



The New King of the Empire



Steve Ballmer is still settling in to his new role as CEO of Microsoft—our Lords & Masters. He even has a catchphrase: “Are you licensed for that?!”

iPhone Goes Orange



Orange has just won a lucrative contract with Apple to offer it's service exclusively on all iPhones in the emerging markets of Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. We won't be seeing the back of O2 over here though...

Latest Linux



Linus Torvalds (the original kernel developer for Linux) authorized the release of Version 2.6.25 on 21st April—it's much more mature than it sounds—and it also proves that not every Linux user has long hair and a beard!

Linux Bites Back

Rarely do we see a machine quite as unexpected as this. The Asus Eee PC has taken the technology world by storm, and yet it is quite possibly the most unlikely best seller this year. Asus, who usually build components rather than complete systems built an ultra-portable laptop the size of two DVD cases stuck together running Xandros Linux at a ridiculously low price—under £200 for the 2G model! This laptop packs in 512MB RAM, an Intel Celeron M processor, and 2GB flash memory (it may not seem like



much, but as an 8GB SD card you can add on costs under £20...). For £50 more you can up that to 4GB of flash memory—but again, SD cards will provide better value.

The one thing that has been remarked upon is the size of the device. The picture above shows it's size in relation to a standard laptop which has a 17" screen—it really is amazingly small, and is against the trend in computing terms, as “really large” and “really small” usually means “really expensive”. Most

people buy the Asus Eee PC with the idea of installing Windows XP on it (Vista really won't run it at all—I assure you!), but users have found that the pre-built OS is so easy to use that they've simply stuck with it, which is great news for Linux. It's found a niche market, and Microsoft seriously want to squash it.

However, Asus has acknowledged a few fallacies, and will be upping the specs to 1GB RAM, 20GB HD (12GB if you run XP) and a much larger screen, but that comes at a premium! Let's see it beat the 1 million sales of the first batch!

Vista's Latest Service Pack

Is Vista's latest service pack the real deal? Well, there are a few things you might find useful...

Useful Thing 1: Microsoft's UAC prompt control has been moved to your user settings. If you happen to be an administrator user and get fed up of UAC prompts, then you now have a handy link, rather than having to trawl through services

Useful Thing 2: Several security patches Microsoft hadn't got round to putting in Windows Update for Vista and both Internet Explorers 6 & 7 are bundled in automatically

Useful Thing 3: The Vista lock down mode has been disabled. If you 'forget' to activate your version of Vista or Microsoft thinks you have a pirated copy, you will now get annoying pop-up messages rather than a total lock-down mode (this was done in response to the large number of false-positives people had when replacing components)

Useful Thing 4: Lots of things that were particularly poor to start off with are less poor, such as the photo screensaver (which now might actually work now as it takes up far less memory) and generally makes the system a little more reliable with a few hotfixes

However, it's not all champagne and strawberries:

Bad Thing 1: Any search facilities from Windows are now noticeably slower than before thanks to opening itself up to competition

Bad Thing 2: You now have even less hard disk space than Vista gave you before

Bad Thing 3: SP1 won't install on any hardware which Microsoft isn't happy with.

It looks like Windows Vienna (the next one after Vista) could be along a lot sooner than expected...

Hackintosh or FrankenMac?

Psystar has caused something of a stir in the technology world by offering Mac OSX Leopard on commodity hardware (the sort of thing you might run Windows or Linux on). The whole situation is shrouded in suspicion. For one thing, it is against Apple's license terms to use it's OS on any hardware other than it's own (in fact, Apple's licenses are even more restrictive than

Microsoft's!). There are several conspiracy theories, such as the idea it may be a covert Apple operation, or that these people are masterminds. All we know for sure is that this is the first time someone has tested the water in this way, and it really will be interesting. Apple have the finest legal team in the US. Let's hope Psystar have the same...

Answers

HD DVD Destroyed By The Blu-Ray

Own an XBOX 360? You may have noticed the absence of the HD DVD drive. This shows that Microsoft wasn't overly committed to the format (especially as it cost £199 for an external HD-DVD drive). Blu-Ray has won thanks to Sony's Hollywood connections and its PS3 console—but is that a good thing?

HD DVD really wasn't a bad technology at all—it was much cheaper than the equivalent Blu-Ray Disc, as

were HD DVD players, but when so many Hollywood names flocked to Sony's new standard, Toshiba had no choice but to cut HD-DVD short, costing the company an estimated \$1 billion.

However, perhaps it was finally Sony's time to shine. It lost the VHS versus Betamax war, and its Mini-Disc format was quickly superseded by cheap MP3 players and the iPod. It had learned lessons from the past—it owned its own film studio (which



would naturally push the format) and with which they could make connections to other studio names. The killer blow was dealt when Sony bundled Blu-Ray drives with PS3s, meaning that there were considerably more Blu-ray players in circulation than HD-DVD.

Both technologies were good, and we should be thankful that this was settled quickly and we can finally move into High Def movie content...

FOR IPHONE FANS!



