

# escape

## Are you man enough?

Escape magazine needs a male journalist to volunteer for a feature we're running next issue. Basically the mug (or brave volunteer) will be strapped to a portable cardiac monitoring machine while he carries out various activities.

These include:

- Bungee jumping
- Driving in rush-hour traffic
- Playing network Quake
- Watching a football match
- Hugging an alien, top star in a crowded newsagents
- Making love

Obviously, the volunteer must fulfil several basic criteria: he must be able to get into a car, he must have a willing partner, and he must be able to take a day off to travel to Devon for a nutritionist on how to set up the apparatus (it's a target that a Sony can, by the way).

For your endeavours, we can offer you a free bungee jump/footie game ticket. + Big photo of yourself splashed across Escape; and a +10 up for it should contact Mat Toor on x3842 by Friday 1st

We regularly hear things described as being **better than sex**, and the reply is usually **"Bollocks!"** even without a shred of evidence. With a portable ECG heart-rate gizmo strapped to his bod, John Davison (a very brave man, believe us) boldly goes where none of the rest of us would go even **bloody** near to collect scientific proof of what, if anything, beats a **damn good shagging**

MAIN PIC: KOBAL

# Better Than

# SEX!

A NOTICE APPEARED ON THE OFFICE BOARD A MONTH OR SO AGO. IT READ: "ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH? **escape** magazine needs a male journalist to volunteer for a feature we're running. Basically, the mug (er, brave volunteer) will be strapped to a portable cardiac monitoring machine while he carries out various activities. These include: bungee jumping, driving in rush hour traffic, playing network *Quake*, watching a Hollywood action movie, chatting to a stranger, buying a, ahem, top-shelf title in a crowded newsagents, and finally... making love."

Fantastic! A guaranteed shag in the name of research and investigative journalism. But, er, why?

Well, you see the media (that's us, then) is apt to wildly and frequently claim that this game or that movie is "better than sex". It's a time-honoured cliché, and something that everyone has probably said at one time or another, but can you prove that something *is* actually better than humping and pumping? More importantly, can you do it scientifically?

Well, yes; you can hook yourself up to a portable ambulatory electrocardiogram (otherwise known as an ECG machine) and

carry out various different activities in order to illustrate a point.

What I've foolishly let myself in for here is a series of tests that will allow us to place activities in a 'stimulation' league table – and find out where playing *Quake* actually fits in. Using this as a 'control' (I knew GCSE General Science would come in useful one day) it'll be possible to say that, for example, having a shag is 'this much better' than playing *Quake*. The bungee jump? Let's just say the Features Editor has a very sick sense of humour...

Having committed to writing this, though, it suddenly dawned on me that a) my girlfriend, good sport that she is, might have a bit of a problem with being 'reviewed and rated', as it were; and b) that if this particular shag didn't rate somewhere pretty high on the Richter scale, and *Quake* ended up producing a somewhat better score, my bollocks would end up in the microwave; and finally c) the idea of jumping off a crane with just an elastic band for company is

I'm getting paid 15 pence a word for THIS?

## The one thing that's better than sex...

To find out what - if anything - was better than sex, we hooked John up to a portable ECG machine and measured the response as he carried out a range of activities. Then we got the medical experts to comment on the results ...

### Driving in rush-hour traffic

By the time I did this test, I'd already been down to the health screening centre in Plymouth to have the ECG machine fitted up. Seeing as I was still wearing the gear on the journey home, I figured that I might as well use the drive back as the first 'real world' test. I left Plymouth in the early afternoon but I obviously timed it badly, because I ended up hitting London at rush hour. On the whole though, the journey was fairly uneventful. 'Long', 'slow' and 'boring' are three particularly useful adjectives here - heart-racing it was not, apart from the brief moment when some cock pulled out in front of me on the White City flyover. I'm pretty sure that my heart raced a bit there.



#### Expert opinion

From 16:30 to 16:54 hrs the basal heart rate was 70 beats per minute. From 16:54 to 17:20 hrs there were three minor fluctuations in heart rate, with the maximum heart rate of 111 beats per minute recorded during this period, which corresponds to the time when he was cut up by another driver.

