

# Steve Scott's Column

## BorCon London

I've just got back from the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Borland Conference in London. This is Borland's official conference in the UK and covers the whole Borland product range across its three tracks. The conference was opened with a keynote from David Intersimone, Borland's Vice President of Developer Relations and Dale Fuller, Borland's Interim CEO. The keynote was pretty much a marketing exercise that probably gave Finance and IT Managers what they wanted to hear but unfortunately put most developers to sleep. However, three things from the keynote have really stuck in my mind.

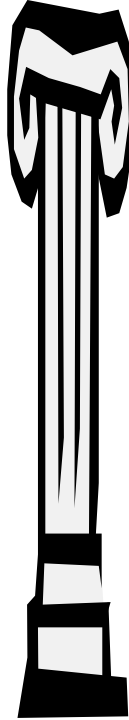
Firstly and most positively, the keynote highlighted the fact that 52% of Inprise's revenue comes from outside of the US, with 33% coming from Europe. This gave me great encouragement that it really is worth us continuing to campaign for what we want here in Europe.

Secondly, and less positively, while David and Dale were explaining that the Borland product line within the Inprise Corporation (that's the current view of things) was split into three sectors: RAD (Delphi, C++ Builder), Java (JBuilder, JDataStore, etc.) and Enterprise (everything else) David made the comment "Oh, I've left InterBase off the Enterprise slide". Under normal circumstances, a comment like this would be seen as small oversight. However, in the light of the current InterBase situation and all that has happened to our beloved little database this year, this type of comment does not leave me with the confidence that InterBase is central in Borland's current product strategy. I could be totally wrong and making a mountain out of a molehill, but Senior VPs of Developer Relations need to be a little more careful when preparing slide shows.

## Made in Borland

The final part of the keynote that struck me occurred during the Q&A Session at the end. A conference delegate asked Dale Fuller how the company intended to improve its market presence through marketing. Dale's response, I have to say was a little disappointing. First he said "You won't see us spending \$200 million sponsoring the Olympics" This was a good start. Borland have currently got almost \$250 million in cash, which I'm sure developers would like to see mainly go into R&D. So, if Borland are not going to enter into marketing campaigns of Microsoft proportions what are they going to do?

Well, Dale told us in his next sentence. "What we need is you guys to hand out these things" at which point he began to pass out bumper stickers to the delegates. We all giggled (just a little) and waited for him to continue, but he didn't. That was it. Apparently bumper stickers (which are very popular in the US) are the force that will establish Borland as a major market force. So, next time you're driving to work and you can't hear the radio because of the huge amount of noise being created by people hooting enthusiastically at the Borland sticker on the back of your car, you will be able to smile smugly, knowing that you are using products from a company that really knows how to sell them.



## Kylix

OK, so enough about marketing and percentages and all that drab stuff, what about the products? Well, Kylix was obviously a major focus and quite a few sessions were devoted to the new CLX (pronounced CLiX) library that will be used in both Kylix and Delphi 6. The sessions, which were divided up to deal with the different sections within CLX (VisualCLX, DataCLX, NetCLX & BaseCLX) were quite informative, although there wasn't really that much new information forthcoming. By the time you read this, anything that was new will be old hat, so I won't waste time listing it all here. We saw a few glimpses of Delphi 6 but only in conjunction with the CLX library and demonstrations of compiling the same code under both Windows and Linux.

## JBuilder 4

Surprisingly the star of the show for me was JBuilder 4. JBuilder is now apparently the best selling Java IDE available, taking about 40% of the market. I have to say a stable, well-featured product that will run on Windows, Linux, Solaris and Macs, that can develop applications for virtually any platform does sound rather attractive.

So how close does JBuilder get? Before going any further, let me be perfectly honest, I have virtually ignored JBuilder since release 2.0 when, in my humble opinion, it was virtually unusable due to its (lack of) stability and speed, so some of the things that I saw may have been in 3 or 3.5, but I wouldn't know. JBuilder 4 is obviously a very different product from the one I looked at a couple of years ago and, if you're a web developer, I strongly suggest you get yourself a 60 day eval from Borland and have a look.

I went to a number of the JBuilder sessions where there were many demos of its new features (especially for back-end web site development) and it appeared to be as solid as rock, along with being able to turn in a fairly swift performance. This was quite impressive as the IDE has been totally rewritten in Java since I last looked at it. OK, I accept that the presenters were all running well-specified machines with lots of memory, but with 800 or 900mhz processor and 256MB of RAM PCs available for about £800 + VAT, who cares. The real test for JBuilder will be the speed and reliability of the applications it produces which, admittedly, comes down to the speed of the VM on the platforms on which you wish to deploy. Demos will never really allow you truly to understand the capabilities and shortfalls of a product, so I intend to take a serious look at JBuilder in the coming weeks and I will report back on my thoughts.

