

Windows To The World: The Window Users Column

By: David Stellmack

When I attended the desktop publishing sig last month, I had no idea that I was going to wind up getting involved again. Dorothy Geiger found about the fact that I had done a lot of writing in AMICON (AMICON is The Amiga Central Ohio Network. I served as the assistant news letter editor for sometime.) and she asked me if I would write a few articles or reviews. I had no real desire to get committed again, but then again, I could just say no. I offered her a counter proposal. Could I write a column once a month on Windows. She look at me and said sure. So, here we go off into the wild blue yonder....

Nothing in the PC community has caused quite a stir, until Windows came along. Came along is phrase not to be take lightly either because so many delays in realized Windows caused it to fall in the "Vapor Ware" column when ever talked about. (Just as an added note of PC history, Windows shipped some 18 months after the promised release date.) When I first bought Windows 1.03 I thought it was a great toy. It gave my trusty old PC XT something that kind of resembled the Mac but, it was the only program I had that made my PC run so slow that I thought I was running it on my old Atari 800. Yes, my friends Windows was/is slow and boy you can sure feel it. At the time of 1.03 their was nothing to speak of that was worth running under Windows that made me want to keep on using it. Microsoft admitted that Windows was "a little slow" on the XT so they released Mach 10 accelerator board stating that this would do the trick. The Mach 10 featured a 10MHz 8086 processor. Well, Windows was still a little "slower" than they first thought, so along came the Mach 20 featuring a 8MHz 80286 and once again we were told; "this will do the trick for sure". At this point with little to no software running under it, I thought that Windows was going to head to the old PC graveyard along side the old IBM portable. Microsoft and Bill Gates were not ready to give up on Windows just yet because of yet a bigger plan.

The Big Plan:

So, why did things change? Things changed for Windows in April of 1987 when, on the same day IBM announced the PS/2 series and OS/2, Microsoft released Windows 2.03. Windows 2.03 sported an improved user interface, better documentation, and most of all a LOT better performance. The whole idea behind Windows is to allow the user an easier transition to the OS/2 Presentation Manager and to make it easier for Window developers to convert their programs to the OS/2 Presentation Manager. Then like magic many new Windows applications started appearing. Many of the early pioneering programs in Windows like In-A-Vision, Graphics Plus, and Designer. Incidentally Micrografx is rumored to have done much of the necessary "dirty work" to establish Windows as a ligament environment. Now a days many new programs are making appearances in Windows. Pagemaker was the reason I needed Windows. Finally a reason to start using this on a full time basis. After using Pagemaker for sometime it was in order that I started exploring some of the other applications available for Windows. Well, I WAS using Lotus 1-2-3 as my spread sheet of choice, but after seeing Excel on the Mac that quickly changed. Excel was converted to Windows from Mac land and it was totally rewritten for Windows from the ground up to take advantage of all of the best features of Windows including DDE. For those of you who are not familiar with Interprogram Communication using Windows Dynamic Data Exchange or DDE for short should consider reading the November issue of the Microsoft Systems Journal Vol. 2, No. 2. (This article will require some programming knowledge of C.) On the other hand if you would like to know more about the hows and the whys Microsoft converted Excel to Windows for the PC; the above mentioned issue also happens to have a good article on that also. So, Windows does have solid Spreadsheet and Desktop Publishing applications that run under Windows, but what else can I run if I start using Windows? Well, in the graphics department you have a choice of many different packages. Z-Soft offers Paintbrush, Paintbrush Plus, as well as the Publisher's Type Foundry. (I have not yet seen the Plus version for Windows yet, but since I'm already using the Publisher's Paintbrush by them I intend to pick up the Windows version soon and when I do I will be sure to write a review of it.) Micrografx's Designer, Draw plus, and Graph Plus are probably some of the best programs currently running under Windows other than Page Maker. Pixie Version 1.02 from Zenographics is another fine program if you do a lot of dealing with graphs for slides and transparencies. The newest of the graphics entry is probably Xerox Presents. What about database

applications? Now, this area does need some improvement, but Quartz from Blyth Software is making a lot of head way. Quartz has Mac-like environment for creating relational database applications. These applications are comparable in over all scope to those of Dbase or Paradox. Rumor has it that Microsoft will release a database for Windows later this year. What about Word processing and desktop publishing? In the desktop publishing arena Pagemaker now in version 3.0 for Windows is king of the mountain and I don't think anyone will knock them off soon. Pagemaker has undergone many changes under the version upgrades, but it is still a little slow in comparison to the Mac version. Word Processing however, is a choice of two at the moment. Ami from Samna is a full featured word processor for Windows featuring limited desktop publishing capabilities. Ami runs very well and it is a pleasure to use, but it still has a few bugs and I expect to see most of them corrected when Samna releases Ami Professional later this fall. Windows Write comes bundled with Windows and it is very similar to features and power to Mac Write, but it is very limited, but for dashing off a short memo is convenient and best of all it's free! Microsoft is expected to release project Opus later this year which should really heat things up in the word processing category. Although Ami is the clear choice in this category I still would rather run Word Perfect 5.0 in good old Ms-Dos.

