

Volume 1, Issue 2

An Informative Newsletter for Our Customers

New Evidence Shows CD Media Can Degrade Over Time!

With the introduction of affordable and effective compact disc burning technology almost a decade ago, practically everyone saves at least some of their important data on CD-R or CD-RW discs. However, new articles in leading technical sources are suggesting that many discs can degrade to be completely unreadable in only two years! This is far less than the 10 to 100 years many manufacturers have suggested.

In an article dated August 19th, 2003, the Dutch PC Magazine, PC Active, performed error tests on 30 types of discs from 20 different manufacturers. These discs had been burned with data 20 months previously, and then stored under optimal conditions: cool, dry and dark. They discovered that several of these discs had developed serious errors, or were completely unreadable. PC Active believed that the use of different photochemical dyes in some of the CD-R's was to blame, as some dyes are more stable than others. Light, heat, and the use of low-quality discs also contributed to the errors that resulted

The problems discovered with CD-R/

RW discs, have to do with how they burn data. A store bought music CD or software program CD have "pits and grooves" that make up the data, physically pressed or laser-burned into the disc itself. Burnable CD's instead use photochemical dyes. These dyes darken when exposed to laser light of a particular frequency and intensity, creating a digital pattern that represents the data that your computer reads. If you have ever noticed a coloration on the underside of your burned CD's than you can see what we are talking about. The dyes used in this process are much more sensitive to environmental extremes and the passage of time than normal, pressed CDs. As a general rule, discs that use phthalocyanine (which produces a gold to light green bottom) usually last longer than discs using cyanine or metal azo dyes (which look green blue or dark blue on the bottom).

While the occurrence of these problems is still the subject of some debate, it is best to take precautions both to protect the data you

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Points of Interest:

- **CD Media Degradation Issues**
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- **New Viruses to look out for.**
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What's Hot in the Industry Today?

The Radeon 9600 Pro Video Card

Want to go a step up from a standard video card, or need to upgrade from an old Nvidia G-Force, but don't want to break the bank? We went looking for a card that would keep both moderate gamers and graphics program users happy that was under \$200. What we found was the Radeon 9600 Pro. It is highly compatible and works with Intel's Pentium II, III and 4 as well as their Celeron processor. It also works with AMD's K6, Duron, Athlon, and Athlon XP processors. It is compatible in both 4x and 8x AGP slots, and works on a system running Windows XP, ME or 2000. Unfortunately it is not recommended for users still running Windows 98. Another minor problem we've found is that the drivers that ATI provides sometimes are a little less stable than

Nvidia drivers. However, unless you are a hardcore gamer, this usually won't come up as an issue. Some of its features include 128mb of memory standard on the card. It supports Direct X 9.0 and the latest version of OpenGL. You can connect a TV or VCR through a S-Video port on the card. It can also be expanded to handle Composite input or output or a dual monitor configuration. Hard-core gamers may need to go even further with their video card choices, but for the occasional to moderate gamer, or everyday user that needs more performance out of their video card, this is one of the best we've found.



Radeon 9600 Pro

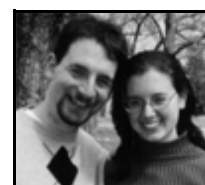
Arete Website Up and Ready for Visitors!

We are happy to announce that the Arete Computer Consulting website has been launched and is ready for browsing! Just go to www.aretecomputer.com and take advantage of the many services we offer. You can buy computer parts, peripherals, or entire systems through our online sales page. You can request service calls, sign up for our newsletter (or read previous copies), see our company's history, or peruse our online brochure. We also have a custom pre-built systems page on which we sell computer systems that we have thoroughly researched and designed for a variety of specific purposes. This page includes systems designed

for gaming, digital video editing and our very popular "I don't do anything but internet, email and word processing" system. You can also access a customer referral submission form on our website. For those of you not familiar with our referral program, we set up a discount voucher system designed to thank people who have recommended our company to their friends and colleagues. For details, just visit our site! We always welcome comments or suggestions about our website. If you have any questions or think of a service we could add to make our website more useful or user friendly, please don't hesitate to let us know!

Guest Article by David Nurenberg

Looking for Love in all the Wrong URLs (Your Survival Guide to Internet Personal Ads)



Does this ad sound like your life? "Single person ISO love, intelligent and witty, hate the bar scene and too overworked to go even if I liked it. Help!" According to the International Labor Organization, Americans work the longest hours out of any industrialized country, and since 1980 we've increased our work year by over 100 hours. Beyond the physical and mental health hazards this poses are the romantic ones - time to get out and meet people has evaporated faster than an Enron-heavy stock portfolio. If you weren't one of those lucky folk who married your college sweetie, it may seem like there's no hope for a love connection, unless, perhaps, you have a high-speed Internet connection.

