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Staring at glowing rectangles

I saw a t-shirt the other day over at the satirical news site The Onion (www.theonion.com) that read: "Report: 90% of waking hours spent staring at glowing rectangles". For the rest of the day I felt awkward working on my PC, and I didn't want to switch on the TV when I got home. I started thinking about maybe going to farm in the Klein Karoo, about staring at far off koppies instead of glowing LCD screens. Then I was reminded about the proposed Eskom price hike and felt better, since pretty soon we'll only be able to afford to spend 40% of the day looking at glowing rectangles.

We've got a pretty smashing issue lined up, with highlights being our first look at Google's new email-like collaboration tool Wave, and an interview with Matthew Buckland who heads up 20FourLabs, arguably one of the best Internet brains in the country. Enjoy.

Mike Joubert <michael@techsmart.co.za>
I am staring at the Lenovo Thinkpad X301.

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Last month we asked you: **Which apps do you make use of on your phone? We received some interesting replies.**

Letter of the Month

Hi Laven. There is no doubt that cellphone apps are now an integral part of the cellphone experience. Enjoy the Lexmark INTERACT. –Mike

Hi TechSmart,

I am a cellphone junkie and I use the following apps on my Nokia 5800XpressMusic:

- Call recorder – this records all my phone calls onto my memory card which is very useful especially when you deal with call centres.
- PDF viewer – I am currently studying at UNISA and get my tutorial letters in PDF format and to be able to read them whenever I have a few free minutes is extremely helpful.
- TechnoClock – this app turns my phone into a clock radio; it starts automatically when I plug in my charger and keeps the screen on displaying the time using the large screen.
- Garmin Mobile XT – this is much better than the Nokia Maps that the phone comes with. It's also quite costly at almost R1000, but it's worth it for the amount I save in fuel and traffic fines.
- Auto Profile Changer – this app automatically changes my profiles during the day. At 8 am my work profile is activated. This has a softer and more conservative ring and message tone than my personal profile that activates at 5 pm.
- Smartmovie – this app lets me watch DivX movies on my phone without having to convert it to watch with the RealPlayer that the phone comes with.

Laven Naidoo

Dear TS,
Thanks for a great magazine, it always keeps me up to date with the latest IT information. I have been a Linux enthusiast for about three years now, and I was wondering if you guys would be able to have a column or page that is dedicated to Linux operating systems. I have completely switched over to Linux on my home PC and I'm very satisfied with the stability of openSUSE 11.1.

Henk Koekemoer

Thanks Henk, you might enjoy the Freeware articles we feature on our website here: ***www.techsmart.co.za/software/freeware****. –Mike*

Letters shortened due to space restrictions.

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GREEN Fast Fact

Lexmark has changed its manufacturing processes and materials to substitute heavy metals, avoid hazardous flame-retardant materials and ozone-depleting substances, to assure the degradability of their products.

Question: We're looking for your favourite tech product of 2009. Let us know what deserves our top 10 tech awards by emailing us on **info@techsmart.co.za**.

The Letter of the Month wins the incredible Lexmark INTERACT 3-in-1 printer, scanner and copier with touch-screen. It includes paper saving Eco Mode and a three-year guarantee with lifetime phone support.

Nintendo means "leave luck to heaven" http://tinyurl.com/technovem

34. Security flaws in different components of Windows, Internet Explorer and Office that Microsoft's October security update addresses. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

The Parlotones' latest album, *Stardust Galaxies*, received an exclusive first release on Sony Ericsson phones, there's even an exclusive "Parlotones Edition" Sony Ericsson W995. TechSmart caught up with lead singer Kahn Morbee in the middle of their European tour.

How's your international following developing?
Really well. Our first show in London two years ago was played to about 40 people, while we recently played London to 900 people and we've been booked to play a venue in February to 1500 people. We're also starting to get attention in places like Holland, Denmark and Russia and the best part is visiting a lot of those places for the first time.

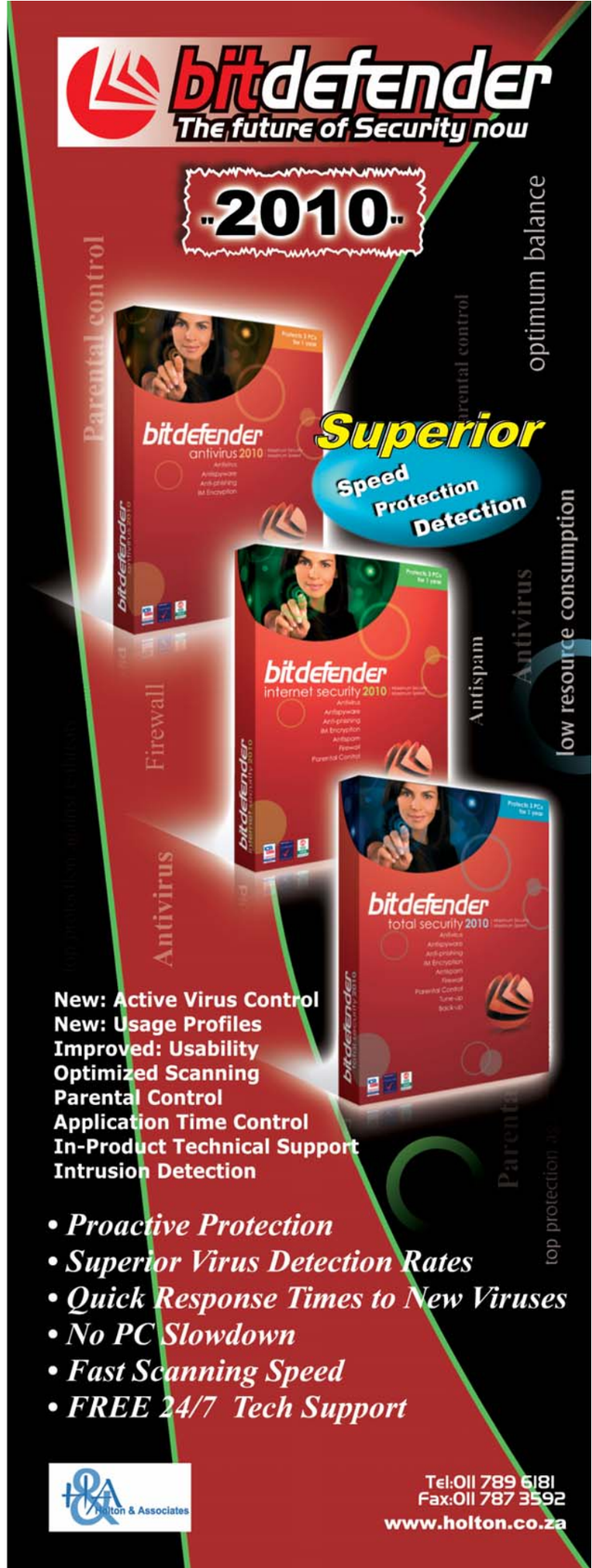
Tell us a little bit about your partnership with Sony Ericsson on bringing out *Stardust Galaxies*.
I think it's a great step in music embracing technology. Technology is ever evolving and ultimately the cellphone is becoming an all encompassing gadget for communication and entertainment. The launch of our album on Sony Ericsson is an indication of big business and artists embracing that fact. I'd like to think that both parties are forward thinking, it's a first for South Africa and a first for a big corporate to embrace it on a local level. I hope to see it as a continuing partnership.

How does it feel to have your own "Parlotones Edition" Sony Ericsson W995?
Pretty darn cool, I think it's a really funky brand which we're really happy to align with. And the W995 is a brilliant phone. It is a music fan's dream come true. The sound quality is awesome and we are super happy to have our album playing off of it.

What's your favourite gadget/ tech product at the moment? Besides the W995 of course.
I'm a big fan of the PSP, a brilliant hand held mobile gaming device which when travelling comes in 'HANDY'.

How do you feel about illegal copying of your music?
I'm against it – how would any citizen feel if every month someone stole 10–20% of their salary. That's essentially what it's doing to the artists. Yes – there are those artists where it doesn't matter but they make up 5% of the musicians, the other 95% are struggling and there in lies the problem. If people continue to do it music will become diluted.

So have you ever copied some songs that you haven't paid for?
In all honesty yes I have from friends in the past, but I no longer do. The artists I did copy however, I ended up buying.



B(r)ing status to the people

Microsoft's Bing search engine is now serving up Twitter updates, with Facebook status updates to be searchable in the near future. For privacy reasons only Facebook's public profiles will appear in the search. As they are presented in real time, outcomes will constantly change with renewed updates. Check out **www.bing.com**.

Frankencamera comes to life

Using a variety of different parts, Stanford University researchers have constructed an open-source digital camera. Dubbed the Frakencamera thanks to its cobbled together looks, its software is open to modifications, allowing for the complete manipulation of all aspects of the camera, turning traditional photography on its head.

News in Very Short

- Yebo Gogo. Vodacom and MTN have agreed to cut interconnect fees, heralding cheaper cellular communication.
- The Vista nightmare is finally over. Windows 7 was officially launched in South Africa at a rain soaked event held at Nelson Mandela Square.
- Nokia is suing Apple in a US Federal court for infringing on ten of its wireless patents for tech used in the iPhone.
- The Android Market for cellphone apps is now open to South Africans. If you have an Android device check it out at **www.android.com/market/**.
- According to *Wired* magazine, In-Q-Tel, the investment arm of the CIA has invested money in a firm specialising in monitoring blogs, online forums, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Amazon. It doesn't monitor Facebook, yet.

Hot New Tech

Amazon Kindle 2
Amazon's Kindle 2 ebook reader can now be imported to SA. It costs **$279** as well as customs duties, import taxes and other fees levied by SARS.

BlackBerry Storm2
The latest incarnation of the BlackBerry Storm has been announced. The Storm2 features a better touch-screen thanks to some tinkering on their SurePress software, as well as Wi-Fi, a 3.2 megapixel cam, and GPS.

HTC Tattoo
The fourth HTC phone running the Android operating system (OS), the Tattoo, will be making its SA debut soon. It's said to be an entry-level device featuring HSDPA, GPS and a personalised cover. We should also see the HTC Touch2, that features Microsoft's recently introduced Windows 6.5 mobile OS, soon.