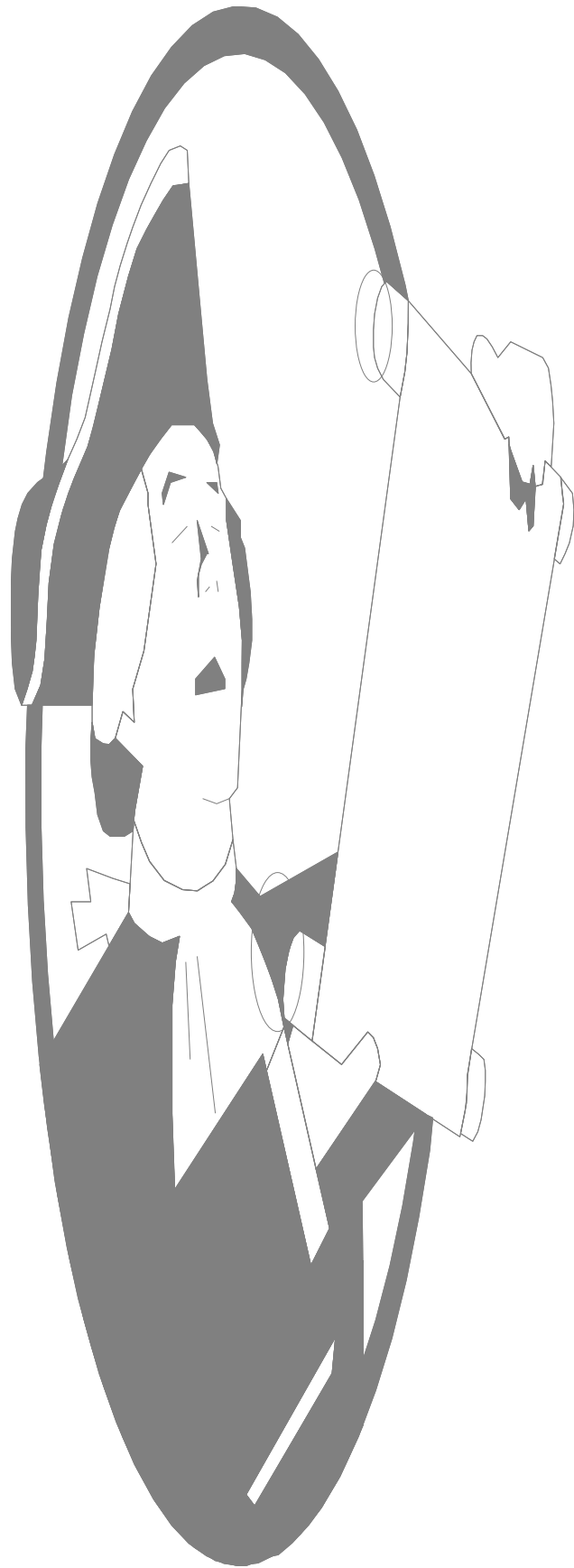
The MS-DOS Executive: Windows Biggest Joke!

A few weeks back I was showing my PC running Pagemaker to a friend of mine who uses a Mac at work to run Pagemaker and when I loaded up Windows and the Ms-Dos Executive came up and I presided to sift through the file names to find PM.EXE he commented to me; "Where are your icons?" Then he proceed to tell me this is the reason he uses a Mac is because it is just plan easier. If you don't know much about Ms-Dos the Ms-Dos Executive is no help. Yes, I'm afraid he was right and since I have been using Ms-Dos for so long I had forgotten that this could all be a lot easier and I had to do something about it. hDC offers a program called Windows Express which allows you to create layer icon driven menus that will replace the poor excuse for a desk top called the Ms-Dos executive. You can organize all of your applications, as well as your documents, spread sheets, as well as all your other files into easy to understand folders and icons. Windows Express includes an icon designer/editor to allow you to create an icon or folder for any file you want. These can all be integrated into a menu system. Windows Express offers: on-line and user defined help, keyboard or mouse interface, optional password protection for any menu item, (that can easily be by passed if you know the first thing about Ms-Dos!!) optional date and time display, choice of screen font sizes, complete icon library with full editor, and automatic screen blanking. If you purchase Windows Express you might want to invest in hDC's companion program for Windows Express called Windows Color which allows you to double the colors from 8 to 16 with any EGA or VGA card and as an added bonus if you purchase Window Express between April 1st and July 31st, 1989 and send your sales receipt to hDC they will send you Windows Color for only \$25.00. You might have a little trouble finding this program locally so you may want to either try and find it mail order or order it directly from hDC. The only thing negative I can say about this program is that the price of \$89.95 was a little steep. hDC would due well to lower the price and make the difference up in volume sales. Now, of course if you like to save a little money you might want to try to find a copy of Wilson WindowWare's Command Post 5.2 shareware menuing program for Windows. I have not yet found a copy, but I will continue to look for it. (You can contact Wilson WindowWare at: (206) 937-9335.) I believe the shareware registration fee for Command Post 5.2 is only \$25, but of course you will not get the pretty icons of Windows Express, but you will get a pull down menu structure that will make the Ms-Dos Executive Blues a thing of the past.

