Swings and roundabouts

It's a funny old thing, Windows 95 — try running XPress 3.1 or Photoshop on it and it should tick along nicely, but try getting video drivers to work, and... Gordon Laing looks at it from a DTP point of view.

Video drivers are the bane of my life. The trouble is that I expect them to work flawlessly first time, and to continue to do so unprompted — which is about as reasonable as expecting any part of a computer to work first time and all the time, but for some odd reason I seem to be consistently caught out by video drivers.

I'll set the scene for my ranting: virtually all of you must have noticed that this is our Windows 95 issue; the cover and the huge wad of pages devoted to Microsoft's new baby (starting on page 101) are both a dead giveaway. What may not necessarily come across in the feature is the varying amount of pain we all endured at *PCW* while trying to configure our systems under the new OS.

It has, in fact, been a whole year since I reformatted by hard disk, removing the curse of an early Windows 95 beta, then known as Chicago. Many new builds have arrived, tempting us to throw caution to the wind, but I held off for as long as I could. The one we all ended up installing *en masse* at *PCW* was dated about four months pre-release, but turned out to be rather good.

Upon installation it recognised both our Novell servers, connected without hassle to our network printer, even supported TCP/IP without complaint. Everyone was hooting with the joys of success. But it was then I noticed that virtually everybody was running in VGA.

Call me a snob, but 640 x 480 in 16 colours, flickering away, doesn't do anything for me — particularly on a 21in monitor. I was merrily running in 1280 x 1024 at 75Hz under Windows 3.1 and naively expected this not to pose any problem for Windows 95. Reasonable? Of course not.

We all installed over existing versions of Windows 3.1 with multimedia, network and display options set and fully operational. The trouble was that it failed to recognise my graphics card, guessed incorrectly and cycled upon restarts between VGA and 1024 x 768, the latter interlacing horribly.

Nothing unusual about a Diamond Stealth 64 DRAM, I thought, but Windows 95 was mistaking it for something else. After numerous calls to the Microsoft helpline and swearing loudly at my machine (both about as useful as each other), I resorted to the Internet.

The Internet is great fun, but most evangelists aren't successfully finding

Hopefully by final release, most video cards will be supported by Windows 95. There was no Stealth 64 DRAM on my beta, however

answers to specific questions — they're merely browsing and randomly coming across interesting stuff. I took the bull by the horns, ran a Net search on Diamond Stealth and was pleasantly greeted by one of Diamond's home pages, complete with, joy of joys, Windows 95 known problems. Five seconds later I was printing out advice for those with Diamond Stealth 64 DRAMs who are running Windows 95.

I was instructed to set up the desired video mode with Diamond's S64DMODE DOS utility, swiftly dug out from my dusty system box. Then I manually selected the correct graphic accelerator chipset, restarted, and was there! Back to 1280 x 1024 non-interlaced with everything looking quite wonderful.

But curiously enough, there was a certain amount of localised flickering at the edges of objects, suggesting that I was driving the card or monitor too hard. But I was using exactly the same mode and hardware that worked perfectly well under Windows 3.1. Perhaps this is a Win95 problem

that will hopefully be fixed by the time the final release emerges. I hope so, or it may be time for another reformat as I rummage around for those old DOS disks.

On a happier note...

It's not all doom and gloom, in fact quite the opposite, so while we're on the subject of Windows 95 I'll go over some of the graphics-related topics I've found so far.

