



BLU-RAY GETS A LEG UP

So, you've decided to go with the Blu-ray crowd and dump DVD forever in spite of that nagging little voice whispering "Internet, pa..." in your ear. Well, what to do for a BD burner fast enough for all that juicy data?

Buffalo reckons it has the answer in the shape of the world's fastest USB 3.0 BD writer: the 12-speed BR-X1216U3, a ¥39,100 PC or Mac drive that's just hit the stores.

It's definitely a great leap forward for the fledgling technology (and slightly scary price tags), but Buffalo is hoping you'll overlook the lack of USB 3.0 ports in most computers on the market and maybe buy one of their add-in cards (from ¥6,300) to up the ante. Oh, and there aren't actually any 12x BD disks in the shops yet—8x is yer lot for now.

<http://bit.ly/buffalobd>

SELF-HEALING PHONES ARE FOREVER

It's hard to say what DoCoMo's move to put scratchproof paint on all its new phones will do to the huge aftermarket protective-cover industry here, but we bet it won't be pretty.

Scratch Shield clear paint, developed by automaker Nissan, is a self-healing resin that essentially "rebounds" after a ding to push out offending marks. Applied to phone cases and screens, it should make other protectors redundant PDQ.

Unless, of course, we're talking about Japan, in which case makers of screen covers and the like will probably just up the bling and add more Kitty holograms and Pokemon emblems to keep sales healthy.

<http://bit.ly/scratchaway>

MARIO HAS AN EYE FOR THE LADIES

Let's face it—there's a fair chance that if you're reading this beautiful tech spread, you didn't grow up playing with Barbie or My Little Pony. Which is why the latest data from Nintendo on female gamers comes as quite a shock.

According to research from Ninty's US arm, a full 11 million women and girls are the "primary players" on games hardware in American households. That's a sizeable chunk of the 45 million folk in total who love their consoles and handhelds.

Where the really surprising number comes is in the success of the Wii among those 11 million—the platform accounts for 80 percent of female gamers, with the remainder almost evenly split between PS3 and Xbox. Way to go, Mario.

<http://bit.ly/galgamers>

GIVING HACKERS THE FINGER

Anyone who's ever had their personal data compromised will appreciate the value of being more prudent when using a computer, but we're not sure if the same biometric security technology employed by many ATMs will ever become as popular as, say, a screensaver/password combo.

Sony's new Mofiria finger-vein scanner is a ¥30,000 USB pad that, when keyed to a specific finger, ensures only its owner can operate a PC. Sony says it's both easier to use and more accurate than other biometric scanners, such as fingerprint readers.

There may be a market for the Mofiria device in some companies and medical facilities, but we can't really see it making inroads among ordinary consumers, who will surely be satisfied with pets' names or birthdates as passwords. Oh, wait...

<http://bit.ly/fingervein>

PENNY FOR YOUR TWEETS

Ah, Twitter—donta love it? Seriously, is there any expat in Tokyo who doesn't use the microblogging service (yours truly is @japanized)? But what would happen if Twitter planned to charge Japanese readers to read certain tweets? There'd be an uproar—just like there was last month.

Back then, a division of a partner in Twitter Japan publicly presented plans for a subscription model, which prompted shock and negative tweets galore. There were even details on the likely cost: ¥100 to ¥1,000 a pop, with Twitter skimming off 30 percent of that.

All well and good, except for the fact that the company concerned then seemingly backtracked in the face of negative press, saying it was all just a third-party suggestion for Twitter and never intended to be anything close to official. Twitter remains free... for now. <http://bit.ly/twittdubs>; <http://bit.ly/twittdubs>

TOKYO'S FIRST SOLAR BIKE PARK

Setagaya-ku readers might want to keep their eyes peeled next spring for an intriguing new bicycle park being built by Sanyo outside Sakurajosui station on the Keio line.

The Solar Parking Lot will—as you might have guessed—be plastered in solar panels designed to juice a fleet of electric bikes. Best of all, the hybrid (electric/human-power) Eneloo bikes will be provided by Sanyo, so you don't need to have your own, which is just as well if the company actually wants any participants.

There's no word yet on the cost or duration of the program, but we know there'll be 40 bikes and enough solar power to light the complex at night. Anyone keen on signing up for a rental should inquire at the Setagaya Ward Office. Expect demand to be sky-high. <http://bit.ly/solarbikes>



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