

Difficulty level

*beginner*

# ROLL YOUR OWN WINDOWS WALLPAPER

1

First capture your image – from a Web site, cover disc, scanned image, wherever. For this exercise, you'll use two images. One is a photo taken with a digital camera – find **FACES.JPG** in the How to folder on our cover disc. The photo is badly lit and the photographer had a bad attack of the shakes, but you're going to turn this to artistic advantage. The other picture is that old favourite, **CLOUDS.BMP**, which you'll find in your Windows folder.



2



Open both images in Paint Shop Pro. With the mouse pointer over the photo, the right side of the status bar shows the image size and colour depth. **FACES.JPG** has 16 million colours – if you're using an image with fewer, you need to convert to this from the Colors/Increase Color depth menu. This doesn't conjure extra colours out of nowhere, but does allow you to perform tricks that won't work on a 256-colour

image. Next the size – this should be the same as your screen resolution. If it's not, change it from the Image/Resample box – this gives better results than the Resize command.

3

Now comes the arty bit. Go to the Image menu and chose Arithmetic. In the left-hand box, select the photo, and in the right-hand box **CLOUDS.BMP**. Choose Difference as the Function, tick the All Channels and Clip color boxes, set Divisor to one and Bias to zero. Don't worry that **CLOUDS.BMP** (or any other image you use in the right-hand box) is a different format, size or colour depth, as Paint Shop Pro will sort this out. Hit the OK button and watch the transformation. Experiment further if you wish. Click the Help button to find out what it all means. Add a finishing touch with a Hot Wax Coating from the Image/Special Effects menu.



4



Now reduce the colours back down to 256 from the Colors menu: select Optimized, Nearest colour, Include Windows colours and unselect Boost... Save the picture in your Windows folder as a .BMP type, Windows RGB sub-type. Open the Display properties either from the Control Panel, or by right-clicking on the desktop and choosing Properties. On the Background tab, scroll down the wallpapers list, click on your file, and select the Center option. Click OK and your decorating is done.

**W**indows comes with a small supply of ready-made Wallpaper – pictures you can use to decorate your desktop to provide a background to everything else. But why stick with this selection when you can make your own? You have the choice between tiling small images or centring a larger image to fill part or all of the screen. Although the latter uses more memory it can look spectacular, especially if you 'tweak' a picture. Here's how to get some special effects with Paint Shop Pro software – you'll find a trial version on the *What PC?* CD-ROM. **Tim Nott**

## Hints and tips

You should always be aware of copyright restrictions. Of course, nobody's likely to object to you taking an image as your personal wallpaper, any more than they would to you sticking a picture from a magazine on your wall. However, distributing the image on disk or on a Web site could land you in trouble.

Choose an image that's roughly in the same proportion as your screen (1.33:1). If not, use the Selection tool (the dotted rectangle) to select a part of the picture, then Image/Crop. Darker colours and gradual shading make wallpaper that's easier on the eye than bright colours and jazzy patterns. In a hurry? You can right-click on a picture in Internet Explorer and set it as instant wallpaper. If you don't know your display resolution, you can find out by right-clicking on the desktop, choosing Properties and then Settings.

If your display shows more than 256 colours, you can save your wallpaper in more colours – it will look better, but it will take up more memory and hard disk space, and can slow down your system.

## Difficulty level

*beginner*

# RECORD YOUR OWN WINDOWS SOUNDS

**W**indows 95 comes with a small selection of sounds to accompany such events as starting up or error messages. If you get bored with the standard fare, why not create your own? All you need is a microphone and performing talent from your family, friends or pets.

In the back of your PC you'll see connections for the sound card. These are usually three or four miniature jack sockets, with the speakers already plugged in to one. One should be marked MIC, or MIC IN, and this is where you plug in the microphone.

Tim Nott

**1**

If you've got a little yellow speaker icon near the right-hand end of the taskbar, right-click on it and choose Adjust Audio Properties. If you haven't, choose Settings/Control Panel from the Start Menu. Double-click on the Multimedia icon and when the window appears, select the Audio tab. Click in the box marked Show volume control on the taskbar.

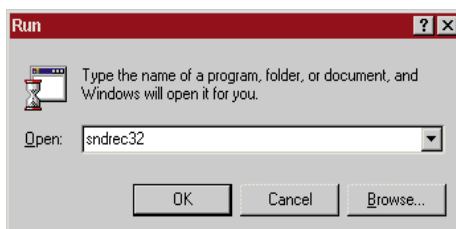
Whichever route you've taken, you'll be looking at the same controls, with sliders for playback and recording volumes. Set both to around the three-quarters mark. Choose from the Preferred quality box – the better the quality, the bigger the sound files will be, and unless your microphone is very high-quality, Radio quality will be fine. Click Apply, but leave the window open – don't click OK yet.



