

question time

Answering queries from our packed postbag this month we advise on DirectX drivers and fixing cluster errors on a hard disk. We point out what to look for when choosing a flatbed scanner and put the facts straight on upgrading to Windows 95



I've recently bought a PC from Red Box and it's fitted with a Terminator 3D graphics card from Hercules. I want to be sure that I'm getting the best performance from this card and I understand I should be running DirectX drivers. How can I tell if my system has DirectX installed and if it hasn't, where can I get the latest version from?
Ron Struthers, Brighton, East Sussex

To check if your system has DirectX installed, you need to open up your Control panel (click the Windows 95 Start button and go to the Settings option) and double-click the Add/Remove Programs icon. On the dialog box that appears, use the scroll bar to peruse the alphabetically sorted list of installed programs and drivers and look for a 'DirectX Drivers' entry. If you find this, your PC has DirectX drivers installed.

At the moment, the most common version of the drivers is DirectX 3.0, but Microsoft is all set to launch version 5.0 within the next few weeks. To keep up to date and to download the latest drivers for your Terminator 3D card you should pay regular visits to Hercules' Terminator 3D Web site: www.hercules.com/support/drivers/term/t643d.

If you haven't got Internet access then you should check with your supplier to see if they can supply you with updates.

I am hoping to buy a colour scanner that can scan at least A4-size pictures. I also want to get some software that will let me manipulate and save the images I scan. My question is simply this – are there any back issues of *What PC?* covering these two areas that you recommend I take a look at?

John Gowenlock, Truro

As you want to scan A4-size images in colour, the most sensible option would be to go for a flatbed scanner. These are nowhere near as expensive as they

once were and you can now pick up a good device for under £300. In last month's issue we took a look at eight of today's best-value flatbed scanners.

As far as graphics-editing software goes, there's certainly no shortage of packages to choose from. Most scanner manufacturers bundle some software in with their machines and this is generally suitable for most people's purposes. However, if you're looking to invest in a professional graphics-editing tool then we suggest you have a look at our September 1996 issue which covered 12 of the most popular programs as part of a group test. And in our May issue this year we ran full reviews of Micrografx's Graphics Suite 2 and Microsoft's Picture It software.

If you want to order one of our back issues you should call 01483 733874. ▶

Q I write as very much a novice PC owner so my question is probably very simple. However, my problem is extremely annoying and I don't know how it occurred in the first place or how to rectify it. The problem is that when I switch on my PC, it immediately defaults to the 'Flying Fingers' program after the startup procedure. I then have to go through a lot of clicking to exit the program, to get to the desktop I want – just a taskbar containing the Start button. Your thoughts (in simple terms!) would be very much appreciated.
Chris Mason, Brundall Norwich

Your PC has been set up to run this program automatically every time you start Windows 95. This can be a handy feature if there's a



A program you always want to run but, as you say, it can be irritating otherwise. To stop it, right-click on the Start button and choose 'Open'. Then open the 'Programs' folder, followed by the 'Startup' folder.

This folder contains shortcuts to any programs that are started when Windows 95 loads. You can then create other shortcuts here or, in your case, remove them. Simply click the appropriate icon and press the 'delete' key on the keyboard.

Question time

I've had my PC for two years now and am thinking about upgrading it. Could you tell me if it's worth putting in an MMX chip? Also, is Microsoft planning to release a new Windows version? **HS Burns, Whitefield, Manchester**

Whether it's worth putting in an MMX (multimedia extensions) chip depends really on what PC you have at present – you need to have at least a Pentium 75 to be able to do so. An OverDrive chip costs from around £300-£400, depending on the speed of your chip. Installation is perfectly straightforward, so you can easily get a faster PC for a fraction of the cost of buying a whole new system. There still isn't a great deal of software available to take advantage of the MMX instructions though, so it's difficult to assess the OverDrive's potential at this stage.

A new version of Windows is in the pipeline but no release date has been announced. Some details have been leaked, though – see the news story in this issue.

I have a Pentium 75MHz with 8Mb of RAM and running DOS 6.22 and Windows 3.11. I have been told that if I want to upgrade to Windows 95 it would be necessary for me to scrub my hard disk and start from scratch.

I would be hesitant to do this and I am now quite confused. Can you please explain how the Windows 95 situation generally affects my system? **B Duffelen, Doncaster, South Yorkshire**

If you buy the Windows 95 upgrade pack, there is absolutely no reason why you should have to first erase your hard disk. When

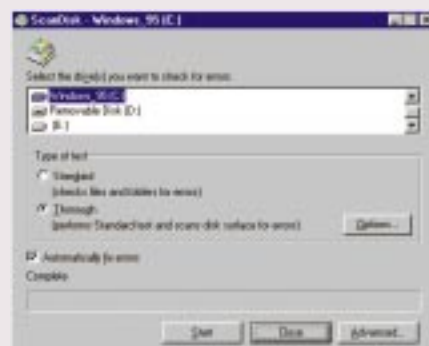
I recently defragmented my hard disk drive and noticed that two bad clusters were reported. Can you tell me how to delete or get rid of them. Also, please could you let me know how they might have been created? **Jonathan Davies, Holywell, Flintshire**

A hard disk drive can be subject to two types of error – physical errors and logical errors. A physical error refers to a physically damaged disk and although they can be bypassed, they are generally bad news.

Logical errors, however, are to do with the way data is stored on the hard disk and these are far less serious. A bad cluster is a logical error and they usually arise when an application crashes or a PC suddenly loses power.

Logical errors are usually easily rectified using a program supplied with both MS-DOS and both versions of Windows. For both Windows 3.x and MS-DOS, simply type **SCANDISK** at the C:\ prompt and your hard drive will be examined for errors. If any are found, you will be asked if you want to correct them.

For Windows 95 systems, you should choose ScanDisk from Start/Programs/Accessories/System Tools. Click on the drive that you want to check and then click the 'Start' button.



you install the Windows 95 upgrade, it interrogates your PC and checks for existing versions of Windows and DOS and can replace them with little bother. Before undertaking any operation as major as installing a new operating system, it makes sense to take backup copies of all your important program and data files.

As far as your Pentium 75MHz system is concerned, Windows 95 will run quite happily upon it but you might want to consider upgrading to 16Mb of memory. Windows 95 will run much faster with 16Mb and at the moment memory prices are quite attractive.

I am looking for a device that will enable me to capture still frames from my video camera and convert them into images that I can edit on my PC.

I used to be able to do this with my Commodore Amiga using a Rombo Framegrabber but I haven't seen anything like this for the PC.

Bob Brace
Bracera@texaco.com



Devices similar to the Rombo Framegrabber do exist for the PC and can capture both still and moving images. The Logitech Snappy is one of them – it connects to a PC's parallel port and takes an input from a camcorder or other video source. It costs £199 and Logitech can be contacted on 01306 734300.

If you don't have a camcorder, the Connectix Colour QuickCam is a better solution. This is a £233.83 colour video camera the size of a golf ball that also connects via a parallel port. As well as still images, it can capture moving ones, making it useful for recording video clips. Call Connectix on 0181 561 1414.

We regret that we cannot provide readers with individual replies but, if you have a question or problem you want to share with other readers, write to us at: Question Time, *What PC?* Editorial, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick St, London W1A 2HG.

If possible, please include details of your hardware and preferably copies of your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files – and for Windows problems, your SYSTEM.INI and WIN.INI files.

The writer of every published letter will receive a FREE COPY of either Microsoft Works 95 or Microsoft Publisher 95. Please state which you would prefer.

