StartupFrills v3.1

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Overview:

This is a simple utility to provide a means of having a random events occur when you restart your Macintosh. These events can include changing the startup screen, playing a startup sound, showing a startup movie and/or reading a text file using the Speech Manager. Although it will work from the desktop, it was designed for use inside the Startup Items folder so that the picture and sound will change each time you boot.

There are plenty of similar utilities around, so why use this one? Well, firstly although these utilities are similar they are not identical. I know of no other utility to speak when restarting, but the major difference lies not in the features but in the implementation. Most other utilities are either control panels or extensions, whereas StartupFrills has been deliberately designed as an application.

I originally wrote this after the utility I used to use broke under System 7.5. It occurred to me that a one-shot application has far less chance of breaking in the future than any extension or control panel, and since there didn't seem to be one of those around I had to write it. Because of this design aim, StartupFrills patches no system calls, uses no memory after completing its tasks and doesn't clutter up your Control Panels menu.

When this application first appeared (under the name "Changing StartupScreens"), all it did was select a screen from a folder called StartupScreens and copy it to the System folder. That was it. No icon, no user-interface, no sounds, no method of selecting where the screens came from, nothing. It didn't even verify it was working with a screen - you could quite easily have ended up with a Microsoft Word document as your screen if it happened to be in the wrong folder at the wrong time!

Since then, many people have contacted me with ideas and virtually all subsequent development has been in response to those ideas. If you do feel there's something you'd like to see, then please contact me. So long as I feel it's in the spirit of the original idea (in other words, no system-level patches) it stands a good chance of being included.

Requirements:

- System 7.0 or above.

- optionally Apple's Speech Manager

- optionally Apple's Quicktime

Running StartupFrills for the first time:

Upgrading from version 2.2 or lower:

- Place the "StartupFrills" application in the Startup Items folder inside your System Folder.

- Reboot. After a while, StartupFrills will display the configuration dialogue. See the section 'Configuring StartupFrills' for further details.

- The first time you reboot, StartupFrills will not alter the startup screen. In other words, if you had no startup screen then you'll still see "Welcome to Macintosh" or if you had one already then the same screen will be displayed.

- This is quite normal, and should only occur once. StartupFrills doesn't actually display screens itself, it simply places them in the correct places for the System to recognise them automatically. Consequently one reboot is needed in order to allow StartupFrills to put a screen in the right place.

Upgrading from version 2.3:

- v2.3 introduced the ability to have alias files named "Startup Screens" or "Startup Sounds" rather than using actual folders inside the System folder. StartupFrills v3.x provides an alternative method of locating these folders, better than the previous method because it leaves the System folder uncluttered.

  Because of this any alias files you may have set up are now obsolete, and should be deleted. If you are using actual folders inside the System folder, then these may still be used under v3.x and can be left alone. You'll still need to the new version where they are though - see the section 'Configuring StartupFrills' for further details.