The first thing I tried was running all my

old 16-bit apps, including those with Win 32s. Photoshop 3.0 if anything ran a little quicker, but beware of "opening as", which in all instances resulted in a crash. Quark XPress 3.1 was fine, but 3.3 didn't want to know. To quote directly from the Windows 95 Beta Release notes:

"Quark XPress 3.3 will typically return an 'out of memory' error regardless of the amount of memory available to a given
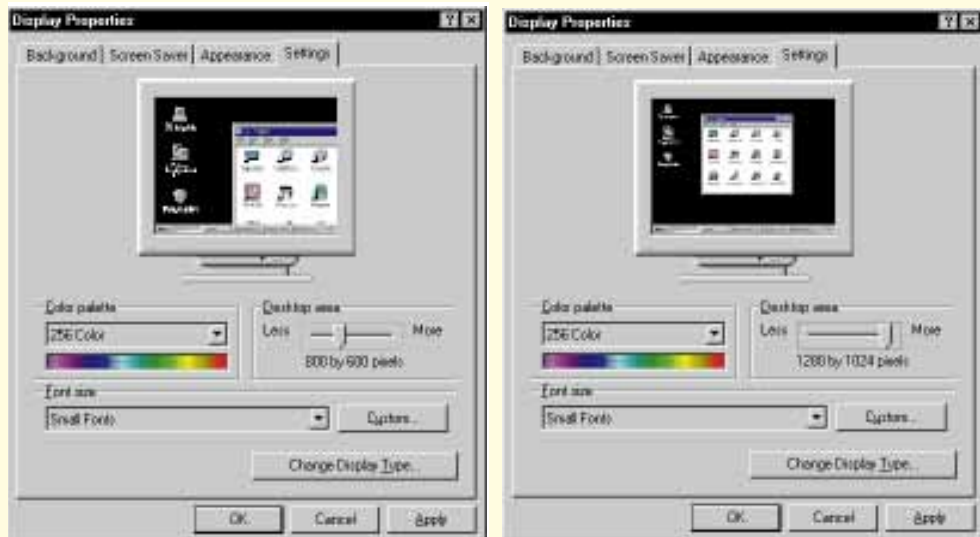
The nice side of Win95. **Above***, the display properties showing what you should expect at different desktop resolutions.* **Below left***, fonts listed by similarity using Panose matching information.* **Below right***, opening a font file offers a neat preview of the typeface*
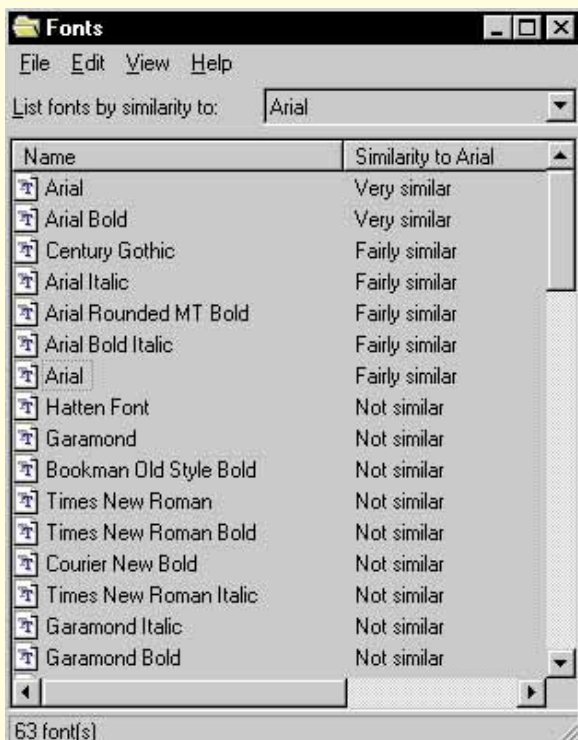
machine. A patch, to upgrade Quark XPress 3.3 to 3.31, can be downloaded from CompuServe or can be provided by Quark. When installing Quark XPress on Windows 95, XPress's install program may stop at 99 percent complete on some systems. Selecting the Continue button finishes the install process."

CorelDraw 5.0 went about its business without a hitch, although the forthcoming version 6.0 is expected to be one of the first Windows 95 applications available. FreeHand experienced difficulties when running with network support, but this is promised to be fixed in time for the final release.