So, What Kind Of Hardware Do I Need?

If you intend to run Windows on more than just an occasional basis, you are going to need some heavy duty hardware. With version 2.03 of Windows no longer available. Your only choice is to upgrade to Windows 286 or 386. The bear minimum requirements for Windows would have to be a 12MHz AT with at lease 1MB of Memory to single run a single tasking version of Windows. As for graphics adaptor E-EGA with the 640 X 480 would be considered the bear minimum. This is all assuming you are going for cost effectiveness. Your best buy would be a 386 SX 16MHz with VGA and 2MB of memory running Windows 386. The 386 SX in this configuration you can do quite a bit of multi-tasking. When thing to remember though is that many of the Windows application programs are real space hogs, so 40MB hard storage is a must. As for those of you still running XTs I would suggest that you look into some of the cheap excelator cards such as Orchard's Tiny Turbo or even Microsoft's Mach 20. One thing to remember about the Mach 20 is that it might be the only excelator board that could

be capable of running OS/2, should you ever decide to go that route. The only other thing to mention is that if you are using the 268 version of Windows make sure you read the section in your manual on how to modify your CONFIG.SYS file so you can use 64K of your Extended Memory for Windows. All versions of Windows 2.0 and greater will use all LIMs compatible memory boards for Windows compatible memory. I normally don't offer any plugs for hardware, but in this case I'll make a little exception. If you are planning to go all out and get a system to run Window specific application, you might want to check out the NEC PowerMate 386SX as featured in the June 1989 PC World. Besides including Windows 386 in their package deal, the system features VGA 800 X 600 graphics, 2MB of memory, and a 40MB hard drive and through mail order I have found some rather good deals being offered on this system. I plan to upgrade to this system after I save up the required nickels. (Which is going to take some time!!) So, if you are planning to buy and plan on running Windows or Windows applications under a runtime version of Windows, just remember, you want the highest graphics resolution, the most LIMS compatible memory, and fastest processor you can afford. (Due to the fact that some sales persons attend a correspondence school for selling computers, it's nice to know what you really need.)



The Free Demo Department:

If you have not taken upon your self to see what Windows can do for you might want to check out two fine FREE examples of Windows at it's best.

Micrografx offers a demo of it's Designer program for Windows free for the asking. It is available in both 5 1/4 and 3 1/2 format. You will have to have an 286 or 386 to really get a good idea of what this program can do for you. (Although is will run on an XT, the waits will put you to sleep.) You will have to have a copy of Windows 2.03, Windows 286, or Windows 386 to use this demo. You can connect Micrografx at:

Micrografx
1303 Arapaho
Richardson, TX 75081
214-234-1769
214-234-2410 (Fax)
800-272-3729

Microsoft offers a demo disk of Excel for Windows free for the asking. It is fully functional working model of Excel. It is available only in High Density 5 1/4 and 3 1/2 format. It requires a 286 or 386 processor to work. The Excel Trial Disk includes a run-time version of Windows along with the demo. Since Microsoft is currently engaged in a battle of the spreadsheet programs, they will offer you either a \$75.00 rebate or a free copy of Windows 286/386 is you purchase Excel between February 1st, 1989 and September 30th, 1989 if you send in your original Lotus 1-2-3 system disks. Microsoft also offers a no-questions asked money-back guarantee now through January of 1990. One look at this program and you will not believe what you have been missing. You can contact Microsoft at:

Microsoft Corporation
16011 NE 36th Way
Box 97017
Redmond, WA 98073-9717
206-882-8080
206-883-8101 (Fax)
800-541-1261

The quickest way to get your Excel demo disk on the way is to call the toll free number and ask for department J35 and ask for the Excel Trail Disk.

Well, I hope you enjoyed this edition of Windows To The World and if you have any questions about Windows or you need help with a Windows application please feel free to write me at the address below.

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Reviews of NEWEST Windows Software Including:

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Adobe Illustrator - By Adobe Systems