Philips Blu-ray player
The price of Blu-ray players is coming down as evident with Philips recently introducing the HDP3000, a sub R2000 Blu-ray player for the SA market.

Wii Exercise bike
There's another fitness device heading to the Wii console, this time a fully fledged exercise bike bundled with the game Cyberbike. No word yet on Cyberplane, which should be bundled with the new Airbus A380.

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±6 km/h. The top speed of Honda's electric unicycle. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

Off the beaten track

Tracking an animal is not for the untrained, especially when the trail is 200 million years old. But according to a recent report in *PloS ONE*, one team of scientists are on the right path. The Moyeni track site in Lesotho features about 250 fossilised footprints from several different types of dinosaur of the Jurassic period. After creating a detailed map of what the terrain would have looked like then, researchers found that the dinos crossed over a wet river bed, climbed up a steep hill and then stomped along a flat surface at the top. The track marks showed that one group, the ornithischians, adjusted their walking style according to the surface. In the river bed they opted to sprawl their feet and drag them along, while on the climb they narrowed their stance and picked up their feet. Once on the flat stretch at the top, they likely switched to just their hind legs. The findings hold clues to evolutionary behaviour of this group of dinosaurs.

Cooperative cleverness

Two heads are better than one. And for hyenas, it's definitely the case. According to a study in a recent issue of the journal *Animal behaviour*, pairs of spotted hyenas quickly learn to pull together when food is at stake. Scientists placed food – bone chips and a sticky meatball – on a platform. Two ropes dangled from the platform and had to be tugged together to release a latch to let the food drop. The hyena pairs quickly figured out they had to work together, and the more experienced they became, the less often one hyena would try to release the platform by tugging alone at the rope. Social factors, such as audience presence or social dominance also influenced performance. The findings show that animals that hunt in packs may be hard-wired for social cooperation, especially when it increases the chance of hunting success. Every dog has its day we guess.

Moving the goalposts

Spare a thought for the striker who just can't seem to clear the goal-posts. A study which recently appeared in the journal *Perception*, showed that goal scoring success is in the eye of the beholder. Scientists asked 23 non-football players to kick a ball to goal from about 10 m away. Participants also had to judge the distance between the goalposts before and after their kicks. After successful attempts kickers judged the goalposts to be farther apart than in their initial distance estimates and perceived the crossbar to be lower.
Unsuccessful participants' post-kick estimates of the distance between the goalposts were much narrower than their initial estimates. The researchers say that the study confirms earlier reports that athletes such as golfers and baseball players adjust their perception of the target after earlier scoring successes. The finding may help coaches to develop their players' goal-kicking abilities. Kick-ass stuff. [LP]

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THE RISING TIDE

Waves, wavelets and blips are just a few more terms recently added to the Google lexicon since the release of the Google Wave Preview.

Despite only a 100 000 invites being sent out, and just eight secondary invites allowed per original invitee, Wave has attracted massive online media attention and tons of speculation about the future success of the project. So great is the hype that people have auctioned off invites online, with these fetching as much as $70.

Why the hype?

Wave is an email client, an instant messaging (IM) service, a wiki, a web chat service, a networking platform and a project management tool. It promotes real-time communications, and importantly, collaboration. In essence it's a productivity tool based in the cloud.

While some have described Wave as underwhelming and pure Google hype, it is important to bear in mind what Wave is not. It isn't a social networking tool, although there are social networking gadgets you can embed in waves. What it is though is a tool that overcomes numerous problems we face with traditional email, such as working on a single version of a document, keeping everyone involved in the conversation and keeping records of changes.

Wave explained

Using Wave is actually a lot like using an email client like Office Outlook, or at least that's the closest thing we could find to compare it to. This similarity means you can literally start using it from the word go, while mastering it takes a bit more effort. You can create folders for organising correspondence, read messages and manage contacts. Its interface is really straightforward with a navigation bar, a contacts list, an inbox and a wave window.

Search and contacts are central to the entire process though, rather than messages. You can search through waves by keywords, activity, history, contacts, and Google search commands like *, which shows all results. Before you get started you first want to fill out your Google profile and add a profile pic to your account. The profile pics of everyone involved in a wave appear above the wave window, and adding contacts to the conversation is as simple as clicking an add button and selecting a contact. cont p13

84%. Young Germans that would rather survive without a spouse than without an Internet connection. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

35%. Teens participating in a US survey that voted Steve Jobs as the person they admire the most. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

Waves are about ongoing communications rather than the staggered or once off emails we are used to. There is no cut off in messages, as you can reply to each in threaded communications via new "blips" (a bit like a single line of an IM conversation), or edit entire documents in real-time from other contacts.

When working on a document in collaboration you can actually see the changes being made in real-time. When someone else is editing a document you are viewing, their name appears in front of the text they're editing, and you see the text being replaced or amended. It's a little disconcerting at first, but it does change your perception of real-time collaboration.

The great thing is that all communication is recorded. You can playback actions taken on a document to see who added or removed what and when. This makes tracking the life of a document a straightforward process. As contacts are central to Wave you can even add and exclude certain contacts from specific bits of content and periods in the wave's life cycle. Selectively sharing information in this way adds to it potency as a collaborative tool.

More than just a communications platform, Wave has great potential for collaboration through gadgets or robots, applications that you can embed in waves. As the source code for Wave has been made open, developers can create apps to aid users in more complex communications and interaction. Trippy, for instance, is an app that can be embedded in a wave that allows users to collaborate on the itinerary of trips or holidays.

The ability to add to the functionality of a wave is important as organisations could potentially create apps that are tailored to internal communications or private individuals could create apps to organise groups collaboratively. The potential for customised forms of collaboration and communication tools within the platform are therefore nearly limitless.

Just the beginning

Wave is still in its infancy. Its potential still needs to be weighed, but with so much media attention and such a unique, forward thinking view on communication it could well be adopted by many millions when it is opened to the public.

It does need some work though, as things like a lack of wave update notifications to your desktop or browser tab can be a little limiting as you can only tell if a wave contains fresh information if the window it's in is open in front of you. The inability to simply "undo" changes to a document is also rather frustrating. Finally the fact that you have to install the Google Chrome Frame to run Wave in Internet Explorer could irritate some people.

There is no news yet on when Google Wave will be made available to the public, but we suspect it is only then that the myriad other uses for Google's latest venture will become apparent. [TM]

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HTC Hero

A phone that "gets you"

As first generation Android devices the Magic and Dream, while exciting, just lacked a certain degree of sophistication in terms of user-interface and styling. With big claims that the Hero "gets you", HTC are setting the device apart as the first Android handset that's actually user-centric.

Interface

Much of the hype around the Hero has concerned HTC's user-interface makeover of the Android OS. They've chucked in a custom dialler, calendar, contacts, QWERTY keyboard, music player and even added multi-touch functionality to photo albums.

These additions are welcome as they make the Hero a really slick handset to use and add a sense of sophistication to the device. The pulling of data from Twitter, Facebook and Flickr really personalises some of these functions, like pictures for your contacts, as well.

Taking its "Sense Experience" UI a little further, HTC have incorporated seven home-screens on the device. You can customise each of these screens according to themes like "work", "music" or "social" with widgets and app shortcuts. The inclusion of HTC exclusive widgets that offer streaming updates from apps like Twitter on your home-screen is also quite ingenious.

All this work on the interface really pays off as the handset feels personal right from setup.

The hardware

The Hero feels solid in hand and sports a Teflon coating and black matte finish that makes it soft on the hands and eyes. It's Dream-like "chin" also gives it a distinctive, but charming look.

It offers a 3.2" capacitive touch-screen and a full compliment of connectivity options. This all combines to make it a very appealing device. It's let down though by its paltry processor and internal memory specs. While its UI was overhauled it offers the same hardware as the Magic with a Qualcomm 528 MHz CPU, 288 MB of RAM and 512 MB ROM.

This means that the device does take a little strain when running multiple applications or Flash when browsing. Its lack of zip is also notable in its painfully slow accelerometer. What HTC did get right was the inclusion of a 5 megapixel camera (no flash though) which is a really decent snapper.

While the Hero impresses with a slick interface, its hardware shortcomings are a little frustrating. Its distinct looks and obvious class do make it a really attractive smartphone however. Just bear in mind that an "always connected" device like this will eat through your data as you browse, download apps and enjoy social networking. [TM]

45%. Planned electricity price increases by Eskom year on year for the next three years. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

Samsung Star

A star among the midrange touch-screen

If you are in the market for a compact, palm-friendly phone that will ease your transition into the touch-screen scene and at the same time fit your budget as well as it does your pocket, then the Samsung Star is worth considering.

The Screen

The Star with its neat and stylish, if somewhat boring, design fits snugly in the hand. The focus is on the 3" touch-screen, which not only looks good, but also performed really well. It's lined underneath by the call accept, call reject, and back buttons. While not particularly big, they worked well in conjunction with the touch-screen operation.

Rather than offering only one home screen, the Star has three different screens that can be customised with different widgets. As an example you can adapt one of the screens to display your MP3 player and radio icons. If you're in the mood for music you simply use your finger to slide to this screen and it will remain as your "home" screen. We've seen this on the HTC Android phones and the concept works well. The anti-slip surfacing on the back cover adds a nice practical touch as well.

Camera and music

Its 3.2 megapixel camera takes good quality pictures and is easy to operate, but it doesn't come with a flash. This means that if you're up for some photos during an evening out with your mates or during overcast and bad-light conditions, your pics will come out a bit blurry. When playing music the sound quality is good and the standard headset is okay, but there's no 3.5 mm jack if you want to use your own headphones.

Storage space is also limited with an internal memory capacity of 50 MB, but the external memory card slot can support up to 8 GB. You can't hotswop the microSD card though, the implication of this being, you have to remove the battery and hence, turn the phone off, which is another minor inconvenience.

Browsing

While the phone contains an accelerometer that switches from portrait and landscape while texting, it doesn't do so automatically when browsing the Web. Surfing was generally pain free, with useful assistance from the volume side buttons, since they can be used to zoom in and out of a webpage.

