

It's hard to believe that Windows-as-we-know-it has only been around for six years; less if we include all the trimmings like multimedia and TrueType. Over the next few months I'm going to take a fresh look at some of the new wonders of the nineties desktop. One of the fun things introduced with Windows 3.0 was wallpaper. You can have a bitmapped image as a backdrop to your screen, which can be a full-screen picture, or a smaller image centred in the screen, or "tiled" as a repeated pattern.

It's all rather fun, especially if you ditch the rather boring examples supplied with Windows and go after your own. You doubtless know that you change the wallpaper from Control Panel/Desktop, but there are a few undocumented wheezes here. For a start, Control Panel will only look in the Windows directory for the list of possible files. However, if you type in the path to a file elsewhere, Windows will find it and use it.

You can use Paintbrush to create wallpaper: set "Options/Image Attributes" to your screen size first; but you'd need to be especially gifted to create a startling, original work with that piece of software. It's easier to use it to vandalise or, depending on your artistic sensibilities, improve on an existing work.

Remember that you can use any of your fonts in Paintbrush to add embellishments such as speech balloons.

The downside of wallpaper is that it

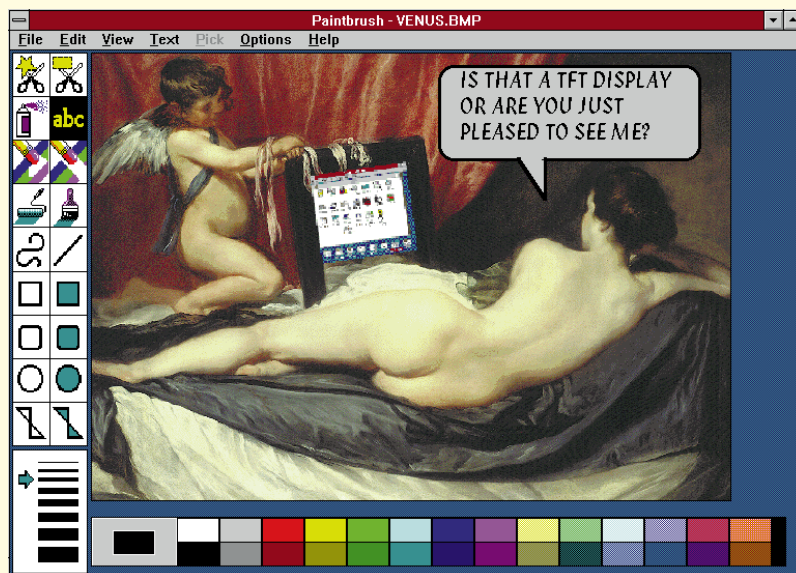
takes up space, both in memory and on disk. A 1024 x 768 x 256 colour backdrop takes up three quarters of a megabyte, so if RAM is at a premium choose a smaller, tiled picture, or fewer colours. If you're going to change your wallpaper often, disk space will be an issue, as well.

One way around this is to convert your files to the RLE format using image processing/conversion software such as the shareware PaintShop Pro. BMP files store the information as a straightforward list of pixels — for example, red, red, red, white, white, blue, blue, blue, blue. Run Length Encoding stores the same information as "three red, two white, four blue". Depending on the type of picture and the amount of detail, this will shrink the file size; it doesn't work too well on photographic images but is good on pictures with large expanses of the same colour, such as cartoons.



Roll playing

It's time to have some fun, so climb the ladder with Tim Nott and hang that wallpaper... paint that screen...



Vandalising great works with Paintbrush

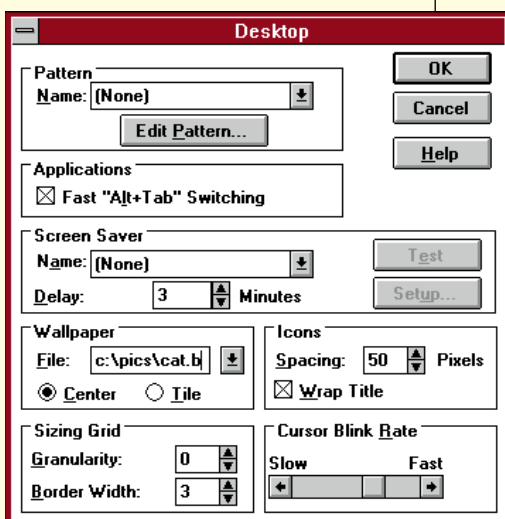
The RLE files won't appear in the Control Panel/Desktop list but, once again, you can type them in (including the extension) by hand and Windows will display the file in an identical fashion to a BMP.

