TEK THOTS
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Published irregularly by Scott C. Holstad

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News/Editorial
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*   Welcome to the second issue of Tek Thots! Thanks for your comments about the
first issue. Again, feel free to send in suggestions, news tips, questions, criticisms, and
complements. While I can be reached at sholstad@earthlink.net I may be switching my
primary mail to sch@well.com. These are merely two of my email addresses; I'm simply
trying to determine which will work best. Those of you who have subscribed do not need
to worry about address changes. Okay -- on with the show!

*   Boycott Open Text. The search engine has recently implemented a rigged search
process via a "preferred listing." Companies can pay as little as 2K to ensure that their site
is one of the top ten "found" when a key word they've leased is sought for. It's advertising.

dammit, and underhanded at that. Users won't be getting "honest" results; the skewed results they'll get will simply be paid advertising. The sad thing is, most people won't even realize it.

* Prodigy is now the latest to fall under Microsoft's spell. On October 8, they announced they had chosen Internet Explorer 3.0 to be the default Web browser for their Internet service -- Prodigy Internet. In return, Microsoft will offer a Prodigy icon in its Windows 95 Online Services folder, and Prodigy will incorporate ActiveX technologies into Prodigy Internet.

This now means, as Microsoft has snagged AOL, Compuserve, Prodigy, and AT&T, they have close to 10 million potential new users to spread the Microsoft gospel. No matter how much Netscape denies it, this has got to be worrisome....

* BrowserWatch News' Scott Lezberg confirmed the rumor that the IE4 beta, scheduled for release this month, has been delayed until the end of the year:

"Wednesday October 2 10:15 AM EDT

Microsoft Browser Progresses

SEATTLE - Microsoft group vice president Paul Maritz says he expects the company's Internet Explorer version 4.0 browser to be in beta test by year-end.

In a telephone interview he said the product, which will be tightly integrated with the Windows 95 operating system, will be available early next year, but he said it was "premature" to project a release date."

Wonder how Netscape will respond to this delay (with relief?).

* IBM and Ameritech will be testing ADSL technology in Wheaton IL soon. If this pans out, it could be a good alternative to ISDN, as it transfers data at something similar to a T1 rate, over existing copper lines.

* IBM's new OS/2 Warp 4 will come with Netscape built in. As OS/2 claims some 14 million customers, this is good news for Netscape. The bad news is that there are rumors that IBM will be shelving OS/2 after this version.

* Big surprise. Burma and Iran are the latest countries to crack down on the Net. For "Western propaganda" evidently. Also, remember the Compuserve fiasco earlier this year with the German government? The Germans banned certain Usenet newsgroups due to their alleged impropriety. Well, looks like they may be gearing up for a repeat -- this time with AOL.

* Sun has developed a picoJava RISC chip designed to run Java-based hardware. Evidently it's up to 20 times faster than the 8x86. Look for it about a year from now.

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PC Thots
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*   AMD suffered a $38 million 3rd quarter loss. Aside from the fact that their K5 chip suffers when compared to Cyrix and Intel chips, AMD has underutilized its facility and is behind its competitors in shipping comparable chips (in terms of clock speed). The K6 chip (with MMX capabilities) is supposed to save AMD, but I think it's a case of too little, too late.

*   Looks like Reveal is another company which has leapt into the hole. Rumors have it they're on the verge of bankruptcy. A combination of mediocre products (I have a Reveal tape backup unit), poor customer service, suspect partnering, and quality competition has brought Reveal to this point. One interesting variable is the fact that a certain number of key Reveal players are also kep Packard Bell/NEC players....

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Mac Thots
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*   Apple will be releasing its fourth quarter info next week. Check this out: They're rumored to be reporting a $37 million loss!

*   Did you read that piece in the San Francisco Examiner last week about Apple eliminating backwards compatibility in its next OS? Seems like corporate suicide to me. What the hell are those people thinking over there? Evidently a big Apple muckety-muck states that it's impossible to make the technological advances called for in the next OS without completely sacrificing backwards compatibility. If this is true, why would anyone buy a Mac today? None of the software will work when the next OS comes out.

The fine folks over at Tidbits immediately pumped out a piece by someone strongly asserting that this article was an outright lie. Their reasoning? It would be corporate suicide. Hhhmmm. And when have we known THAT logic to stop the people over at Apple from throwing themselves on their swords?

I suspect that the truth is somewhere in the middle. Ultimately, software upgrades will be essential. However, if everyone's software stopped performing with the release of a new OS, Apple would cease to exist as a company.

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Web Development Thots
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*   Borland recently announced InterClient for their InterBase cross-platform SQL server. InterClient is written completely in Java and is supposed to provide JDBC-

compliant connectivity for InterBase, thus improving the performance of Web-based database functions. Java applets can make direct connections to InterBase servers because InterClient has both client and server components. You can find a beta version at: http://www.borland.com/interbase/interclient/.

*   Over the next few months, IBM plans to release some new products/services for Java and expand its partnership with JavaSoft. The biggie is a set of Java APIs for creating server apps. The APIs are part of IBM's effort to integrate the Java Virtual Machine into its OSs. IBM also plans to create Java-based development tools, to port the Java VM to Win3.1, and to produce services designed to aid companies in deploying Java apps at the enterprise level. By the end of the year, IBM plans to release a beta version of its VisualAge for Java, a tool that helps create server and client Java apps.

*   Oracle plans to add Java functionality to ALL of its apps by mid-'97.