As an all-round package though, the Samsung Star does impress and would be ideal for anyone looking to make the switch from a traditional phone to an affordable touch-screen phone. The Star retails at a recommended **R2199**. [HD]

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ZTE S302

Keeping it straight and simple

Plain and simple aren't necessarily words associated with modern cellphones, but then again not everyone needs a phone with GPS, push email, a 5 megapixel camera and a capacitive touch-screen.

Vodacom's release of the ZTE S302 is aimed at users with "specific needs". The oversized buttons for example are great for people with hand dexterity problems, while the extra ringing volume can help people who suffer from hearing loss.

SOS

The most interesting thing about the phone is the inclusion of an SOS button at the back. Once pressed it sends out SMSs to three user-defined contacts, at the same time activating an onboard alarm. If no reply is received it starts calling the numbers in a three-way cycle. This is a extremely useful feature for frail older people, or actually anyone living in SA.

More features

The phone isn't completely feature free since it does contain a useful LED flashlight plus a radio, although we struggled to get decent reception. A birthday reminder and calculator are also helpful, while two speed-dial buttons assist in dialing important contacts. At **R399**, which includes a Vodacom starter pack, the phone is a bargain. [MJ]

Sony Ericsson Naite

Talking with a green conscience

Sony Ericsson's Naite is an environmentally-friendly phone that has reduced its carbon footprint by 15%, without compromising on looks or specs.

A 15% footprint reduction was achieved by making use of an in-phone manual, which replaces the standard paper version and saves over 90% in paper.

Sony Ericsson also utilised a minimum of 50% of recycled plastic in the construction of the phone and provided it with a power efficient charger that minimises the amount of power wasted during standby mode. This means your phone stops sucking volts when it's fully charged but still plugged into a socket.

SE even carry the green theme through to the phone's software. With apps like Ecomate and a carbon footprint calculator you can monitor your footprint and access practical tips on how to reduce it.

In terms of features, 3G HSDPA makes surfing the web quick and the 2 megapixel camera takes acceptable pics, but lacks a flash. The sound quality of the onboard speakers is good, but there's no 3.5 mm jack for making use of your own earphones.

Generally though, the phone impressed us by marrying its style and features with its green conscience.

The Naite's RRP is **R1999**. [HD]

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ADVERTORIAL

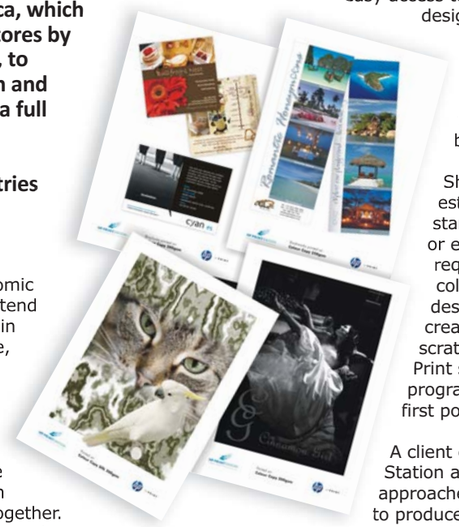
HP Print Station programme services SME market

HP Print Stations are HP co-branded stores operated by HP partners, offering high quality digital printing services primarily to business customers in the small business and small office segments. HP Print Stations stores are opening their doors all over the world, from South Africa, which will boast 100 stores by the end of 2010, to Morocco, Jordan and Egypt. HP plans a full rollout of the programme to additional countries next year.

SME attraction

In uncertain economic times, companies tend to delay investing in their infrastructure, which affects spending on their printing solutions; smaller businesses, on the other hand, refrain from investing altogether. Despite the reluctance to spend, companies need to focus on differentiating themselves and providing greater value to their customers.

Shane van Rensburg, graphic designer at the Channelware Pretoria branch, explains that the business she operates and manages offers a unique service to the SME market. "To compare an HP Print Station to other standard Print Service Providers is near impossible," she says. HP has developed the Print Station programme to cater for a market without easy access to marketing or design services.



The HP Print Station concept has been tailored to meet this business need.

Should an established SME, start-up business or entrepreneur require marketing collateral designed and created from scratch, the HP Print station programme is the first point-of-call.

A client of the HP Print Station at Channelware approached the business to produce a small number of folders and business cards, which had to be designed and professionally bound for an urgent tender that had been opened. The HP print station successfully completed the order within hours and presented it to the customer in time to meet his deadline. The result is that the customer was so pleased with the results that he returned for additional prints.

The difference between an HP Print Station and a similar other standard Print Service Providers offering is simple: an HP Print Station offers modern digital equipment, and is capable of providing consulting and marketing skills thanks to its unrivalled printing expertise.

HP Print Stations employ qualified and skilled graphic designers to create individual and unique designs tailored for every type of client. Whether your business needs only a handful of business cards produced, or 2000 leaflets or brochures printed, the HP Print Station can think it, create it and print it!

For more information on the HP Print Station programme contact HP's partner ACT on 011-695-1600 or HPPrintStation@ACT3.co.za. Visit **www.hpprintstation.com** to find out about your nearest HP PSP store.

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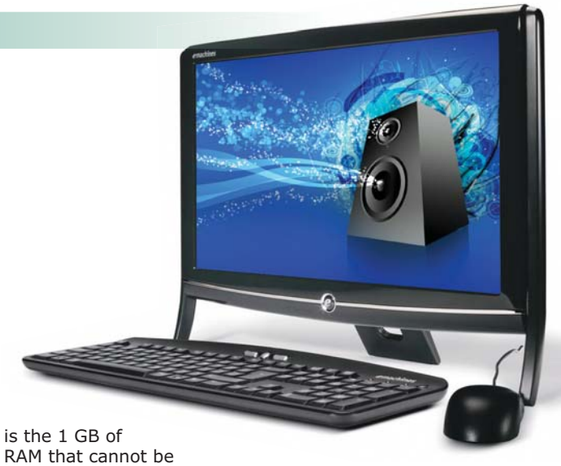
Acer eMachines EZ1601 Nettop

Can you say "EASY PC"

Are we witnessing the dawn of a new species with the rise of the nettop PC?

These all-in-one machines utilise the same little Atom processor found in netbooks to provide a more compact desktop experience. Case in point the Acer eMachines EZ1601 running on the Intel Atom N270.



Design

Looking at the EZ1601 you might wonder where the box is. Well, everything is tucked away at the back of the LCD panel. This concept isn't new, Apple's been doing it for awhile now with their iMacs. But it's a brilliant idea, since you no longer have to bother with finding space for the case, plus the PC is also a lot more manageable if you want to start moving it around.

The eMachines is a very attractive piece of equipment and the excellent 18.5" display (wide-screen, 16:9 ratio) is a joy to work on. It looks gorgeous, but the included keyboard and mouse are a bit plain.

Wi-Fi and DVD writer

We're very glad Acer decided to include Wi-Fi and a DVD writer. These days Wi-Fi is a must, a lack of WLAN was our biggest complaint about their Veriton N270, as it seriously limits appeal to the office market. The DVD writer is a bit of a bonus and makes the eMachines more appealing than some of the other nettops, like the Asus EeeTop ET1602, launching without one.

Performance

While the 160 GB hard disk space isn't a lot in modern day terms, it should be sufficient in most cases. A bit of a concern is the 1 GB of RAM that cannot be upgraded. A gigabyte isn't a lot, but we were actually taken aback by the machine's performance. The eMachines we tested came with Windows 7 and gave us surprisingly little hassle. It booted up quickly and during general usage performed well. You can browse, have some music playing and write in Word without any difficulty.

The system comes with five USB ports on the side and bottom of the system as well as a SD card and Memory Stick slot. There's also onboard speakers that are loud enough to watch a movie without having to employ external speakers, although sound quality is not that hot.

The Acer eMachines EZ1601 is a very attractive machine that won't look out of place in the smartest of offices or the trendiest of rooms. For general usage that doesn't require a lot of intensive graphic work or laborious multi-tasking the Acer eMachines is a solid choice. Available from Incredible Connection for **R4999**. [MJ]

276.9 million. People in the US that used email during August 09. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

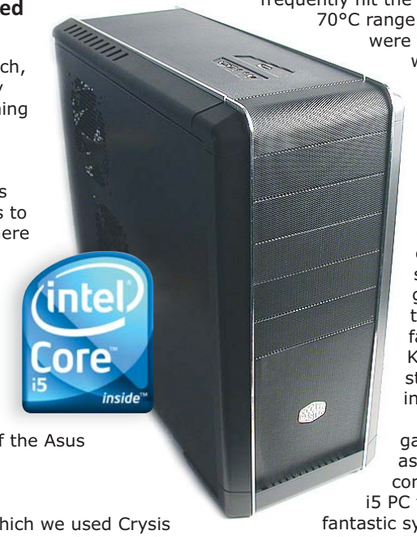
$18 billion. Money by which Bill Gates' fortune shrunk from last year. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

Evetech Intel Core i5 Custom Built Gaming PC

Gaming rig with BMT

Building your own gaming PC is a good challenge, but it comes with a certain amount of uncertainty about the components you've included and the stability of the machine.

Pretoria-based custom PC builder Evetech, takes care of the choices for you. They sent us their mid-range Intel Core i5 gaming PC to check out.



Stress testing

To review the system we put it through its paces via a number of tests. The first was to check the stability of the system, since there is nothing more annoying than having a very fast system that crashes every so often. The stress testing tools we used check CPU, Video and RAM usage. Evetech's PC is rock solid in all regards, not crashing once while running a myriad of these tools, often even at the same time. And why shouldn't it be with the Intel Core i5 2.66 GHz processor powering it, 4 GB of DDR3 RAM, on top of the Asus P7P55D-LE (Light Edition) motherboard?

Benchmarking

Following this was the benchmarks, for which we used Crysis Warhead, CINEBENCH 10 and the new MMO Aion (reviewed on p45). It's not often that we receive machines that can deal with what we throw at them, but the Evetech handled it and then some. It's important to note that once you go over a resolution of 1024 x 768, the GPU becomes the most important component, and not so much the CPU. Built into the Evetech PC was the powerful ATI Radeon HD4890 1 GB 256 bit DDR5 Turbo (Overclocked Edition) Graphics Card. This GPU is close to the top of the range on the current GPU market and works very well in conjunction with the Core i5 processor. It frequently hit the +80°C mark, most often hovering in the 70°C range. While this is perfectly acceptable we were a bit concerned by the noise generated while operating. This ended up as a non-issue since the noise was drowned out by gameplay sound. General operation was dead quiet though.