### Playing Network Quake

Our office games of *Quake* can get pretty heated. The whole building here has been networked in recent months, which means when someone boots up as a 16-player server, it's not long before you get loads of people joining in. Tonight's effort was a bit lacking compared to some nights, but things were spicy enough to keep going for an hour or so. The ECG box surprised me, as my heart actually jumped up to 115 bpm at one point. Admittedly it wasn't a sustained high; and I certainly never felt like my heart rate increased.



#### Expert opinion

A somewhat flat heart rate response on the one-minute averaging graph. This perhaps reflects the fact that John has played the game many times before. However, a maximum heart rate of 115 bpm was recorded during this activity, which is almost twice John's lowest recorded rate.

### Watching a video

Trying to select a video in Blockbuster with your girlfriend is arguably more stressful than changing jobs, moving house and getting married - all at once! Thankfully though, this particular trip was hassle-free, because we're blessed with a particularly useless branch, and invariably you'll find that the video you actually want is never in stock. After about 20 minutes wandering the shelves, we settled for *Bad Boys*, starring Will Smith... which, it turned out, had virtually no effect on my heart rate whatsoever, with it peaking at a pathetic 88 bpm - that was probably where I got up halfway through the film to have a piss.



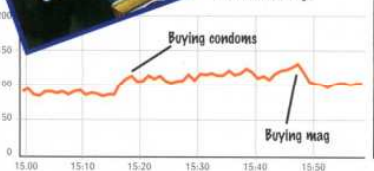
#### Expert opinion

The maximum heart rate attained during this activity was a mere 88 beats per minute. The heart rate graph demonstrates a somewhat flat response, with average heart rates varying between 65 and 82 beats per minute. Obviously John picked the wrong video.

### Buying condoms

As a spur-of-the-moment test, while out on our 'adrenaline afternoon' we decided that buying condoms was another nerve-racking duty that most blokes are happy to leave to their better halves (or, failing that, slipping them incognito into the monthly shop at Safeway). Having found a branch of Boots on Kings Road it was decreed that I wasn't allowed to go for (and I quote) "some poxy packet of three", I had to purchase

"shitloads". Having found something suitable, within a few minutes I was the proud owner of 18 Durex Featherlite. The girl on the checkout was probably more embarrassed than I, especially when Phil, our photographer, insisted I "hold 'em up" while at the till. Wahay!



#### What's Up Doc

The maximum heart rate attained whilst buying condoms was 107 beats per minute, and while buying a pornographic magazine 115 beats per minute. The basal heart rate prior to these activities averaged 90 beats - this was no doubt due to the fact that the activities occurred soon after the bungee jump, and John's heart rate had yet to settle back to its normal relaxed state.

### Buying a 'top-shelf' mag

It's been years since I last ventured into any kind of newsies to buy one of these. As an adolescent I can remember it being one of the most nerve-racking things on earth - the perfect thing for this experiment! The thing is, though, to add to the overall stress and strain of the occasion it was decided that I wasn't allowed to go to some cheap 'n' cheerful Mr Patel's, I had to go to a large branch of W H Smith and purchase the most blatantly filthy mag they sold.

Anyway, after a wee bit of browsing (producing a peak heart rate of 115 bpm - that makes it as exciting as a game of *Quake*, guys) I settled for something which was duly purchased with the aid of a very chirpy checkout girl. "Would you like a bag for that, sir?" "Yep, I think that's probably a good idea, don't you?"

Obviously, seeing as I'd bought the thing, I might as well take a peek. To be honest, it wasn't that brilliant. The girls were hardly babes of the century; but the phone lines advertised in the back are the funniest things in the world. Two caught my eye; I have the numbers if you'd like to try them: "Maria takes it slightly reluctantly from behind for the first time" (that's *slightly* reluctantly) and, a personal favourite, "I've got a banana up my arse and one up my c\*\*\*. Hear me lick and suck on them both." Fantastic!



### Chatting-up a stranger

Attempting this part of the experiment sober was the first mistake. Having arrived at my local in Camden, I was sure if I bought a pint and waited, at least one likely target would make itself apparent. It didn't. And after a while I was starting to feel a bit daft. I've got the 'making eye contact' bit off to a tee - it doesn't faze me at all. It's the actual chat-up line bit I can't get to grips with. What the hell are you supposed to say?

I could get riotously drunk but the last time I chatted-up a girl while pissed I ended up engaged to her (and still am). Not a good idea to try that again, eh?

