



A luvverly bunch

...of bananas, pretzels, clusters, unfeasibly large fonts, loud music and phones. Tim Nott has something useful to say about the lot of 'em, fixing and tipping all over the place.

Philip Dodd has asked, "Can you suggest a way of instantly muting the audio, via the keyboard? The problem with clicking the loudspeaker symbol on the taskbar to get the volume control displayed, and then clicking the mute box, is that it takes a few seconds to accomplish, by which time the phone could have stopped ringing."

You must have some rather impatient callers, Philip, but this problem has never occurred to me before as I have my sound card plugged into a tuner/amplifier because sometimes I like to listen to the radio. The phones sit on top of this so I've perfected the technique of turning down the volume knob and picking up the phone in one fluid movement! But this is a challenge, so I've squandered some time researching the undocumented command line switches for the volume control.

The first thing is to know what you are looking for. In this case, the filename of the volume control: it's SNDVOL32.EXE and lives in the WINDOWS folder (Fig 1). There isn't, as far as I can tell, any direct way of getting this to mute the sound on launch, but running this with the /s switch produces a compact form of the multi-slider window. The /t switch produces the same minimal single-slider and mute box as a single click on the speaker icon in the system tray.

So, create a shortcut on the desktop, with the target `C:\WINDOWS\SNDVOL32.EXE /t` and a suitable shortcut key — I've used Control + F12. To mute the sound, hit the shortcut key followed by M (another M will toggle it back on again). Although the

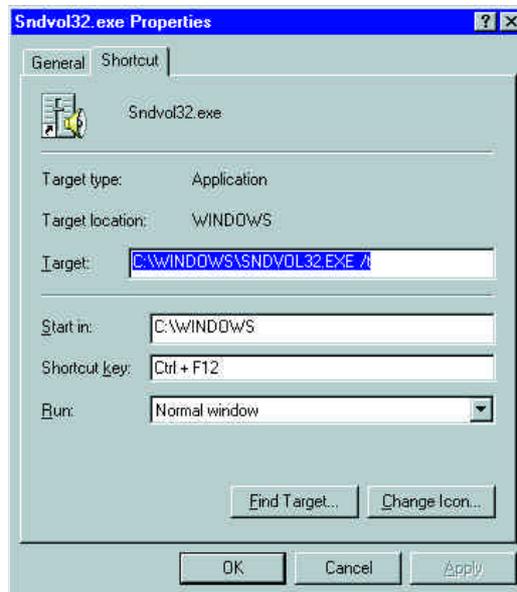


Fig 1 Shortcut for the tiny volume control

minimal volume control doesn't have a close button, clicking anywhere off it, or pressing Alt + F4, closes it.

The great Explorer

Further to the tip on getting Explorer to start without any drives expanded by using `C:\WINDOWS\EXPLORER.EXE /n, /e, /select, C:\` as the shortcut command (PCW April), Ray Daniels and Mike Davis complained that they can't find a way to make this work when opening Explorer by right-clicking on the Start button, so is there a way around this? Sorry guys, no. The whole idea of the "Explore" and "Open" menu options on the Start button is to jump straight to the "Start Menu" folder so that you can organise the shortcuts therein and the folders below. It isn't intended to be a general-purpose launcher for Explorer. But as you've got it

open, you can create a shortcut to Explorer, as shown earlier, in the top Start Menu level. And that's still only two clicks away.

One-stop restart

In January we did the tip on how to close down Windows without the "Shut Down Windows" confirmation dialog. For those of you who missed it, the trick is to create a shortcut to `C:\WINDOWS\RUNDLL32.EXE user.exe, ExitWindows`

This bypasses the confirmation, but will still prompt you to save any open files.

Since then, several of you have asked whether it's possible to restart in a similar manner. Well, it's not really similar, but Ralph (no surname) offers this tip. Create a batch file with the single line:

```
@EXIT
```

Save it as, say, RESTART.BAT, anywhere you like. Create a shortcut to it on the Desktop or anywhere else that's easily accessible. Right-click the shortcut, choose "Properties" and go to the "Program" tab. Tick the "Close on Exit" option, click on the "Advanced" button and tick the "MS-DOS mode" box. Untick the "Warn before" box. And that's it.