Also onboard

The machine comes with a 500 GB hard disk and a Lite-On 24x Dual Layer DVD +/- Writer. The CoolerMaster CM 690 case is a fantastic choice for this PC setup. It has a very stylish look without going overboard, has ample space on the inside and with a potential of seven fans, airflow shouldn't be a problem. Keep in mind that you would have to install your own OS, since it does not come included with the price.

If you're in the market for a new gaming rig without all the hassles associated with choosing all the right components, look no further than the Core i5 PC that Evetech has put together. It's a fantastic system and one we're quite sure will serve you well. The i5 system is available for a respectable **R10 499** (incl VAT). It's customisable on **www.evetech.co.za** and comes with a 24-month return-to-base warranty.

Acer Travelmate Timeline 8471

Thin-and-light is coming

Thin-and-light notebooks were a trend many manufactures latched onto this year. With ultra-low voltage processors (CULV) and low consumption batteries, these notebooks offer a middle ground between desktop replacements and netbooks.

Acer's new business centric Travelmate Timeline series is one of the best examples of the thin-and-light segment we've seen thus far. The 14" Timeline 8471 in particular caught our attention with its reasonably sized display, truly amazing battery life claims and slight profile. It even includes an 8X DVD-Super Multi double-layer drive, a rarity in the thin-and-light segment.

Innovation

The Timeline 8471 is a great example of a thin-and-light notebook because it offers the perfect blend of mobility without too great a sacrifice on the processing front. It sports a uniform black magnesium alloy chassis which simultaneously makes it durable and light.

The 8471 also boast some impressive innovations including Intel's Laminar Wall Jet technology, a Intel Core 2 Duo Su7300 1.3 GHz CULV and a 62.16 W 5600 mAh 6-cell Li-ion battery. This means that you get hours of normal use battery life, Acer claim eight hours, but we got something closer to five.

The other impressive innovation the Timeline 8471 offers is a multi-gesture trackpad. This multi-touch functionality lets you scroll up and down pages by performing a circular finger swirl, zoom in and out of pages with a pinch gesture and flick through media by swiping two fingers horizontally across the trackpad. While not as impressive as Apple's implementation of multi-touch on the MacBook it's a very nifty feature indeed.

More conventionally

On the more conventional side the Acer Timeline 8471 offers up to 3 GB of RAM, a maximum of 250 GB of hard drive space and an Intel GMA 4500MHD graphics accelerator. Decent specs for a device offering such mobility.

The Timeline 8471 is a remarkable business notebook. The only thing that doesn't make sense on the device is the addition of independent $ and € keys, but not independent volume controls. Get it from Laptop City on 012-663-1155 for **R10 899**, which is a chunk of change, but well worth it if you have it. [TM]

Fact box:

Intel's Laminar Wall Jet technology redirects cooling air along the bottom of the notebook keeping the notebook cool even after hours of it resting on your lap and saving precious battery power.

Lenovo G530 Notebook

A student's friend

If you're scouring the market for an affordable entry-level laptop, then the Lenovo G530 is definitely worth considering.

The proposition is made all the more appealing by Computer Corporation's current special on the device which sees a mouse, the Canon IP 1900 ink-jet printer, a notebook bag, as well as a 2 GB flash drive thrown in. All this for a very reasonable **R4999**.

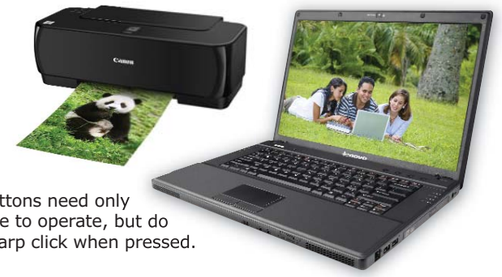
The look and feel of the G530 is simple yet elegant. The edges are rounded and the lid has a nice black finish that is smooth to the touch. Underneath the hood you'll find the Intel Celeron M900 running at 2.20 GHz, 2 GB of RAM, and a 160 GB hard drive. Yes it's quite average, but good considering the price. Luckily it comes with all the important extras, most importantly Wi-Fi, a DVD writer, a web cam and Bluetooth. Vista Home Basic does the operating.

The screen

The Lenovo's 15.4" screen is crisp and clear when viewing photos, web pages or movies on DVD. VibrantView adds a glossy, reflective surface to the screen which helps to improve colours and contrast, but can sometimes be very reflective, mirroring whatever's in front of it.

Input devices

Typing on the keyboard is easy and smooth. There are four media-related keys, the volume up/down buttons, mute button and a button that deactivates the touchpad, and these are all located above the keyboard. The touchpad has good sensitivity and a smooth surface texture which makes it easy to work on, while the touchpad buttons need only light pressure to operate, but do give off a sharp click when pressed.



Interfaces

There's a whole host of connectivity possibilities with this notebook, it has a 4-in-1 media card reader, four high-speed USB 2.0 ports, two on either side of the notebook, as well as a VGA connection.

Speakers

Sound quality when using the onboard speakers is okay for listening to music or when you are watching a movie, but the speakers are fairly average as far as notebook speakers go. Bass was lacking, especially when listening to music, but given the cost of this notebook it wasn't a major issue. We preferred hooking it up to external speakers when watching movies since it was a tad too soft to really watch comfortably.

Verdict

Considering its price and the offer that comes with it, the Lenovo G530 notebook should be definitely above that case of Black Label on the consummate student's shopping list. There's also no reason why it cannot be used in a business environment either. It has all the features you need and most of the ones you want, true it might not be very powerful, but then again you're not paying R10K. **R4999** from Computer Corporation on 08616-08616. [HD]

$35 million. Amount Guy Laliberte, founder of Cirque du Soleil, paid to go to space. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

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Installs in minutes

An X-series kit includes vSpace virtualisation software, access devices, and a PCI card. Install the card in a standard PC, connect the access devices with standard cables, install the software, and you are all set. If you need USB peripherals, simply connect them to the computer and NCSolutions' software will let you assign each device to an individual user. Want your desk space back? The highly compact X-series access devices mount directly to the back of VESA-compliant monitors.

Choose the X350 if you are using PCs with low-profile PCI slots or if you only want to add a few users to each PC. Choose the X550 if your PCs have full-height PCI slots and if you want to maximize the number of users per PC (4 to 11 users).

NComputing L-Series

If you have users who need to be more than 10 m away from the shared computer, choose the L-series instead. The L-series also share the excess power of a standard PC, yet offers additional benefits in that you can share one PC with up to 30 users on an Ethernet infrastructure.

They just snap into place

Because the L-series access devices connect across standard Ethernet networks, they just snap into place and can be as far away from the shared computer as you like. This gives you flexibility and is a breeze to set-up. It also makes it easy to secure the shared PCs behind locked doors.

Both models you can choose from are attractive yet unobtrusive at just 2.5 cm high and 11 cm wide. Choose the L230 if you need a USB Flash drive port, 24-bit graphics, or a microphone port.

The X- and L-series desktops are available from NC Solutions on 011-465-7952, or visit **www.ncs.co.za**.

2011. Year smartphone sales will exceed global PC sales. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

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Edimax WP-S1100 Wireless Projector Server

To Project and Serve

Meeting rooms and conference facilities often have a problem with connecting more than one presenter to a projector.

The latest Edimax WP-S1100 wireless projector server creates a way to connect to a projector, television or LCD screen wirelessly from Wi-Fi enabled PCs, effectively solving this problem.

The S1100 itself connects to a projector or other display device either via an HDMI or VGA input, and from there up to 16 users can connect wirelessly to the Edimax to have their presentations or videos displayed.

All presentation content is first compressed and then sent to the projector to ensure presentations run smoothly. On the video side the S1100 supports the MPEG 1/2/4, WMV9 and H.264 video formats, while wireless transmission is protected by WEP64/128bit, WPA/2 encryption.

An interesting feature on the device is the ability to connect to an Internet router. This enables the presenter as well as the rest of the people connected to the Edimax to have access to the Net.

The WP-S1100 comes with an RRP of **R2914** (excl VAT). Contact Miro Distribution for more info on 086-123-MIRO (6476).

AirLive WIAS-1200G Internet Access Server

Hotspots made easy

Being able to sit down in a coffee shop and connect to the local Internet hotspot is one of the luxuries of modern day living.

Proper wireless local area network (WLAN) solutions for proprietors to provide this service are few and far between however.

The AirLive WIAS-1200G Internet access Server (RRP is **R3749** excl VAT) not only takes care of client's connections to the hotspot, but also prints out tickets to provide clients with their billing info and access code via its optional ticket printer.

The AirLive server offers a lot of functionality since users can be billed either according to time spent on the Net or according to bandwidth usage, while the support of up to 500 local user accounts provides the ability to sell access on a monthly basis.

It communicates on the powerful 802.11g wireless standard and comes with two antennas to ensure extra distance and clear connection to the server for clients. Tickets for clients can either be printed out on a regular printer or on the optional TP-1000 ticket printer (RRP is **R1749** excl VAT).

Contact Nology for more info on 012-657-1317.

±R54 million. Cost to replace the city of Los Angeles' outdated email system. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

Plustek Best Buys

Super Smart Scanning

Plustek OpticSlim M12 Plus

Looking to scan documents on the go? The M12 is the perfect travelling partner, since it does not need an external power supply (it runs off your USB), and comes with a nice little travel pouch. While its width is just a bit bigger than an A4 piece of paper, its height and length are small enough to allow the M12 to easily fit into your laptop carry bag. **R999**.

Plustek SmartOffice PS286

With high-speed scanning of up to 25 pages per minute in simplex or duplex mode, the Plustek SmartOffice PS286 is definitely no slouch when it comes to working in the office. This dedicated scanner includes a 50-sheet automatic document feeder that accepts documents from business cards to A4 size papers, while also supporting embossed insurance ID cards and drivers licenses. **R3299**.

Fujitsu ScanSnap S1500 Deluxe

Filing in a Snap

The Deluxe version of Fujitsu's ScanSnap S1500 colour image scanner now comes bundled with Rack2-Filer V5.0 in the box.

