

Review: The Chief's Installer Pro

Reviewed by Bob Swart

So, you've written your first Delphi application and it's just great. Now, all you have to do is write the installation program. Or add that one missing feature that makes your great app a killer app... Unfortunately, you only have time to do one thing. Then it's time to pick up a copy of *The Chief's Installer Pro for Windows*. It will lift the burden of the install program from your shoulders, and give you more time to concentrate on your own application instead!

The Chief's Installer Pro can be used to install and optionally **uninstall** your Windows applications. It is able to copy files from up to 45 floppy disks (although I must say I haven't tested it with more than 3). Files compressed with COMPRESS.EXE (and the -r flag) will be expanded automatically using LZEXPAND.DLL.

The main program INSTALL.EXE can be used quite happily on its own. For foreign language support, you can create a file called WINSTALL.DLL with a string table for your non-English strings. The original English version is also included in .RC source form. It is very much appreciated if you send The Chief your "country specific version" of the WINSTALL.DLL (see the address at the bottom).

If the files you wish to install do not fit on one disk, you can use the SETUP.EXE program which is also supplied. SETUP is just a small loader that makes sure INSTALL.EXE and any optional support files are copied to the TEMP directory, so you're not continually prompted for Disk 1 with INSTALL.EXE.

The actual install instructions for your program are written in an ASCII file called WINSTALL.INF. The Chief's Installer Pro comes with some useful example .INF files and a detailed Windows Help file with information on the syntax. It's quite simple and yet powerful enough to do whatever you want, such as:

- > Partial or optional installations;
- > Checking available space;
- > Writing to .INI files;
- > Creating new Program Manager groups and icons for target files;
- > A bitmap, banner and progress indicators during the installation;
- > Messages or programs to start at the end of or during installation.

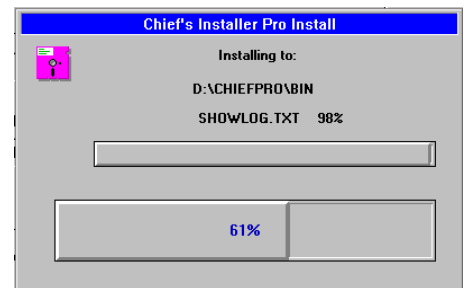
It's all there, and more too that we don't have space to discuss! The screen shots (from the install of The Chief's Installer Pro itself) give you a good idea of how your own installation will look.

And then there's the UNINSTAL.EXE, which can be used to uninstall any program that was installed with The Chief's Installer Pro. Note that you have to set an option in WINSTALL.INF to generate an UNINSTAL.LOG file that is needed to uninstall your application. Of course, your application will be so good that nobody would want to uninstall it, but it's a very nice feature to have available!



Main installation screen with the now obligatory colour fade background!

Display of progress information during an installation



The Chief's Installer Pro is shareware. You'll find an evaluation copy on the disk with Issue 2 of The Delphi Magazine (this is a full version, not crippled, but if you want to continue using it then you need to register it of course!). If you can't wait that long, check Library 4 of the CompuServe WINSHARE forum. The registration fee is only £20 or US\$29 or equivalent. There are a number of registration sites around the world which accept local funds, or you can register on CompuServe.

Personally, I think The Chief's Installer Pro is a very good program, and well worth the modest registration fee. I've already used it on two of my applications and it enabled me to spend more time on the programs themselves! I can recommend it to anyone who wants their applications to be installed in a professional way without spending the earth. As we go to press we have learnt that it has been awarded a *Gold Award* by *PC Plus Magazine* in their April 1995 UK edition.

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