It took me a little while to figure it out, but what it does is the same as the "Restart in MS-DOS mode" option from the "Shut Down" menu; as normal, you still get prompted to save any open files. As soon as it has done this, it runs the DOS "EXIT" command which in turn restarts Windows. Very ingenious, but I would warn you that when I tried this, with Exchange running, my PC ground to a halt and I could only restart by turning it off. So, you might say, nothing

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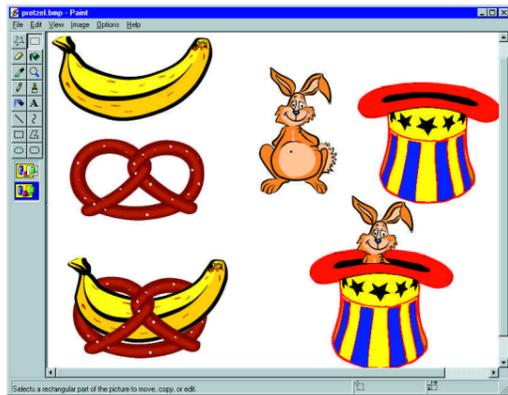


Fig 2 Paint magic — “just like that”

Although the Display Properties sheet doesn't have such an icon, the keystrokes still work. Next, press M for “Move” then use the arrow keys to move the window. Hit “Enter” when it's in the desired position.

Pretzel logic

How do you thread a banana through a pretzel? How do you get a rabbit into a hat? You're allowed to use whatever clipart you can find and Windows Paint (Fig 2).

First, catch your rabbit and the rest of the clipart in bitmap format. I cheated here by raiding the clipart gallery in Corel Xara, resizing the four images to suit and taking screenshots of them, which I pasted into a blank 800 x 600 Paint file.

Make sure the background colour is set to white, by right-clicking on the white swatch in the colour palette, and pick the rectangular selection tool. You'll see two rather meaningless-looking icons appear in the tray below the painting tools. Make sure the bottom one is selected, as this means that selections can be pasted “transparently” (in other words, the underlying colours show through any part of the clip that's in the background colour).

Draw a rectangle around the pretzel, and Control + drag it down to the bottom of the screen, to make a copy. Click anywhere outside the selection to paste it into place.

Repeat with the banana, Control + dragging it on top of the pretzel. Now pick the freeform selection tool, again making sure the transparency option is on. This is the bit that takes a little skill. Drag around the centre of the original pretzel to capture the area that will sit on top of the banana. Control + drag this into place, so it aligns seamlessly with the rest of the pretzel. The rabbit was done in a similar way, pasted transparently over a copy of the hat, then a copy of part of the hat pasted over the lot. Fairly pointless, but rather cool, I think.

Be selective

Every so often someone asks if there's a way to filter the contents of the “Recent Documents” list automatically.

So far, we've only been able to clear the entire list, either by right-clicking on the Taskbar and going to “Properties/ Start Menu Programs” and pressing the “Clear” button, or getting TweakUI (or a batch file) to do it on startup. Although I've yet to find a way to stop files getting on the list to start with, I have discovered the next best thing — selective deletion by file type.

If you open a DOS box and go to the Windows\Recent directory (Fig 3), DIR will get you a list of the contents. Note that there are more files here than actually appear on the “Documents” menu. Also note that the long filename format, on the right of the listing, takes the format “my document.doc.lnk” or “picture.gif.lnk”. So if you want to get rid of all the links to .GIF files, for instance, type into the DOS box (be sure to include the double quotes):

```
del *.gif.lnk
```

Repeat for any other extensions you might want to remove. You could automate this with a batch file on startup or close-down, but it won't work from AUTOEXEC.BAT; Windows has to load before long filenames are recognised.

