

Visual Shell 3.1

Visual Shell is shelf for Windows. It allows you to define up to 15 programs for quick launching (one click). It will also log everything it does, or you do to it. It is a straight forward interface and does not require a genius to operate it. The origin of this program started when I found the need to have a group of un-associated programs easily accessible. (i.e. Not opening Program Manager, closing previous group to see the other group icons, opening a new group, and then finally launching a my next program. This can get rather tedious real quick when you jump around a lot. This version should most likely be called 1.0 due to the inferiority of its earlier versions. In developing the first few versions I had only my own needs in mind. However, I started uploading them just to see what would happen. Once I uploaded them I started taking a closer look at what someone else would see. The result is that I needed to get a better version out quick. 1.0 is fine for my needs, but most likely totally useless to someone else. So I released rather quickly several versions.

I have invested considerably more time into this project to make it faster and more responsive. However, depending on your type of system, you may notice a small delay when first starting. Visual Basic has one main flaw (C++ programmers will remain silent!) in that if you want the app to run faster during run-time you lose a little at boot time. This is mainly because the forms must be loaded at startup of the app. The other way, speeding up startup, you lose speed displaying the forms. I have tried to get around this as best I could with this release. This program requires 6% system resources.

INSTALLATION

VBRUN300.DLL - Visual Basic 3.0 Run Time Library (not included) Goes in System Directory (Usually C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM)

To install Visual Shell you will need to copy the files to the proper Directory as follows:

VSHELL31.EXE - Anywhere (I put in my Default Windows DIR)
VSHELL31.INI - MUST be in Windows Directory (Usually **C:\WINDOWS**)
THREED3.VBX - MUST be in System Directory (Usually **C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM**)
CMDIALOG.VBX - MUST be in System Directory (Usually **C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM**)
COMMDLG.DLL - MUST be in System Directory (Usually **C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM**)
VSHELL31.WRI - WRITE document (This one)
VSHELL31.WRI - NOTEPAD document.
VSHELL31.LOG - Created at Run Time if you specify the **/LOG** command line.

NOTE: COMMDLG.DLL is a Windows DLL, you should already have one. However I upgraded my windows to 3.11 and it included a newer DLL's. It is completely backwards compatible, so you should just copy this one

over the old one. However I do not work for Microsoft so better make a backup of the original first just in case I am wrong.

SETUP

When you first run VSHELL31.EXE You will see a screen with 15 buttons with basic Windows Features. You will also see 5 other buttons on the right side of the window. The top right one is the SETUP button. Click Setup to edit the 15 program items to your liking. To insure it can find the program you may wish to Click once on the path box (the right text box) and a search dialog box will pop up. From there you just go through the standard windows FILE Dialog box and locate your program. Note the filter drop box at the bottom you can specify EXE/COM/PIF/BAT or ALL Files in the Filter. Once you have established a path, then click on the label box to the left of the Path box, a standard VB input prompt will ask for the Button name. If this seems a bit confusing, just try it!

Features

- Up to 15 programs on the shelf (User Definable)
- Button Caption Editing
- New RUN button to run other apps not on Buttons
- Logging of Activities with the /LOG command line switch
- Automatic Minimizing when launch occurs
- Will not interfere with Visual Shell 1.1/2.0a/2.0b/3.0
- Does not have compatability problems (well I havent found any)
- Free, unless you a generous person and love little programs like this..

Using Visual Shell 3.1

Selecting a Program to run:

Click on the button with the name of the program you wish to run

Viewing the Log:

Click the LOG button (This launches NOTEPAD.EXE with the LOG file you can copy/backup the log if you so desire from here) Every button you push is reported to the LOG except About.

Running Setup:

Click SETUP button, the VSHELL31.INI file is loaded into the labels and text boxes you will see. Thier definition will be self explanatory, but just in case, they are the Button Caption on the left and Path and filename on the right. You can Click once on the Button Captions Label and a simple prompt will prompt you for a new name The PATH / FILENAME text boxes have two ways of editing. One click and you can edit it manualy (type in the path and filename) or Double Click and a window will open and you may use the Windows dialogs to locate your file.

Clearing the Log:

If you are a heavy user of this program you will find that the LOG will get large quickly. There are two ways around this. One Clear it often, or two, turn the log off. You can turn the log off by not having the command line switch /LOG after VSHELL31.EXE

PROGRAMMING

Visual Shell was written on a 386/40 under Windows 3.11 in Visual Basic 3.0 [Professional Edition]

TESTING

AMD 386-40 / 8mg Ram / Win 3.11 (Drives C: D:)
INT 486DX2-66 / 8mg Ram / Win 3.11 (C: plus Network drives)

Release Notes

- 1.0 - had 4 buttons and was basically a demo
- 1.1 - Had 21 buttons and was slowed by heavy 3d effects. (not released)
- 2.0 - API/DLL Calls to KERNEL.EXE, 10 buttons, editable
- 2.0a - 10 buttons, easier editor, access to any local drive
- 2.0b - Includes Logging of activities, Faster Screen Redraws
- 3.0 - Faster still! 15 buttons, new icon
- 3.1 - Faster / Run Button / Cleaner Configuration Window
More accurate logging / Visual Basic 3.0 Pro

Disclaimer:

If you instruct the program to run a LOW-LEVEL formatter on your IDE drive it is your fault! If you somehow manage to trash your computer with it it is, again, your fault! There is only one thing destructive this program does: It deletes the Log File (VSHELL31.LOG) if you select Clr Log from the Setup window. There is no possible way this can harm anything. It doesn't write to your WIN.INI, even its own ini isn't really an INI it is a list of your buttons and location of programs. Even so, don't cry to me if you have a problem, VSHELL didn't do it! Please enjoy the program and spread it around. I don't expect a return, but I'll take one if you are a hard core Shareware fan.

I hope you find this useful. Any comments can be sent to me at any major BBS in Dallas Texas

My Handles are: Gob-Lin, Norin, Danny Ames (err this is my name, not handle)

Beta Testing:
Black Sheep, The Adept, Gob-Lin