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AMIGA

Review

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For professional and home users

Windows 95 vs Workbench

WHO WINS?

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* Recommended Retail Price

Sneak look at
Twist database

undelete function, which works much the same way as the Macintosh Trashcan and a bit like the freely distributable, and rather elderly, Kan system on the Amiga; deleted files get moved to a directory, and you can empty that directory manually when you're good and ready. The files remember where they came from, which is enormously helpful for odd-named data files.

The standard Windows 95 Recycle Bin, as it's called, only "catches" files deleted by hand, as it were; if a file's deleted by a Windows or DOS application or overwritten by another, you can't get it back from the Bin. If you install Norton Utilities for Windows 95, you can use a Bin that covers all of these eventualities and then some.

Despite all their technical sophistication, Windows programs still don't have very good installers. The installer for Windows 95 itself is marvel, considering the job it has to do, but other software typically comes with very dim installation utilities indeed.

The Amiga has Installer, which everyone sane programmer uses. Write a script, with version checking and as much control as you like, and there it is. All of the Windows installers, though, are roll-your-own jobs, which seldom check to see if there's a newer version of DUMBPROG.DLL on the system but just trample it with the old one, and can do marvellous things like not understanding drives with more than a gigabyte of free space and assuming there must be none.

Knobs on

Windows 95 comes with a pile of built-in stuff. If you get it along with the PLUS! add-on, you get a personal information manager and day planner, perfectly adequate for most people (which can send data to those near-magical Timex data-

bank watches), comprehensive bundled email features that give you faxes, local and Internet email in one place, a decent Web browser, a fun pinball game and a DOOM-engine non-violent race game, a Make Your Life Better By Setting Goals thingy, a program scheduler that automatically runs things at given times, after a given period of inactivity and so on, a defragmenter, a drive compressor, disk repair software, a little paint program, a little word processor, a little database, a sound recorder, a CD player and a calculator.

AmigaDOS comes with... a calculator. One point for Windows, methinks.

True, the new Amiga bundles have good real applications with them, but not many of those will have been sold by the time you read this. AmigaDOS could do with a few more useful utilities as standard.

AmigaDOS is a great little operating system. But there are advantages and disadvantages to being little.

Little OSes don't need huge computers. But little OSes also can't contain features that MUST take up lots of space, like monster on-line help facilities.

Windows 95 is a valiant attempt to impose cleverness upon a dumb system. If you are stuck with a wood-fired automobile, you do what you can. And what Microsoft have achieved, overall, is very impressive. There is no way an operating system this complex could be produced in an economical time without using committee coding and living with inefficient results.

And the winner is...

So, which operating system wins? Well, if you're looking for a home computer you can walk away with for well under \$2000 with useful applications and a simple, friendly interface, the Amiga

is it. If you've got twice as much to spend, though, a worked multimedia PC could look very attractive. (When pricing a PC, don't forget to include the cost of the more expensive software.)

Standing well back, we can now make a few statements about the home computer scene in general, taking into account software, hardware and operating system.

If you want to do budget video titling or drop 2D or 3D animation to video, the Amiga is still the only way to go - you can do it with PCs, but only with an expensive encoder card. PC titling software is not as cheap, or as good. Likewise, Scala on the Amiga is still faster, smoother and easier than most PC equivalents.

Deluxe Paint on the Amiga remains the best 2D animation program. There is no PC equivalent to Hyperbook or something as cheap and easy as CanDo. There are no Blitz basics on the PC, although Klik and Play offers some comparison with AMOS.

Only the Amiga offers multiple screens and windows - Windows on the PC is entirely window based. Workbench has a stronger multitasking feel, and with the right add ons can match Windows for functionality - although not always to every degree. The next version of Workbench may well match Windows better in the bells and whistles department too - like better printer driver control, networking and file management tools like easy linking.

On the whole, Amiga still has a lot going for it - and that's despite the lack of recent developments. It's that fact that holds out great promise for future Amiga operating systems, and is still a great attraction today.

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