I gave up and dropped into the supermarket on the way home for dinner. And what do you know? After some accidental eye contact in the 'prepared meals' section I realise that all the wires and electrodes dangling out from beneath my shirt are the perfect talking point. Ha ha! I'd done it. What's more, my heart was racing a lot more than I expected. Whaddya know, eh? Supermarkets are the new singles bars.



#### What's Up Doc

The basal heart rate prior to and post this activity was 100 beats per minute. The maximum heart rate of 136 beats per minute is clearly demonstrated on the heart rate graph at 19:28 hrs, the time at which John began the conversation with the woman.

# Tracker – the bane of my life for the next week

Here's the box that records my every sin. It's like a simplified walkman (recording everything on standard cassettes), and fits into a pouch on a belt. There are four wires that plug into electrodes on your skin. Once fitted up, you use the gold button to record. You must place the

electrodes in specific places, and before you stick 'em on you must 'prep' your skin – wiping it down with alcohol and scraping it with a 'rasp' (a bit of velcro stuck to a lolly stick) until it goes red. Then can you stick the pads down. Now I'm ready to begin...



## Masturbation



For the full gory details of this particular part of this you'll have to read the main text of this feature. I'll provide the condensed version here. It goes something like this: Travel to Plymouth. Talk to bloke. You want me to do what? "Argggggggghh!!!"

### Expert Opinion

No heart rate graph is available for this activity, as John had a headache and refused to repeat the test with the Tracker recorder attached! The maximum heart rate recorded was 130 beats per minute – this probably would have been rather higher if the test had been conducted in different circumstances, namely without someone else in the room and with some adult magazines for stimulation!

## Sexual intercourse

"Do you want to help me with my electrodes, darling?" is quite possibly the most original thing I've ever said prior to an evening of nookie. But I think my girlfriend made an extra-special effort because this evening's carnal activities were going to be recorded for posterity. Blimey!

Avoiding pressure on the electrodes was something of a problem – apparently if you squish them too hard the readings get distorted – and obviously I'm not allowed to move around too much because of all of that electrical impulse stuff. So for the most part I just had to lie back and think of *ESTERLINE* magazine. Tough job.

I suppose there was a bit of pressure on me. After all, the graph does have a time scale, which might prove a little embarrassing in the office on Monday. Still, this is what I call overtime...



### Expert Opinion

As expected, the quality of the electrocardiographic recording was somewhat poor during sexual activity because the electrical impulses generated by the muscles involved interfered with electrodes. John says he put the electrodes on at 21.37, and implied that sexual activity took place throughout. However, we know better!

The basal heart rate prior to intercourse was 65 beats per minute, and the increasing heart rate produced when he actually got down to it is clearly seen on the heart rate graph commencing at 22.12 and peaking with orgasm at 22.15, with a heart rate of 150 beats per minute.

This is perhaps a surprisingly high rate, as many men find that sex with regular partner becomes progressively less exciting the longer they are together. In fact, a common cause of heart attack is men cheating on their wives – they are so excited about making love to someone new that they have a coronary!

## Bungee jumping – the one thing better than sex!

I think I can safely say that this was the most terrified I have ever been in my whole life. I was reasonably okay in the cab ride to Adrenaline Village, by Chelsea Bridge in Battersea, but as the cab came round the corner and I saw the crane... At that precise moment my sphincter started to spasm like a goldfish out of water. A 400-foot crane is higher than it sounds. Much, much, *much* higher.

The Adrenaline Village (aply named) site in Battersea, I soon found out, is the third-highest bungee jump in the world (Victoria Falls and Niagara Falls are higher) and is actually the highest crane bungee platform in the world. Soaring 400 feet up over the River Thames,



Oh shit! Oh shit! Oh shit! Oh SHIT!



it's something of a monster. And as I stand beneath it, looking skywards, it dawns on me that agreeing to write this feature is one of the most completely fucking stupid things I have ever done. What a wanker!

