

Book Reviews

Delphi Programming Explorer
by Jeff Duntemann, Jim Mischel and Don Taylor
Reviewed by Bob Swart

This book is unique. It is written by three great authors in a way that is perfect for Delphi: first do it, and then find out how it works. That's exactly the approach Jeff and Jim used to write the first 14 chapters of this book. Jim starts off by doing something with Delphi, and then (in the next chapter) Jeff comes along to explain the techniques behind it in his own unique style.

Together they cover topics like the Delphi IDE, visual programming, Components, Properties, Buckets (ie Collections), Forms, Units, Objects (and OO-programming), Dialogs, Files, Graphics and simple Database Applications with Delphi. As you'll see, these topics range from beginner to intermediate and while the book is written in a very pleasant and easy way, the authors are not afraid to give extra technical information for the more experienced reader.

Then, just when you think the book's over, another book starts: *Ace Breakpoint's Database Adventure*, written by none other than Don Taylor [Don formerly ran the *Turbo User Group* and edited *TUGlines*, the group's well-respected newsletter, now sadly out of publication. Editor]. Don describes a complete Delphi database application design and implementation project in the form of a detective story. I've never read anything like it. I loved it, and learned a lot about practical database design. Apart from the detective work, Don again gives us real-life practical hints and tips in designing Delphi database applications.

The final application contains everything you need: linked database tables, forms (including input forms), reports using ReportSmith and the helpfile.

The book ends with an appendix for VB users on how to move to Delphi. Both the 3.5 inch disk and

CD-ROM (from the *Delphi Starter Kit*) contain a trial version of EarthTrek's *Conversion Assistant*, so if you've got VB code lying around, that could be yet another reason to check on this book!

The *Delphi Starter Kit* contains the book and a CD-ROM full with Delphi tools and articles on creating applications with Delphi. The CD-ROM also contains a trial version of *HelpGen* for help authoring and a lot of source code, articles and custom components. For only a few bucks more you get much more and I can assure you it's money well spent!

Delphi Programming Explorer by Jeff Duntemann, Jim Mischel and Don Taylor is published by Coriolis Group (distributed by IDG Books), ISBN: 1-883577-25-X, 630 pages with 3.5 inch disk, US\$39.99. Also with CD-ROM as the *Delphi Starter Kit* for US\$44.99.

Delphi Developer's Guide
by Xavier Pacheco
and Steve Teixeira
Reviewed by Steve Troxell

If you're new to Delphi and find yourself ready to move beyond the "beginner" books out there, or you're an experienced Pascal, C, or Visual Basic programmer want a concise look at the features of Delphi, as well as a heaped helping of practical problem-solving techniques, then *Delphi Developer's Guide* is for you.

Having spent many years as Borland Technical Support specialists and being directly involved in the development of Delphi itself, Xavier Pacheco and Steve Teixeira bring an "in the trenches" perspective to Delphi. The book only briefly touches on Pascal syntax and Delphi IDE basics, although there is enough there to make a comfortable transition for the experienced programmer. The bulk of the book focuses on real-world programming problems and techniques to solve them.

The first two-thirds of the book covers a wide variety of topics including multimedia, printing, DLLs, MDI, graphics, VBXs, BASM and more.

While other sources might cover similar ground, Xavier and Steve go into greater depth. For example, there is a discussion of how a Windows message travels through the VCL and all the Delphi methods where that message may be intercepted; there is detailed information about how to create your own fonts; the chapter on printing shows you how to print reports direct from Delphi without relying on a report writer such as ReportSmith, as well as how to print rotated text and display a simple print preview window; the multimedia section shows how to construct an audio CD player to rival your Sony.

The final third of the book consists of two sections aptly called "Real World Building Blocks" and "Real World Applications". The authors use the foundation laid in the first part of the book to take you through a series of projects that reflect practical programming challenges rather than contrived academic examples. These include a day planner and address book, a terminal application and a complete inventory management system.

The book includes a CD-ROM that contains not only all the source code from the text, but an extensive collection of evaluation copies of thirteen third party products including ForeHelp, InfoPower, EarthTrek's VB to Delphi Conversion Assistant, Orpheus, Async Pro for Delphi, and many others. These alone are worth the price of the book.

Delphi Developer's Guide by Xavier Pacheco and Steve Teixeira is published by SAMS Publishing, ISBN: 0-672-30704-9, 907 pages with CD-ROM, US\$39.99, £46.95 in the UK.