



The Warp factor

The surging popularity of networked computing has brought out the best in Warp, with its development into a highly competent internet tool. Terence Green predicts good things for 1997.

One of the pleasures of the Hands On OS/2 section for me is the amount of feedback and the way it shapes the column each month. Because of the way I write the piece, it may not be apparent that large sections appear as a result of email received. The feedback goes well beyond simple queries. Readers correct my errors as often as they draw on my resources, so if you appreciate the column, remember that thanks are due for the contributions of many un-named readers.

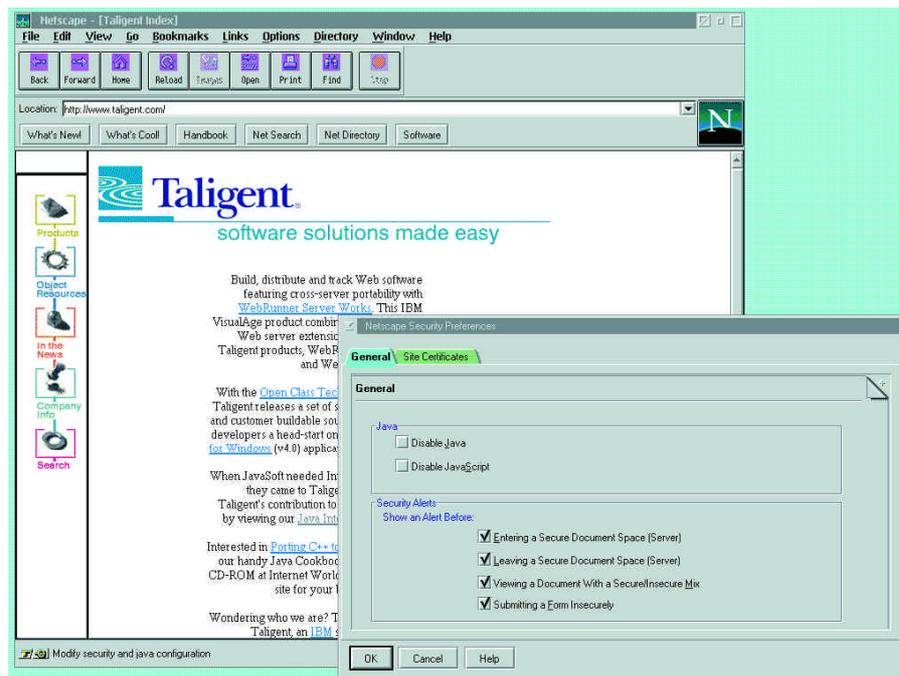
It did occur to me when I took on the OS/2 column, just as Windows 95 was making its way into the world, that many people considered OS/2 at best a legacy operating system. But, some 16 months later, Warp 4 has grown into an extremely competent internet tool just as interest in networked computing has grown to fever pitch. So, while 1996 saw a lot of speculation about the future for Warp, 1997 looks like being a good year for its users.

Warp's focus on the internet started back in 1994 when Warp 3 with the Internet Access Kit shipped. Since then, the internet has become the prime driver and Warp 4, the first desktop operating system to be Java-enabled, is obviously well placed. But

internet development time is measured in months, and operating systems traditionally take years to develop.

To that end IBM decided in 1996 to consolidate and prepare for more rapid upgrades. The press reported this as "freezing the kernel" and predicted (yet

not make any major changes to the kernel until 1998 when Warp 5 is pencilled in. That probably means no major alterations to the input queue fixes already in Warp 4 and almost certainly means no SMP-enabled end-user version. Instead, we can expect to see Warp 4 both gaining new power-user



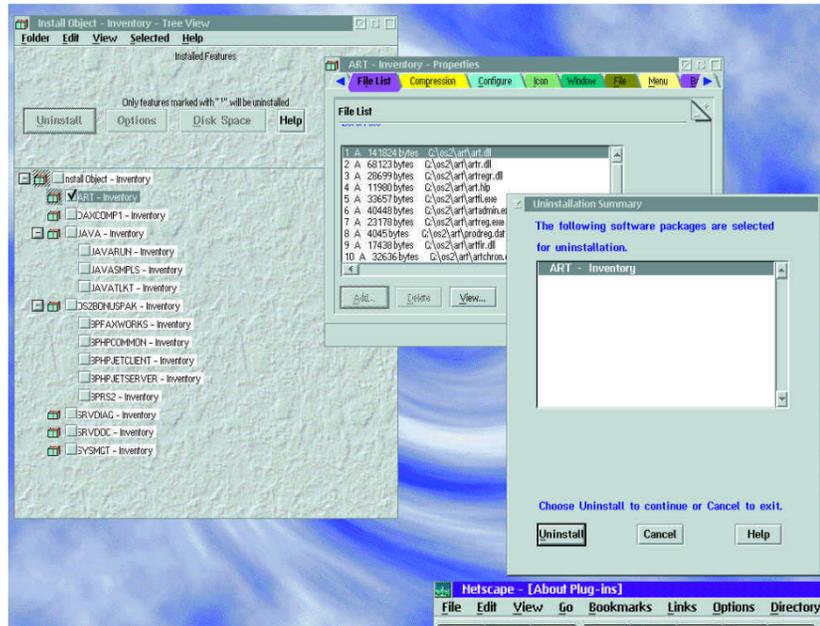
Taligent frameworks are being incorporated into Java to ease internationalisation for developers. See www.taligent.com for more details and don't forget to enable Java in Netscape for OS/2; it's disabled by default