Paper puzzle

If you want to really confuse nosey-parkers while you're away from your desk, try the following. With plenty of "interesting" windows visible, press PrintScreen to copy a screen image to the clipboard. Open Paintbrush, set "Image attributes" to the same size as your display, then Zoom out. Paste in the captured screen (you may have to do this twice) and save. Quicker still, paste, then immediately "Edit/Copy to..." an appropriate file name.

Set this file as your wallpaper, and close everything except Program Manager. Select "Move" from the Control menu (Alt+Space) and use the arrow keys to move Program Manager completely off the screen. Press Enter to fix it in place, then make yourself scarce and watch the fun as the victim clicks around the fake desktop wondering why nothing works. To restore Program Manager, Ctrl+Esc and "Tile", or select it with Ctrl+Esc, press Alt+Space, then arrow back on to the screen. This way of clearing the desktop is also a good way of grabbing a screen of

Time for a change — type the path if the file's not in Windows



Tim's Tips — What the f?

Be the life and soul of the pub with these funky function key shortcuts:

F1	All applications	Gets help.
F2	File Manager	Drops the list of drives.
F3	Most text applications	Starts the "find" command or repeats the last "find".
F4	Write, Cardfile	Go to a page or index.
F5	Notepad	Inserts the time and date.
F5	Cardfile	Dials the first number with four or more digits on the card.
F5	Write	Normal text (F6,7,8 for bold, italic and underline).
F5	File Manager	Updates the contents of the active window.
F6	File Manager	Switches through current file/directory/drive.
F6	Cardfile	Edit index entry.
F7	Cardfile	Add a record.
F7	Program and File Managers	Move selected item.
F8	Program and File Managers	Copy selected item.
F9	Calculator	Toggles +/- . And there are lots more in scientific mode (too boring to list here).
F10	All applications	Highlights the menu bar — use the underlined letter or Arrow keys, then Enter, to open a menu.

tiled wallpaper that you might want to use as a background to some other creation. Another rather surreal effect is to take a screenshot of Paintbrush, paste it into Paintbrush, and continue the process in a recursive manner.

What on earth?

Just to show there's always something new under the sun, I came across an interior decorating tip today, that I'd never seen before. Have a careful look at the screenshot, below, with the 256-colour "Planet Earth" backdrop. Bitmap size 640 x 480? No. It's only 260 x 340.

The desktop colour has been set to black, the same colour as the background to the photo, the wallpaper has been set to centred rather than tiled (hence the TileWallPaper=0 in WIN.INI) but I've moved the goalposts (or rather the centre) so the picture sits in the top right-hand corner.

The lines to add to WIN.INI are:

