



PERIPHERALS

INTEL GOES WIRELESS

Recognising the booming interest in home networking, Intel has launched the AnyPoint wireless networking range.

The first products include an internal PC card and an external USB device.

These allow a laptop user to access the Internet from anywhere in or around the home. And the AnyPoint Wireless USB Home Network allows PCs to be connected to the same wireless network: for games, and file and printer sharing.

These products use the 2Mbps HomeRF standard, which is unfortunately incompatible with the 802.11 wireless standard used by many businesses. Intel can be contacted at www.intel.co.uk.

NEW PANASONIC CD-ROM

After a long absence, Panasonic has returned to the UK CD-ROM market. Its new model is the CR-593 – a 40-speed unit aimed at home and small business users. The price should come in at around £35.23 including VAT.

FREE PDA DEVICES TO BE THE NORM

In a boost for the PDA market – and lovers of shiny tech toys – a recent report by analysts at the research company Gartner Group has predicted that 70 per cent of PDA devices would be free or heavily subsidised by the year 2003.

Speculation about their future includes them becoming like mobile phones – paid for by regular subscription fees. Presumably software access would be rented via the Net.

3COM WITHDRAWS FROM BUSINESS MARKET

3Com has angered users by pulling out of the business networking market.

Following the February flotation of its major product line, the Palm series of PDAs, 3Com is discontinuing the CoreBuilder product.

Its alliance with Extreme Networks is being put forward as the migration path for users. But many 3Com sites have been dismayed at the announcement, especially as Extreme does not offer any Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) products, vital for business applications.

Dixons slammed over PC deals

Will customers pay over the odds because of cosy deals with PC makers?

Dixons has again been criticised by rivals for its deals with PC suppliers. Dixons now has exclusive access to future home PCs from Compaq and Packard Bell. But John Lewis and Comet-owner Kingfisher reacted angrily when the deal was disclosed. Until recently, John Lewis has been selling both brands of PC. And the company said it might take legal action if the Office of Fair Trading was not prepared to reopen its case into Dixons' domination of the UK home PC market.

It's been feared that consumers will be faced with a dwindling

number of PC outlets if deals like this are allowed to proceed. Prices could also rise as competition is stifled. This is not the first time that Dixons has had exclusive access to certain brands of PC. But after a study last year, the director general of Fair Trading said there was adequate competition in this field.

The OFT issued a statement after the latest Dixons' deal was announced, saying the companies "did not appear to infringe the new Competition Act". But sources close to Dixons reveal that further exclusive deals with other manufacturers could soon be



Dixons – in the firing line again.

announced. Although the OFT is still looking at the case, nothing short of a new investigation will be enough for some rival retailers. The original OFT study commenced after Intel criticised Dixons for its "ridiculous margins."

Pocket PC launches

Compaq and Casio provide upgrade route

As expected, the Pocket PC was launched on 19th April. The launch events were in New York and London and many of Microsoft's hardware



The Compaq iPaq H3600.

and software partners showed off their wares. Casio, Compaq and HP announced devices aimed at consumers and business users, whilst Casio and Symbol also introduced rugged Pocket PCs designed to withstand outdoor use – including rain.

Many of the consumer devices have already started to appear in the shops. The Compaq iPaq H3600 and the new slimline Casio EM-500 are due out around July. Obsolescence is a big problem with portable devices, but Compaq and Casio have announced upgrade schemes. The Compaq offer allows users to upgrade their own hardware (www.compaq.com/products/handhelds) and the Casio scheme is a trade-in (support.casio.com/tradein.htm).

Casio's trade-in has caused great interest in the Internet newsgroups. There has been speculation about why Casio's E100/E105 models cannot be brought up-to-date with a simple ROM upgrade. Some users have suggested that Microsoft has changed the Pocket PC operating system, so Casio has to make additional hardware changes. HP has generally been quiet on the subject of upgrades. And although Microsoft has been proclaiming the upgradeability of the OS – it's ultimately down to the hardware vendor to make it possible.

Craig Peacock

PROCESSORS

New Intel Celerons delayed

But the numbers keep on climbing

Intel has delayed the launch of its 633MHz and 666MHz Celeron processors by two months. Originally scheduled for April, the new processors are now expected to be launched some time in June. A 700MHz Celeron is also expected to be announced at the same time. For several months now, Intel has struggled to produce enough chips to satisfy demand. And it wants to ensure the new Celerons do not suffer from the same problem. The 566MHz and 600MHz Celerons were introduced at the end of March.

Meanwhile, Intel has revealed that the Pentium III still has some way to go – despite the 1GHz barrier having been reached. The company has said the processor's core still has significant potential for expansion. As such, expect to see Pentium III chips running at 1.06, 1.13, 1.2 and 1.26GHz. Some of these are expected to be launched in the third quarter of this year.

