

# My DVD drive

AN \$%&\*"\$!&& OF AN EXPLANATION WHY THE WONDERS OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY MEANS THAT THE PRODUCTIVITY OF TREASURERS IS ACTUALLY FALLING.

People stop me in the street, and complain that *The Bottom Line* appears so infrequently these days. Ah, I reply, brushing by them and walking on, it is all to do with modern technology. Let me explain.

The problem starts with the way that I type out this column. I will hurry past the early years, when I had a succession of portable typewriters. (A portable typewriter was the first consumer durable I ever bought). Since I type badly, back in these days I also had to buy gallon jars of Tippex. The keys of my portable kept jamming, or the middle of the letters 'a' or 'o' kept clogging up, and I switched to electronic typewriters when they first came onto the market. These had a tiny memory, and made a sound like a machine gun as the carriage rattled back and forth when I pressed the PRINT key. All of my electronic typewriters gave up the ghost in the same way, printing '\$%&\*"\$!&&' when I had typed in a sensible word like 'derivatives'.

I eventually moved to a PC, with my first PC rented rather than bought. This was a pretty awful machine, with the printer regularly blowing a fuse. Aah, would say the repairman, you must have had another power surge. Don't be ridiculous, I would reply, for I no more suffer from power surges than I suffer from BO. This machine had few software features. To be fair, among the software offerings was a game of Solitaire, but, as I cannot play cards any more than I can swim or play the piano, this provided little entertainment. This first PC had, I think, a CD drive, but that could only work by pushing an unbent paper-clip through a little hole in the casing. As a result, that PC was silent, and provided little amusement, apart from making me wait for the fuse on the printer to blow again. Overall, it was a very dull machine.

I then moved to a succession of purchased PCs, all with an internet connection. All of these had a CD drive, that worked without my unbent paper-clip. I bought lots and lots of CDs, composed by dead, white males, which made a cheerful background noise as I typed away. Now, if it were left to me, I would never want to upgrade a PC. The software might be slow and clunky, but no hacker, I reason, would create a virus to attack elderly software; but with my previous machine my children got very sniffy. It is s-o-o-o slow, they complained, and the fan in the unit makes a terrible clatter. Never mind, I would reply, for the slowness of the machine gives me time

to think, and the problem with the noisy fan can be fixed if someone would just undo the screws on the back of the unit, and blow away the dust. They kept on and on with their nagging, and eventually I succumbed.

My new PC, with the current version of Windows, is lightning fast and not at all clunky; and has a spell check, and a thesaurus, and a route planner, and other software features beyond anything I will ever need; but the ultimate marvel is that it has a DVD drive. My older readers might not know what a DVD is. Remember when music came from LPs, black things as wide as dinner plates. LPs shrank to become CDs, the little silvery things about 4 inches across. In olden days, films could only be recorded on video tapes. Now

this happens on DVDs which are the same size as CDs, with microscopic pits on the shiny surface which can be read by a laser. (It is as well that I gave this technical explanation now, before the technology changes again). It would be churlish not to play DVDs on my PC, after Bill Gates has gone to all that trouble to build his Media Player.

DVDs are around the price of a paperback – and some come free with the Sunday newspapers – although DVDs of new films are around the price of a hardback. Most new films amount to not much more than car chases and loud BANGS and the earth being consumed, but the cost of obtaining a decent, old film is quite affordable. Better still, my son-in-law built up a massive collection of DVDs during his bachelor days, and I am able to use him as a free lending library. All that I have to do

in return is to write a short review, and score the DVD on a five-point scale. (My son-in-law does not try to regulate the length of the review. I can be at my lyrical best and fill pages praising the depth of characterisation and the pace of the plot-line and the mixture of humour and Lear-like tragedy of the DVD of a series of *The Sopranos*, and give it 4 7/8 points, but I am allowed to give *The Passion of the Christ* 1/2 point and dismiss it with the words "For masochists only"). Alas, my son-in-law's collection does not seem to include any DVDs which feature corporate treasurers.

I am starting to ramble. The point is that I have become addicted to films, and I would much rather sit in front of my computer screen watching a DVD then pecking out on the keyboard another *Bottom Line*. Blame my silence on modern technology. JF