Fonts are handled interestingly, so long as you're using anything other than Type 1. ATM for Windows 95 was not out at the time of writing, so any cunning new facilities remained unknown. That said, Windows 95 has certainly improved its handling of TrueType and system fonts. Selecting the Fonts Control Panel brings up a Window with all your installed True-Type and system fonts — except there's now a new option in the View menu: "list fonts by similarity". Any Panose matching information is taken into consideration and all fonts are listed by similarity to the selected font file. See the screenshot on page 289 which proclaims very similar, fairly similar or not similar, to solve all those typeface arguments once and for all.

Perhaps more useful is the extremely quick preview of any TrueType or system font. Just right-click the file, select Open and a window appears with examples of the font at various point sizes, and an entire character listing. With any luck the next version of ATM will offer this facility.

Returning to the subject of video drivers, Windows 95 has at least got one thing absolutely right: a decent graphical representation of what happens when you change the desktop resolution. Selecting the settings of display properties offers a picture of a monitor with a few objects on the desktop, including icons and a window. Adjusting the size of the desktop area from less to more updates the contents of the pretend monitor screen, indicating how the higher the resolution, the more you fit on, but at a smaller size.

From this window you can also change the display type, which is where I ran into difficulties upon my initial Windows 95 installation. Two options are presented:
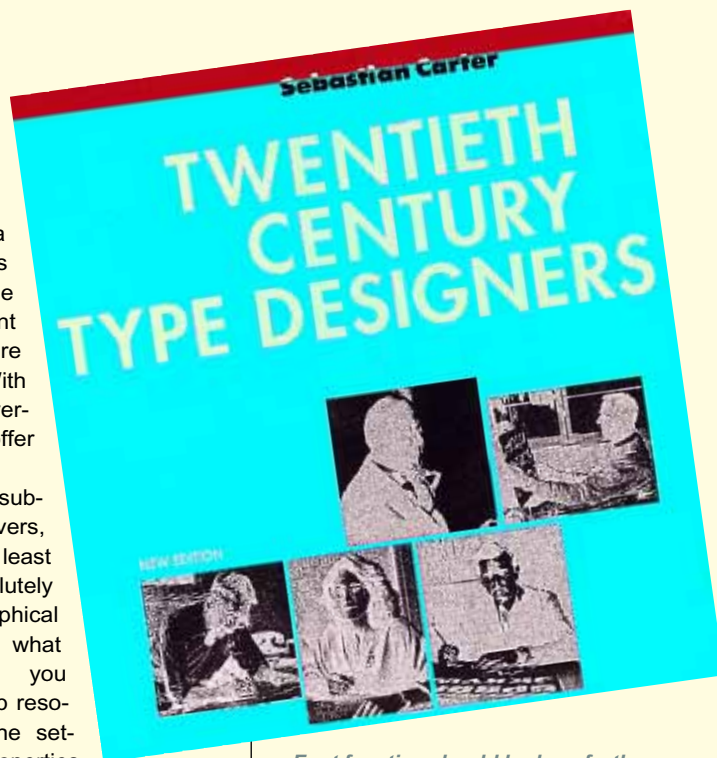
Font fanatics should look no further than two excellent new books from Lund Humphries

the adaptor type and monitor type. The theory is that Windows 95 has a list of every video card and monitor along with their specifications, so that once a pair has been selected, it knows exactly what the combination can and cannot do. No more selecting too high a resolution for your monitor's capabilities.