The Motorola DynaTAC 8500XL was its equivalent 20 years ago—but these days we'd probably use it as a door-stop or a draft-excluder...

Twenty Questions

I have received loads of emails from you guys asking me questions, and I've had plenty of queries put to me in the past year—however, I haven't had room to squeeze them all in! I've since replied to these people, but they're published here for your reference!

"My Computer's Really Slow, but I Only Bought it 3 Months ago. What's the Problem?"

The likelihood is that you're running Windows Vista. You poor, poor thing. It is said that Steve Ballmer is the best advert for Vista in that he's fat, loud and annoying—but I couldn't possibly comment on that! I think it could be because you have bought some good hardware but Vista can't really run on it. You can try Windows XP to see if that improves the situation (you can pick up a copy off Amazon for around £15-20), or if you're really adventurous you could try Linux!

"I Keep Getting Error Messages from Excel saying, 'Excel must close now', but every time I close it, it restarts!"

That would be because when that message comes up a box is

checked to say 'restart Microsoft Excel'. Uncheck that and you should be able to restart. Judging by the fact you're getting that error there is something very wrong with Excel—I would suggest re-installing.

"I'm Running Corel WordPerfect Suite X3 and I can't open my documents at college—help!"

That's because Corel Wordperfect doesn't really support Microsoft Office too well, so if you create something in Word or Wordperfect, then transferring to the other will cause strange problems. I would recommend that if you don't want to shell out for Microsoft Office or a commercial plugin that you download OpenOffice.org for free off the internet. It's totally free, a lot like Microsoft Office and it can read formats from both office suites. You can even run a version of it off a pen drive at college!

"People keep talking about a hidden admin user in Windows XP. What's that?"

XP has several hidden users, including 'visitor', 'help and

support', etc. However, there is one called 'Administrator' which will have been setup during the Windows installation. If you bought Windows pre-installed, then make sure you change that user's password, as it's a known exploit for hackers.

"My task bar keeps on disappearing off the bottom of the screen. If I put my mouse cursor near it it pops up again, but I want to get it back!"

This sounds like you've chosen to 'autohide' the taskbar. Just right click, select 'properties...' then uncheck 'auto-hide'. When you press 'Apply' your taskbar should be returned to normal!

"How do you upgrade Vista?"

To upgrade to a more expensive version of Vista, simple head to Control Panel > System then click 'Vista anytime upgrade'. You will be taken to Microsoft's website and you can work things from there. If your system came with a CD entitled by the same thing, then you can also run it from that.

That's all we have space for folks! Look out for more eAnswers next year!

More Answers!

eAnswers

Did you enjoy this two-page edition? Bob Moss would like to thank all those this year who posted a question, but most of all the readers, who have to suffer more than anyone else!

GET INVOLVED!

Do you have a tech problems that needs solving? Do you have any suggestions for future workshops or articles?

EMAIL BOB MOSS ON THE COLLEGE NETWORK

GET INTERACTIVE!

For tips, tricks and the latest news, head to:

<http://bjm1904.741.com>

Wiltshire Air



A large group photo—it had been a long day...



First Aid for Wiltshire Air Ambulance

On Wednesday 23rd April 2008, tutor group A in the BTEC National Diploma for ICT Practitioners collectively cycled 100 miles to raise money for the Wiltshire Air Ambulance, which is in desperate need of funding and facing review from the local council.

This group was doing a 'Working with Others' unit as part of the course, and after some debates decided that cycling around Castle Combe circuit would best serve the purpose, and that the Wiltshire Air Ambulance was the cause that most needed help.

It was a hard slog but eventually we got there. We each had to complete several laps around the course accumulating twelve and a half miles each (Christine Sanders, though not featured in the pictures also took part).

Things went reasonably well and without a hitch, apart from a seriously buckled wheel (which meant that we had five bikes for eight people instead of six, so things took a little longer!).

"You broke my bike!"

Tris Simpkins to Dan Betteridge

We achieved our goals, and hopefully we've made a real difference.



Hey, give me a break!

The 100 Miles

Ambulance



Taking photos from the same direction as the sun is not always advisable!

“I haven’t had this much fun since I nearly choked on a cherry drop!”

Nathan Dyer

We Still Need Your Cash!

Yes, as the title suggests we are still raising cash for the Wiltshire Air Ambulance—we had at the time of writing around £70 worth of sponsorship (more if we include gift aid contributions). The important thing now however is to present this to the organization!

If you have pledged cash to help us, then just get hold of anyone in this tutor group or Christine Sanders and ensure that your donation does go towards saving lives! If you have not contributed but still wish to, then please contact the same people, as every penny we make (yes, there are sponsors out there offering just 2p!) will make a difference!

We plan to present the cash to Wiltshire Air Ambulance at some point in early June, though actual dates were unconfirmed at the time this went to press. Our thanks have to go to Wiltshire Air Ambulance, Castle Combe Circuit and the St John’s Ambulance service for making this all possible, as well as those of you who have donated to the cause!

Bob Moss



Yet another lap...

e Cycle Ride