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ByBenedict Seymour

Our man on the technology front puts a whoopee cushion under the latest smart releases. (N.B. Text contains serious counter-factual elements)

February saw a tiny but significant catflap to the future swing open in IBM's San Jose research labs. Announcing the results of their latest experiments in 'atomic scale computing', the IBM team could well have found the key to the development of circuitry millions of times smaller than today's (so-called) microprocessors. Apart from pissing on contemporary standards of information transfer, assumptions about the subject-object distinction and western metaphysics as a whole, newspaper reports also stressed the info-sartorial implications of this new technological order. If IBM's tediously complex lab trickery can be put to real use, as Charles Piller of the LA Times writes: "the power of a supercomputer [could be packed] into a device so small that they could be woven into garments powered by our body heat." Scientists speculate that (literally) 'smart' jumpers, 'wired wool' or even 'fuck me' shoes have now become a real possibility – good news for a generation of Gap-clad geeks and other bum-bloused losers.

Some futurologists have dismissed IBM's findings as a case of "the emperor's new clothes", whilst other commentators remain more concerned about the real consequences of intelligent apparel (IA): will the datasuit make our bums look big, or just entirely irrelevant?

On a happier note, IBM's research seems to have sparked renewed interest in the potential of FPT or 'Fart Parcel Technology'. This cybernetic extension of the repressed communicational capability of the human arse was originally hypothesised by the late Timothy Bruckner back in the flower power '60s. The realisation of Bruckner's addled sub-Reichian vision of a 'nano-petomanic' interface (or 'interbumface'), now seems a matter not of 'if' but 'when'. Woven into special snug-fit electronic briefs or 'e-fronts', FPT would allow a further intensification of human communication, this time without any decline in sensuous particularity. In FPT, differently charged particles in the controlled or involuntary gaseous emissions from smart-bottomed ('smart arse') users would be converted into digital code, facilitating soundless, invisible information exchange between people at distances of up to thirty metres. A more 'organic' alternative to the sterile infrared hocus pocus of WAP technology, this could be a wireless but refreshingly un-antiseptic form of IT, tapping directly into the latent possibilities of the membrane as sender/receiver. Bruckner's dream of overcoming 'oppressive' mind/body, self/other distinctions through the use of smart e-pants could one day take the alienating abstraction out of telecoms, and, at the same time, confirm Brian ('the future is perfume') Eno as the visionary olfactory prophet he doubtless is.

Benedict Seymour