

# Poor man's Distiller

Life would be perfect if Adobe would only release a native OS/2 version of the Adobe Acrobat software. I don't mean the reader; I mean the software to actually create Portable Document Format (PDF) files. However, since they haven't, I've come up with a workable solution (*for me*) and I figured I'd share it with everyone else who saw the need.

There are several software packages you will need to download in order to get this to work. All of them are (*at the writing*) freeware so the only thing this will cost you is some download time.

The most important piece of this system is **Aladdin Ghostscript**. The current version is 5.01, and can be obtained from their web page at <http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~ghost/> Read the instructions carefully to install. Rename the gsos2.exe program to simply gs.exe.

The next package you will need are the **EMX Run time libraries**. You should be able to find these at <http://hobbes.nmsu.edu> in the os2/unix libraries, usually with the name emxrt.zip. Again, make sure you read the instructions carefully and install the package. The EMX run time libraries are used by quite a few shareware and freeware programs.

The next thing you will need is **IBM's Visual REXX extensions**. This is a freeware package distributed through IBM's EWS (*Employee Written Software*) program. The package name is usually VREXX2.ZIP and should be available at the hobbes site mentioned above, or any site specializing in OS/2 software. Follow the instructions included in the package to install the software.

Next, you will need **Kai Uwe Rommel's PRINTMON program**. This was also available from the hobbes site, and is also freeware. The installation instructions are sparse. Just copy the PRINTMON.EXE program into a directory on your path.

Next, you'll need the REXX program in this package, **Distill.CMD**. Copy it into a directory on your path as well. You will need to modify the program slightly before using. Open it in the text editor of your choice and change the "gspath" variable to reflect the drive and directory into which you installed Ghostscript, and then modify either the "acdir" or "gkdir" variables depending on whether you want to use, **GSView** or **Acrobat**, to view your PDF files.

Finally, you will have to create a printer object on your desktop. Use the latest generic Postscript printer drivers (*as of this writing they are 30.514*). If you are using Warp3 I'd suggest upgrading to the Fixpack 26 or higher level. You should be fine with the base level of Warp4. You can always get the latest printer drivers from the Master OS/2 Update Site, <http://www.cincyteamos2.org/masterupdate.html>

There are two ways to use Distill.CMD. You can create a desktop object for it, then drag & drop raw postscript files onto it. To create a raw postscript file, have the printer object print to a file instead of to a port. When you print to this object, you will be prompted for a file name. Once the file is created, you can drag and drop that file onto the Distill object and you will be prompted for another file name; this one will be the PDF file.

## Poor Man's Distiller

I don't know about you. To me, the above sounds a little too convoluted. Instead, I'd leave the printer object directed to a port. If you have a `STARTUP.COMD` file in the root directory of your boot drive, add the following line:

```
START /MIN PRINTMON LPTx "DISTILL STDIN"
```

where "x" is the port number to which you've assigned the Postscript printer.

If you do not have a `STARTUP.COMD` file, create one now with the above line. If your `STARTUP.COMD` file is written in REXX instead of the standard OS/2 batch language, enclose the above line in single quotes.

The next time you print to the Postscript printer object, you will hear your disk churn a bit, and then a window will pop up prompting you for the path and filename for the new Acrobat document. Enter the information and press the "OK" button. Give it a few moments (*till you hear the disk stop churning*) and you should be prompted to view your new document with either the **Adobe Acrobat Reader for OS/2** or **Russell Lang's GSView** (*depending on how you've configured Distill.COMD*).

Please read the `PS2PDF.TXT` document that comes with Ghostscript to learn about the limitations to the PDF documents created by Ghostscript. If you have any problems with the `Distill.COMD` REXX program, please feel free to contact me. If you have problems with any of the other programs in this system, please refer to the tech support information from their authors.

And, of course, don't forget to let Adobe know how much you'd **REALLY** like a native version of Acrobat!!

Jaime A. Cruz, Jr.  
jcruz@ibm.net

### Revision History:

**1997/06/27** - Samuel Audet <guardia@cam.org> suggested verifying whether or not the PDF file was created. We couldn't find a way to tell if the file created was valid or not (`GSOS2.EXE` apparently does not pass return codes) so I decided to give the user the option of launching the Adobe Acrobat Reader if the PDF file was created so he can see for himself if he was successful.

**1997/06/28** - There must be a bug in the REXX interpreter running under OS/2 Warp 3, because I was certainly able to retrieve return codes from `GSOS2.EXE` under Warp4 running both ObjectREXX and Classic REXX. I've modified the error code to check for the existence of the PDF file AND a return code of zero from `GSOS2.EXE`. Only then will it prompt the user to launch Acrobat. Also, the new code has the option of launching Russell Lang's GSView program instead of Acrobat Reader. Russell has released GSView 2.2 which works with Aladdin's Ghostscript 5.01 so some users may prefer to use that instead of Acrobat Reader.

## Poor Man's Distiller

**1997/07/07** - Updated the documentation to correct some errors, and created a PDF version of the documentation using the IBMWorks word processor and Distill.CMD (*to prove it works*).

**1997/07/26** - Updated the Distill.CMD program to end with a return code of '4' if no input parameter is given. Modified the initial dialog box call to use the **VFileBox** dialog instead of the **VInputBox** dialog. Corrected a problem where the full path was not being added to the input file name under all circumstances.