The ScanSnap S1500 scans black and white documents at speeds of 20 pages per minute at a resolution of 300dpi for black and white documents and 150dpi for colour documents. You can also set a resolution of 600dpi for both colour and black and white documents at slower speeds.

Rack2-Filer is a user-friendly scanning and file management system for SMEs. It enables you to create virtual binders packed with digital paper and then organise them in virtual storage filing cabinets, just like it's done in the real world. The software also features Easy Flip technology, which lets you 'flip' through these virtual binders.

You can quickly sort, organise and file paper documents digitally and manage all your documents in an intuitive, virtual collection simply and easily by converting scanned documents and digital data into PDF files and organising them into graphical electronic binders. It also comes with a full version of Adobe Acrobat 9.0 and ABBYY FineReader for optical character recognition. **R6999**.

All three these scanners, and many other models, are available from ImageTEK on 011-608-1964 (ask for Andrew).

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Advertorial Vox ADSL PBX VOiP Solution

No contract, no problem

When starting your own business, or even while running a SME for awhile, you don't necessarily want to be locked in a long term PABX contract. So how about a contract that doesn't tie you in, instead working only on a 60 day cancellation period?

For SMEs requiring eight handsets or less, the Vox ADSL PBX is the ideal system to satisfy both household and office requirements. It offers voice, broadband and data communication on a single platform. From **R499** pm you receive three wired handsets, one DECT phone and a smart looking switchboard. The switchboard can handle regular PABX functionality such as call waiting, conference, reminder call and call forwarding.

The PBX supports four wired extensions, integrated voicemail (two port), music on hold and a shared system directory (available from both analogue and DECT Phones).

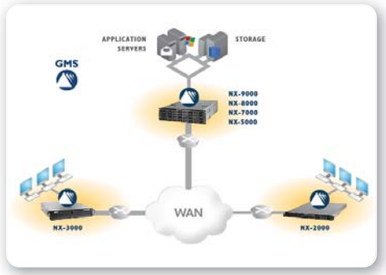
The Vox ADSL PBX is also a fully featured data solution and is equipped with an ADSL 2+ modem for fast Internet access, as well as a router, firewall, 4 Ethernet ports and an integrated Wi-Fi (802.11b/g) access point.

For more information on this package call PJ Kruger from Communigate on 087-808-6008.

Advertorial Silver Peak Data Acceleration

Optimise Bandwidth Usage

The amount of data generated by enterprises is growing at a rapid rate, some say so much as 50 – 60% per year. Instead of buying more bandwidth, companies are using data acceleration to optimise bandwidth usage across a WAN.



Silver Peak data acceleration solutions, as implemented by Remoteq, make it possible for a single WAN infrastructure to universally support all business application. From pre-existing file-, email-, and web traffic, to emerging virtual desktops and cloud computing. High bandwidth data replication to real-time voice and video is also not a problem. Silver Peak is application agnostic, meaning you can choose what data you want to accelerate between your branches (backups, voice, etc.).

As far as security is concerned Silver Peak goes one step further than just using IPSec on the WAN links, instead encrypting all data that are locally stored on the appliances. To deal with applications like Citrix, telnet and other interactive services is also part of their game.

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Data Recovery

10 Common Data Recovery Truths

Henk Smit from Tecleo Data Recovery Lab tackles some common data loss misconceptions to bring us the truth.

1. Data that has been deleted can be recovered.
2. Data can be recovered once you have formatted a drive.
3. Data that has been overwritten is not recoverable.
4. A hard disk drive cannot be wiped by placing a strong magnet close to the drive.
5. Moving the hard drive platters is not the answer to all data loss problems.
6. There isn't a universal tool available that can recover data from all hard disk drives, irrespective of the drive's state.
7. There aren't devices available that can be placed next to a computer in order to extract the data from a faulty hard disk drive.
8. Placing a hard disk drive in a refrigerator won't solve hard disk failures issues.
9. Blue laser technology cannot be used for data recovery.
10. Data isn't always recoverable.

Contact Tecleo on 0860-600-800 or visit **www.datarecovery.co.za** should you be a victim of any potential data loss situation.

400+. Cars available to race from the start in Forza 3. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

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Gizmo Guide: Have to have Gadgets and Gear

The Finger Drums Set

Finger drumming is right up there with air guitaring, just noisier. The Finger Drums Set by Jam lets you give your fingers a workout on something other than a keyboard and mouse. In no time your colleagues or friends will all be basking in the beats made famous by the likes of Ringo Starr, Phil Collins and John Bonham, or wishing they can escape the auditory purgatory in which they find themselves. The set retails for **R199** from The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop.

Oregon Scientific Instaforecast i600

The Oregon Scientific Instaforecast i600 connects to the Web to give you a live weather forecast of your city and region. The multi-unit screen even displays the weather for the next five days for your town.

The unit also possesses the ability to gather surrounding weather information, such as temperature and humidity, and display it on screen, while also boasting some none-weather related functionality such as a timer and alarm. **R1299** from The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop.

The Panic Button

What to do when you are busy tweeting or updating your Facebook page and fear that the close proximity of your manager won't give you enough time to hit ALT & F4 or ALT & Tab as they approach to enquire about your progress? The Panic Button is the answer. Simply hit the USB powered button to immediately bring up a spreadsheet or document provided with the button's software.

Panic Button – **R149**. Keeping your job – priceless. From The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop.

Justick Electro Adhesion Desktop

The Justick Electro Adhesion Desktop is a static powered stand that can hold anything from notes, scripts and business cards without the need for any tape, pins, magnets, bubblegum or Pritt. You just hold it up to the board and voila it sticks as if by magic. It isn't limited to paper and will work with some plastic and metal objects as well. **R199** from The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop.

Get these from The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop on 012-346-2726.

Adapt Emergency Keychain charger

How many times have you run out of battery life on your cellphone but didn't not have your charger with you? Adapt comes to the rescue with their emergency keychain charger. It helps to give that extra energy boost to a whole range of different cellphones as well as MP3 players, and comes with a handy LED light. **R100** (incl VAT) during November (usual price R180) from PDAShop.

Contact PDAShop on 0861-627-911.

XGR Warmer & USB Hub

If you have ever had to knock back the last gulps of cold coffee or soup in the morning, you'll be happy to know that XGR have come up with the perfect solution to this predicament. The XGR Warmer & USB Hub doesn't only keep your favourite beverages warm, but provides you with four additional USB ports as well. It's available at **R49** from Computer Corporation.

Samsung ES10 compact camera

Samsung's ES10 is an 8.1 megapixel camera with 3x optical zoom, which makes taking beautiful photos really straightforward by including features such as the Digital Image Stabilization (DIS) and Beauty Shot. The former lets you take clear photos, even in overcast conditions and the flash off, with the latter recognises the flaws in the photos – the likes of blemishes and dark spots, and re-touches them. You can get it from Computer Corporation for **R999**.

RCA Digital 3-source HDMI Switcher

The RCA Digital 3-source HDMI Switcher lets you connect up to three HDMI compatible audio or video sources to a single HDMI input on your HDTV. It supports all the associated formats including 480i, 480p, 720p, 1080i & 1080p, as well as HDCP-compliant devices. It retails for **R1099** from Computer Corporation.

Get these from Computer Corporation on 08616-08616.

iPod nano 5th Generation

Now with video

The fifth generation of Apple's iPod nano sees the addition of a video camera, mic, speaker and larger screen to allow you to capture video and upload it to YouTube or Facebook. It represents a big leap forward for the nano range, but is it worth the purchase?

Video

Operating the video camera is quite simple and it allows you to choose from a host of shooting modes, including Security Camera, Infrared, Black & White, Film Grain, and Kaleido. This makes for a number of amusing and creative video shoots, but the effects you place on the movies can't be removed later if you want to view normal footage of what you've shot.

The quality of the video is surprisingly good and the resolution during playback is great for such a little screen. There isn't a flash for taking videos in lowlight conditions though. You can't take stills either, which is a bit of a let down, as we're quite sure users are more likely to capture and share images on a regular basis than video.

Other features

Just like the previous model you can give your nano a shake to shuffle through your music collection. Engaging this feature means your nano changes to any random song, so you can't limit the shuffling to a particular album, artist or music genre. If your music gets too boring, you can always switch over to radio. The inclusion of an FM tuner was long overdue on the nano, and it includes a number of interesting features such as song tagging and live radio pausing.

We enjoyed the pedometer that tells you how many steps you've taken while on your power walk, how long you walked for and the estimated amount of calories that you've burnt. It stores these on your calendar for review and comparison.

