MerriMac Software Group

enhancing the flavor of your Macintosh since 1991

Chief Programmer
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MSG Philosophy

MerriMac Software Group was originally designed for marketing simple games, useless utilities, and other assorted things which can and should be classified as "fluff."   However, if I've learned anything in the past few years, I've learned that fluff is in the eye of the beholder.   One person's fluff is another person's godsend, and vice-versa.

So, I expanded my horizons, spread my wings, and tried to embark upon more useful pursuits.   Of course, I kept getting pulled back to fluff, much in the same way that the Corleone family in "The Godfather" kept getting pulled back to crime.   Of course, crime doesn't pay (compared to politics), and neither does fluff (compared to crime).   I have agonized for minutes at a time about whether to charge money for my software and distribute it as shareware.   I've also agonized over whether to go up to strangers on the street and mug them.   The answer has always been no on both counts.

For many months when I first started programming on the Macintosh, I distributed my fluff as shareware, charging reasonable fees (always less than $10) and feeling that this was justified, considering how much work I put into my fluff.   Most of it was, as I have said, simple games and useless utilities, which is not the right sort of thing to distribute as shareware.   There is a very small group of highly polished, immensely useful, and/or extremely cool programs currently available that I would pay money for; my programs have never fallen in that category, and many programs which are distributed as shareware don't fall into that category either.

The following is a list of things you will never see in any program I release, even if I do eventually break down and release something as shareware: (1) a long-winded document extolling the virtues of the shareware honor system and at the same time forcefully reminding you of your legal obligation to pay me money; (2) annoying messages and dialog boxes popping up at inconvenient times reminding you of your failure to pay; (3) features intentionally left out or suspended until you pay your shareware fee; (4) any form of copy protection.

MSG History

MerriMac Software Group was founded in 1991 by a small group of friends at Cornell University.   The first stable program we developed was MSG Demo, which served as a shell for demonstrating (read: showing off) some simple graphic effects.   Actually, there was a card game, Accordian, which was started before MSG Demo, but it was never completed, and, as far as I know, it hasn't changed much in three years.   We also used MSG Demo as a testing ground for other code.   The system extension "Gravity Mouse", which makes your mouse fall to the bottom of the screen every so often, was originally an undocumented feature of MSG Demo.   When one of us finally learned how to write a system extension, it became its own program.   The original name was "Narcoleptic Mouse", but we feared that many people might consider this offensive, so the name was changed the day before it was released.

Other than some initial spurts and sputters, no real quantity of programming took place until January, 1993.   By this time, none of us were at Cornell anymore, although several of us were still in contact with each other, and everyone but me had given up on Macintosh programming and gone on to bigger and better things, or possibly smaller and worse things, depending on your point of view.   With a new and powerful computer (a Mac IIci), I found the old shell

code from MSG Demo and started working on a game, Pentominoes, which later became the first program I ever released publicly.   I still remember it fondly, in much the same way many people remember the first person they slept with — it wasn't very good, but at the time I thought it was phenomenal.   Pentominoes hit the Internet in March, 1993.

Programming continued through the summer of 1993 and into the fall (or, if you're in the southern hemisphere, through the winter and into the spring).   In November, 1993, I began distributing programs under the GNU General Public License, as a way of making source code available to other programmers.   One of the reasons I had such a slow start in Macintosh programming was that there was a general lack of good source code; the code that was available was, for the most part, snippets for doing particular useful things in specific circumstances.   I wanted to give more than that — complete source code, covering every aspect of a complete program.   I learn best by perusing other people's code, and I know that people twiddle and fiddle their way through my code.   I take that as the highest form of compliment.

MSG Future

Who knows?   I want to continue distributing the highest quality software I can, but I seem to keep being pulled back to fluff.   Of course, there is high quality fluff and there is low quality fluff, and I strive to put out only the highest quality fluff.   I have been steadily programming less, mainly because I'm a senior in college and have no time to breathe, much less program.   But whining aside, I can't imagine quitting programming altogether, simply because I love it too much to devote my life to something else.   I hope you enjoy the end product as much as I enjoyed the work that went into it.

END OF LINE
VERY LITTLE CARRIER