again!) OS/2's demise. In fact, what is happening is that the core of Warp is being kept stable so that sub-systems, especially those concerned with the internet, with Java, and with communications in general can more easily be adapted, enhanced or added to in order to exploit the emerging uses that are being discovered through the internet and the web.

During 1997 IBM plans to ship lots of modular enhancements to Warp 4 but will

features for Pentium-powered systems while also slimming down to tackle emerging markets such as set-top WebTVs and other embedded systems.

There are obvious benefits to the user from the set-top box approach modelled on the network computer because it's a pay-as-you-go system which will take Warp into the home far more effectively, at lower cost, and with much greater ease of use for consumers than having to tussle with



Above You can eliminate the irritating registration screen using the uninstall utility in \OS2\INSTALL\Installed Objects

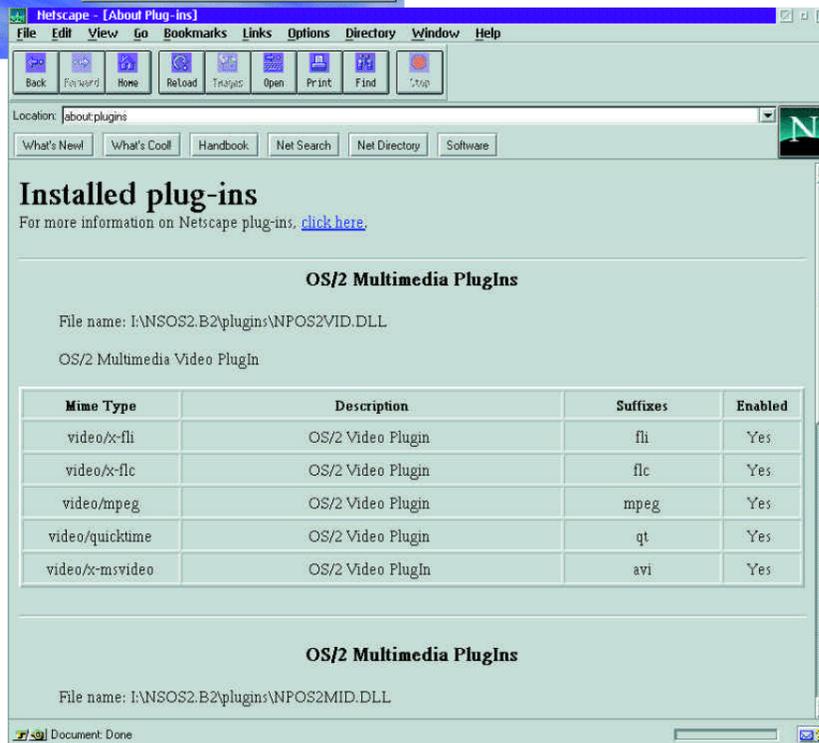
Right The Plug-In situation with Netscape for OS/2 is complex and differs between Warp 3 and Warp 4. For a fuller explanation follow the URL link on the Help/About:Plug-Ins screen

installing and configuring a Pentium box. Meanwhile, we nerds can continue to expand our Warp 4 systems through the modular enhancements promised for 1997. Quite how IBM plans to make the 1997 enhancements available for Warp 4 users has not been disclosed at the time of writing, but now this is in print it would be a good time to check the latest news.

Any answers?

It isn't always possible to answer every query satisfactorily and sometimes I can't answer them at all. Here are a couple of queries that have been hanging around unanswered. Currently I'm having difficulty discovering whether there are device drivers for the Hauppauge WinTV card and for the Epson EPL5500 laser printer, not the Windows system version. There was some discussion about a set of Epson printer drivers for OS/2 being prepared by Epson Germany but they were not yet ready, and it seemed that Epson was hoping to charge for a driver diskette.