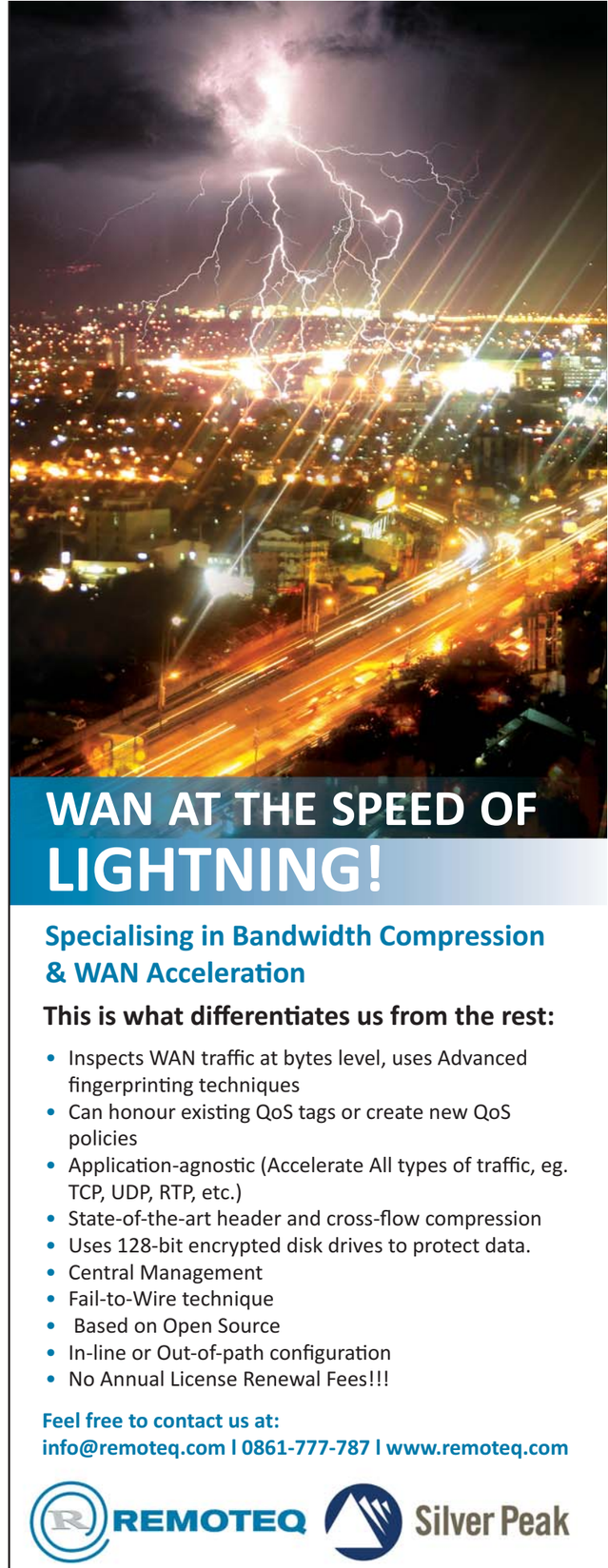
The nano's onboard speaker doesn't play very loudly, but the quality of the sound is okay. It's more useful for podcasts and video than for listening to music because of the average sound quality and low volume.

The verdict

The fifth generation iPod nano really impressed us by improving on what already was a good product to start with. The quality that you get shooting videos, the fact that there's a speaker built into such a petite device and the bigger screen, over that of its predecessor, all combine to ensure that this sexy little music player remains the leader of the pack.

The nano is available in 8 GB and 16 GB versions with an RRP of **R1999** and **R2499** respectively. [HD]

1 billion. Search queries Google handles per day, releasing some 200 tons of CO2. http://tinyurl.com/technovem



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Advertorial WIKI Dual SIM card mobile phone

A rendezvous of convenience

If you are thinking about getting a second mobile phone to enable you to use one for work and the other for personal calls, then you may want to consider acquiring a dual SIM card cellphone.

Using two SIM cards in one phone can save you money by merging the numbers from two network carriers or a contract and a prepaid SIM. You can even utilise local pre-paid cards on your business trip oversees. Dual SIM mobile phones are perfect for global travellers or persons who want a more concrete distinction between their private and business calls.

The WIKI Dual SIM card mobile phone is one such device offering the use of two SIM cards in one cellphone without missing a call on either number. It also features a 3" TFT touch-screen, dual cameras and digital 3-D sound.

Also check out Wikiglobal's free WIKI Toolbar available from **http://Wikiglobal.OurToolbar.com/** that integrates social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook while allowing you to manage multiple email accounts with an email notifier.

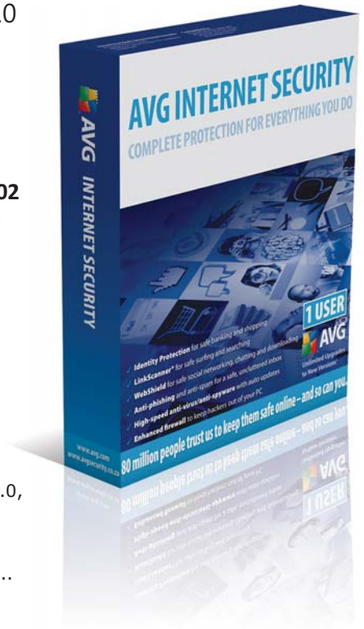
Call them on 072-5077-969, or visit **www.wikiglobal.net** for more info.

BlackBerry Curve (all 83XX models). Best selling smartphone in Q1 2009: http://tinyurl.com/technovem

1976. Year the first email was sent by Queen Elizabeth of Britain. http://tinyurl.com/technovem

AVG Internet Security Version 9.0

Stay Safe and Sound



AVG has been available in SA since 2002 and already has a million plus users in the country, much of them using their solid free security software available online.

As of last month you can purchase their feature-rich, paid versions, Internet Security 9.0 and Antivirus 9.0, in South Africa off the shelf or from a locally hosted website, which is incidentally also the source of local updates, a bonus for us internationally handi-"capped" users.

Their latest offering, Internet Security 9.0, is classic AVG with a twist. The marketing drive behind the product is "Faster. Safer. Easier to use", used in reference to their previous version AVG Internet Security 8.5..

Simpler

While AVG are renowned for their protection features, they've often been criticised for their less than user-friendly interfaces. Version 9.0 seeks to resolve some of these issues with fewer setup windows, just 11 now as opposed to 20 plus in version 8.5. They've also worked on improving the interface, which includes an overview of all tools, a computer scanner and updater. While we found it to be a logical setup and simple to use, it wasn't as slick as some competitors that feature things like one click setup screens or greater levels of user profiling.

Faster

In terms of "faster" claims, AVG point out that scan times are 50% faster, boot times have been cut by 15% and that memory use has been cut by 15%, in comparison to version 8.5. While all this maybe true we did find that its quick scan took a lot longer to perform than some competitors.

Security

On the security front the package features antivirus, anti-spyware, anti-spam, anti-rootkit, a link scanner, email scanner, system tools, identity protection and a firewall. This wide variety of tools makes it a great all-round security option that is able to meet most of the needs of consumers. Results from the big anti-malware testing houses, like Westcoast Labs in the US, aren't out yet so we can't give a definitive answer as to how effective the package will rate, but AVG have an excellent track-record.

The RRP of AVG Internet Security 9.0 is **R399** for a one year, one user license. The package also comes with a free copy of TuneUp Utilities 2009 valued at **R299**.

Contact Phoenix Software on 011-803-5437 or visit **www.avgsa.co.za** for more info. [TM]

Advertorial MAGIX Video Easy

Easier than Magic

It seems like video cameras get stuck into anything these days. Even the latest iPod nano has this feature and a lot of the latest dSLRs include HD video capabilities.

Editing these movies can be a bit tricky, with the software that is available for editing these usually expensive or too difficult to use quickly to make a video.

MAGIX Video Easy is one of the best solutions for amateurs to begin preparing professional quality movies. In just a few minutes, you can cut videos with transitions, add text and background music, and even optimise image and sound. You also have a simplified user interface, numerous help functions and many practical wizards to assist you in converting your recordings into impressive films. It also helps you to get your movie burned onto a DVD, saved on your PC or uploaded to YouTube.

Several video clips give details as to the use of various software functions and the manual includes large images and screenshots to allow you to get the easiest and fastest start in utilising the program. **R595** from Edutain on 011-450-4578 or **www.edusphere.co.za**.

THE BIG ISSUE GOOGLE BOOKS

More than ten years ago, Larry Page proposed that their new start-up company should try to digitise all the books in the world. It was a bit ambitious at that stage to expect such a small company to take on such a massive task, but in 2004 Page felt confident enough to announce the project to the world at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Five years down the line Google has scanned more than 10 million books and made them accessible online.

Read online

Go to Google Books (**http://books.google.com/books**) and you literally have a library at your fingertips. Most of the books that Google and their Library Partners (including Harvard, the New York Public Library, Oxford and 25 others) have scanned are searchable online through Google Book Search. Some of them, ones that have fallen into the public domain or are published under a creative commons license, can even be downloaded to keep as a PDF. The catalogue includes a number of rare, hard to find and out-of-print books and magazines. Ones that would be very difficult for anyone to stumble across in the first place, nevermind having the opportunity to browse through on your PC. The fact that these books are digitally scanned means they are saved forever, since digital copies cannot burn, get wet, or get old and disintegrate.

Copyright issues

But as noble as the Google Books project seems, it has come under immense criticism. Robert Darnton, director of the Harvard University Library, believes that because of Google Book Search, the search giant is on the way to becoming "a monopoly of a new kind, not of railroads or steel but of access to information". It's not only accusations of a monopoly that is bringing the project to a halt, but also claims of copyright infringement.

The Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers filed a class action lawsuit against Google citing copyright infringement. They believe Google didn't have the right to scan and store copyrighted material in the first place. Although Google do not display the full text of copyrighted work, only a searchable summary, they still believe it constitutes more than Google's claim of fair usage.

Google's control of so called "orphaned" books, books from publishers or authors that are difficult to find, is also being called into question.

Settlement

Google has reached a $125 million settlement with the parties, which includes being able to sell out-of-print books online, with publishers and authors able to share in the profits. But objections by authors, rival tech companies and others have been numerous, with concerns being raised about Google's ability to manipulate prices of these online books. This has led the American Justice Department to request a revised settlement, due 9 November 2009, to comply with US copyright and antitrust laws. [MJ]

HP Photo Books

Don't wait, start creating

HP is offering a new service that gives you the opportunity to create your very own professional quality photo books.

Amateur photographers, and just about anyone who wants a book of such memorable events as weddings, 21st birthdays, overseas tours or new born baby pics, will love HP's new Indigo Photo Books offering.

The service allows anyone to design and print one or more copies of a book filled with all your photos. You start off with downloading and installing the free software, available from one the websites mentioned below.

You then select the number of pages you want, as well as the look of the book. There's a number of looks to go for, including soft- or hardcover, standard or personalised with your own cover, in a variety of sizes including A3 or A4, with a glossy finish on every page.

From here you can start designing the book, either doing it manually or allowing the software to autofill the pages with your selected pics. You can choose from a variety of themes, masks, backgrounds and border frames to spice things up. Once that's done, you simply send it over the Internet to one of the participating outlets or take it to a participating store on your flash disk or CD.

The books are printed on the HP Indigo printer range, a high quality and high performance press used for commercial print, publishing, and photo-related applications.

Our Experience

As part of a media event to introduce the Indigo Photo books offering, we actually designed a 20 page photo book ourselves. Choosing the autofill option will literally have you done with the book in less than 20 minutes. Being a little more pedantic we did the layout ourselves and managed to complete the book in less than an hour and 30 minutes.

