

Y2K: Out of the Big Blue Sky

Lyrics ©1997 Stephen Savitzky. Some Rights Reserved¹.
 To the tune of *Out of the Clear Blue Sky* by Dr. J. Robinson

Am G
 Once in a darkened office cube
 F E
 A hacker peered into his tube
 Am G
 And saw a vision of despair
 F G
 Of bugs and crashes everywhere
 C G
 Followed by chaos and woe
 F E Am
 From arithmetic overflow.
 Am C
 The hacker put a message on the Net
 Dm E
 That said “you folks had better not forget:
 That soon”

Am
 The century is ending at last
 Am
 And when it does your systems will crash
 G
 When date fields overflow it will be long ago
 Am
 No way to be a hero
 G Em E7 Am
 And only printed paper will survive Year Zero

The CIO of one large bank
 Said “customers have me to thank
 For noticing that EBCDIC
 In two-byte fields has 16 bits.
 We’ll update all our files in place
 And not use up a bit more space.”
 The hacker said “I’m not completely sold—
 I think I’ll take my balance out in gold.
 Because...”

A unix wizard said, “You know
 We solved that problem long ago
 Our date and time are binary
 Seconds since 1970,
 We’ll recompile in time enough
 Don’t bother me with mainframe stuff.”
 The hacker said “I don’t think you should wait—
 You only have till 2038.
 Meanwhile...”

A tycoon with huge market share
 Said “Trust me, I control software
 And I can say just what all fields
 Contain and what a function yields;
 So you can just sit back and wait—
 It’s fixed in Windows 98.”
 The hacker said “I’m sure you’ll have it done
 In time for Christmas in 2001.”

At last the year changed, on the dot
 From 99 to double-ought.
 Just as the hacker had expected
 For clocks cannot be write-protected.
 On New Years’ morning people woke to groan,
 “Oh dreadful day—if only we had known
 But now

The century has ended at last
 And when it did our systems all crashed
 Our date fields overflow; now our programs
 won’t go.
 No way to be a hero
 And only printed paper has survived Year Zero.”

*Yes calendars on paper have survived... the pro-
 grammers and hackers have survived... VMS
 and Unix have survived... the beta release of
 Windows Zero is expected on January 1st, 1970...*

Those fortunate people who have not encountered the Extended Binary Coded Decimal Interchange Code will want to know that “EBCDIC” is pronounced “EBB-suh-dick.”

¹This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 US License. 19970525