

Shaastra 2003



Under *the hood*



The Zeroth Issue of the Shaastra Newsletter

But We Have Promises to Keep

And a Week to Go Before We Sleep!

What with Engineering having a Spirit called Shaastra, we couldn't really decide if it should have an engine or a heart. So here's the in between. Shaastra has a Boxer 4 Chambered Thingy. With tricuspid valves and all.

Whether you look at it as a car, as this newsletter proposes to, or as a plane, as some preferred it instead would (what with aviation turning 100), one fact is inescapable – Shaastra is bigger than it's ever been. Starting out as a humble technical festival in the year 2000, in turn a giant leap over the relatively unknown Pragma, Shaastra has now become a mission, a philosophy, a hoarding campaign, even.

The Escher Knot has gone as far as Hyderabad to spread the brandname. And this city has been a very interesting choice. We reckon the day isn't far when Shaastra Study Circles train kids to say, "We are studying to get to that coincidentally ISO 9001 certified Institute which holds the ISO 9001 Certified Shaastra!"

This year saw another first – a press conference. Held on Friday, 3rd October, the conference was smooth, albeit poorly attended. Only one journalist of about the ten invited eventually showed up. And the other journalist present represented both *The Fourth Estate* and this newsletter, and we hear, as a consequence, that plans for Gameology came under much closer scrutiny than the core or coordinators ever expected they would, especially by way of questions at a press conference! So much for that. The PR team must nonetheless be commended on the effort.

Finally, whether in carrying a technical festival into the league of events fit to be publicised by vinyl hoardings or in setting up Shaastra Corners, or in calling a press conference, the core has, at every step, been acting on an admirable vision that everyone could benefit from sharing. It begins with asking oneself the question, "Where do you see Shaastra fifteen years from now?"

Team Newsletter proposes the following answer. Amen.



Art *Kunz* Text *M. Rahul Prasad*

~~We Are ISO 9001 Festival~~ Rather, We Have ISO 9001!

Actually, not just as yet. But significant progress has been made in the department. Before starting to fill us in on the details, the core in charge said, very cautiously, “I hope you’re not giving people the idea that Shaastra is going to rock just because of the ISO 9001 certification. It only indicates that our procedures are all in place, and not that the ‘quality’ of the experience meets any standards.”

That said, he told us that the two internal audits are done with, and that they uncovered a somewhat larger number of screw-ups than desired. The final external audit is scheduled for 10th October. “We’re quite optimistic about getting the certificate,” he said, “and we may soon see a Shaastra logo below the board near the gate, saying, ‘So do we!’”

Shaastra 2003 Release Notes

All that’s new in the latest version

It’s hard to forget the “Woah!” that shook the ChLT at the aspiring coordinators meeting a year and a half ago, as Ajit Q Narayanan wrote with a chalk on the blackboard, the words, “The Greatest Thing in the World”, and added, “Basically, we’re looking to create a world record at Shaastra da!”

That was the first time students were as excited about an event at Shaastra. This year it may be the sponsorship drive and publicity campaign that draw most of the gasps and sighs. But the events are continuously both generating and reinventing themselves. We take a look at all that’s new and repackaged in Shaastra 2003.

The Spirit of Engineering is what The Greatest Thing in the World has come to be renamed as. It was quite clear that we couldn’t go on breaking world records forever. Moreover, the motivation for the event was more to get those thousand hands to work together on an engineering marvel than to sign their way into the Guinness Book. This year, the idea is to build a 50ft x 50ft version of single player Snake (Nokia) or Nibbles (GNOME). The snake will be remote controlled and will mechanically move across the grid

chasing electronic fruit. As usual, hitting a wall or its own tail will kill the snake.

The Incredible Machine (TIM) is based on a brilliant computer game made by Sierra Online in the early nineties. Though it will be impossible to implement machines of even a hundredth the complexity of those in the actual game, TIM at Shaastra should be a wonderful challenge for those looking to unite Newtonian and Tom and Jerry Physics!

Other new events include **Informals**, **Robotics**, and **The Simulation Championship**. While the latter two have remained rather low profile, Informals has managed to grab some attention with the Ignobel Paper written by the coordinators and circulated as an IP. Also promised is a wide range of Oscilloscope games. **Rocketry** and **AI Bots** are now into their second year. Good old **Bullseye** is, as always, yet another step closer to reality!

At the time this newsletter went into press, the **Video Conference** coordinators were still wrestling with the Visa complications of one of the speakers who was to be flown in from Hong Kong with his wife. As it turns out, it will cost as

much to video conference with him in Hong Kong as it will bring him all the way to IITM, these logistical difficulties notwithstanding! Finally, as it stands, however, Dr. Kevin Warwick – Cyborg will be speaking at Shaastra, one way or another. Also speaking is Nobel Laureate Dr. Martin Perl of Stanford University.

Some events have already kicked off their elimination procedures. Among them is the **Programming Contest**, for which the non-IIT prelims will be held during Shaastra. Also, the **Paper Presentation** coordinators have had quite a truckload of entries to sift through. The participation from all the IITs is abysmal. The coordinators find most of the papers rather disappointing, but on the whole entertaining – one paper sent in by X1 and X2 openly claims to have been *written* by some unwitting American, and *presented* by X1 and X2. Looks like they're

taking the name of the event rather too literally! The one that takes the cake, however, is a letter that accompanied one of the entries, addressed personally to one of the coordinators. It went something like, “Dear μ , You were in the morning batch in Ramaiah. I was in the evening batch. I was very happy to see your name in the papers when you got AIR θ and also very happy to see your name in the Shaastra coordinators list for Paper Presentation. I am not saying this so you will select my paper, but I hope you will consider it even though it is a little late. I believe this paper can revolutionalise Biotechnology.”

And finally, the Shaastra Newsletter would like to pay a special tribute to four people who would have been quite a big part of Shaastra, but who must now go on to Noida for the next stage of the BBC University Challenge. Though we don't see them all below, we wish them luck.



Hi
&
Bye

Team Newsletter are
Kunal Kumar Pradeep S. Prashanth Sriram Rahul Pratap M.

Message for the Core Group

While we wonder how the damn rumour started, we wish to clarify that the Dilbert strip in no way refers to any of you. Quit flattering yourselves! Who among you do you think is Core-of-Fame material anyway?!
