



Sending out an OS/2

Terence Green deals with cries for help and advice from his readers. There are problems with Warp and hardware, plus there's information on all the goodies on our CD-ROM.

This month's cover CD is largely the work of Peter Koller, in France. He sent in a selection of OS/2 utilities which he has written; some shareware, some freeware. One of his programs is a card filing system and Peter deserves special thanks for including an index of the OS/2 content on the PCW cover-mounted CD-ROMs up to February (Figs 1 & 2). Nice one, Peter.

WARPing

Another frequent request involves the hardware required for Warp. Richard Smith wanted to know whether a 133MHz Pentium with 32Mb RAM would be enough for Warp 4? It would be fine for speech dictation and navigation, together with Java and some productivity applications. A 100MHz Pentium with 32Mb RAM works for me, but you can also run Warp on much less powerful hardware if you don't need all the bells and whistles. Richard claims to have once run Warp 3 on a 386 with 4Mb RAM and, frankly, once is probably as far as anyone would want to go down that road.

Bernice Roust wrote to me to say she's running Warp 3 on an AMD 386DX 40MHz with 8Mb RAM. Bernice likes the PCW cover CD and has successfully run it in a full-screen Win-OS/2 session, although she says "It's little slow" — I love that English reserve.

Having discovered that Creative Labs doesn't support OS/2, Bernice tells me that

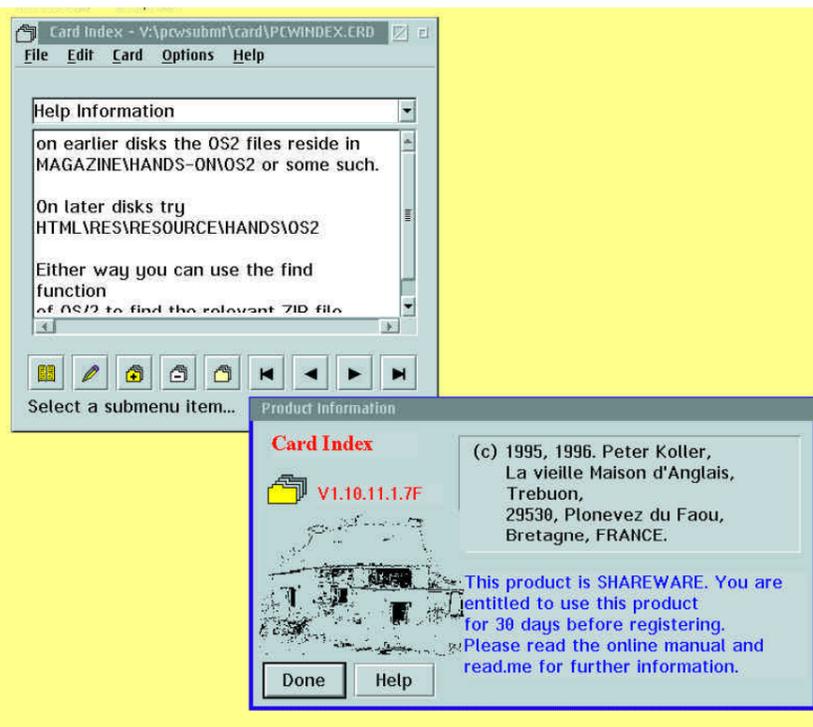


Fig 1 Peter Koller has included an index of the OS/2 files on the PCW cover-mounted CD-ROM to go with his card index filing utility

she now boots into DOS to set up the plug-and-play parameters on her SoundBlaster 16 before booting OS/2.

She raises another good point when she recalls having had problems with other cover CDs installing Win32s version 1.30 which Warp does not support. A lot of software for Windows 95 might actually be based on Win32s, which is designed to run on Windows 3.1 as well. Win32s up to version 1.25 will work on Warp, but for Win32s 1.30 Microsoft introduced a Virtual Device Driver (or VxD) and these are no-no's for any operating system like OS/2 or

Windows NT that aims to deliver reliable multitasking.

Essentially, VxDs touch the hardware directly. They don't like the controlled hardware access that OS/2 Warp allows for certain DOS/Windows applications and they won't work with the virtualised hardware access that both Warp and Windows NT provide.

