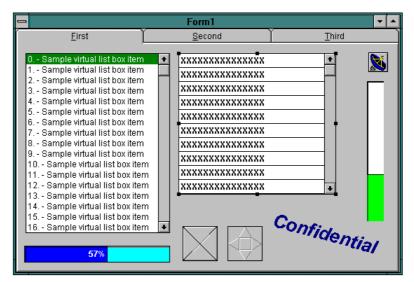
Review: Orpheus

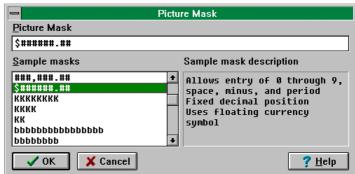
Reviewed by Dave Jewell

Orpheus is a powerful set of Delphi components produced by TurboPower Software, who have something of a reputation for quality in the provision of tools for Pascal and C++ developers. There are three different sets of controls in Orpheus and the default arrangement is that they occupy three different pages on the Component Palette: the general purpose components, a set of so-called table (or grid) components and lastly database components.

There are a number of data entry components which, in various ways, improve upon the basic functionality provided in Delphi. A TovcSimpleField control works just like an edit box but provides input validation on a character-bycharacter and field-by-field basis. A somewhat more complex control, TOvcPictureField expands upon this capability by allowing you to define a 'picture' mask. This is nothing to do with graphics, by the way. In this sense a picture mask is standard database terminology for a template string which provides a representation of acceptable input - it's a very powerful technique and uses a design-time picture mask editor. For example, you might define a picture mask as hh:mm:ss if you only wanted a valid time to be entered, or as \$###.# for some currency amount. The \$ sign, by the way, is automatically replaced at run-time with the currently set Windows currency symbol, so you don't need to worry about Orpheus being specific to the US. There's also a TOvcNumericField which is specific to numeric data entry - the data appears in a 'calculator' style manner.

All three of these components (and others in the Orpheus library) make use of a TovcController component. This provides centralised control for key assignment (you can use WordStar style keycodes if you want). It's a neat feature. All three components are available in





➤ The Orpheus toolkit has a strong emphasis on data validation. At design-time, you can use the built-in picture mask editor to choose from a set of pre-defined masks or just type in your own.

an 'array' (listbox) form and you can link multiple listboxes together so that they all scroll together. While on the subject of listboxes, Orpheus includes a virtual listbox, TovcVirtualListBox, which can manage many billions of items. It doesn't take responsibility for storing the item data, but requests more data from the application as new items come into view.

Two different components are provided for editing text. One is specific to editing text in files, while the other is more flexible and can get text from any source. Both editors have a limitation of about 2Gb in the amount of editable text, which should be enough for most people! There are two corresponding viewer components, which don't allow editing, although you

can also set a ReadOnly property in the editors.

Orpheus features yet another implementation of a tabbed notebook, this time with tabs along the top or right hand side. It's certainly convenient to use at design-time. You change pages by...er... just clicking on the tabs! Wonder why Borland didn't think of that one! It will also let you set individual tab text colours, which can often be useful (as when indicating pages which a user has already viewed).

As any seasoned Windows programmer will know, there are severe limits on the number of timers that are available to applications. When creating a new timer, you should always check that the API call executed successfully. For those Delphi programs which

require a number of timers, Orpheus provides a TOvcTimerPool control which allows for up to 32,767 different timer events while requiring only a single timer at the API level.

Another interesting component, TOvcRotatedLabel, works just as its name describes. It's used to display any TrueType font at an arbitrary angle on the screen. It does only work with TrueType fonts, though, if you try to use another font type and then set a non-zero angle, the component will cunningly swap back to a TrueType font! There's also a progress bar (TurboPower call it a meter) which can be oriented either horizontally or vertically, another variation on the calendar theme (it had to come...) and a set of 'tweaker' components. The tweakers include a spin button, a four-way spinner four-way star-shaped spinner. These last two controls could be used to advantage in drawing programs, allowing you to 'nudge' individual objects a tiny

amount in any direction. The TOvcTransfer looks rather useful: it provides a mechanism for writing code which transfers data between one or more components (edit box, combo box, etc) and an associated data structure.

Orpheus contains a very powerful spreadsheet-style grid component and a number of subsidiary components which can be used to include checkboxes, pictures, comboboxes and so forth inside the cells of the grid. The library is rounded out by another triplet of the three data entry fields (simple, picture and numeric), this time with a data-aware flavour to them. Last but not least, there's a dataaware text editor component which can be used to directly edit the contents of database memo fields.

As with all TurboPower products, full source code is included in the package which means that you're in a good position to port the aforementioned controls to Windows 95 or NT once the 32-bit version of Delphi is released. A number of example programs are also included in the package.

Orpheus generally costs £135 in the UK and is available from most development tools retailers. As with all TurboPower tools, full source code is included. It requires about 6Mb of disk space and includes full on-line help for the various Orpheus components. A 'preview' version can be downloaded from CompuServe (Library 22 in the Delphi forum), CIX, or TurboPower's ftp site. The preview version is fully functional, except that none of the components will function unless Delphi is itself loaded into memory.

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