

Miles Mendoza's Website of the Day

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Published by Friday Books

Extract

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1. INTRODUCTION

Why the web is brilliant, and how I got hooked

Hello. Thanks very much for buying or borrowing this book. Or even just for reading this far when you've got time to kill in a bookshop – I'm not choosy.

I really can't get through the first few paragraphs without mentioning my Mum. She's *super*-grateful to you for reading this, in fact words can't describe the extent of her gratitude. Because as of this second, she gets to talk about her son being a published author – and that, I'm sure you'll agree, is a good result for all mums.

But Mum doesn't have the monopoly on gratitude here. I'm very grateful too, because I'm sort-of guessing that you've never read a book about the Internet before. Hence my job is to make sure you don't look back on this as a massive error of judgement.

How to use this book

Much though I'd like to think you'll sit down and read this from cover to cover, I realise that it's not that sort of book.

But it's not a conventional guide book either. You're welcome to keep it next to the computer – and I'm sure you'll find it handy to skip to a chapter to find the web address for a particular site. But you could pay me no greater compliment than to keep this in the bathroom or dip into it on the train in the morning. Hopefully that way you'll read about some sites you like the sound of – and you can explore them properly later on when you're in front of the computer.

To that end, I'll save you the trouble of having to type in every web address you see in these pages. The only address you need is <http://www.websiteofthedaybook.com>

On that site you'll find clickable page-by-page links to every single site mentioned in this book. There. Don't say I don't spoil you.

While I'm on the subject, I'll also use that address to let you know if any of the sites featured in these pages bite the dust. The web moves quickly, and in a book with as many links as this one, it's highly likely that one or two featured sites won't last the course.

Just to be clear, this definitely isn't a book about computers. Let's face it – computers are fundamentally pretty dull. Nobody whose company you enjoy would ever be caught enthusing about a computer. They're at least as ugly as they're functional *and* they're full of even uglier things with incomprehensible names.

You'll find copious ham-fisted analogies in the pages ahead, and it's only right that I don't wait any longer before smashing the champagne over the hull of my favourite analogy of the lot. Behold the Website of the Day Morecambe and Wise Theory:

Everyone loves Morecambe and Wise,
but nobody loves cathode ray tubes.

You don't need to understand cathode rays
to enjoy the Morecambe and Wise Show.

Computers are to cathode rays as websites
are to Morecambe and Wise. The best
websites are both hugely useful and every bit
as entertaining as a Morecambe and Wise
Christmas Show.

About 28 million people watched the 1977
Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show.
And 28 million people can't be wrong.

While I don't blame anyone for finding computers intimidating, one of the things I've always tried to get across on the radio is that they're merely a means to an end. So don't dwell on the aforementioned ugly box in the corner; think instead of all the fabulous stuff you can do with it.

My philosophy for Website of the Day has always been to look for sites that are entertaining to talk about. I never needed to sit down with Steve to discuss what to do with the feature. We both believed that if done properly, a feature about websites could (and

✦ The Morecambe and Wise Home Page

<http://www.morecambeandwise.co.uk>

The ultimate fan site for the dynamic duo is rarely updated these days, but the bulletin board, chat room and mailing list provide a great meeting-place for fans of classic comedy.

✦ Morecambe and Wise on BBC Cult

http://www.bbc.co.uk/cultclassic/morecambe_wise/

The BBC site has video of some memorable moments, including dancing newsreaders and Des O'Connor's moment of glory!



✂ Little Gems: The Herbs

<http://www.thechestnut.com/herbs/the-herbs.html>

✂ The Magic Roundabout

<http://magicroundabout.com>

Little Gems is a joyful celebration of children's TV of the late 1960s and 1970s. From *Lizzie Dripping* to *The Singing Ringing Tree* via *The Herbs*, you'll find programmes you loved, programmes you'd forgotten about and programmes you never knew existed.

The Magic Roundabout fan site explains how former Play School presenter Eric Thompson came to rewrite Serge Danot's French-made *Le Manège Enchanté* series completely, thus creating the surreal flower-power classic.

should) be interesting and entertaining even to listeners who don't use the Internet. My job is simply to find a bunch of great sites and share my enthusiasm.

It may surprise people to know that I wasn't one of the computer-y kids at school. I always associated computers with science and I was much more interested in drama and music. And I'm a bit too old to have had compulsory computer lessons – when I first started working in local radio production in 1989, we were typing all our scripts on ancient clumsy manual typewriters.

Consequently, when I first encountered a computer in the early 1990s I had a pretty steep learning curve ahead of me.

But once I got online there was no looking back. I've always been someone who's never just mildly interested in something. If it grabs my attention, it usually doesn't take long to develop into a full-blown obsession! *The Herbs* and *The Magic Roundabout* came first.

Next it was Snoopy and the *Peanuts* comic strips. In the school holidays my absolute favourite outing was a trip into one of the big department stores in central London since they had a 6-foot-tall cuddly Snoopy. I had well over ten Snoopies of my own. Snoopy Snoops, Snoopy Mick, Snoopy Mike, Snoopy Alan – and so it went on.

Then came *Thunderbirds*, *Batman*, *Superman*, *The Hulk* and *The Avengers*. *Grease* and *Charlie's*

Angels. For two years in the playground I was Bosley every break-time. Arguments about which Angel was best raged for weeks on end. My favourite was Sabrina. Farrah Fawcett Majors may have had the iconic hair, but Kate Jackson (who played Sabrina) was the brain-box who spoke nine (count 'em) foreign languages.

The sites I would have loved ... if they'd been there at the time

Thunderbirds Online

<http://www.thunderbirdsonline.com>

With fully animated '5-4-3-2-1 ... Thunderbirds Are Go' introduction!

Superman Homepage

<http://www.supermanhomepage.com/news.php>

A fan-run site celebrating all of Superman's incarnations.

Grease

<http://www.greasemovie.com>

Official site for the 20th anniversary re-release of the ultimate high school musical.

Charlie's Angels

<http://www.charliesangels.com>

Fan-site for the original TV show, with episode guides, interviews and the 'Farrah Hair Puzzle' – a fiendishly difficult maze that invites you to navigate your way safely through an artist's impression of Farrah Fawcett Majors' golden tresses.

Snoopy.com

<http://www.snoopy.com>

This terrific multi-media site transports me back to my ninth birthday, when my bedroom was a shrine to Snoopy and Woodstock.

You'll always find 30 different *Peanuts* strips on the site, each of which can be emailed to friends. There's a timeline showing the history of *Peanuts* from the first published strip in October 1950 right up until Charles M. Schulz' retirement nearly 50 years later.

The 'Fun and Games' section is a particular highlight with screen-saver and wallpaper downloads, video clips from the many Charlie Brown TV specials and an interactive colouring book for junior surfers.

