW Contacts

I wish you all a merry Christmas, happy New Year, and hope that many of your wishes come true. Feel free to send greetings cards to the PCW address on Broadwick Street or email me as [gordon\\_laing@pcw.ccmil.com](mailto:gordon_laing@pcw.ccmil.com).

**compuserve.com**  
**Faces** 01276 38888  
**FontWorks** 0171 490 5390  
**Adobe** 0181 606 4000  
**Paul Tully (for Swifty)** 0171 729 3003  
**Quark home pages**  
<http://www.quark.com/>  
**Diamond page**  
<http://www.diamondmm.com/win95.html>