Usually VxDs are there to do something that requires direct hardware access or sensitive timing, so they are often found in backup and communications applications. The only new twist is the VxD in Win32s

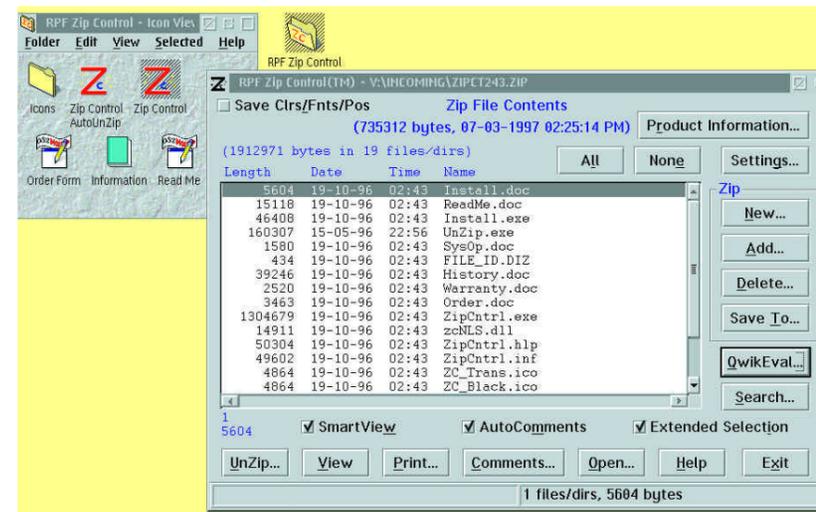
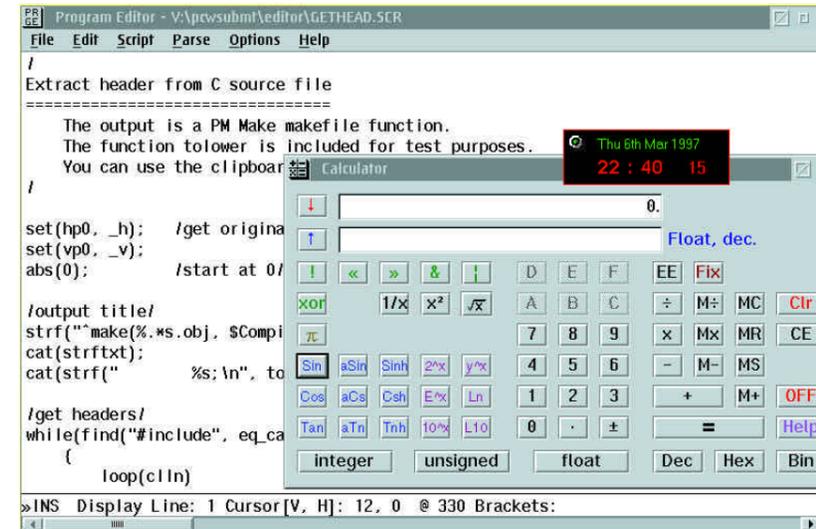


Fig 2 (Top) More pictures of the Peter Koller cover disc contribution: a program editor, a clock, and a scientific calculator

(Above) ZipControl is a shareware front-end that can be used with the freeware OS/2 ZIP and UNZIP programs. It is also to be found on our cover-mounted CD

version 1.30 and care is needed to ensure you don't install an application that installs Win32s version 1.30 into Warp. It's not always possible to discover beforehand whether the software you plan to install will make troublesome alterations to your system, so backing up before installing new software is always a good idea.

Bernice goes on to say she thinks the best way to download files from the cover CD is to copy the OS/2 folder to a temporary folder and to use ZipControl to unpack or execute them. Run an ATTRIB x:\temp -r command against files copied from the CD to remove the read-only attribute that CD files have. Also, try to use an OS/2 unpacker to decompress those compressed files which contain OS/2 material, in case there are any extended attributes (EAs) for the

compressed files. A DOS or Windows decompressor will lose the EAs. After taking a look at ZipControl, which includes free OS/2 ZIP and UNZIP executables, I've placed it on the cover CD.

One other question that Richard Smith raised when he was wondering whether to upgrade to Warp 4 or to stay with Warp 3 was whether Java support could be added to Warp 3? The answer is "yes", as of February, and it's on the current cover CD, which will please reader John Lewis.

Java palaver

John has a single-speed CD-ROM which he finds is too slow for the PCW CD-ROM browser interface. He's interested in Java if it delivers smaller, more focused, applications rather than the "megalithic

