FEEDBACK

> **The standard diagnostic practices of most ISPs are a direct threat to Internet safety.**

BEFORE YOU GET READY TO THANK THE ACADEMY...

After reading "How to Make an Award-Winning Movie" by Bill Dyszel (December 28, 2004), I viewed the movie (*http://go.pcmag.com/area2slash2*) and was quite impressed at what Bill was able to accomplish in just 48 hours. I found his 5-minute movie entertaining and extremely clever. The key word here is *clever*, but I can't leave out the words *creative* and *talented* as well. Which leads me to putting in my two cents.

I run a small film-to-DVD service, so it irks me when I read ads from stores like BestBuy that oversimplify creating a home movie with statements like: "Just three simple steps! (1) Shoot, (2) Edit, (3) Burn."

Ads like this mislead the public as to what is *really* involved in making a movie. Bill's article did something similar by oversimplifying the movie-making procedure. Forget the *cost* of the software. *It would take longer than 48 hours* just to learn how to work with the software *he* used to create his movie. People reading his article don't realize this.

Editing movies is a long, laborious process. It involves a tremendous amount of creative talent to finalize a movie that would be enjoyed by all. The "producer" needs to purchase the proper software and be totally familiar with it, which is a task in itself.

VELIKO BEKIR

INTERNET SAFETY BEGINS WITH THE ISP

I read with interest your piece entitled "Internet Safety Begins at Home" (Forward Thinking, December 14). I agree wholeheartedly with your assessment that home computers are wreaking havoc with Internet security. From my perspective, ISPs are a significant part of the problem.

My firm provides technical support for small businesses and home offices. I have found that the standard diagnostic practices of most major ISPs are a direct threat to Internet safety. Invariably, the first thing my users are told upon calling their ISP's support is, "Remove the firewall." As the 20-minute figure from the SANS Institute indicates, this is not only foolhardy but downright dangerous.

Frequently my clients are also advised to disable antivirus software and/or antispyware protections and are baffled when they end up with compromised machines. They assume that the ISPs are experts on computer security, but I usually find them to be anything but. The ISPs' so-called "technicians" know how to diagnose only one type of environment: a single PC directly connected to the broadband modem. End users can hardly be expected to understand why computer security is important when their ISPs have such a blasé attitude about it.

ISPs need to train their people. A basic networking class, like those offered at many community colleges, is all that's required. There's no difference between a firewall doing a PPPoE authentication and a PC doing it, and there's no reason for these ISPs to be contributing to Internet threats.

TRIONA GUIDRY

LESS IS MORE

Your review of the so-called low-end computer caught my eye ("A Little Computer for the Rest of the World," Forward Thinking, December 14; also in the same issue, Pipeline, page 26). This machine has 125MB RAM and a 10GB hard drive, can do e-mail, Internet, and likely word processing, and is *very easy to use*. It also lists for $249. Guess what? This is all that 80 percent of computer users want or need from a computer.

So why isn't such a computer being sold here in the U.S. and Canada? I'd like that kind of machine, too!

MARTIN PLANT

XBOX MAGAZINE?

It is interesting to me that you include Halo 2 as one of your 100 Best of 2004 (December 28, page 113) and that it's on your Editors' Choice list for Action/Combat games. Maybe I'm delusional, but doesn't your cover say "*PC Magazine*"? Halo 2, last I checked, was an Xbox game and not released for PC as of now.

I would have preferred a different game in your 100 best, one made for the PC, such as the greats of 2004: Half-Life 2, Painkiller, Far Cry, Doom 3, Unreal Tournament 2004, or any number of other high-quality PC games. I've played Halo 2 for the Xbox, and while it is an improvement over Halo, it is by no means greater than any of the actual PC games released this year. Please keep your title in mind when bestowing your Editors' Choice and 100 Best awards.

STEPHEN SNIDER

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Corrections and Amplifications

■ In "The 21st Annual Awards for Technical Excellence," January 2004, in the Mobile Components category, we misnamed one product: The correct name is the Intel Bulverde XScale PXA 270.

■ In our Best of the Year story (December 28), in the Gaming section, we reported an incorrect subscription rate for City of Heroes. It is $14.95 a month, not $20 a month.