To summarise: this conference has left me with mixed feelings about the Borland/Inprise operation. One thing is for sure, Borland really do know how to produce top of the range development products and on a technical level I think people will find it almost impossible to beat them. The downside is, however, once they have produced these tools my confidence in them to convince anybody to buy them is a little shaky.



continued

## Windows 2000

One company that doesn't seem to have any problem convincing people to buy its products, even if the products themselves leave something to be desired, is Microsoft. The Microsoft machine has plodded on for what seems like forever, churning out very successful mediocre products. Earlier this year, however, Microsoft released what I believe to be their best product ever in the form of Windows 2000.

It appears to me that this product, since its release, has not had the same hype around it as other MS operating systems have in the past. Maybe it's just me becoming oblivious to the Microsoft marketing machine, which could be an important warning to Microsoft. Anyway, regardless of hype or lack of it, Windows 2000 is a great operating system. If you are currently developing under Windows NT and enjoying its stability (relative to other MS platforms) but envious of the 95/98 brigade with all their wizzy features, then its time to upgrade. On the other hand, if you are a developer who enjoys the features of 95/98 when you can keep your machine running long enough to try them, then you need to upgrade.

I've been running under the shipping version of Windows 2000 for about 3 months now. I have applied the first service pack (80MB download), but only to keep up to date, not because I had any problems to fix, and overall I am very impressed. Firstly, and most importantly, it is very stable. Secondly, from Dial up Networking to COM+, it is very easy to configure and get to grips with and, last but by no means least, no developer should be expected to work any more without Dual Monitor Support. Go on, it might hurt to stick your hand in your pocket and give Mr Gates a couple of hundred quid, but I'm sure you won't regret it. (NB: If you're going to install on a laptop, it's advisable to make sure you are running the latest BIOS from the manufacturer.)



## Angus' Nifty Tips

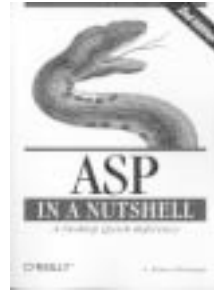
If you're running any TCP/IP services (such as WWW service, FTP service, POP3/SMTP services, or even just NetBIOS over TCP/IP) on your computer, you may want to find out who's connected to your computer and from where at a given time. This information is easy to obtain using NETSTAT command.

- Go to the "DOS Prompt" or "Command Prompt"
- Type  
NETSTAT <number of seconds>  
For example, if you want to redisplay the TCP/IP connections every 10 seconds, type:  
NETSTAT 10
- Press ENTER

## Finally, a book review

**ASP in a Nutshell (2nd Edition)**

by **A. Keyton Weissinger**



Available at Amazon (via [www.richplum.co.uk](http://www.richplum.co.uk)) for £12.76

As you may already know, I am a big fan of the O'Reilly "in a Nutshell" series of books. They are designed to be desktop references, something you may refer to daily, not just when trying to learn about the covered subject.

The book is split into three parts with the first being an introduction to ASP. If you are looking for a complete beginners book on ASP then this is probably not the one as this section is only about 20 pages long. If, on the other hand, you have an idea of what server side scripting is and a reasonable competence at either JavaScript or VBScript, then these 20 pages are probably all you need to understand the ASP ethos. As someone who hates books that take eight chapters and 200 pages to explain what a variable is, I enjoy the Nutshell rapid introduction style, although I do admit this one could be a little longer.

The second section is the ASP object reference. This section is about 150 pages and covers every method and property of the seven basic objects available to the developer as well as containing a chapter on the often forgotten but useful GLOBAL.ASA file. This section has been updated since the first edition to cover the new ASPError object in ASP 3.0 as well as bringing up to date any changes in the other objects that were already available in ASP 2.0. It is this section of the book that you will find most useful as you try to get to grips with ASP programming as it is well set out and every method has a VBScript example.

The final section of the book comprises 11 chapters taking up just over 200 pages and covers many objects that are not actually part of ASP but are useful to the ASP developer. Each of these objects or utilities is covered from an ASP perspective. The biggest chapter is on ActiveX Data Objects, which ASP relies on for database access. This chapter has been revised to cover ADO 2.6 rather than version 1.5, which was in the first edition. All the ADO objects relevant to the ASP developer are covered again with an example for each method. Other chapters in this section include the Ad Rotator, Browser Capabilities Component, CDO, File Access Component, Counter Component, Permission Checker Component as well as others. Added to this section since the first edition are chapters on the Logging Utility and Tools Components.

If you're just setting out in ASP and need familiarity with the object library or you're just looking for a good ASP object reference, then you should definitely buy this book. If you bought the first edition and find yourself using it regularly, then at under £13 it's worth the upgrade.

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