If your skeptical eyebrow is rising, don't worry - mine did, too. If personal ads are the haven for weirdoes and recluses, then surely the INTERNET personal ads were even worse? Whatever happened to the romance of love at first sight, the serendipitous "spark" of a chance encounter? Yeah, right. Eventually you're going to break down and try something practical, like I did, and when you do, you'll also realize the shape of Internet personals has changed. There are hundreds of people just like you - bright, attractive, and frustrated with the lack of dating prospects around them. The key to finding them is persistence, resiliency, and keeping in mind some tips to maintain your safety and your sanity.

TIP 1: Choose the right site. Online versions of established newspaper personals are reliable. Well-known Internet providers like AOL and Yahoo host well-maintained personal ads. If you have particular dating needs, try specialized dating sites for Christians, Jews, Ivy League graduates, or Star Trek fans. Some sites are free, but most only allow you to post and browse for free, charging you for replying. But what else is money for? If you can afford it, join multiple sites to increase your odds. It's still probably cheaper than routinely buying rounds of drinks at a singles bar. Just be careful of porn sites that masquerade as dating

sites. Read all fine print!

TIP 2: Be a dandelion - send out seeds in as many directions as you can. If someone is even a potential prospect, send a "hello." Don't expect people to come to you.

TIP 3: Easy does it. When responding to an ad, send one and only one inquiry. If they're interested/available, they'll respond, maybe in a few days, maybe never. NEVER send a second email to someone who hasn't replied. It's a sure way to give "stalker" vibes, and if they were considering replying before, they'll likely stop considering now. Don't despair - on the average most people get one reply per 10-20 inquiries. Also, keep early emails brief and positive.

TIP 4: Make a date to meet in person sooner rather than later. I can't emphasize this enough. Extended email correspondence leads to fantasies that inevitably fall short. I once "e-chatted" with a girl for two months, fell head over heels, then met her and in 20 minutes I was gasping in horror as she verbally abused a teenage bagel chef right before my eyes! That kind of stuff you can only discover in person. Needless to say, there was no second date.

TIP 5: Suggest meeting in person after 3-4 emails, pick a public place or eatery for no more than an hour or two. Agree on some way to recognize each other ("I'll be holding a red umbrella") and once again, keep things positive and short - leave room for yourself to escape the date if need be.

TIP 6: Be persistent! At any time, you may find yourself thrown all the way back to step one. You need to endure freaks (like a girl who added me to her speed dial and invited me on a cruise after only 1 email exchange), nice people who are just bad matches, rejection, and long stretches of time with no "bites." It took me over a year, 30 random dates, and hundreds of emails, but it all paid off - this July, I'm marrying a wonderful woman I met online. When browsing online personals, you can't expect love at first click -- but as they say with the lottery, you only need to win once.

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have already burned as well as make sure your future data is safe:

1. Do not “overburn” your CD’s. Sometimes users buy CD’s rated for one speed (such as 48X), and then burn at a higher speed (such as 52x). We recommend burning at a lower speed than the maximum.

2. Store your CD’s in a cool, dry, dark location. If you have important discs, you should put them in airtight bags, and then store them in a safe or filing cabinet. It is imperative that your discs not be exposed to sunlight for long periods of time. Users in tropical climates need to take special care, as the high humidity can spur the production of a type of fungus that actually eats the polymers in CD’s! Also, CD’s should be kept in some sort of protective jewel case. Replace discs in paper covers with plastic cases, if at all possible.

4. Look for high quality brands of CD-R’s. If you are backing up important data, stick with CD-R’s instead of CD-RW’s, which are reportedly less stable. While there is a LOT of debate regarding the issue of disc quality, our research found that discs made by Mitsui and especially Taiyo Yuden were the repeatedly judged to be best. While these factories make discs under their own names, they are more commonly found in a variety of different brands, such as Sony, Philips, 3M, TDK, Pioneer, Yamaha and Kodak. Look for a “made in Japan” label on the next pack of disks you buy. Japanese discs in general are reported to be of higher quality than those made in Taiwan.

5. Buy a good burner. Most drives from Plextor, Light-On, Sony or TDK are high quality and can be trusted. Also,

make sure to keep the firmware for your drive up to date.

