Windows 3.x

an introductory overview

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A small introduction on the aged operating system Microsoft Windows 3.11 For Workgroups.

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1.0 introduction

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2.0 history

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After Apple had introduced it’s MacOS with the powerfull and easy-to-use GUI, the future of desktop computing was this way.

Microsoft - still just providing DOS - was under pressure and began to develop an own "operation system" Windows. Compared to MacOS relatively poor and slow, Windows became well-supported by a broad spectre of software and was also good to handle. Until Windows 3.11 including, Windows was not a real operation system but only some kind of a large application for DOS providing and own generic graphical user interface (GUI) and a general driver modell.

2.0 features

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2.1 general

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The driver modell and the GUI allowed programmers to develop high-resolution software also using multimedia features and printing capabilities without dealing with the wide spectre of hardware. The developer was thus independent from hardware, cos Windows offered the API (Application Programming Interface) that was used generic and independent of current system settings or the hardware configuration. This was the main key for the success of Windows, cos development did not require that hardware testing. En plus, the provided controls like buttons, lists, text-controls etc. did not demand time-intensive custom creations. As a result, the user has one GUI, so that many different programms are controlled the same way - this increased the working speed.

Using a console prompt, the user still had access to the command-line and was even able to run most DOS based applications under the Windows GUI. But system resources were rare in these times, so not all DOS programs - especially games - could be run under Windows, exiting to a pure DOS mode was nessessary.

Since Windows 3.11, the Windows family is optimized for network use, may it be LAN, WAN or even internet. Not that the previous versions did not know networking, but 3.11 has been updated with many important features important for a network use. Cos Windows up to 3.0 processed 16bit data, 3.11 received another interesting feature in 1993: hard drive access was enlarged to virtual 32bit that speeded up read / write operations on the HD. Also, there has been released a patch called Win32s that enabled many 32bit sofware to work under 16bit Kernel of Windows 1x-3x.

2.2 high resolution grafx

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- resolutions up to 1280x968 pixels and more allowed extended capabilities of the computer, such as DTP (desktop publishing)

2.3 generic GUI

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- rapid application development using common and reuseable controls such as buttons, lists, text controls etc.
- user is familiar with the interface, this and design guidelines guarantee generic interaction with applications

2.4 generic driver model

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- developers can easily create graphical and multimedial applications without creating custom drivers, thus hardware testing is not nesessary anymore

2.5 16bit API

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- the WinAPI (Application Programming Interface) offers a generic interface to Window’s system tasks, resources, hardware etc.; programming is not anylonger dependent from user’s computer configuration

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