

INDOZE ON THE WORLD?

"I looked into a Window and what did I see?
Why, it was a Mac-face staring back at me!"

In the spirit of detente, this installment of ASoAP will focus on my and others' thoughts and opinions on the upcoming release of Microsoft's "Windows 95" operating system (OS). Like the O.J. trial, any computer user who hasn't heard of Win95 must have been lurking on the dark side of the moon lately, sooo...

First, the perspective from the PC side. The following quotes are from Jason Coleman and Steve Williams, two of my Team of expert PC Consultants here at the MSU Computer Store (Chris Kar is the third Team member. By the way, those of you who have ventured to my web pages may recognize Jason, Steve, and Chris as my "Delinkwent Chyldrin", myself being "Biker Mama"; check out their pages for more info on them). These statements were made after having had the Preview edition of Win95 installed and thoroughly tested on multiple Store systems; they are not made lightly, and Jason and Steve are two of my most adamant PC supporters. They are the backbone of my Consulting staff, and I highly prize their opinions and expertise--however, I must include them under the same disclaimers as apply to myself (see footer below). They speak from experience when they say:

(from Jason Coleman):

"There are too many differences to list in a short article. Much like Windows NT, Windows 95 is a brand new operating system unto itself. Microsoft has made a monumental effort to get rid of the familiar C> prompt that millions of users run in fear from. A simple way to describe Windows 95 would be is as Windows NT's "little brother". They share many traits in common, such as preemptive multi-tasking, protected memory spaces, and built-in networking features far above and beyond what Windows 3.11 for

Workgroups possesses. That doesn't make Windows 95 a scaled back Windows NT; one thing that 95 has that NT doesn't is personality. While NT is stuck with its clunky old Windows 3.1 interface, Microsoft has come up with a new interface that seems to be a hybrid built on the interfaces of just about everything else out there. In short, Windows 95 is new and improved, but it remains to be seen if that makes it better or not. Microsoft has quite a challenge if it is going to overcome nearly twenty years of the familiar old DOS setup."

(from Steve Williams):

"Differences between the said software packages [follow]. The obvious, Win 3.1 is 16-bit and NOT an OS; Win95 is 32-bit and *IS* an OS. Win95 was supposed to be designed with a "4MB footprint", meaning the OS could run just as fast, if not faster than Win 3.1, and only need 4MB of RAM to do it. This is not the case however; Windows 95 is realistically requiring 12MB of RAM to do much of anything."

"The environment is the one major change, which in turn sprouts a few new things by itself. The Windows 3.xx environment is the "Windowed" Program Manager interface, lacking the ability to place anything at all on the desktop. Its "drag and drop" features were fairly limited as well. Windows 95 gives the user what Microsoft hopes people will find to be a more "friendly" and comfortable environment to work with. However, this is only true when your target group are first-time computer users, or people porting from the MacOS. The Windows 95 interface has changed enough that, for a user who is very familiar with how to get around in Windows 3.xx and knows its built-in utilities, if a time crunch comes and they haven't spent enough time with Win95, they will spend countless wasted hours looking for the tools they need to get the job done. File Manager has been replaced (which has been needed for a long time), by a utility called Explorer. Unfortunately, the upgrade is more cosmetic than anything else."

"Win95's nicest feature is the Start button on the task bar. This allows quick access to programs, control panels, and other utilities which places the user in a much better position to control the environment without needing to search through countless windows to find what they need. Another nice advantage brought about by this bar, is that each program that is currently running is placed onto this bar. This makes the idea of multi-tasking easier for first time users to grasp, as well as making the process of switching between apps much less painful. Win95 is also ready to jump onto the Internet with built-in TCP/IP support, along with Microsoft's own

"Microsoft Network". Win95 is also quickly being supported as a Web server, as well as a server for SMTP, and other useful tasks. All in all, Microsoft has given Windows 3.xx a facelift, decided that the newly beautified and surgically enhanced product would be "freshness dated", and called it "Windows 95"."