Sadly, the beta of Win95 I was installing
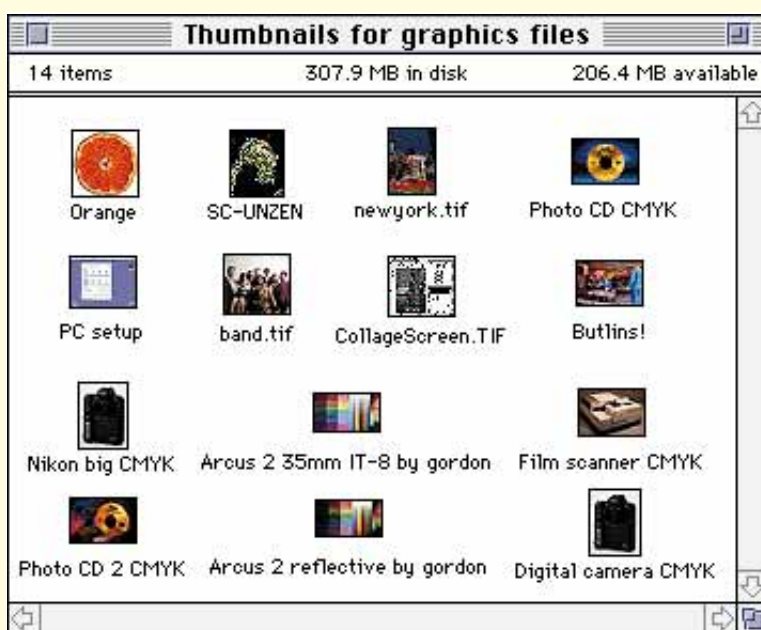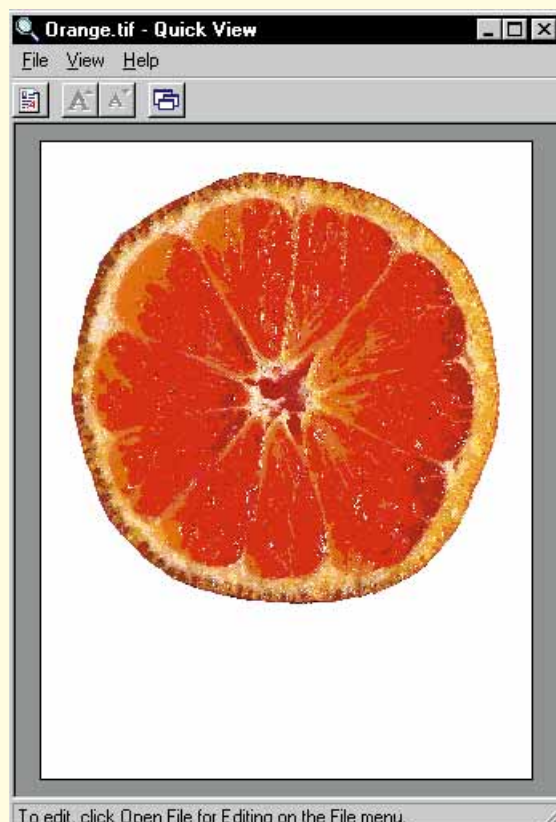
*How can you tell what a graphic looks like without opening it? Windows 95 offers a quick view facility, **left**, which opens a preview in a few seconds. However, check out the Macintosh folder, **above**. Photoshop for Macintosh creates thumbnail previews for the graphics file icons. They may be small, but you can see straight away what they represent*

had never heard of my monitor and mistook my graphics card for something else. Every time I speak to a video manufacturer I'm told they're feverishly writing updated drivers, so with any luck either Windows 95 will already be aware on release or there'll be lots of patch disks available direct from the developers.

Under the thumbnail

Speak to Mac users, and many, including myself, rave about thumbnail images used as the icons for graphics files. It turns out that what many considered to be part of System 7 is in fact a cunning piece of programming by Adobe on Photoshop. The fact that so many assumed it as part of the OS indicates Photoshop's huge installed Mac base.

The point of all this is that my initial disappointment in finding Microsoft not implementing thumbnail icons on Windows 95 could be alleviated in several ways. First, I'm hoping that it was left off because this is only a beta, although this is such a late stage in the development that if it were going to feature, it would probably be doing so already. Second, Adobe could perhaps implement it in the next version of Photoshop for Windows 95. Third, other manufacturers could do it, although the preview of Micrografx Picture Publisher for Windows 95 did not.

It *could* be that it's impossible, or that certain vital developers don't consider it important enough to program. If either of these are the case, that would be a shame since it's one of the neatest features I've come across.