Bugwatch

Although Win95 applications are supposed to include a de-installation routine, bitter experience has taught us that this doesn't always work. And, of course, Windows 3.1 applications installed under Win95 aren't able to register for de-installation either. Quarterdeck's Cleansweep 95 (v.2) has an “Install Monitor” feature that records changes to your hard disk, system files and registry. I used it a lot until one day I noticed that it wasn't recording changes to the registry. I was sure it used to, so I double-checked some old logs and, sure enough, it did, once upon a time. The culprit appears to be Internet Explorer 3, which, according

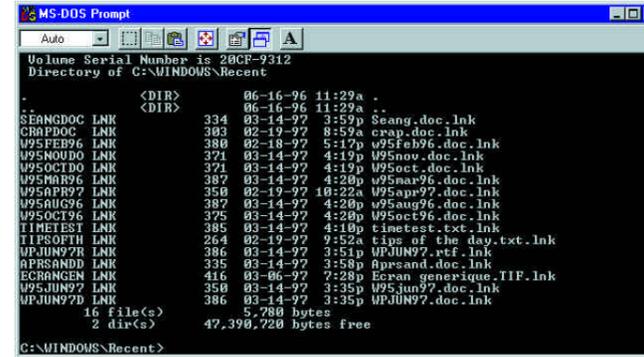


Fig 3 The DOS names of all those recent document shortcuts

size. On a 1.6Gb partition, disk space is allocated in units of 32Kb. Any file under this will occupy a full 32Kb cluster. Lots of tiny files are, therefore, extremely wasteful of disk space. But

to Quarterdeck, “Updates the files ADVAPI32.DLL and OLEAUT32.DLL in the Windows\System directory. These updates cause the problems with Install Monitor. To work around this problem, replace ADVAPI32.DLL and OLEAUT32.DLL with older versions of these files. Note: You will be unable to use Internet Explorer 3.0 if you do this.” Hey, what a great workaround! The cure, apparently, is to “Download and install the latest IE 3.0 patches from Microsoft's web site”. Microsoft makes no mention of Cleansweep on the Explorer site, except to say that version 3 can cause problems installing Office 97. Nor does Quarterdeck explicitly state that version 3 solves the DLL conflict problem. Which makes the honours (or rather the lack of them) about even.

Cluster's last stand

Simon Roberts has a 1.6Gb drive and noticed that it backed up 719Mb or thereabouts. But if he right-clicks on C:\ and looks at the “Properties” in Explorer, he sees used disk space of 1.14Gb and free disk space of 371Mb. On the other hand, if he goes to the right pane, selects all in C:\ and right-clicks Properties, he gets a total size of 719Mb again. So where is the other 400Mb? It's not in the recycle bin, and he has tried defragmenting and a thorough scandisk.

There are two things to realise here. First, any report on the free space on drive C:\ has to be taken with a pinch of salt as the swap file (the part of the hard disk used as “Virtual Memory”) is constantly changing. Open C:\Windows and find Win386.swp. It will probably be the biggest file there, so click on the top of the “Size” column in “Details” view to bring it to the top. Now do something like starting another application. Go back to C:\Windows and hit F5 to re-read the disk. Watch the figure change.

Having said that, the thing that's largely responsible for the missing space is cluster

400Mb? Surely not *that* wasteful. Well, I couldn't believe it either, until I used the “Find...” command to winkle out all files on my own 1.6Gb drive under 4Kb. Find gave up when it reached 10,000. So, at 28Kb wasted for each, that would account for 280Mb.

Were one to iterate the exercise for progressively larger file sizes, a total of 400Mb doesn't seem unreasonable. See next month's thrilling episode for some solutions to this problem.

Quickies

- Double-clicking in the title bar toggles full-screen/windowed view: i.e. it replicates a single click on the middle of the right-hand group of buttons on the title bar.
- Right-clicking on the title bar brings up the same menu as a left click on the icon at the left of the title bar (or Alt + spacebar).
- Lost the volume control on the Taskbar? This should do the trick: Control Panel/Multimedia — Audio tab. Tick the box that says “Show volume control on taskbar”.
- If your NUMLOCK key refuses to start enabled despite the settings in the BIOS or CONFIG.SYS, add a key named “Keyboard” to the registry branch: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Microsoft Input Devices. Add a string value named “NumLock” to the key and set this to “ON”.
- If you're faxing from a word processor (or other application) use the “Print to” rather than the “Send to” fax option. It's more reliable and less hassle.
- You can detach the WordPad toolbars or the toolbar and colour palette in Paint and move them anywhere.
- It's not new, yet few people know that any Notepad file with .LOG as the first line will automatically add the date and time to the end of the file each time it's opened.

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