

# Delphi 4 Preview

by Brian Long

In the next issue of our sister magazine, *Developers Review* (Issue 5, August 1998), we will have a full, detailed review of Delphi 4, courtesy of Brian Long. Here's a taster...

More than a year after Delphi 3 was released, Delphi 4 is just about to be with us. Inprise have kept this product surprisingly well concealed. Very few people have had much of a chance to see it or play with it, which is unusual for a new version of a successful product these days.

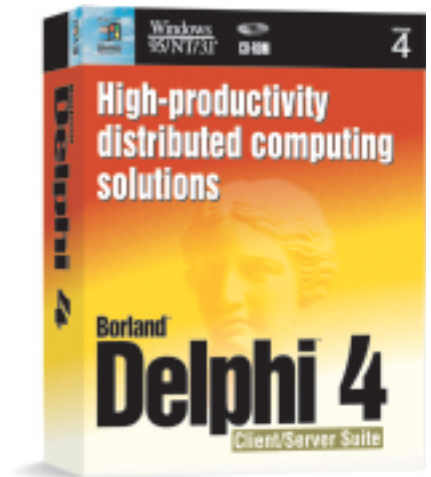
To follow on from Delphi 3's elegant COM support, version 4 supports Distributed COM rather better, including the threading models and full support for Microsoft Transaction Server (MTS). To round off the distributed objects support, it also has similar support for CORBA. Inprise recently took over Visigenics, and their Visibroker product is the supplied ORB.

Database-wise there is new support in both the BDE and VCL for all the exciting extensions to Oracle 8, including nested fields and array fields. Also supported is Access 97.

Figure 1 shows a rather more MS Office-like environment, where the main window has separate, configurable, toolbars. Most of the IDE windows can be dragged and docked in various places: the IDE shown has been configured to have all the debug support windows as separate tab sheets in one window. You can also see the multi-target project manager.

The nice looking hierarchy view occupying a third of the editor window is called the Code Explorer. This convenient programming ally keeps track of the currently active file in the editor and displays a constantly updated analysis of what's in it. It allows you, for example, to navigate to the declarations of variables and implementations of subroutines.

This is just one of a host of productivity boosters added to Delphi, which also include Class



Completion (a godsend to save typing), the Code Browser, Module Navigation and Tooltip Symbol Insight (in action in the picture, showing me where exactly DragFinish is implemented). These and more will be checked out in full in the review.

The screenshot also suggests some of the other new features in the VCL, such as drag and dock support (DockSite and DragKind properties), resizing constraint (Constraints property), Windows 98 support, including multiple monitors (DefaultMonitor property), bi-directional support in appropriate international versions of Windows (BiDiMode property) and centralised program actions through a TActionList component and the Action property.

There are enhancements to the language too, such as dynamic arrays method overloading and default parameters for subroutines. Plus Delphi 4 has enhanced debugging, including remote debugging.

And that takes up all the space I'm allowed for now. I hope some of these features make the product sound as enticing as I know it to be. It's a great new version.

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➤ Figure 1: Delphi 4's AppBrowser IDE, showing off its Code Explorer, dockable toolbars and windows, and multi-target project manager.