Also sadly unsupported in the *PCW* office is the sharing of long filenames between PCs and Macs over a Novell NetWare 3.1 server. Unconfirmed rumours imply that this should work with an NT server, but we reckon that's just a conspiracy to persuade us to blindly swap from Novell. Whatever the reasons, it's a shame that the day both platforms can share long filenames and preview icons is likely to be a long way off.

One consolation is Microsoft's Quick View accessory which pops up as an option when you right-click a file. Text embedded in often complex word-processing files is separated from any complex formatting and presented in a flash. Good-size previews of graphics files are rapidly opened — well, most graphics files, anyway.

My QuickView didn't present itself as an option on JPEG files, while certain TIFF flavours cause difficulties. On the plus

Neuzeit Grotesk

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abçdéfghijklmnöpqrstuvwxyzß&1234567890
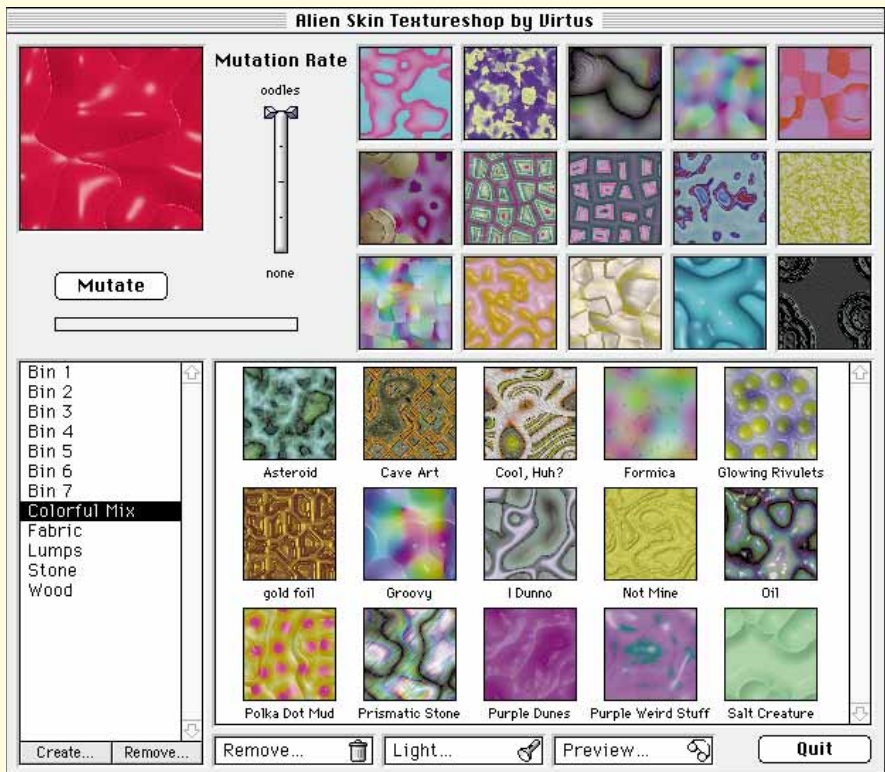
We're seeing lots of texture-generating utilities these days. Here's a quick teaser of Alien Skin — a full round-up is coming soon

side, it did recognise and successfully open normal TIFF, GIF, BMP, PCX and EPS files. It even showed the tiny previews that CorelDraw creates for CDR files. By default, all files are displayed 1:1, so you may have to scroll around large bitmaps. In these cases, select Page View to see the whole picture.

Anyone whose appetite has been whetted should check out our comprehensive Windows 95 feature in this issue.

Font of the Month

Continuing the theme of the past few months, here's another font which is used within the pages of *PCW*. DIN Neuzeit Grotesk, designed in 1928 by Wilhelm Pischner, is available in two weights: light and bold condensed. The latter is featured here and is the one more commonly used in *PCW*. "Grotesk" was a term originally used to describe sans serif faces by those probably used to seeing conventional serifs, and is still in use today.

Type fans should check out two superb new hardback books, *Twentieth Century Type Designers* and *Typographers on Type*, £25 each and both published by Lund Humphries.