

The Live Wire. (415) 540-0529. 300/1200, 24 hours. A digital magazine for the graphic-arts community (printers, typesetters, self-publishers, artists). Free. Sysop: Rick Hepthing.

Feminist BBS. (312) 225-9138. 8-N-1, 24 hours, 300/1200 baud. Feminism, women's issues, general talk. Sysop: Susan B. Anthony.

Bulletin Board System. BBS devoted to handicappers and racing fans in So. Cal. On line every weekend. Log-on: race data for Santa Anita, Hollywood Park and Del Mar. (213) 934-6026.

Videodrome BBS. Where computers and video meet. (213) 324-5882. Open weekdays 4 pm - 2 am, weekends 12 pm - 2 am. Commodore 64 system.

Earth-Rite BBS. We specialize in Earth Religion and related topics. We are not a software exchange. (415) 851-9498. 24 hrs., 300/1200 baud.

Humor & Wisdom. A board dedicated to the exchange of comic relief and things to ponder in a new age of consciousness. Free, as all things should be. 300/1200 baud, (415) 937-2508.

Jukebox Bulletin Board (JBBS) (213) 670-8053. 8-N-1, 24 hours. 7 days, 300/1200 baud. Message board for buyers, sellers, and anyone interested in antique jukeboxes. Free. CPM/Password available on request. No Fees. sysop: Ray Etchepare.

Secret Partner 1. (213) 543-5273. 8-N-1, 24 hour, 300/1200 baud. "Find your long-awaited sweetheart." Walter F. Howard. sysop.

The Pirate's Hollow BBS. 24 hours, 300 baud. Ye Cap'n: The Atari Pirate. (415) 593-8784.

Phoenix Info. Sports betting, football, horse racing — Bay Meadows, Golden Gate Fields. Lotto and stocks coming later. Starting weekends while increasing days as interest grows. One ring and call back to get on. (408) 270-2661. Sysop: Jim Fimmel.

The Dead Board (717) 677-9573. 24 hrs., 8 bit word, 1 stop bit, no parity. 300/1200 baud. Grateful Dead tape trading and info: space for bulletins, ads and public mail.

Cold Moon On A Single Star. (415) 668-6101, San Francisco. 24 hours. Fido board. Chinese culture, history, language, Chinese cooking, discussion, etc. Asian community events. Sysop: Joseph Puig and Susan Chen.

Musician's Network BBS. Musician's information exchange. Space for want ads, bulletins, and public mail. Uploading and downloading available. BBS operates on Fido Software. 8 bits, no parity, 1 stop. Weekends only, 8pm Fri-8am Mon. (415) 893-1616. Sysop: Erik E. Hayles.

Lynzie's Motherboard (818) 508-6482/(213) 650-0519. 24 hours, 300/1200/2400 baud, B-N-1. Private E-mail, download library, dating match, interactive chat between users, 4 phone lines on rotary. Public boards include employment, food and restaurant reviews, sci-fi, political, debate, for sale and many more. Monthly social happenings for local users. Sysop: Lynzie Flynn.

The Shark's Head BBS Something for everyone, from serious to ridiculous. No-fee, membership system. We're not only user friendly, we're friendly users. Member SVSE. Dusty & Candy Van, (408) 247-4810.

Photobytes, a photography oriented BBS, features product information, help files, photo contest listings, plus much more. Sponsored by Wentling Camera Shops. 300 baud, (415) 439-2515, 24 hrs. 7 days.

Dial-Your-Match #1. (818) 842-6900. 24 hours, 7 days, 300/1200 baud. Meet new friends! The original and most unique friendship BBS. Online since October 1981. DYM network allows you to send messages across the USA.

Vietnam Vets-The LooneyBin Nancy and Todd Looney, sysops. Dedicated to 'Nam vets, their wives, lovers, and friends. Good friendly conversation plus referrals and counseling. Online 2 hours 3/12/2400. (408) 297-7894. FidoNet #143/27.

Uncle Tim's Hot Tub BBS (916) 689-4870. 8-N-1, 300/1200 baud. 24 hours. A cloth optional experience coming from Almost-Elk-Grove, California. Features: Main Hot Tub, C Language Tub, Pot Tub, Tasteless Tub and O Boards Tubs. No fees. Sysop: as open as the software allow. Registration unnecessary. We're new and ing! Give us a call, we'd like to hear from you! Sysop: Tim Beckwith.