**2**

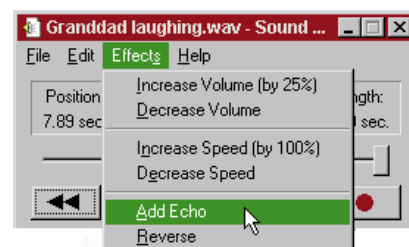
Dig out the Sound Recorder – it should be located in the Start/Programs/Accessories/Multimedia menu. If you can't find it, don't worry – open the Run command from the Start menu and type in sndrec32. Now start recording. The controls are exactly like those on a cassette recorder, so hit the red button, point the microphone and let rip. The amount of recording time you get varies with the sound quality, but unlike a tape, there's no blank space left if you stop before the time is up. Play back your recording and, if necessary, adjust the recording volume in the Audio Properties window.

You can open a second copy of Sound Recorder, and load one of the Microsoft-supplied .WAV files from your Windows\Media folder to compare levels.



**3**

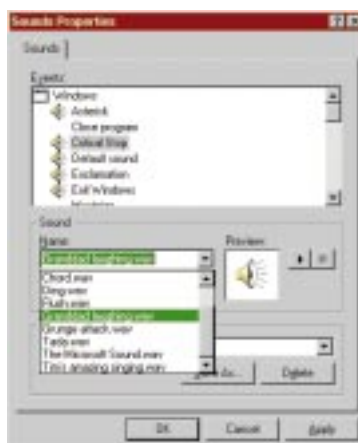
Now is your chance to show your creative flair – use the commands on the Recorder's Edit and Effects menus to mix sounds, cut from the beginning or end, and change the volume. If you feel more adventurous, you can change the speed, add echo and even reverse the recording. Remember, you can have several Recorders open, and cut and paste sounds between them. When you've finished editing, save the file in your Windows\Media folder.



**4**

When you've amassed a suitable collection of sounds, close the Sound Recorders and Audio Properties windows, go back to Control Panel, and open Sounds. You'll see a list of all the Windows and Program events that can have sounds assigned to them. Those that have sounds already assigned have a speaker icon beside them.

Highlight the event you want to change, click on the arrow beside the Name box and take your pick of recorded masterworks. There's a Browse button if you want to find sound files in a different folder, and a Schemes box for you to describe and save your custom assignments.



Difficulty level

*beginner*

# DIGITISING YOUR SIGNATURE

1

Your scanner will have software for scanning or you can use a painting package such as Paint Shop Pro (included on our CD). In this package, click on the scanner icon to Acquire an image from a Twain-compliant device.

Set the resolution at 200dpi (dots per inch) and the colour to lineart or black and white (the exact terms will vary according to your scanner's software). You may also need to specify the size of the signature to scan – perhaps a depth of 1.5in. When the settings are correct, you are ready to do the scan. You will see the scanned image appear on the screen.

Next, you need to put it into Paint Shop Pro, or an equivalent package, to tidy it up and save it as a file. There will be an option called something like Transfer, which will transfer the scanned image to your chosen application. Click to carry out the transfer process.

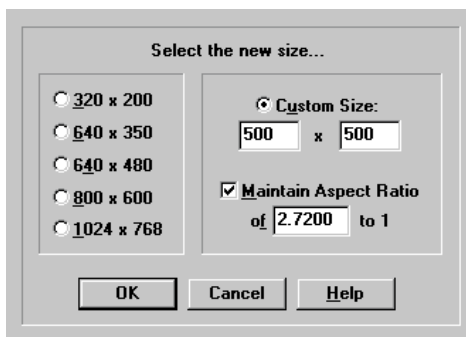


If you are lucky enough to own a scanner – be it a modest hand-held or the grandest of flat-bed versions – one useful job to give it is to digitise your signature. This will allow you to add a personal touch to faxes, newsletters or circulars with the minimum effort.

While it would be impossible to give instructions for every make of scanner and software package, the steps shown here should arm you with enough information to undertake the project on your own equipment. It's worth bearing in mind that a digitised signature needs neither fine detail nor colour – if you scan at a high resolution, you will make the signature itself and the file unnecessarily large.