Another request I haven't solved is whether there are any Windows 95 HPFS readers. I'm aware of a DOS-based HPFS reader and there's a workaround for the



unwillingness of Windows NT 4.0 to see HPFS drives, but is anyone aware of any utility which will enable HPFS drives to be seen from Windows 95? Talking of readers who add to the knowledge bank, here are a few quick tips. If you have one of the older NEC CD-ROM drives such as the NEC 2xi and you're having difficulty installing OS/2 or accessing the drive, try turning parity checking off in the SCSI BIOS. And then there are readers who are just weird! One writes to say that he has mixed feelings about Windows 95 but loves the

image quality which he adjudged by viewing the same (Windows 95) bitmap in Windows 95 and OS/2 Warp. Apparently it looks much crisper and sharper in Windows 95. Well, one would hope that an image shipped with Windows 95 would look good, but how many factors are involved? First there's the video device driver itself, then the resolution, then the refresh rate. To make an accurate comparison, all of these should have identical settings, particularly the refresh rate. The same reader also wants to know whether to stay with OS/2 or switch to Windows NT. This question has become common since Windows NT 4.0 arrived. I guess the first consideration is how much you want to pay for your operating system,

as Windows NT workstation costs a lot more than OS/2 Warp. The next consideration would be your applications. Our reader wants a "top-notch" office suite but can't wait any longer for Lotus SmartSuite. Well, it's okay to run Microsoft Office versions up to 4.3 in a Warp Win-OS/2 session, but not Office 95 or Office 97 which are exclusively Win32. You should also consider which legacy applications you might wish to run, as some DOS and Windows 3.1 applications run very slowly, if at all, in Windows NT. On top of that you would need to check whether

Sun's HotJava browser will soon be available for Warp

you have any specific applications which are poorly supported on Windows NT such as fax software and games. Further considerations are that Windows NT does not support power management and that it only supports static PCMCIA insertion prior to booting up, not hot insertion/removal of PC Cards.

As to whether Windows NT is more reliable or stable than OS/2 Warp, I don't feel the question has a simple yes or no answer. Depending on the quality of the hardware and the associated device drivers, both Windows NT and OS/2 Warp can range from rock-solid to flaky as hell.

Hints and tips

I've sent Fixpak #26 to the cover CD. This is the latest official release dated 18th November 1996. It includes several important fixes for bugs introduced with Fixpak #17 which appeared on an earlier PCW Cover CD and also includes the Open32 support required for applications developed with the Developer API Extensions. It is also required if you wish to run Windows 3.1 Plug-Ins with Netscape for OS/2 beta 2 and later.

Some interesting fixes in Fixpak #26 include a fix for the "994" message received when attempting to view files on a Windows NT Server, and the ability to reserve drive letters in order to ensure a consistent address for CD-ROM drives. See the XR_W026.1ST file for more details. Also note that you must use the latest Corrective Service Facility (CSF) boot disks in order to install FixPack #26. These disk images are included on the cover CD.

A couple of tips for those who have installed or plan to install Warp 4 over Warp 3. Warp 4 creates a new desktop and saves the old one along with any printer objects in the Previous Desktop folder. Look in here for your printer icons and drag them to the new Warp 4 Desktop.

If you upgrade Warp Connect to Warp 4 and see a blue screen with a clock which turns to a blank Desktop when you press



CTRL-ESC, reboot and press ALT-F1 when a white blob appears top left of the screen. Select F2 to bring up a command prompt, change to the :OS2\INSTALL subdirectory and type MAKEINI INSTALL.INI INSTALL.RC, then press Enter. Restart the system, press ALT-F1 and select F6 to disable hardware detection.

If you have installed FixPak #22 over Warp 3, do not use the Warp 4 Easy Install without first removing FixPak #22. This is because Warp 4 shipped at the FixPak #20 level. You can use the Advanced Installation and when asked whether to overwrite newer files reply "yes".

If you have a ProAudio Spectrum 16 and the IBM-supplied Andrea microphone, you must obtain the optional battery pack for the microphone to work. The tiny power adaptor (easily overlooked in the packaging) is required for Creative Labs SoundBlaster boards.

If you lose the new Warp Sans font, the most likely cause is because you installed a new video driver and allowed it to overwrite the DSPRES.DLL file. Replace the correct DSPRES.DLL by rebooting and pressing ALT-F1 when the white blob appears top left. Call a command prompt with F2 and enter the following:

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UNPACK X: \OS2\INSTALL\VGAVGA
/N: DSPRES. DLL
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where X: is the Warp 4 boot drive. Exit the command prompt to reboot.

PCW Contact

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