JAOW dropping

If only IBM would stop beating up Windows for a minute, we might be able to appreciate the good things about Warp, says Terence Green.

November 1995 was a strange month for Warp. IBM announced a product called Just Add Warp and started talking openly about a forthcoming product codenamed Merlin. Just Add Warp (for which the acronym is JAOW, not JAW), was obviously designed as a useful data set for comparing Warp and Windows. It contains some very useful information about Warp which is worth having to hand. Whether it's worth a 3Mb download is another question.

Unfortunately, IBM's Personal Software Products vice president, Dan Lautenbach, introduced JAOW by saying it could "rescue unhappy Windows customers", millions of whom "may have been duped into trying to use [Windows 95]". This is drivel, and insulting to users to boot. With faultless foot-in-mouth talents, Dan went a step further and complained that the plug-and-play features in Windows 95 don't work. This is true but kind of dumb of him to mention when there isn't any plug-and-play in IBM Warp to speak of either.

Well, I suppose the PCMCIA support in Warp sort of qualifies as plug-and-play, but the real reason no-one in the computer industry except Apple does real plug-and-play is because there haven't been any decent open standards for PC peripheral hardware since the introduction of the humungously lashed-up, er, IBM PC hardware standard in 1983. Over to you, Dan...

The magic of Merlin

What makes the Lautenbach line so depressing is that while he's trashing the opposition, other voices at IBM are starting to talk positively about the next version of Warp, which will ship next summer. Warp II (or whatever they call it) is a fourth generation product. Today's Warp is the result of several years of testing by highly critical users, many of whom have upgraded from Windows. IBM should stick

Just Add Warp to have (nearly) all your questions answered about OS/2 Warp, its compatibility with your hardware [see text] and how to upgrade to Warp

to telling us what Warp does (as JAOW does), and leave us to figure out whether it's better than Windows 95 or no. It doesn't take a genius to figure out whether Windows 95 meets one's needs or not. Many people will be satisfied with it. If not, all we need to know is that there's an alternative.

The next Warp version, codenamed Merlin, will add a bunch of stuff that really consolidates Warp's position as an alternative to any Windows platform, including Windows NT. Merlin, or Warp II as it may be called, includes symmetric multiprocessor support (SMP), a better fix for the single message queue problem mentioned in last month's column, built-in security, OpenDoc, and improvements to the user interface, among other developments.

As all Warp products have a common base, Merlin will be equally competent as a home user Internet access tool and a server base running any of IBM's upcoming applications servers. It's as though there was only one version of

Windows which ran on notebooks, desktops, home office PCs and departmental or enterprise servers with all the benefits that a single code base has for those who have to support and maintain these systems.

Just Add (OS/2) Warp

The most useful parts of JAOW are the Warp and Warp Connect FAQ (frequently asked questions) lists and the tips and tricks guides, especially the "Stupid OS/2 Tricks" section, which is anything but stupid. It's full of hard facts and useful tips. There's also a copy of the latest Hardware Compatibility list.

The above amounts to about half of JAOW's 3Mb. The Upgrade Advisor is a bit of a disappointment, as its detection features are no more than average and the demo is best skipped over.

JAOW runs on Windows or OS/2, but I initially had problems installing it under OS/2 Warp, as it bombed out with an unhelpful message which Dan Lautenbach forgot to warn me of. JAOW installed fine under Windows however. At this point I called the IBM Helpline in Greenock. This has recently been set up to co-ordinate all European support and it runs a 24-hour support line. The 60 days free support for Warp can be continued for £45 per annum. I called at 1a.m. and was annoyed to have to wait for over two minutes. What kind of propeller-head, I wonder, calls technical support after midnight?

I didn't get the exact answer I wanted from the Helpline, but I did get enough of an answer to suggest my next course of action. In this case, I decided to upgrade using the Warp FixPack #10 referred to in last month's column. What a palaver. First I picked up some spurious messages when I ran the "Kicker" disks and then I checked on CompuServe, where I discovered a fresh set of Kicker disks had been posted. Is this a first? — a fix for install disks for a fixpack?

Anyway, the new set worked and the JAOW problem was solved, despite the fact that the Kicker disk README.1ST file contains some hopelessly outdated explanations of the difference between Corrective Service Disks and FixPacks. This really is the essential difference between Warp and Windows. At least with Windows, you feel that the people who package the product are on your side and you won't have to fight your way through

Developer's delights

A developer writes, wanting to know whether one could access DB2 databases from Windows. You can — DB2 includes client enablers and there's an ODBC driver for Windows. He said he had searched the documentation and CompuServe for some time without success, so I set off on the Web and headed for the Solution Developer Home Page. There I found reference to the free DB2 Developer Assistance programme which can be applied to throughGO IBMDB2 on CompuServe.

To be fair, the new Solution Developer organisation, which was announced in January, is much improved with a single port of entry instead of the 25-plus separate developer programs it replaces. Those who work in Windows-centric worlds could also check out the new DB2 platform, Windows NT.

Another new development on the Web of interest to OS/2 and Windows developers is the OpenDoc Club page. This is a home page designed to encourage the take-up of OpenDoc, and open-standards alternative object-orientated development platform to Microsoft's proprietary OLE. Co-developed by Apple, Novell, and IBM, OpenDoc includes an OLE wrapper which allows OpenDoc and OLE objects to interoperate, but OpenDoc is available to run on the MacOS, Unix, Windows and OS/2 and is being developed for OS/400 and MVS too.

Apple has shipped the first OpenDoc shrink-wrap and OS/2 and Windows code is now in Beta. Developers can start working with OpenDoc by picking up one of the developer release Betas, details of which can be found at Club OpenDoc. Rather than list loads of URLs here, I would suggest you hit WWW.IBM.COM and take it from there to find Club OpenDoc, the Solution Developer Home Page, FixPacks, Just Add Warp, and the OS/2 Warp home page.

seven hells in order to see what all the fuss is about.

First aid with TCP/IP

Sometimes people have trouble getting Netscape (version 1.0 or 2.0 Beta) running under OS/2, and the problem is usually caused by a Winsock clash. Warp's TCP/IP includes all you need to run Winsock-compliant TCP/IP applications such as World Wide Web browsers and TCP/IP utilities in OS/2, DOS and Windows sessions, but Netscape finds a third-party Windows WINSOCK.DLL in the path and tries to use this instead of the correct Warp-provided WINSOCK.DLL, which resides in the \TCPIP\DOS\BIN sub-directory by default.

This usually happens either because Warp was installed over an existing Windows installation, or when you install an Internet package which includes its own WINSOCK.DLL, which it invariably places in the \OS2\MDOS\WINOS2\ SYSTEM subdirectory. Make sure you only have one WINSOCK.DLL, the Warp one, in the path and Netscape will run.

Essential ingredients

In order for the above to work you do need IBM TCP/IP loaded, either TCP/IP 2.0 which ships as the Internet Access Kit in the Warp Bonus Pak, or the TCP/IP 3.0

You don't have to use Web Explorer to trawl around the Web — Warp supports any Windows Web navigator right out of the box. Difference is you have to pay for Netscape but IBM Web Explorer is free with Warp and Warp Connect

provided with Warp Connect. You'll need to download a few fixes for TCP/IP 2.0 if you want to run the latest Web Explorer 1.03 as well.