MS-DOS

Features and history of MS-DOS(tm)

by Blazko, mail@neveprise.de

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This article gives a brief introduction on Microsoft's Disk Operating System (MS-DOS). Note that here is only little info, cos DOS is not supported by MS anylonger - and no one uses it, or?! But be sure there are lots of DOS sites out there in the www.

1.0 introduction

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1.1 history

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Originally, MS-DOS was an experimental operating system called QDOS (quick and dirty operating system), that had been bought from a recently foundet firm known as Microsoft. They continued development on that OS and renamed it to MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System). Although it has its origins in the early 80's, it still exists nowadays in Version 7.x in Windows 32bit platforms, including NT/2k as a full 32bit clone (console).

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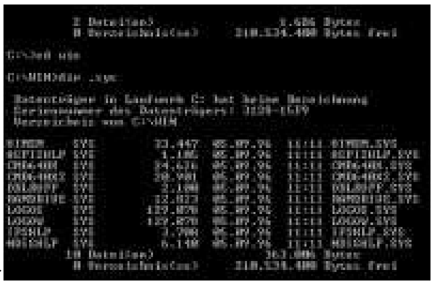

Pic A: the classic prompt

A long time, DOS still had a large role as base for games by offering a lean basic OS, but since the successful introduction of the DirectX API (a game and multimedia extension for Win32), DOS nearly has no meaning at all, except as base for Windows 9x/ME or for scripting purposes under NT/2k.

2.0 features

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2.1 general

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DOS (MS~ and DR~ ; a clone from Digital Research) are low level operating systems, that are only to use via prompt using a console. Only by using simple ASCII interfaces such as the famous Norton Commander from Symantec, DOS could handled with some comfort. Nevertheless, there existed real graphical user interfaces, but they were used very seldomly.
>One of the greatest advances of DOS was the generic printer interface for applications, thus software developers had not to write dedicated code for all kinds of printers out there, that task was now left to printer constructors and Microsoft - a great advance for developers that had to implement printer capabilities to their programms.In contrast, it was very difficult to develop software using special hardware support, especially games that needed perfect handling of graphic adapters and sound cards. Every developer had to get specifica from all hardware producers whose stuff they wanted to support, or they had to licence special APIs for this purpose.

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Pic B: the editor

2.2 performance

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- low overhead (i.e. a missing GUI) allowed high performance, that is - compared to multitasking OSs - relatively bad

2.3 control

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- only by prompt or simple third-party ASCII interfaces
- automatization by scripts (batch files)

2.4 control

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- hardware not directly supported by OS (except basic stuff such as COM, keyboard, mouse, CD-ROM etc.); software had to be deployed with such wrappers (e.g. for VGA, SoundBlaster
- but: printers were directly supported via API

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