THE BULLETIN BOARD PROLETARIAT

A VOLUNTEER PROLETARIAT MAINTAINS ONE OF the most invisible communication undergrounds going. Linked by phone lines, a web of computer bulletin board systems (BBSs) work night-duty collating messages and electronic mail for free. Regulars patronize small-time BBSs because they can feast on immediate gossip about very specialized subjects. Name a topic and there is almost certainly a BBS dedicated to it somewhere.

To get onto a BBS, you dial a phone number with your computer, and after reading the welcome message, you follow a menu of choices until you arrive at a topic you like. You can then read messages left by others (the bulletin board aspect) and post some of your own by typing them in. The result is a public answering machine, on which anyone can read all messages. Comments are served to you intelligently so that you read only the ones posted since you last checked in, no matter how long that's been. If you've been gone two weeks, you read two weeks' worth, and then you're caught up to the center of what is being said. It'll seem to the other callers that you were there all along, keeping quiet. The sum is a collective conversation that continues for weeks or months, and which happens at your convenience. In theory they stick to one topic. In practice there's enough continuity to keep it informative, and enough diversity to keep it alive.

Any old computer will let you in. You fit it out with a telephone adapter, called a modem (about \$100), and plug it into the phone jack. You'll find listings of public BBSs in the back of Computer Shopper (\$18/year from Patch Publishing, P.O. Box F, Titusville, FL 32781), in regional tabloids like California's Computer Currents and Microtimes, and at user-group meetings. Once you find one, it'll lead you to many others, board hopping as long-distance as you care to. Pirate boards, the truly underground BBSs where teenage hackers boast of their exploits, appear and disappear so fast they can only be found by hopping.

Propelling much of the drive in regular use of BBSs is the superhighway of PC Pursuit (800/336-0437). Run by Telenet, PC Pursuit lets anyone call BBSs located in most cities for a flat \$25-per-month fee, unlimited time, as long as it's in the evening. Without PC Pursuit many notable BBSs would be out of reach for half the country.

No one knows exactly how many bulletin board systems there are. The best guess is that there are about 7,000 operating at one particular time. They come and go with the irregularity of phone line static. Immensely easy to

start, a BBS usually becomes a hassle to maintain over the long stretch. While it's up and running, though, it's promoting a new brand of conversation. BBS sysops (system operators) keep them going because of the unsurpassed advantages of having people from all over the country calling in at their own expense to post amazing messages on the very subject one cares about.

BBSs are a gathering medium, not a broadcasting channel. The ones that work sculpt a comfortable visiting space to welcome comments. Dave Hughes, the pioneer telecommunications visionary, says the acid test for a BBS is if it averages one posted message for every two calls in. Any fewer messages and it will fade rapidly.

To start your own home-based BBS, you'll need a computer, modem, and one of these recommended software packages. For the Apple, we suggest GBBS. It's easy to set up in less than an hour, takes customized modifications superbly, and tends to be crash-proof. Consensus in the Macintosh world is that Red Ryder Host is the ticket for a home-based Mac BBS. Since it doesn't matter too much what computer you use, the most efficient way is to run your BBS on an IBM clone. The choice for IBM and compatible is TBBS. It's programmable by amateurs, and has been around a long time. There are two flavors. Single phone line (about \$300). Multiline, which will take up to eight phone lines (\$895), and mail to the free-forwarding FIDO service linking up BBSs at night (\$100). With both FIDO mail and 8 lines in, a souped-up BBS approaches the capabilities of a local teleconferencing system like the WELL. In fact, having both public and private access to your personal answering machine is the innovation brewing here. A BBS may be part of the household furniture someday.

— Kevin Kelly

TBBS: Version 2.0. For IBM and compatibles; needs 384K and hard disk. Copy-protected. \$300 for single line, \$895 for multiline. \$100 for FIDO mail; from eSoft, 4100 South Parker Road/Box 305, Aurora, CO 80014; 303/699-6565.

GBBS: Version 1.3. For Apple family; needs two drives. Not copy-protected. \$128 postpaid from L & L Productions, P. O. Box 5354, Avada, CO 80005; 303/420-3156.

Red Ryder Host: Version 1.4. For Macintosh; needs 512K. Not copy-protected. \$60 postpaid from FreeSoft, 150 Hickory Drive, Beaver Falls, PA 15010; 412/846-2700. ■