

WINDOWS 95 IS GREAT, BUT IT'S A DRAIN ON YOUR MEMORY

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WHAT'S UP: I've seen a preview of Windows 95 and it's cool. I want it. Boy, do I want it. It beats the heck out of Windows 3.1 and rivals the operating system found on Macintosh computers for organization and intuitive ease of use. But I don't have the equipment for it, and I can't afford to upgrade my system or buy a new, more powerful computer. So I'm out of luck for the moment, and many of you probably are, too.

The big problem is memory, both hard disk space and random access memory, or RAM. Micro soft Corp. officials insist you need only a 386DX PC with less than 100 megabytes of hard disk space and 4 megabytes of RAM to run Windows 95. Don't believe it, though, particularly if you expect Windows 95 to move faster than the U.S. Postal Service or grandma's fruit cake on Christmas morning.

Windows 95 will consume between 35 and 55 megabytes of hard disk space, depending on what features you choose to install. And the actual minimum set-up for good performance, beta-testers and pundits say, is a 486-based machine running at least at 33Mhz with at least 400 megabytes of hard disk space and 8 megabytes of RAM.

David Boles, a New York-based Windows 95 tester since 1994, said his 8MB RAM machine actually runs faster and better under Windows 95.

But two clownish presenters at Wednesday night's preview at the Ohio Theater in Columbus suggested that memory isn't a genuine problem because, as they stated, the common home PC system today is a Pentium-based machine running at 90Mhz with 16 mega bytes of RAM. The audience laughed. ``Really, I've read the market research," one presenter responded.

I have a 486SX machine running at 33Mhz with 170 megabytes of hard disk space and 8 megabytes of RAM. But to make Windows 95 sing like it did Wednesday night, I believe my computer needs 16 megs of RAM and a whole bunch more hard disk space, say 540 megs. Those upgrades would cost me about \$700. The alternative would be to apply that \$700 toward a new Pen tium machine like the one described above. But that would set me back \$2,000 or more if I included a CD-ROM drive, a 28,800-baud modem and high-grade color monitor - all of which you really need to take full advantage of Windows 95. Or I could buy a Mac.

Meanwhile, the house needs work, and the kids want to go to Myrtle Beach. (So do I.) There are other expenses coming down the pike, too, so I'll have to make do with my current system and Windows 3.1. But for those with fast 486 and Pentium machines with hard disk space and RAM to burn, Windows 95 offers:

* A much-improved interface, one very similar to that found on Macintosh computers. Gone is Program Manager window and all the application group icons. Drag a file onto the desktop and create a ``shortcut" icon. Make as many as you like because they take only a few hundred bytes of hard disk space. Click on one and the application and file pop up instantly ready for more use.

* Plug and Play capability. Install a new external hard drive, for example, and Windows 95 will locate it and reconfigure your system for you automatically.

* The ability to run DOS programs directly on top of the operating system. No more conflicts with Windows.

* New 32-bit programs that give you true multitasking and multith reading. Faster disk access and printing, too.

* Extended file naming capability. No more eight character limit. Now you can call that collection of exotic recipes ``Exotic recipes stolen from relatives and neighbors" instead of ``exorecip.txt."

* Autoplay. Just pop a CD into the CD-ROM player and it starts automatically. No more opening File Manager and searching the disk for the executable file.

* Faster graphics support with full-screen, full-motion video on high-end PCs with no special hardware needed.

* And one-click access to the Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft Network.

* Simplified network installation.

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* Lots of customization options.

Microsoft has not set a price for Windows 95, but it is aiming for \$100, a spokeswoman said. It will be on store shelves starting Aug. 24.

OTHER STUFF: A few weeks ago, I asked you to tell me about your old computers. Some of you did, and your responses showed me that PCs are more than mere machines to you. They become personal friends and workmates.

Nita Leland, for example, is a Washington Twp. artist and author. She has owned a succession of computers, all named Dudley Do-Right.

"My first PC . . . was a 64K Kay pro with two floppy disk drives and bundled software," Leland wrote. "He came to live with me in January 1983. Dudley needed something constructive to do, so I asked him to help me write a book.

"Since then I've gone through three more Dudleys (all IBMs) and have had two more books published. As an artist and entrepreneur I've also manufactured a color wheel for artists and I use my PC not only for writing books and correspondence, but also for bookkeeping, inventory control, time management and database management of a mailing list of more than 6,000 artists," Leland said.

"I love my PC!"

But like me, Leland wishes she had a bigger and better system.

Memo: SMARTBytes

- Jim Dillon, staff writer, covers the local computing scene and loves to hear from local PC and MacIntosh users. Know of some good new software, online finds or tips on how to get the most from your computer? Call Dillon at 225-2393 or send e-mail to 76676,101 on Compuserve or JDILLO@aol.com.

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