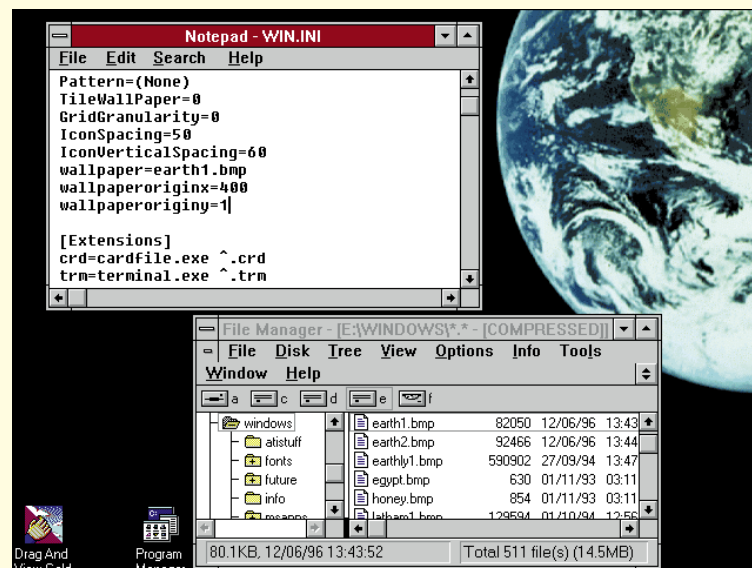
```
WallpaperOriginX=number
WallpaperOriginY=number
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As you can see from the screenshot, the capitalisation doesn't matter and *number* is the distance in pixels from the top left of the screen to the top left of the image. Note that if you set the number to zero, this is the same as omitting the entry, and the position reverts to the centre.

Now entering the ChromaZone

And now for something equally frivolous: screensavers. I must admit I've had loads. At one time I had this little man with a beard who lived on a desert island. Every day he'd do something different. Or not. You could watch it for hours on end, with absolutely no satisfaction whatsoever, rather like daytime television.

Then there are those things that take up tens of megabytes of disk space, ferret



Cornering an image

OEM text

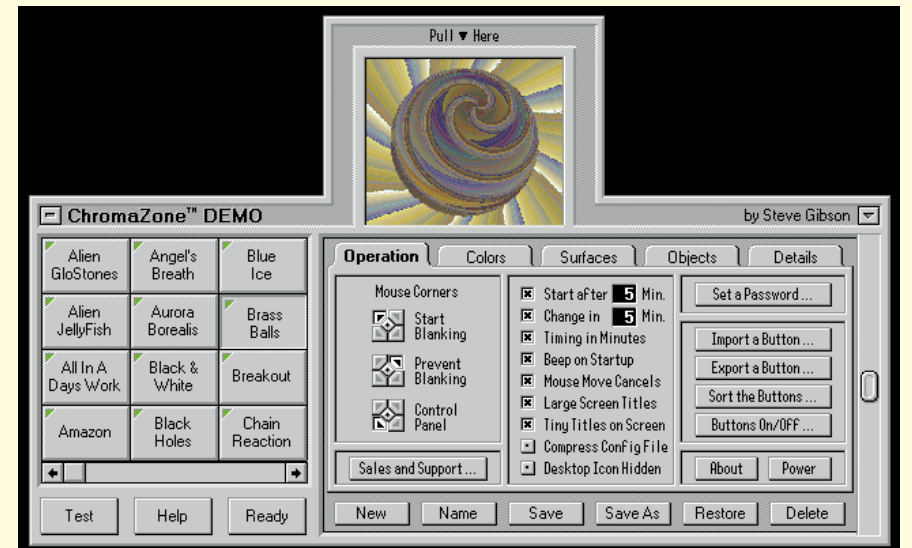
A quick query from David Clarke harks back to my February-issue column about the clipboard.

David says: "I was impressed by the facility to view text copied from a DOS application in its original spacing and OEM font. Is there a way of pasting this into a Windows application together with the original formatting and spacing? And what does OEM stand for?"

To answer the last question first, OEM stands for Original Equipment Manufacturer. The reason why Microsoft should thus name a font that comes with DOS and Windows is lost in history, but the OEM character set differs from the Windows one. If you look at the Terminal font in Character map, for instance, you'll see that the upper range of characters include the box-drawing and shading symbols used in DOS screens. If you open Write, for example, and switch to the Terminal font, you'll see that Alt+0206, which normally produces an uppercase E-acute, now produces a double top-left corner. Unfortunately, this doesn't work via the Clipboard — whatever you set the font to in the target application, you still get the normal Windows characters. The nearest you can get is to take a screen image of the DOS or clipboard window by pressing Alt+Print Screen.

deep into your system files and are screamingly funny — for the first fortnight. Then there are the ones that by some triumph of PR over reality, achieve cult status: oh, why did I download the Guinness advert? Peer pressure? Beer pressure?

Anyway, I've just found a screensaver I



Welcome to the ChromaZone — who said windows have to be rectangular?

rather admire. It has three things going for it. First, it produces wonderfully hypnotic, swirly patterns without the user having to resort to pharmaceutical assistance. Second, there are hours and hours of displacement activity to be had configuring it. Third, it packs an enormous amount into a tiny space.

The demo, included on this month's cover-mounted CD-ROM, unzips to a single 180Kb executable and contains 100 different preset effects, all of which can be tweaked and twisted — in the full version you can save your own.

It was created by Steve Gibson, who wrote the hard disk utility, Spinrite. It's writ-

ten in assembler, which means it's fast, compact, and you can do wonderfully non-Windowsy things such as open sliding panels to get your hands on the controls. In order for it to work you need a 256-colour display, as the secret of the "animation" is that it's not animation at all — the shapes stay put but the colour palette shifts, giving the illusion of movement.

PCW Contacts

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