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This Issue's Plug-in
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*   An animation plug-in you might want to check out is Totally Hip's Sizzler. This plug-in takes standard PICS files or Mac QuickTime movies (as well as AVIs), and converts them into sprite files which play on Web pages using a streaming technology similar to InterVU's (mentioned in the last issue). You can find some truly cool examples of Sizzler-based animation, so go poke around. But, in all candor, while the technology is "hip," Sizzler needs to be "totally" (or at least slightly) improved -- the image takes way too much time to develop, so you hurt your eyes looking at a mass of pixels as the animation downloads -- some of the images spin while developing, which is cool the first time around, but wears on you. Nonetheless, definitely worth a look-see. You can find it at: http://www.totallyhip.com/sizzler/.

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This Issue's ActiveX Control
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*   How about an off-line browser? Microsoft states that Preloader is a control which downloads a file at the specified URL and puts it in the cache. The control is invisible at runtime and starts downloading when enabled. When the download is finished, the control fires a Complete event. Where is it? At: http://microsoft.saltmine.com/isapi/activexisv/prmgallery/gallery-activex-info.idc?ID=142.

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Stock Thots
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*   Manugistics Group's shares gained 136% between June 30 and September 30. Level One Communications followed Manugistics by posting a third quarter gain of

73.4%. S3 Inc. and Western Digital were also in the top five percentage gains of 60.4 % and 53.6%, respectively. Why is it, though, that WD is the only one people have heard of?

*   If you haven't already, dump Quarterdeck (Nasdaq QDEK). After spending more on marketing ALONE than their entire sales last quarter, they are undergoing "restructuring." Read: they can't get quality management people in. And customers are evidently leaving in droves. No products, no customer service, no management plan. Seems like we're seeing the death of a company....

*   Seagate, somehow withstanding the insane investor lawsuits sparking controversial California propositions, announced $129 million in third quarter earnings.

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Game Thot

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Newbie Thot
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*   Ever go to download and play with a new toy from the Net, only to find some bizarre message about not being able to "open" it? Well, when that happens, you need a "compression utility." For info on what compression utilities are, where to get 'em, and how to use 'em, check out my piece, "Putting the Squeeze on Compression," located at: http://www.earthlink.net/daily/tuesday/compression.html.

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Privacy/Security Thots
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*   Writing in an article entitled "US Army Seeks Computer Antivirus Plan" in the August 26 issue of _Defense News_ magazine, reporter Pat Cooper reveals the US Army suffered from serious computer virus infections while deployed in Bosnia.

Infections by Monkey, AntiEXE and Prank Macro caused computer software malfunctions and related problems which "forced Army personnel to waste hundreds of hours finding the viruses and cleaning them from the systems . . ." Apparently, imperfect Monkey virus removals also resulted in non-critical data being lost from infected hard disks.

The widespread dispersal of the viruses on Army computers in Bosnia have catalyzed a review of informations systems procedures and could have implications for all future force deployments, servicewide, according to Cooper and Defense News.

Army Captain Steve Warnock told Cooper that while virus computer trouble was widespread, it affected only "nonsensitive data and did not adversely affect the Bosnian mission."

Army officials pressed for solid recommendations that all computers be checked for computer viruses prior to future deployments. One recommendation also suggested the maintenance of an on-line site from which Army personnel could download anti-virus software while in the field.

Pat Cooper commented to Crypt Newsletter that the US Army had used IBM Anti-virus and McAfee Associates software while in Bosnia.

Brought to you courtesy of (and w/o permission -- please don't sue):
Crypt Newsletter
Pasadena, CA
http://www.soci.niu.edu/~crypt

*   Could someone -- anyone -- explain to me why the military is using IBM Anti-virus and not something ... better?

*   Has anyone heard of Hare since Spetember 22? Didn't think so. I wonder how much money the anti-virus companies made off of that....

*   Ever wonder what kind of info your Web browser is sending out? Well, go visit this site -- http://www.uiuc.edu/cgi-bin/info -- and find out. It can be kind of scary.

*   CERT recently received reports of two security problems in sendmail, affecting all versions through 8.7.5. By exploiting the first, users with local accounts can gain access to the default user, which is usually daemon. The second vulnerability allows any local user to gain root access.

*   Has anyone seen the BSD patch which allegedly addresses the TCP SYN flooding hole? After the disabling attacks seen in NY last month, it should be obvious that this can happen to anyone at any time (especially since 2600 printed the code). Seems to me that EVERYONE should be producing a patch for this baby -- somehow.

*   Ed Cummings (Bernie S.) was unexpectedly released from a Pennsylvania prison last month. For those of you with foggy memories, Ed was arrested and prosecuted by the Secret Service for possessing computers, cel phones, and books which described various hacking/security issues -- all legal. He was nonetheless deemed a threat because he had tools/knowledge to do something devious if he so desired.

*   For those of you interested, 2600 is printing Kevin Mitnick's new prison address.
It is:
Kevin Mitnick 89950-012
P.O. Box 1500
Unit 7
South Los Angeles, CA 90053-1500

*   I guess I better settle this once and for all. Even after my comments in the last issue (or, perhaps as a result of?), I've received several more emails shrieking about the Good Times virus. Why? Why is someone sending this old news out, scaring countless newbies half to death? For the last time, IT'S A HOAX!

Conversely, there are thousands of legitimate viruses, and I've been getting email and phone calls from a number of people over the past couple of weeks. If you want to contact me, feel free. In all candor, however, I'm the first to admit that I'm not the most knowledgeable person in the world -- there are tons of virus resources on the Net.

With that said, here's one to look out for. There are bogus files named PKZ300B.EXE and PK300B.ZIP floating around out there. These ARE viruses -- don't download them. The last legitimate release from PKware was PKzip 2.04g (although evidently there's a limited version called 2.06).

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