6. Avoid sticking any sort of adhesive labels to your CD. A recent article we found suggests that the glue in many labels may react badly with the metal foils in the disc. It’s best to write your labels directly onto your CD’s with a permanent felt tip marker. Make sure you use **only** felt tipped pens. Scratching the top of a disc with a ballpoint pen can be even more destructive than a scratch on the bottom of the disc.

7. Make random spot checks of your data at least once or twice a year. That way, you can track errors on the disc as they begin to appear. There are software tools you can use to check on the status of your discs.

Here is a list of links that can help you learn more about this issue:

Andy McFadden’s CD-Recordable FAQ: www.cdrfaq.org
A wonderful resource that is kept up to date, and answers practically every question you might possibly have about CD recording.

Nero CDSPEED 2000: www.cdspeed2000.com
A comprehensive benchmarking tool, with the ability to test the quality of your CD burner, as well as the media you are burning with.

CD Media World: www.cdmediaworld.com
A good source of news, with an extensive list of media, grouped by manufacturer, brand, dye types, etc.

And as always, feel free to contact us, either by phone or by email, if you have any questions!

Video Gamer’s Review by Josh Mintzer

Overall Game Score: **8.7**

TRON 2.0

Probably one of the most anticipated first-person shooters of the summer, TRON 2.0 continues the story begun by Disney’s 1982 movie, and while previous knowledge of the storyline isn’t necessary to play the game, you’ll find it helpful in order to understand references to past events, and to catch the in-jokes that often pop up. You take on the role of Jet Bradley, son of one of the protagonists from the movie. Working as a game programmer for Encom, Jet suddenly finds himself thrust into the digital world when a powerful computer virus infects the company system. Now forced to operate within the computer itself as a “user program”, Jet must track down the source of this world-wide viral infection, and eventually halt the efforts of a rival company bent on taking over the world.

Each world glows in spectacular color and displays a wide variety of special effects, provided your machine can handle the hefty system requirements. I personally wouldn’t recommend trying to run this game on anything less than a Pentium III 800mhz, or with less than 256 megabytes of RAM. You’ll also need a relatively new (from the last year or two) video card in or-

der to make the game playable.

While I highly enjoyed the game, I feel that it broke very little new ground. The puzzles are all of the same type that have been in use for the past decade, and I often found myself wishing that there could be more than one way to solve them. It’s also a rather linear game, so the plot doesn’t change one way or the other depending on your actions. There is a limited multiplayer component, but it boils down to either a frustrating “disc arena”, or a “light cycle” match, which doesn’t properly work over the Internet. Neither were terribly engrossing.

TRON 2.0 is a solid, well-crafted first person shooter game. While it doesn’t do anything new or revolutionary, the single player experience is a great blend of combat, exploration, and plot. The limited replay value hurts the game somewhat, as does the lackluster multiplayer function. However, there is hope that player produced modifications will add some extra life to the game in the future. Fans of the movie and hardcore first person shooter players in general will certainly want to pick this title up.

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An Informative Newsletter for Our Customers

www.aretecomputer.com

Beware the Virus!

As always, the best protection against computer viruses is to have a virus protection program installed and running at all times on your computer. We recommend either McAfee or Norton Anti-Virus. Perform regular scans on all of your hard drives and never download files from a website or email attachment you are unfamiliar with. Viruses can hide in anything!



According to Norton's website, a current virus threat is: The **W32.HLLW.Bodiru** which is a worm that spreads using file-sharing networks. It attempts to perform a Denial of Service (DoS) attack against Internet hosts. The worm is written in Visual Basic and is compressed with ASPack. It affects systems running Win-

dows 2000, Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows NT, Windows Server 2003 and Windows XP. This virus attempts to change the contents of files on the computer and may corrupt files.

This Virus may also attempt to gain access to passwords or other system-level security settings. It searches for openings in the Internet-processing components of the computer to install a program on that particular system, which an individual could remotely control over the Internet. This virus spreads through file sharing networks such as Kaaza and Kaaza-Lite. It will attempt to replicate itself through mapped drives or other server volumes.

If you think your computer may have this virus, run a virus scan and call us immediately!

Computer Joke of the Month:

Top five things you don't want to hear from Tech Support:

1. "Do you have a sledgehammer or a brick handy?"
2. "That's right, not even McGyver could fix it."
3. "We can fix this, but you're gonna need a butter knife, a roll of duct tape, and a car battery."
4. "In layman's terms, we call that the Hindenburg Effect."
5. "Please hold for Mr. Gates attorney."