After signing the world's longest – and most hideously detailed (see box) – disclaimer, it's time to jump on the scales so they can decide which rope (ie a fat rubber band) I need to use. Right... Eighty-four kilos – that's the red rope. Super. My heart is now in my mouth and my balls aren't far behind (the ECG shows a sustained high level at this point) as I'm rigged up with the two harnesses that you have to wear – one around your waist and the other between your ankles. Jump on the scales again just to double check. Hmmm, 82 kilos – that's the green rope. Hang on, he said the red one a few minutes ago. What does that mean exactly? "Oh, the ropes are different strengths and it's affected by your weight. Get the wrong one and you could end up twatting your head,"



says bungee-meister Mark Debenham. Oh, really? Fine, fine, fine, FINE! So work out which one I need, will you!!

Having hopped over to the crane's cradle and sat down, I get hooked up on my (green) bungee rope. "Don't worry, mate, it's a new rope. You probably won't even get your hair wet." He-he.

Thanks.

It doesn't take very long to reach the top. Ever the slave to my art, it is decided that we'll get the best pictures if I jump from the cradle backwards, so I have to grip on to the hand rail and lean back until my elbows lock. "Right, I'm going to count from three to one, and when I shout 'bungee!' just let go. Easy. Don't look down," says Mark.

Funnily enough, at this point the thought of falling 300 feet through fresh

air is strangely not at the forefront of my mind. For some reason my stupid male ego is now more worried about how embarrassing it's going to be if I can't actually let go. As Mark begins the final countdown, my heart revs up into overdrive and I learn the true meaning of terror.

"Three, two, one, bungee!!!"  
Ohshitohshitohshitohshit  
ohshitohshitohshitohshit  
ohshitohshitohshitohshit...

Now, apparently some students came along to do this a while ago wearing those heart-rate monitoring watches, and they were so scared that one bloke's heart rate was 170 when he was sitting on the ground waiting to go up, and rose to 185 just before he jumped. Mark says his heart rate stays around 130 bpm until lift-off, when it briefly peaks at 160. Pah! I beat 'em all. Poofs!



## The small print...

In case the thought of hurling yourself off a 400-foot tower with a rubber band tied to your ankle wasn't enough to give you palpitations, there's always the release form you have sign before you jump. The following few paragraphs are a verbatim extract from the small print. Read it and wet your pants...

"You won't even get your hair wet!"

"I do hereby acknowledge that:

(a) bungee jumping, catapulting and cage riding is a dangerous activity and that it involves the risk to me or my child of death and bodily injury.

(b) of my own free will I wish to participate/ am prepared to allow my said child to participate, in the activity of bungee jumping, catapulting and cage riding and to do so at my own risk, and I accept full responsibility for any injury resulting therefrom, whether giving rise to a cause of action falling within the scope of paragraph (11) (a), (b), (c) or (d) hereof or not, whether suffered by myself or my said child and whether fatal or otherwise. Without in any way limiting or detracting from the scope of the foregoing, injuries includes damage of any kind to the back, neck, spinal column, brain, blood vessels (including the blood vessels serving or related to the eyes), eyes, nerves (including ocular nerves), central nervous system, cardio vascular system and also includes shock AND includes the event of a miscarriage suffered by any female as a result of participating in bungee jumping, catapulting and cage riding...." etc, etc, etc.



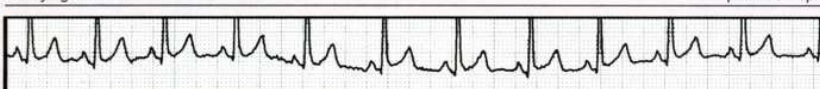
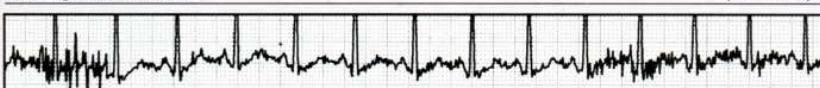
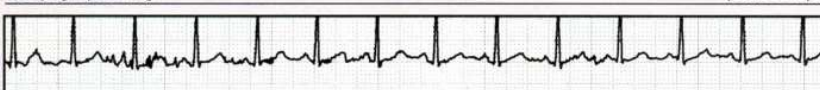
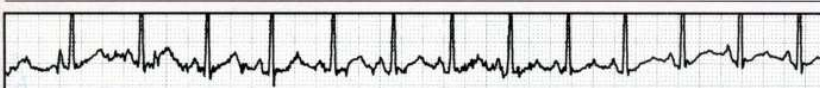
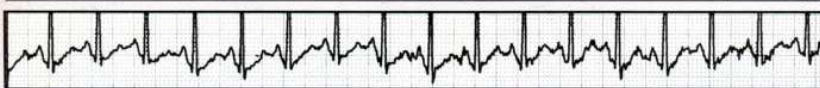
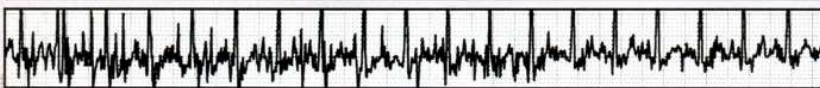
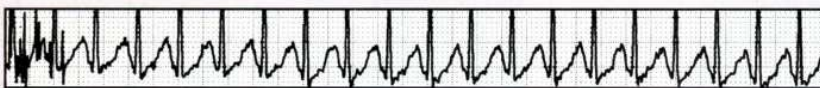
## Conclusion

