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NEWS

Germany's [Chaos Computer Club \(CCC\)](#) put together an 8 story, 144 pixel, computer-controlled display on the side of a Berlin building that lets people display animations, send text messages, and even play single- or multi-player games of Pong. "Blinkenlights," located on/in "the famous Haus des Lehrers in Berlin's Alexanderplatz," was created in only four weeks to celebrate the CCC's 20th anniversary, and it's expected to be up until at least this February.

CCC members ran over 5000 meters (~16,400 feet) of cable to allow three computers to control 144 150W bulbs, one each in 18 windows on 8 floors of the Haus des Lehrers. The 144 windows were painted white to give a better display effect, and the control signals from the Blinkenlights Chaos Control Center are amplified to enable each relay to be switched independently. Although a single computer could run Blinkenlights, CCC split the functions out to separately handle control, playback, and telephone interactivity for "distributed development and operation."

Using a mobile phone, passers-by can play Pong (dubbed "King Pong" by the BBC) against the computer or another person who's dialed in, and even send love letter movies. CCC members created a program called Blinkenpaint which you can use to design and send in your own animations, and the group is even holding a contest to choose the best submitted animation (contest ends December 29th). The [Blinkenlights website](#) is also hosting submitted animations, which currently include a Tetris sim, a 3D rotating cube, and "a recreation of the entire nativity story including angels and the baby Jesus."

For more information, please see the [BBC News Online](#) and the [Blinkenlights website](#). You can also check the [Blinkenlights webcam](#) (only updates the pic every 30 seconds) and the ["trailer movie"](#) (QuickTime 5 format).

SAM'S OPINION

We covered something similar to this back in April 2000 when students at Brown University created a [10 story Tetris game](#).

What I find most cool about this is the mobile phone interactivity, something we'd expect in Europe (and not here, unfortunately) due to Europeans' much more abundant and longer history of cellular phone service use. It's definitely



cool to be able to send in your own animations for Blinkenlights, but the thought of playing 8-story Pong against someone standing next to me is pretty damned Geeky!

One thing that isn't mentioned is how the CCC got permission to paint 144 windows of this building white ... I wonder if one of the club members owns the building or something? Either way, congrats to the Chaos Computer Club on its 20th anniversary, and for its ingenuity and quick work on Blinkenlights. See, not all hackers are bad! :)

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