The software is pretty straightforward, although you will benefit a lot by learning a few of its tricks such as alignment and picture size management. Impressively we received the finished photo book just a day later from 24 Hour Photo Books. The final product was very impressive, with a regular old photo album not even comparable.

The A4 cover with peephole and 20 pages printed on 170 gsm matte paper costs a reasonable **R295**.

Web addresses' of participating printers in SA:

- **www.24hourphotobooks.co.za**
- **www.burblepix.co.za**
- **www.fotodeli.co.za**
- **www.Photo2print.co.za**
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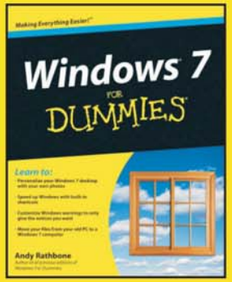

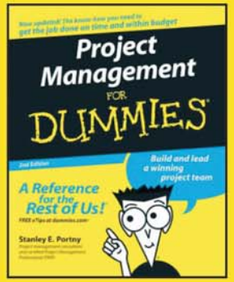

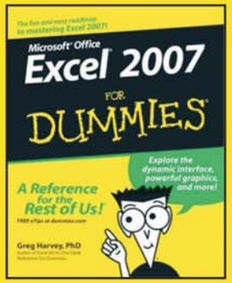

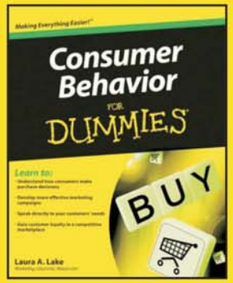

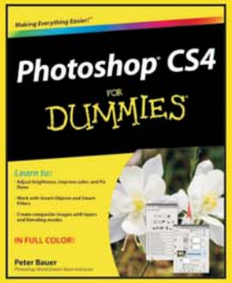

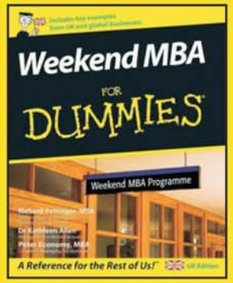

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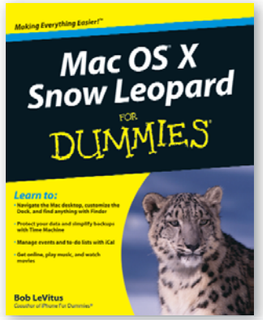
Books for November

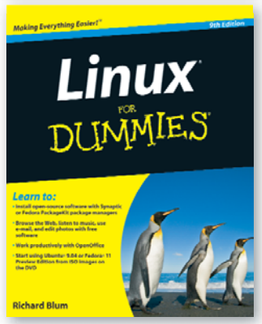
***Mac OS X Snow Leopard For Dummies,* R280**

This Dummies title is ideal for the many Apple fans out there who are upgrading to Mac OS X, or the first-time Apple buyers who want to get to grips with this pre-loaded OS on their new "piece of art". It tackles all the basics, including touring the Finder and its Desktop, customisation, using widgets, getting to know the Dock, and countless more features.



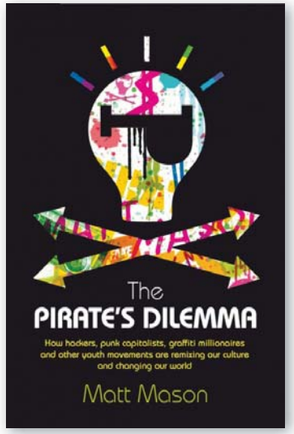
***Linux For Dummies 9th Edition,* R400**

There are many groups and varsity clubs in South Africa that are enlightening PC users about the advantages of switching to Linux. *Linux for Dummies* is an excellent reference for the converted, providing guidance on many topics concerning the latest versions of this OS. gOS Linux, Ubuntu and the full Fedora Linux distribution is covered in the usual Dummies fashion.



Both are available from **www.intersoft.co.za**.

The Pirate's Dilemma
R230



With movies and music now being digital instead of only physical objects, modern day pirates are scouring the Web in search of stuff to download without paying. While record companies and movie houses are up in arms about this, Matt Mason in his smashing book *The Pirate's Dilemma*, argues that the pirates (and these day's who isn't a little bit of a pirate?) are actually the good guys. They are in fact the ones fuelling innovation and driving technology forward, breaking traditional restrictions on the ways we think about the distribution of information.

Mason believes that modern pirates come from a proud line of innovators which include the guys that started Hollywood, DJs responsible for the rock revolution and punk pioneers like Richard Meyers of Television.

The Pirate's Dilemma is an essential read for anyone amazed by the world brought about by the Internet. It grabs inspiration from everywhere, touching on computer history, graffiti, hip-hop, *Star Wars* and uhm, the nun that started disco. More importantly the book is about identifying that little bit of pirate in you to start rocking your own revolution. Follow his blog here: **http://thepiratesdilemma.com/**

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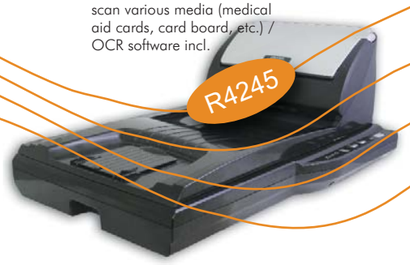

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20FOURLABS
PART OF THE 24.COM NETWORK

Matthew Buckland is considered by many as one of the SA's foremost thinkers on the Internet. He currently heads 20FourLabs (www.20fourlabs.com), a start-up research hub within 24.com which focuses its efforts on rapid, agile Web and mobile development and innovation. TechSmart chatted to him about the future of newspapers, privacy and the Net.

Best business blog for 2008, co-founder of amatomu.com, founder of Webby Honouree and SA blog of the year Thought Leader... the list goes on. You could make a rather dense tag cloud with your roll of achievements thus far in your career. What's the secret?
It's passion for what you do that keeps you striving for more. I'm rarely completely satisfied with a project, so it motivates you to push higher and harder. It's a sum total of the team of people around you, equally motivated and passionate, and the community out there using the applications we make, that makes the magic happen. It drives us.

What do you think is the most exciting and most frustrating thing about the online space in South Africa?
Exciting: We're an early-adopter nation with some inspiring world-class Web entrepreneurs both here and abroad.
Frustrating: Without a doubt the size of the Internet market and throttled state of our bandwidth. Deregulation and the new undersea cables give us hope. But beyond the cost and regulatory issues we know so well, people often forget that the greatest challenge to the growth of our market remains the inequitable socio-economic circumstances in our country – an issue beyond the scope of the Web.

Where will newspapers find themselves in five years time?
Well I remember that in the mid 90s there was a popular phrase that went something along the lines of "newspapers will be dead in ten years time". That never happened. I think in five years or even 10 years newspapers will still be around. I think the death of print has been greatly exaggerated. It's also not a homogenous market, for example newspapers in emerging markets are doing exceedingly well and will be around for many years to come.

In fact, saying newspapers will die is akin to us saying in the 1960s that we'll no longer have fireplaces in our houses because we've invented electric heaters. Yes, electric heaters come on at the flick of a switch and are less messy – but they just don't have the charm and feel-good feeling of a roaring fire. It's an irrational lifestyle thing. Just because the digital medium is more efficient, it **cont... p40**

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does not automatically mean people will ditch papers for it en masse.

There's no doubt newspapers will be under pressure however. Some will close, some will niche, some will boom. Expect cover prices to go through the roof as they become "luxury items".

Tell us a bit about 20FourLabs and you role in The Hub.

20FourLabs is the innovation division of 24.com. It's a startup in a corporate of around 30 or so top talents in the organisation aiming to capture some of the entrepreneurial flair and attitude you find in Web start-ups which make them good places for rapid development and innovation. We're currently working on about 35 projects of which roughly about 14 have launched.

My specific role in The Hub involved the conceptualisation of it and then workshopping and debating it with our product managers, who wire-framed and refined it. The design phase has been completed and it's now in development.

The theory behind The Hub is that online publishing sites like news24.com (and pretty much all others) have natural networks around them. Now what these sites, in particular, do badly is formalise and realise those networks. Some do it better than others. For example, user comments below articles are a crude form of social networking in a publishing context. Social networks on a basic level would also include a user submitting and publishing stories or photos to a Website. These create small, crude and "unrealised" networks. Publishers are good at connecting with users, but could go further when it comes to connecting users with each other. So this is where The Hub comes in. The idea is to inject a layer of social sophistication into the key areas where users are commenting, debating and interacting. Then it takes things further and enriches user interaction: users are profiled, they can see activity feeds, they can follow each other, then can IM each other, they can create dynamic groups or "Hubs" to take the debate further and network some more.

What's your next big project at 20FourLabs?

The Hub is probably the most ambitious of all the projects, because it's an untested idea and will be wrapped around the whole 24.com network, which is the biggest in the country. Other projects include flirtaroo.mobi and flirtaroo.com (micro-payment-based, locative dating site), mobiganic.com (mobile cms), Letterdash.com Phase 2 (Social blogging), and our cross-platform widget-based homepage at 24.com and 24.mobi. We've also built News24 iPhone, Android and J2me apps.

One of your discussion points in a blog post about your vision of Augmented Reality was "Goodbye to privacy." Do you think our perception of privacy just needs to change or is privacy soon to be extinct beyond our own thoughts?

I'm often (rightly) accused of neglecting the dystopian view. It may be too idealistic to suggest that a loss of privacy as a result of the Web and the social networking revolution would be ok because it would mean we'd evolve into a "transparent" and "accountable" society. While persuasive, this may be too idealistic.

We could also become a paranoid and distrustful society, always worrying about what our friends and neighbours will find out about us from a Web or social network search. A comforting thought is that 1) to some extent you're in control by limiting your profile information on most networks and failing that the "delete" button looms large; and 2) everyone will mostly be in the same boat.

However, you won't be in control of all the information about you there. We have still to develop the legal and moral framework to cope with this and there may be a backlash from society.

Maybe there's a business opportunity here too?

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PRICES VALID WHILE STOCK LASTS

What's the deal with Seacom?

Written by Lance Terner, a 12-year Internet industry veteran and Chief Executive of Branded Internet – listed as one of SA's Top 50 ICTe Companies 2005/6 + 2006/7.