On the Mac side, this from an Apple Tech Rep (kept nameless here): "Sure, Win95 allows 'plug-and-play', but only if your PC was designed as a plug-and-play system; it won't work that way on older PCs. And many of the features that Microsoft has put into Win95 [i.e., use of aliases, etc.] have already been done--better--on the Mac long ago."

And what say you, Apple Pie? Well, here are some of my observations:

(But before I go on, stop me if you've heard this before:

Q: How many Microsoft developers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Zero--they'd just reclassify darkness as an industry standard! I love that joke!)

First, what effect will this have on the Mac & Mac users? Well, technically none, unless Uncle Bill has plans to port it over to the Mac. Call me crazy, but I don't see that happening (on the other hand, stranger things--like BOB!--have been done; but I digress...). However, as Steve pointed out, Win95 could definitely have a major impact on those folks who are fence-sitting, deciding on whether to buy a Mac for its infamous ease-of-use, or go with a PC for all of the standard reasons. It could also impact those Mac users-- especially corporate users--who for one reason or another feel they have "outgrown" their Macs and want to move to, in their minds, a "real" system (and trust me, there are plenty of people out there who, because of mismanaged "guidance" from within and with-out Apple, feel that the Mac is only a toy).

I'll give you an example. When our Microsoft rep first showed us an early beta of Win95, she pointed out features that, to me and our other Mac-based consultant (we're currently outnumbered 9 PCers to 2 MACers) were no biggie--we had already seen the same things on Macs and took them for granted (I made the mistake of saying out loud, "can you spell A-L-I-A-S? I knew you could!" to which Steve replied "well, can you spell B-A-T-C-H-F-I-L-E?"; and

then a major fight broke out with many chairs flying and...but again, I

digress). Anyway, the rep pointed out that many of the features I've long taken for granted as part of the MacOS were simply not available in Win3.1, and that a lot of our departmental users would be thrilled to see something as simple as easy aliasing. As a consultant that services both Mac and PC users, anything that makes life easier for my users and customers is good for me. The ability of Microsoft to provide these features to novice PC users is a definite plus for the "M-Team" and a minus for the "A-Team". In my opinion, Apple will have to come strong with Copland/MacOS 8 to combat the possible migration of it's biggest market: the novice user.

Aside from that, however, a second concern is with the usability of the system itself. Again, as Steve and Jason pointed out, many of the changes made in Win95 are cosmetic (shades of System 7? hmmm...). Also, one thing they didn't address is its incompatibility with some applications, most noticeably utility apps such as Symantec's "Norton Utilities". Microsoft's answer to that, predictably, is that there will be new versions of these products available soon after the final version of Win95 is released (and of course, they plan on rolling out the Win95-specific version of Office then; did you doubt it?).

But didn't we in the Mac world already see this with the Power Macs? In fact, Apple was heavily blasted for not having "any" PPC native apps out at the announce date for the first Power Macs (and truly, that wasn't just Apple's fault, but that's neither here nor there). Say what you want about that, but at least most of the 680x0 software ran in emulation on Power Macs--our current versions of Norton & Central Point/Symantec's "PC Tools" are useless on Win95 systems! That could spawn a whole other thread ("you should just upgrade all your software to the Win95 standards!" <-> "why should I have to do this--everything that ever existed on PCs should automatically work perfectly in Win95!"), but the point is, now that Microsoft will shortly have 95 and NT in place, DOS is just about a foregone conclusion, and with it, DOS-based programs (at least, those from Microsoft). How long will it take before those users will be looking for a new home? Hey Apple, maybe here's your chance to...nah, forget it; they're still stuck in the "point and click" mode.

Ah well; I guess I'll just take life easy and stick with my trusty-dusty Macintosh, and watch the PC big-wigs slug it out. Now, I wonder what song ol' Copland will be singing...

-["Apple Pie"](#)

I would like to thank Jason Coleman, Steve Williams, Chris Kar, and the rest of my Consultant staff for their contributions and advice for this article.

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