WIRED

Snow Crash's Neal Stephenson Visits Shenzhen

¡Enchufate!

R. U. Sirius on Media Voyeurism

Stephen Levy: The Mac at 10

February 1994

Is Advertising Finally Dead?

Will legendary adman George (I want my MTV) Lois, upstart Richard (No Excuses) Kirshenbaum, and their chubby buddy be zapped into interactive oblivion? First, a word from our sponsor...



02
0 74820 08887 6
$4.95 / Canada 5.95

JARGON WATCH

BLOB (Binary Large OBject) – Used to describe very large binary files. "The speed of your server is a function of the size and number of BLOBs you'll be moving through the network."

Dawn Patrol – Programmers who are still at their terminals when you return to work the next morning.

Dittoheads – People who are in perfect alignment on an issue, an idea, or a belief system. Allegedly coined by Rush Limbaugh to refer to his legion of faithful followers.

Firefighters – Net users who try to put out "flame wars" early in their gestation.

Going Postal – Euphemism for being totally stressed out; losing it. Makes reference to the unfortunate number of postal employees who have snapped and gone on mass shooting rampages.

Holy Wars – Perpetual BBS discussions that never die, the arguments never change, and no one's opinions ever budge one iota. Holy wars are fought over abortion, gun control, Mac versus IBM, Windows versus DOS, and how much nudity to allow in the image areas of online services.

Slag – To bring a network, especially a LAN, to its knees by overloading it with data traffic. "We slagged the net last night by playing *Spectre* while the MIS department was trying to reindex the accounting file."

SoHo – Acronym for Small Office, Home Office. Ziff-Davis recently started inserting a PC supplement into Sunday newspapers targeting the SoHo market.

Thrashing – Clicking helter skelter around an interactive computer screen in search of hidden buttons that might trigger actions. (Found in the manual to the CD-ROM game *Myst*.) – *Gareth Branwyn*

Tip o' the hat to: John Raymond Sumser, Ian Iver, Eric S. Theise, John Manning, and Rebecca Lartigue

► **Understand: A New Jersey man, arrested after pumping several rounds of lead into his misbehaving home computer, told police he "couldn't understand why he couldn't shoot his own computer in his own home." Unfortunately he used hollow-point bullets and the gun was not registered. As an alternative, we suggest a screen saver which, on your command, turns your monitor into a gutted hulk. ☰III The Revolution Just Got Faster: Not content to let the PowerPC eat its lunch, Intel recently announced that its entire line of chips will double in speed over the next year – without a price increase. ☰III Reinventing Silicon Valley: Bored with forging the computer revolution, a non-profit consortium of Silicon Valley companies has garnered a major grant from state and federal agencies to create CommerceNet, an $8 million project "designed to help Silicon Valley businesses make commercial use of the coming 'Information Superhighway.'" Sponsored by Smart Valley Inc. – the consortium of Valley biggies – and the private consulting firm EIT (e-mail *ams@eit.com*), CommerceNet could be seen as the first serious attempt to turn the Net into a viable commercial infrastructure. ☰III If you think the All-Music Guide is a good idea (see page 52), how about an Internet Encyclopedia? The Interpedia, as it will be known, is under construction by infonauts around the globe. It began as a mailing list, but its goal is the creation of a living document that will be kept completely up-to-date. Indeed, it may include hypertext links to ongoing discussions, and perhaps evolve into a general interface to all resources and activities on the Internet." Interested? E-mail** ►

...The Sexonix BUST.....

Sexonix, the world's first VR sex company, has lots of appeal. They manufacture and sell specialized software and hardware to bring about the ultimate in safe sex and digital convergence. Just one thing keeps it out of the hands and off the genitals of eager teledildonauts: The company is a hoax from start to finish, masterminded by Joey Skaggs, a professional media performance artist.

Sexonix got its "start" at the Toronto Christmas Gift Show in the fall of 1992, when Skaggs rented a booth at the show and called a press conference to demonstrate his wares to reporters. But Skaggs's booth was empty – he claimed all of his VR gear was confiscated by Canadian customs for obscenity reasons, putting Sexonix out of business.

The confiscation story was covered on television, radio, and newspapers in Toronto, and picked up by wire services around the world. *Future Sex* and *New Media* magazines covered Sexonix's plight, expressing outrage and cries of foul play.

All well and good, except the gear never existed, and he never had anything to show. The whole stunt was done with a few well-chosen video clips from *Lawnmower Man*, some actors, and help from a public relations agency to stir up press interest.

Skaggs wasn't satisfied with just duping the media: He went after the online community as well. In July 1993, months after the initial wave of publicity surrounding Sexonix, he posted a press release describing the "events" surrounding his Toronto confiscation and the demise of Sexonix on several BBSes, including ECHO, Fidonet, and the Well. His posting stimulated discussions that were active over the summer, and he still gets queries once in a while. Most Wellites fell for the scam – except for journalist Brock Meeks, who smelled a rat and checked the facts.

Once exposed on the Well, Skaggs was vilified by online denizens, and one counter-prankster posted that Skaggs had died of mysterious circumstances. Needless to say, Skaggs is alive and well and quite amused by the attention.



This isn't Skaggs's first hoax. Previously he played a doctor with a cockroach-extract-based cure for arthritis, acne, and radiation sickness; a proprietor of a dog bordello; and the founder of the Fat Squad – guards for fat people to keep them from overeating.

Seeing how easily the Sexonix hoax went over on the Net, where everybody is both a reporter and a reader, Skaggs's media pranks are a reminder to check the source before reposting the story.
– *David Strom*

FACING PAGE: BILL ZEMANEK