I've been asked many times about what is happening with Seacom and why we're not seeing the big drop in prices as expected.

So why haven't we seen a change in ADSL data pricing since the Seacom cable went live?

There are two main factors that come into play here. The first is relatively simple. As a rule, Telkom will try and sign data contracts with ISPs for a three to five year term in return for discounts. So even if someone wanted to use Seacom they are locked into contracts with Telkom for a certain period. To understand the second factor I need to introduce you to some of the technical details of ADSL products as an ISP.

How ISPs work

I often joke that ISPs work "by magic", but there is quite a bit that goes into making it all happen. Firstly you need to buy capacity into Telkom's exchange network so that ADSL users, via their routers, can connect to you, their ISP.

You then need your upstream international connection to the Internet. Normally this is through Telkom, another large ISP or Seacom. However you still need to physically connect your network to that upstream source, and again, this is Telkom.

In addition to all this you need to connect, or peer, to all the large local ISPs for your local bandwidth, similarly using Telkom. Of course you also have all your equipment and staff to take into account.

So as you can see, the actual international bandwidth part, the part you would get via Seacom, is really only one, small part of the cost, and even if this cost were cut in half, the overall impact on the final price would not be significant.

The true cost

While the debate has been raging over the cost of ADSL data, you should also consider the cost of line rental. A 1 GB account on a 384k line will cost about R200. Even if the cost of the 1 GB data were cut in half, your bill would only come down to about R170, or a 15% drop. So, other than what I've explained above, if Telkom were to bring the cost of an ADSL line down, this would have an even greater impact on the overall cost of your ADSL.

But it's not a lost cause. In the coming months, as other networks roll out their own country-wide fibre optic networks, and as local connection prices come down, we will see a cumulative effect which will lead to a steady reduction in ADSL prices.

This is Lance's final Netsmart for the magazine. Thanks Lance for your 38 articles in just over three years, it has brought Internet enlightenment to many! Good luck with your forthcoming ventures. –Mike

November Web Time Wasters

Bing vs Google
www.bing-vs-google.com

If you find it difficult to choose between the new kid on the block Bing, or trusty old Google, this site gives you the best of both, side by side. Type in your search query in the box and hit enter. You'll receive the results from both search engines next to each other. If you like this you'll also dig QoD's search (**www.quickordie.com**) which spits out Twitter and Google searches next to each other.

Monopoly City Streets
www.monopolycitystreets.com

This online game merges the classic Monopoly boardgame with Google Streetmaps to kick off a new era of global street wars on the Net. You start off with £3 million in the bank with which to buy vacant streets, place buildings on them and make offers to other players for their streets. The ultimate goal of the game is simple, make as much money as possible, you greedy monocled capitalist you.

Mystery Google
www.mysterygoogle.com

Mystery Google works just like Google, except for the fact that you get the previous person's search results that used the site just before you. The means that in practice you get entirely random search results, which may sometimes turn out to be quite, well, random.

Lamebook
www.lamebook.com

lamebook
the funniest and lamest of facebook

You must have read a few dodgy Facebook status updates and though "does he know this just went out to everyone?" Everyone and on Lamebook that is. Lamebook is the go-to site to find all these embarrassing updates, comments and pictures. Good for a few laughs, but contains some harsh language and strange topics. Like this? You'll also love **www.fmylife.com**.

Bembo's Zoo
www.bemboszoo.com

If you're into design you'll dig Bembo's Zoo. The site contains a collection of animals, listed alphabetically, all created using the letters and punctuation from their names. Choose a letter and the animal associated with it comes to life via flash animation.

www.thegadgetshop.co.za

Skylark Mini Helicopter
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He's not only the smallest and lightest, but also extremely stable, it's the mini flying helicopter that will bring you endless hours of fun and the most excitement you'll ever have! The new 3-channel technology (most small helicopters this size only offers 2-channels), will turn 360 degrees, move forward and backward and fly higher and faster when you open the throttle!
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Intellipen
The IntelliPen is an easy to use plug and play digital pen. The technology is tucked away in the pen in the form of a transmitter that will beam your every stroke to a waiting USB memory drive, included with the kit.
R1399

Belkin Tune Cast FM iPod
TuneCast Auto lets you listen to your iPhone or iPod in the car, while it charges. Cut through the static with ClearScan. Avoid the frustration of manually finding a clear FM station.
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The TechSmart Jargon Buster

You asked for it and here it is – the TechSmart Jargon Buster to explain some of those difficult tech words you might encounter.

Capacitive touch-screen: Capacitive touch-screen displays use the electrical impulses of your fingers to detect where on the display you are touching. It can be controlled with the slightest of touches, but you cannot use a stylus on it or use it when wearing gloves. The iPhone's screen is capacitive.

RAM: When you start a program on your PC it's loaded from the hard-drive into the Random Access Memory (RAM). Upgrading your RAM will enable your computer to run more programs at once, speed up program launches and help prevent system crashes.

AGPS: Assisted Global Positioning System uses a data connection such as GPRS or 3G in conjunction with the usual GPS satellite signals to display your current position faster. It's used in a range of GPS-capable cellular phones.

The Android Operating System: Android is an operating system (OS) for mobile phones originally developed by Google and now by the Open Handset Alliance, a coalition of 50 firms to create open-source software for mobile devices. Other OS for phones include Symbian, mainly used by Nokia and Samsung, and Microsoft Windows Mobile which is found on a range of smartphones. The HTC Hero (p14) uses Android.

HSDPA: High Speed Downlink Packet Access is an evolution of the 3G data service and provides data transmission speeds of up to 8–10 Mbps. It is a wireless service generally found in cellphones or wireless modems.

JustTipping.com Preview

Start your prediction engines

Online fantasy sports leagues are big business these days, but how about one that keeps things local?

The A1 Tipping Game at **www.justtipping.com** lets you predict the results of each A1 Grand Prix in the season in an effort to win points.

To play you first need to become a member, but membership is completely free. You can then enter your predictions for each of the A1-races for the 2009/10 season. You submit predictions for qualifying positions (pole, second and third), for race positions (first, second and third) and for a bonus round which includes tips on the last finisher and fastest lap of the race with various points being awarded for accurate tips. There are voucher prizes (redeemable with relevant sponsors) up for grabs for the winners of each round and a grand prize at the end of the season.

The grand prize for this season is a Fantastic Racing Platinum Event where you can learn to drive a race car. The fact that only South Africans can play is great as it keeps the whole thing local and means that you have a real shot at winning the prizes.

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Aion

A class balancing act

Aion, an epic MMORPG that sees two worlds divided and at conflict in the Abyss, was recently released by NCsoft.

While comparisons with WoW were inevitable (the gameplay of most MMOs are similar with factions, classes, skills and combat vital to all such games), they are fairly pointless as Aion brings its own unique style to the MMO landscape.

Gameplay and graphics

While the first ten levels are a little boring, Aion really comes into its own when you progress through the levels and experience the game's design and gameplay mechanics. The character customisation tools are powerful and can keep you busy for ages, while Aion's superb graphics are one of its stand out features. Powered by a heavily modified version of the CryEngine, the game looks stunning with detailed environments and excellent character models.

Balance

Even more impressive is the way the NCsoft have managed to create a fairly balanced game. As a PvPvE game, Aion offers the right mix of gameplay for players of any preference. Most of the PvP action happens in the Abyss, while players are generally safe to PvE on their home worlds with only the slight chance of being attacked if a rift between the worlds should open up. So whether you're looking for a fight or looking to grind your way through the game, it's your choice. The balance even extends to population control as servers for the two factions, the Elyos and the Asmodians, are kept at a 50/50 level, as far as is possible.

Combat

Combat in the game is satisfying as NCsoft have built in a combat movement modifier. The modifier works by assigning pros and cons to every movement your character makes during combat, adding an interesting dynamic to conformations. Following the storyline and completing quests is also worth-while. The story is engrossing and with more cut scenes than we're used to in an MMO it really keeps you engaged.

Aion is a subscription based game, so it will cost you **€12.99** a month to play on top of the starting price of around **R375** for the game itself. It's well worth it though as the game is the best looking MMO we've seen and is riveting to play. [TM]

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Forza 3

Sheer Driving Pleasure

It's a bit of a shame that Forza 3 (F3) appears on the scene in the wake of the exciting Need for Speed: SHIFT. The Forza series is known for its extremely life-like handling and top-notch graphics, of which F3 is no exception.

Compared to its predecessor, Forza 2, it's a much slicker and also a lot less frustrating racing sim. But compared to SHIFT it comes across as a tad bit, well, bland. That said, it doesn't mean racing aficionados won't love F3.

The look

F3 includes a very comprehensive 400 cars, with all of them unlocked from the start. This is an excellent deal for free play since cars like the Koenigsegg CCGT are there for your sheer driving pleasure from the get go. But in career mode you first need to earn enough money to buy them.

The graphics this time round look a great deal better than in 2. Ditto for the 100 racing tracks, with tracks like Camino Viejo de Montserrat being absolutely spectacular. As can be expected from Forza, the car handling is extremely life-like, only being truly experienced in the advance mode with factors like traction control and autobrake turned off. Newcomers will enjoy racing in the beginner and intermediate modes, but use it only to lose your training wheels, since there's a lot more money to be made driving in advanced mode.

Instant replay

The inclusion of an instant replay button is certainly one of the most interesting additions to racing sims ever. It allows you to replay a just-happened crash, bump or skid to undo the bad. While purist will be up in arms about this, it does come in handy if you simply don't want to go through the trouble of redoing the race for the umpteenth time. That said it can become addictive, and Michael Schumacher never got any second chances now did he?

Conclusion

While being a top-notch racing sim, F3 lacks some of the excitement of SHIFT. Granted instant replay is really smart and the scenery on some of the tracks, such as the Amalfi Coast, is spectacular. The developers, Turn 10, did a much better job on Forza 3 than 2, but we think SHIFT has changed the game with elements such as its driver's perspective dynamics and the aggressive/ precision element. While F3 can be seen as the well mannered, soft spoken, straight A student with a nice haircut, SHIFT is the hooligan on the bike getting the girls. Forza 4 would have to be a bit more exciting to keep up. [MJ]

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