Sheila Hill

2



If your signature has come out either too large or too small, it's simple to resize it. Select the entire signature and then click on Image and Resize.

Click to select Maintain Aspect Ratio, so your signature will stay in proportion as you resize it. Increase or decrease the Custom Size as you wish – for instance, reduce it from 500x500 to 200 (just reduce the first figure – the rest will be done for you automatically). Remove any unwanted marks or blots.

4

Once you have saved your file, you can use it in applications such as Microsoft Word.

When you reach the point where you need to insert your signature, click on Insert and then on Picture. Select the appropriate type of graphics file and select the right directory.

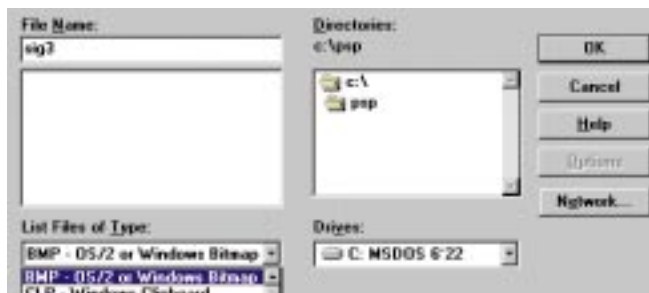
When you see the right file name, click on it and click on OK.

In a moment or two, you should see your signature appear.

3

When you are finally happy with the appearance of your signature, save it. Click File, Save As.

You then need to name your file and decide what sort of format you want it to be. Make sure you save your file in a format that will be understood by the application in which you are going to use it. BMP, PCX and TIF are usually acceptable formats, so choose one of these.





Difficulty level

*beginner*

# MAKE YOUR OWN CD JUKEBOX

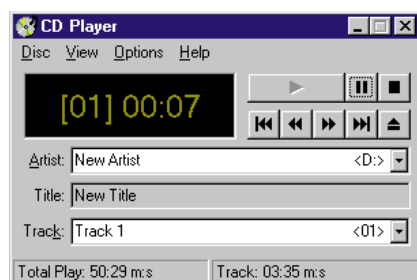
**P**ut an audio CD in your Windows 95 PC and, if all goes well, seconds later you'll have music coming from the speakers. However, in less than five minutes it's possible to set things up so that you only hear your favourite tracks. Here's how.

Sheila Hill

**2**

Now you can put in the name of the CD, artist and tracks. Click on Disc and Edit Play List. At the top of the window, put in the name of the artist and the CD. At the bottom of the window, put in the name of each track and press Enter – this will set the name of that track and leave you ready to type the next track name.

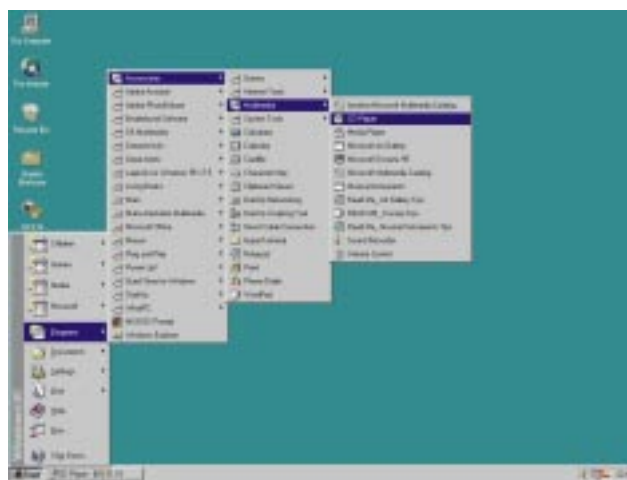
As you type in track names, the Play List and the Available Tracks list are identical – that is, every track will be played.

**4**

Old Red Eyes is Back is back, only now it's down at the bottom of the Play List. When you are happy with your Play List, click on OK.

**1**

Click on the Start Menu, then move to Programs, Accessories, Multimedia and finally CD player to load up the music application. Now, if you haven't already done so, put in your CD. The CD player will register that it is there and start playing. It will also show the length of the CD and the track being played.

**3**

You can now personalise your play list by removing those tracks you don't want to hear, playing some more than once or rearranging the playing order.

If there is a track you don't want to hear, click on its name in the Play List, then click on Remove.

**5**

The next time you put in that particular CD, the CD player will recognise it, and play the tracks as you have dictated them on your Play List. It's really that simple.

