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Intel has just made your PC obsolete. Your computer has become what the twee jargon of the industry calls 'legacy hardware'. In other words, it's out of date, can't cut the mustard and brands you as at best a cheapskate, or at worst, a Luddite who longs for the days of the DOS command line and Microsoft Basic.

The new MMX (multimedia extensions) processor is a wolf in sheep's clothing: it pretends to be an upgraded Pentium but it's actually a Pentium replacement. While the 166MHz and 200MHz MMX chips are currently being sold in tandem with ordinary Pentiums of the same speeds, so rapid is the move to MMX chips by system builders that by the end of the summer they won't want to buy any ordinary Pentiums. And Intel will be only too pleased to stop making them and concentrate instead on building faster MMX chips and the MMX version of the Pentium Pro.

The reason for the fast take-up of MMX chips is that manufacturers pay very little more for them than they do for ordinary Pentiums; in the past, new processors from Intel have carried crippling price tags and have taken a year or more to find their way into mass-market PCs.

Happily for most of us, the instant obsolescence of our PCs will go mostly unnoticed, because our computers will continue to run the software that we already own just as they always have. However, when software designers start writing programs specifically for the MMX processors it will be a whole new ball game. The time will come, certainly by next year, when you will only be able to run MMX versions of new software titles at anything like a decent speed. Yes, on the box it'll say 'Also runs on ordinary Pentium PCs,' but this will be just like the current games that also run on 486 machines – with the same pizzazz as watching snooker on a 12in black-and-white TV.

The good news is that Intel is already selling OverDrive upgrade processors that will add full MMX capabilities to many (though not all) existing Pentium-based PCs, so when the impact of MMX-specific software really begins to hurt, at least you won't have to start all over again from scratch.

And if you're already in the market for a new PC, you can buy MMX now without paying through the nose for it. In fact, you'd be a fool not to.

Paul Wardley

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Diablo: The Official Strategy Guide

John K Waters. 250pp. Prima Publishing. £15.99. ISBN: 0-7615-0361-4.



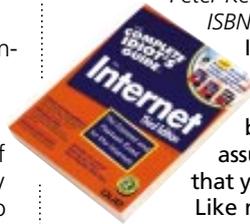
If our review of Diablo last month took your fancy, chances are you're up to your knees in things that go bump in the night. To ensure you come out of the dungeons in one piece you can arm yourself with the *Diablo Official Strategy Guide*.

Along with detailed insights into the three main characters, the guide provides everything you need to know about the dungeons of Tristram and their demons. There's a list of creatures you'll encounter, tactics on how to challenge them, and descriptions of all available weapons, spells and magical items.

The *Diablo Official Strategy Guide* is a must for serious adventurers ready to challenge The Lord of Terror and his minions, even if it is a tad expensive.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Internet (Third Edition)

Peter Kent. 391pp plus CD-ROM. Que. £23.49. ISBN: 0-7897-1073-0.



If you're still shivering on the banks of the Internet, this book could tempt your toe into the water. Covering a broad range of topics, it makes no assumptions about your expertise except that you can use a computer.

Like most guides to the Internet, it gives a historical background, but this is refreshingly brief – you are plunged almost immediately into things you want to know. There's a guide to service providers and the different types of connections available, as well as clear explanations as to the distinction between the Internet and the World Wide Web. Find out how to browse the Web and how to create Web pages.

This book caters for readers at both ends of the spectrum – for the reluctant, there are sections in each chapter entitled 'The Least You Need to Know', whereas for those who become hooked, there are chapters on even the most obscure tools for searching the Internet, as well as a glossary which will enable you to 'Speak like a Geek'.

Step by Step Microsoft FrontPage 97

Various. 286pp. Microsoft Press. £27.99. ISBN: 1-57231-336-6.



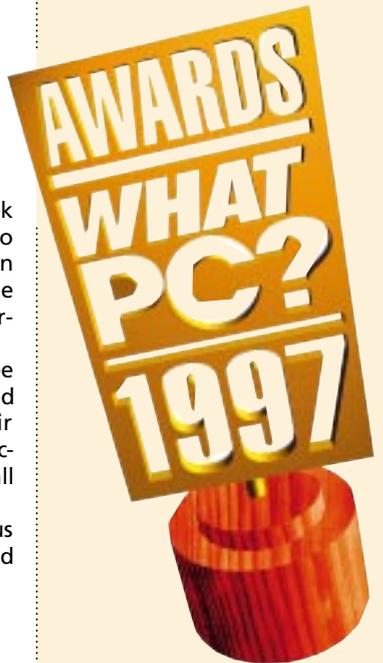
The World Wide Web is now so vast that you're just as likely to come across the home page of your local corner shop as you are that of a corporate giant such as Microsoft. If you've been looking to set up your own corner on this growing medium, and have invested in Microsoft's superb FrontPage 97

Web-design software, this book might interest you.

It starts out with the very basics – a few paper drawings and creating a structure for your Web site – and goes on to cover the more complicated procedures such as creating in-site forms and how to publish a completed design. Microsoft has supplied essential lesson files on a CD-ROM, which includes a full copy of Internet Explorer 3.0 so you can easily test your own designs.

Step By Step Microsoft FrontPage 97 is a fine book but the price is nowhere near justified given its slim size, and why should you be expected to buy a second manual from Microsoft?

next month



Awards

Next month we reveal the winners of the annual *What PC?* awards, the hardware and software products that have been judged by our panel of experts to be the best of their type on the market today. Whether you're looking for a new PC, peripheral or application, don't buy anything before you read this.



Flatbed scanners

If you want to get photographs or other images into your PC, a flatbed scanner will give the most professional results. We put the leading models head to head to find the ones that give the best quality and value for money.

Computer class: Macros made easy part 2

In the concluding part of his tutorial, Terry Pinnell shows you how to edit macros in Microsoft Word and Excel, automate your work and improve productivity.

On sale 8th May

(contents subject to change)