And 1.5GHz processors will eventually be released – Intel has already demonstrated the prototype of such a processor. But all of these developments are far removed from the buying habits of current users. Such progress is more to do with the battles with AMD than any relevance to mainstream consumers.



The Pentium III – how far do you want to go?



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Red faces over Red Hat security hole

Default password could allow malicious code to be run

It seems Microsoft does not have a monopoly when it comes to security issues. Specialists at Internet Security Systems Inc. have discovered a problem with Red Hat Linux 6.2. This allows an intruder to view and modify files. But access depends on the Piranha component being installed. For

this reason, Red Hat says most users have no need to worry.

Piranha is only installed if the user chooses the clustering option – or a full installation. The security risk still applies if the software is installed but not in use. This is because Piranha has been shipped with a default password. Knowing

this password, any Web user can utilise the 'change password' function to pass a malicious script to the server.

This means Web pages could be modified or confidential information compromised.

Although this is clearly a problem with the software, one of the first rules of server management is to ensure there are no default security credentials. At the very least, administrators should define a new password for this facility. But Red Hat has produced patches for the three Piranha packages – piranha, piranha-doc and piranha-gui. Supported users may download them from [ftp://updates.redhat.com/6.2](http://updates.redhat.com/6.2).



Never leave server software unconfigured.

SECURITY

15-year-old arrested over Web site attack

But 'Mafiaboy' has not been blamed for the other February attacks

A high profile attack in February on cnn.com has been blamed on a 15-year-old Canadian cracker dubbed Mafiaboy.

His real name has been withheld because of Canadian Law. But a statement from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police revealed he had been arrested in mid-April and charged in a Canadian juvenile court. His home was searched and equipment believed to be used for the attacks was seized.

Such a crime in Canada normally carries ten years in prison. However, if it can be proved that loss of life could have resulted from the attack, the sentence could be much higher.

The boy was caught after evidence was found on the systems at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He was also found rather unwisely bragging on Internet discussion forums.

It was originally thought that Mafiaboy was also responsible for the other attacks in February. These targeted sites such as Yahoo, Excite, eBay and Amazon. But this theory has now been discounted. It's believed the boy merely copied the tactics of a group of much more sophisticated hackers. He's now on bail, under the condition that he does not touch a computer unless a teacher is present.



They start them young these days.

Fragmentation could hinder Linux growth

Users are confused by versions

Linux has been a remarkable success, but there could be dark clouds on the horizon. The Open Source operating system, with a penguin as its mascot, is largely based on the 35-year-old Unix. But one of the failings of Unix has been the wide variety of versions on offer.

There is now a variety of competing forms of Linux – including Red Hat, Mandrake, S.u.S.E and Corel. Users are often confused about which version they should commit to. And being worried about backing the wrong horse, some are electing to ignore the operating system altogether. This confusion has now been recognised in the financial markets. Analysts at Wall Street's JP Morgan have said that it's inevitable that Linux will break up into a series of totally incompatible versions. Plus the Hurwitz Group believes that Microsoft would have been much weaker today if Unix had not made it so difficult to run applications across multiple systems. There are also worries that some software companies, like Oracle, are re-engineering particular brands of Linux to make their own products perform better overall.



It's the Penguin. But which one?

NEWS IN BRIEF

FIFTH GENERATION OF VIRUSSCAN

McAfee has released version 5.0 of its VirusScan package. The new 'Safe & Sound' feature automatically backs up data files to a protected area of the hard disk. And a new incremental update feature keeps the size of new virus signatures to a minimum.

There's also a 'Quarantine' for isolating suspect files and e-mails from the rest of the PC.

These are protected until the next update, or the all-clear has been given by the specialist McAfee Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team.

The product has a new interface and its estimated street price is £24.95 including VAT. The company can be contacted at www.mcafee.com.

BEOS 5 RECORD DOWNLOADS

Be claims that more than 550,000 copies of BeOS 5 have been downloaded from its Web site. BeOS is a fast and highly customisable alternative operating system, that's particularly suited to multimedia work. Although it's not achieved great commercial success, more and more users are looking at alternatives to Microsoft.

The BeOS Web site is at free.be.com. You'll find a copy of the latest BeOs on last month's PC Plus SuperDisc.

MGI LAUNCHES ZOOM SERVER 3.5

MGI Software has announced Zoom Server 3.5 – a new release of its high-performance Internet imaging software.

The system is aimed at any on-line service where images are important – for instance retailers and auction sites.

And it allows for the fast transmission of high quality images over any bandwidth.

There are five different offerings: Soho, Small Biz, Merchant, Professional and Enterprise. MGI has also announced a world-wide deal with Dell.

This will see the company's popular VideoWave III video editing software being bundled with certain Dell models.

MGI Software can be contacted at their Web site www.mgisoft.com for further details.