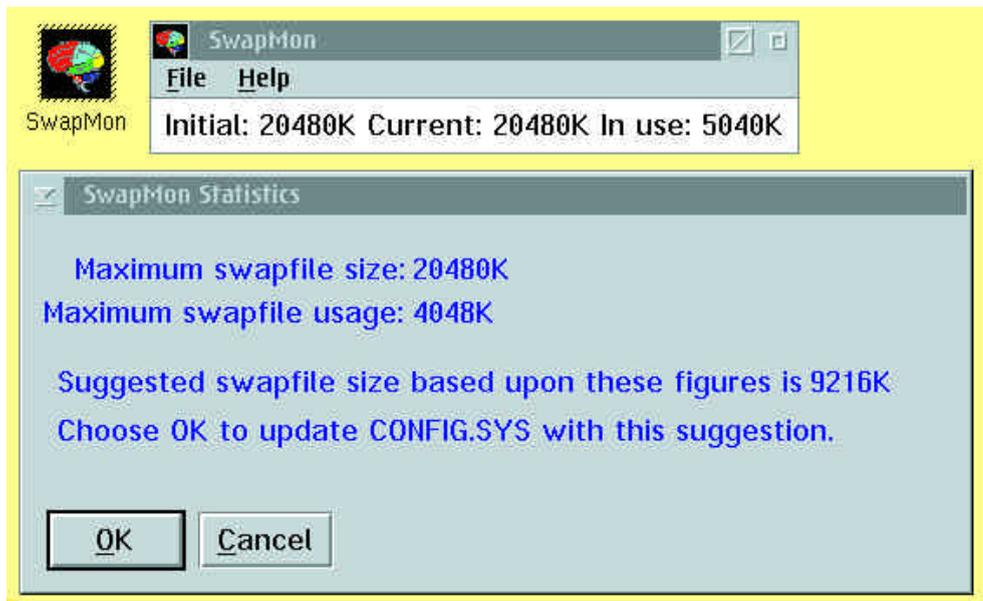


Fig 3 And now for something completely different — Keith Jones sent in this swapfile monitor. It's not on the PCW/CD-ROM; you need to download it from the net

packages" that are currently the norm.

The interesting point about this is that it reveals "real" users who don't have the latest whizz-bang hardware and yet manage to derive benefit from Warp. It also shows how tricky it is to come up with any generalised rules for recommended hardware to run Warp. Bernice, with a slow 386 PC and a six-speed Mitsumi CD, is happy with the PCW cover disc while John, with a faster 66MHz 486 and single-speed CD-ROM drive, is not.

Anyway, Java for OS/2 1.02 is on the cover CD. Java 1.02 upgrades all versions of Warp and Warp Server but please read the read.me file before you install. Run the executable JAVAOS2.EXE in a temporary directory to extract the files.

Java 1.02 is faster, has better security provisions and works better with firewalls, it says at www.software.ibm.com/os/warp/java.

The ability to run Java on the Warp server also opens up interesting possibilities for client/server applications, but I've waffled on incessantly about Java for months so I'll give it a break now, except to say that the Lotus Kona Desktop Java applets I mentioned in last month's column should now be available for download in beta versions from the www.kona.lotus.com web site.

Net gain

I know I've been slow to reply to my email and that's because I *am* slow, but readers who contact me via the postal system are likely to have to wait an even longer time for a reply through this column. I appreciate that this is easier said than done, but it really

does pay to have an internet connection.

Not necessarily to spend hours downloading megabytes of files, but simply because the information you need can be found really quickly.

My current ISP preference is for Demon Internet because it's a big, competent, organisation and because unlike many other ISPs they acknowledge the existence of OS/2. I mention this because Steve O'Neil says his ISP is reluctant to help him because he is trying to access the service with OS/2 Warp. This sounds like an ISP to avoid, Steve.

UK chat

Talking of ISPs to avoid, I've not been near AOL for many moons but Andy Marston has asked me to pass this message to any AOL users who might want to drop by the OS/2 area (Keyword OS/2) where plans are under way to create a UK Chat session on Sunday evenings. Contact him at AndySisko@aol.com if you are interested.

Andy also tells me that he uses a printer driver, with his Epson Stylus, that he found at ftp.software.ibm.com/ps/products/os2/drivers/printers. It's a file called WARP4DD4.XDF and, although not specifically for the Epson EPL-5500, it should work as it uses the general purpose LASERJET.DRV.

Flexible DOS sessions

Having unsuccessfully tried for a while to run Borland Pascal for Objects 7, a protected mode program, in a DOS session in OS/2 Warp 3.0, John Hines remembered that the batch file which he uses under DOS sets the environment variable.

Running the batch file in a DOS session got Pascal calculating. OS/2's DOS sessions are very flexible and can run protect mode programs and other troublesome DOS programs with picky demands, but they might need configuring first.

Configuring the DOS Command Prompt icon in the System/Command Prompts

folder will set the default for that and subsequent DOS sessions. Alternatively, you can create a program icon to start a DOS session and run your application. Each session can have its own special environment which can be configured with batch files and from the Settings menu. The help system is a good introduction but don't be afraid to experiment. The worst that can happen is that your DOS program won't run and you may have to kill the session.

The type of change you might want to make, for example, with a program that requires DOS Protect Mode memory and doesn't seem to want to work, is to change the DPMI memory setting up or down.

Hoots mon! It's SwapMon

SwapMon v2.01 is not on our cover-mounted disc but the author, Keith Jones, says it's the only swapfile utility you need. It monitors swapfile activity and gives you an indication of whether you would benefit by altering the initial size, which is set in the CONFIG.SYS (Fig 3). The reason it isn't on our CD-ROM is because SwapMon relies on a few IBM memory utilities so Keith suggests you download the whole package from the SwapMon home page at www.users.dircon.co.uk/~kjones/. I will check the status and put it onto a subsequent cover disc if possible, but if you can stand a half-megabyte download it's a useful tool to have around.

PCW Contact

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