In true science essay fashion, I suppose I must sum things up here with a conclusion to all this madness. As far as I'm concerned, the results can be presented in two ways: the results that I 'felt' were the most stressful/scary/exciting (delete where applicable), and the empirical results as recorded by the ECG gizmo. My personal ranking goes something like this:

### Emotional results

1. Wanking in a room in front of a bloke that I hope wasn't watching	(terrifying)
2. Bungee jumping	(also terrifying)
3. Sex	(for obvious reasons... wahay!)
4. Chatting-up a stranger	(scariest than I thought)
5. Buying a porn mag	(oddly unscary)
6. Driving in rush-hour traffic	(a bit stressful)
7. Playing <i>Quake</i>	(mildly exciting)
8. Buying condoms	(er... nothing, really)
9. Watching a video	(near catatonia)

### ECG-recorded results



What does this prove? Well, for one thing, shagging is actually 24% more exciting than playing *Quake* (now there's a statistic for you), while doing a bungee jump is 39% more exciting than *Quake* and around 20% more er... what's the word? 'Stimulating'? Er... 'scary'? Er... Oh, I dunno, about 20% 'more' than shagging. Blimey. There you go. In true school essay-fashion, we can now say categorically that "no, *Quake* is not better than sex. We have scientific proof."

actually pretty terrifying once you're committed to doing it.

### Ambulatory ECG hook-up kits and wanking

First things first though. Before I can do any of the above activities and even think about jumping into the sack with sensors slapped all over my bare chest, I have to go and get fitted up with the gear. A health screening centre in Plymouth called Cardio Analytics had kindly agreed to help us out with the equipment, so all I had to do was get myself to Devon and learn how to use it.

This is where problem number one kicks in. Having spoken to Cardio Analytics director David Morris before travelling down, he told me that although the idea for the feature is extremely interesting, it does pose a number of difficulties.

"Obviously," he tells me, "the ECG reading at orgasm is the most important reading for the article." Er, yeah... "But unfortunately this is going to be very difficult to get, as the unit we are using measures your heart by recording the electrical impulses generated by your heart when it beats." So? "Well, when your muscles move, they generate the same kind of electrical impulse... and as you can imagine, when you have sex, there's an awful lot of muscle movement." Er? "So whenever you move, the reading is going to be affected. What we need to do is find

*"Er, well... you'll have to come down here and er... well, masturbate while we take readings in the labs"*

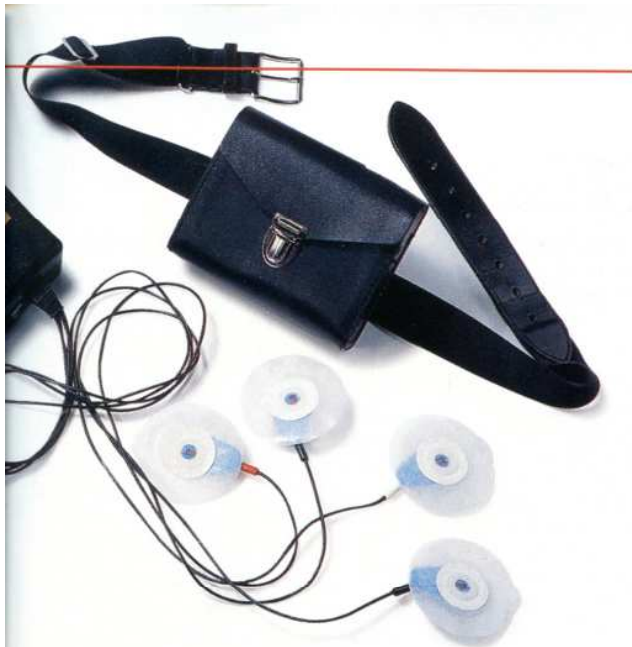
the areas on your body to place the electrodes where they'll pick up the least interference. While we're doing that, we might as well record an ECG reading for you at orgasm under lab conditions so you can use that if things go wrong." So what the hell is all this leading up to? "Er, well... you'll have to come down here and er... well, you'll have to masturbate while we take the readings in the lab."

