

Buying equipment from abroad can be fraught with difficulty and is a subject that we'll be looking at in more detail later this year. In the meantime, perhaps some of our other readers have information that may help you.

NOT EINSTEIN

Re: Computer Shopper, Issue 12, page 168 (review of Star Trek), Hardware requirements box.

A light year is a unit of distance, not time!

Ashley Davies, PhD, Berkshire

While your grasp of physics is commendable, we can't say as much for the rest of your letter; this is *Computer Buyer*, not *Computer Shopper*!

DEPRESSION SOFTWARE

The computer press has waxed lyrical of late over the properties of compression software — 'Double your disk space for under £100' is what we are told. Not only that; as well as being completely safe, the software improves the performance of your machine. As always, though, there is another side to the story. This is an account of my experience with one such product, *Stacker*.

I was sent a copy of *Stacker* to review for a magazine. I installed *Stacker* on my 286 machine, which had about 7Mb of free space. When I had done this, my C drive was crammed full and I was unable to write to any of the files, so I decided to de-install *Stacker*. When I tried this all my files disappeared; I had not been aware that this would happen but it shouldn't have been much of a problem because I back up every day. Unfortunately, my problems were only just beginning.

I contacted the helpline, who told me I would have no more problems as soon as I restored the files. This was not true: I had to reformat my hard disk. I was then unable to write to the A drive, which meant that in order to back up the files, I had to transfer them by modem to another computer.

After contacting the PC Independent User Group, it was suggested that I needed a new A drive. After nearly a fortnight off-line, installing and then de-installing *Stacker* has cost me over £150, plus a lot of time and effort.

Both the *Stacker* technical support and the PCIUG insist that my A drive failing was a coincidence. I don't believe that; if I hadn't installed *Stacker*, I am sure that none of this would have happened. I strongly advise anyone thinking of buying any compression utility software or

HOW TO CONTACT BUYER

- 1) By fax on (071) 438 1443.
- 2) By Royal Mail to:
The Editor, *Computer Buyer*,
19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ
- 3) By e-mail to:
buyer@cx.computink.co.uk.

If you have a technical problem, PLEASE DO NOT CALL US — we are not equipped for telephone enquiries. Instead, fill in the Tech Support FastFax on page 263 and mail or fax it to us.

BUYER: THE CONFERENCE

There is now a *Buyer* conference for your feedback on the cx on-line conferencing system. Type «join buyer» at the main prompt. If you are not on cx but would like to join, call (081) 390 8446 for details.

hardware, to think very carefully. I have heard of at least two other cases of people losing all their data when using such utilities. Computers have never been cheaper, to upgrade may cost twice as much as a compression utility, but there is an old adage: buy cheap, pay twice.

A Baron, London

There have been some problems reported with disk compression software and there are drawbacks to using such systems — some of them were raised when we looked at *Stacker* and *SuperStor* in the January issue of *Buyer* — but they can also be very useful tools for a lot of users. Your problems with *Stacker* seem to have been quite considerable, and we can only say that they're also unusual in *Buyer's* experience and we're inclined to agree that the failure of your floppy disk drive was almost certainly a coincidence.

KEEP CLEAR OF CRAZY SUE

I purchased a virus infected disk at a local boot fair for 20p. Fortunately, I used your Gold Disk Program 'V Shield' and discovered that this disk carried the 'Stoned' virus.

While many reports of viruses appear in various PC magazines, there does not appear to be a National Register of total counts of viruses found. Editorial guesses at the total numbers do not seem to be adequate to this end. How about setting up a Report Line centre?

Alan Crisp, Kent

Readers should watch out for copies of the disk sent in by Mr Crisp; while they may not all be infected it's good practice to scan every disk you buy for viruses. Mr Crisp's disk has a label saying, "PC FUN Crazy Sue. Attention: this is no budget game."

Your suggestion of a Report Line is a very good one; there are already some sources of virus information — see this month's feature on page 145.