- After you have deleted any alias files that were in use, continue as if you were installing for the first time.
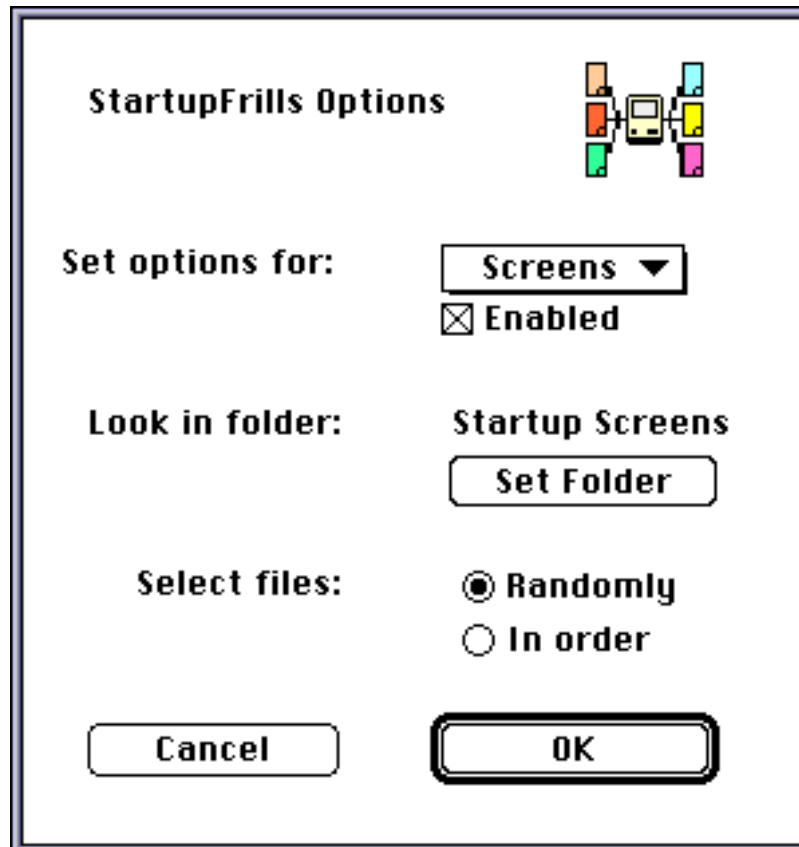
Upgrading from version 3.0:

- The configuration file for version 3.1 is considerably different to that for v3.0. Consequently you will have to delete your original preferences file and re-configure.

  I'm planning to make sure this is the last time something like this happens. In future, there will always be a safe conversion method rather than requiring you to start from scratch.

Configuring StartupFrills:

- The layout of the configuration screen in shown below.

- Use the pop-up menu to switch between options for different startup file types. There are three entries in this menu - screens, sounds, and speech.

- The checkbox controls whether StartupFrills should deal with a given file type. If 'Enabled' is checked, StartupFrills will make use of the type in question. If it is not checked, then files of that type will be left alone.

  In the example screen above, 'Enabled' is checked. This means that StartupFrills will change the startup screen each time you restart. Had 'Enabled' not been checked, you would have had the same screen appear each time.

- Select the folders in which contains the files for each type. To use the screens feature, you require StartupScreen files (not just ordinary picture files). To use sound, any ordinary System 7-style sound file will work. To use speech, any pure text file (created by SimpleText or BBEdit, for example) is required. To use movies, any valid Quicktime movie is required. Not that the version of Quicktime installed should be capable of playing any of the movies you wish to use.

  Note also that these folders need not exclusively have screens, sounds, movies or text files in them. You may choose a folder containing other types of files; if you do so, StartupFrills will ignore all superfluous files and select only from those it knows how to deal with.

Note also that these folders need not be different. You could have all three types within the same folder. Since these folders are to be referenced at startup time, it is advisable to have them on a volume which is permanently mounted.

Changing StartupFrills' Configuration:

• You may re-configure StartupFrills any time it runs. To re-show the configuration dialogue, hold down the command key when StartupFrills runs.

Caveats:

Although I've tested this to my satisfaction I'm not going to guarantee it'll work every time. I think it works, but if it doesn't then I'm not responsible for any consequences. Sorry to turn nasty for a moment, but I've got to cover myself just in case...

If you do find a problem, please email me. My email is checked at least weekly, usually more frequently than that, and I promise I'll respond to all mail received on this subject.

Just one thing about error reporting - please include the version number when reporting a problem. I've had quite a few difficulties due to old versions lying around on the net, and unless people tell me exactly what they're working with it can be awkward working out which version is being referring to. You can determine the version number by performing a 'Get Info' command from the Finder.

StartupFrills has now been tested on numerous systems, including machines running non-English language System versions.

Freeware:

This application is freeware, since it would be ludicrous for me to expect anyone to pay for it! It can be included in any archive, and distributed freely via any medium providing all accompanying documentation goes with it.

If you do feel like making a contribution, please donate some money to your local children's hospital - they almost *always* have an appeal of some kind on. Twenty-odd years ago if it hadn't been for Sheffield Children's Hospital in the UK, I wouldn't be here and neither would this application.

Enjoy,
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