Fine. Cue lots of "Do you have to go all the way to Plymouth just to have a wank, John?" gags from everyone in the office. Hooray.

So it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I made the four-hour drive down to Devon. After meeting my new friend David at the lab, we soon went through the procedure of fitting up the electrodes to my body. "Just pop your clothes off and lie on the bench... Yes, all of them." Sorry?!

Once I had been fitted up with all the pads and wiring, I got the shock of my life - and it wasn't of an electric nature: "Okay then, John. When you're ready... erm, off you go." What? "Don't worry, I'll just be over here. If we need to move the electrodes because the readings are affected I'll tell you to stop and then we can change things around. Oh yes, by the way, whatever you do, don't ejaculate until we're ready, as that will just fuck everything up." Oh, right then. I'll try my best...

Er, hang on. Did you say you'd be here when I was doing this? Like, in the same friggin' room?! With



me?! Erm... watching?! "Ho ho. Gosh, we'll remember today, won't we? Blimey. We've had much worse things than this in this lab though, I can tell you." Who fucking cares!?! You want me to pull my pud with you sat here in the room? "Right then, off you go."

I mean, what do you think about in these situations? Cue thoughts of the dirtiest, filthiest things I can conjure up whilst trying to obliterate the fact that there's a middle-aged bloke in a white coat standing five feet away while I'm having a fist kebab.

Then the worst thing in the world happens. David's colleague pops outside the building for a fag break (a heart specialist smoking tabs?! I ask you!) with his assistant, and through the blinds I hear the following: "Have you seen this, Martha?" Right. That's it. Fuck off. Fuck *right* off. I don't care if they're not talking about me. I don't care what he wants Martha to flaming-well look at, and I know they can't see in, but I'm not doing this any more.

Eventually I calm down and decide that, okay, I can do this. "Right, then, when you think you're going to come, tell me a few seconds before you do and then I'll start recording the results." No problem. "Oh yes, and when you've erm, done the business I want you to lie absolutely still." Fine. Tug, tug, tug, tug, tug, tug... This is going to take a while. Sustaining quality wood with a bloke stood in the room next to me is not particularly easy. Performing the rest is going to take some serious imagination. Tug... tug... tug... tug... "Er, you'd better start the tape rolling..."

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the most embarrassing moment of my life. Having cleaned up and tried to gather what remains of my dignity (virtually none), I put my kecks back on and realise that I have a splitting headache. David, now reetroot red but oddly chirpy, then produces the portable unit: "You up to doing it again with the equipment you'll be using at home?" No way, José! "Can't you handle multiple orgasms then?" Yeah, pal, but it depends on who I'm with. Not now, I've got a headache.

After two hours of what can only be described as hell on earth, I eventually escape with all the gear I'm going to need to perform the tests.

For the record, though, my little session resulted with a peak heart rate of 130 beats per minute... Well, it's a good start, I suppose. ☺

## Thanks to...

**Cardio Analytics** – A high-tech health screening service which is open to the general public as well as GPs and hospitals. You can walk in off the street and book yourself a comprehensive (and surprisingly inexpensive) heart check-up – they'll even wire you up to one of those machines that go 'ping'! You won't have to pull your pud though... (Contact David Morris on ☎ 01752 606360).

**The UK Bungee Club** – Based in Adrenaline Village, on the south bank of the Thames by Chelsea Bridge, this is the place to go for a full-on bungee experience. The club is open for business on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (depending on the weather) and prices for jumps and tuition start at £35 plus a one-off club membership fee of £15. The ideal Christmas present for your granny! (Contact Mark Debenham on ☎ 0171 720 9496.)

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