

OPINION



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Something has been bugging me for some time: why is multimedia so often an unsatisfactory experience? Wait, I hear you say, don't you know how complex the technology is? Listen, pal and watch my lips, 'I don't care.' I know at least four intelligent people with computers who do nothing with them.

Computers, if they are to be used in the home, should satisfy a need, not just sit there as a fashion accessory. How about reliable computers running worthwhile content? Many have been disillusioned by their digital multimedia experiences, and we're going to have to fight hard to get them back.

In a recent UK survey still only about 25 per cent of computer owners had CD-ROM multimedia capability. Why? Disappointed by its CD-ROM sales, a chain of superstores commissioned research that showed the bulk of sales were from startup bundles, and that people rarely bought more because of high costs and low standards. The chain then introduced their own quality control. Using criteria such as the appropriate use of medium, ease of installation, localisation, and content, they failed approximately 70 per cent of the titles reviewed.

What happened to multimedia? DTP brought pages with a dozen mismatched fonts. Now sense has returned and we are no longer in awe of the technology. Consumers will not tolerate substandard, ill thought out or opportunistic products. The time has come for a truly interactive aesthetic that delivers on the promises that have been made.