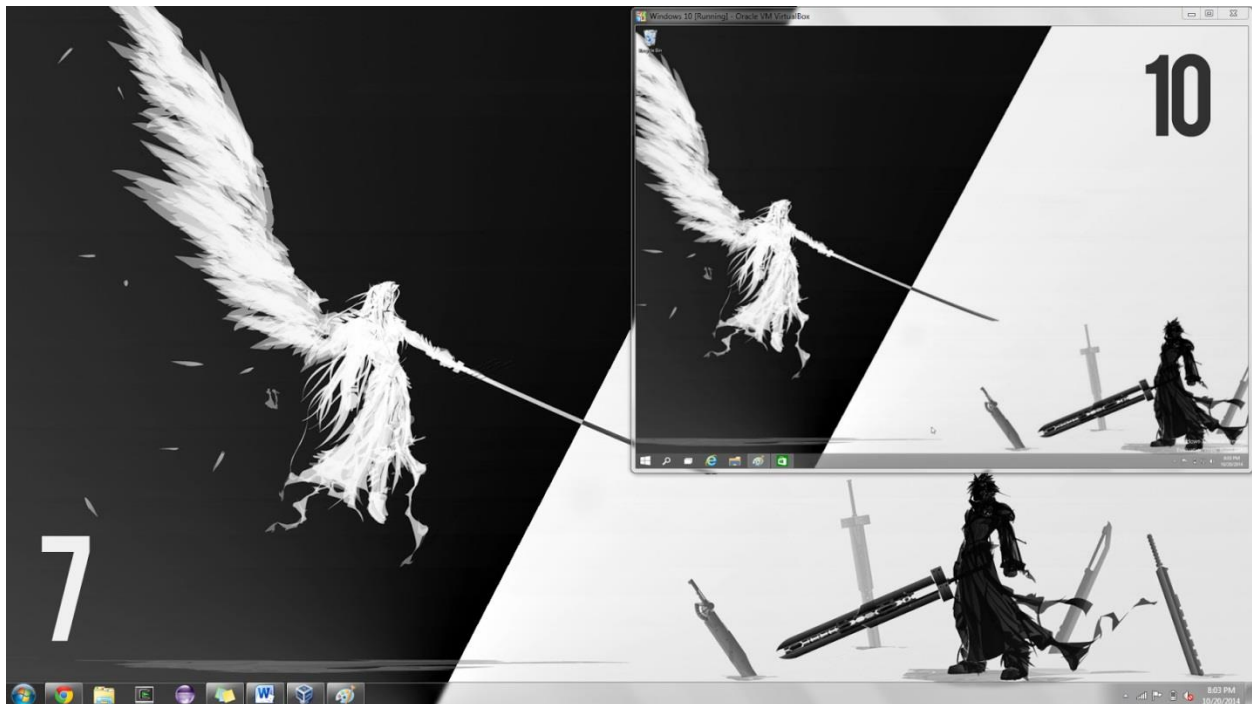


Windows 7 users: don't give up on Microsoft yet!

By: Michael Hu



Left: Windows 7 desktop. Right: Windows Technical Preview (Windows 10) desktop.

Earlier this month, Microsoft unveiled a beta version of their new Windows operating system to the public. Besides further espousing the fact that Microsoft doesn't count like the rest of us, Windows 10 offers several new improvements to its Windows 8 and 8.1 predecessors. While many reviews of the Windows Technical Preview thus far have focused on its vast improvements over Windows 8, many of the new features are just fixing what Windows 8 and 8.1 destroyed. In essence there is one huge question that is bothering a percentage of Windows fans, and it is not the no-brainer that is whether or not one should make the jump from 8.1 to 10. The Windows users in question are the ones who were skeptical when the tablet-desktop hybrid OS that was Windows 8 first came out, the ones who saw the Metro and Charms Menu and just shook their heads in dismay, the users who stuck with Windows 7 because Windows 8 just

wasn't their cup of tea. These are the users who now want to know: is it time to switch to Windows 10?

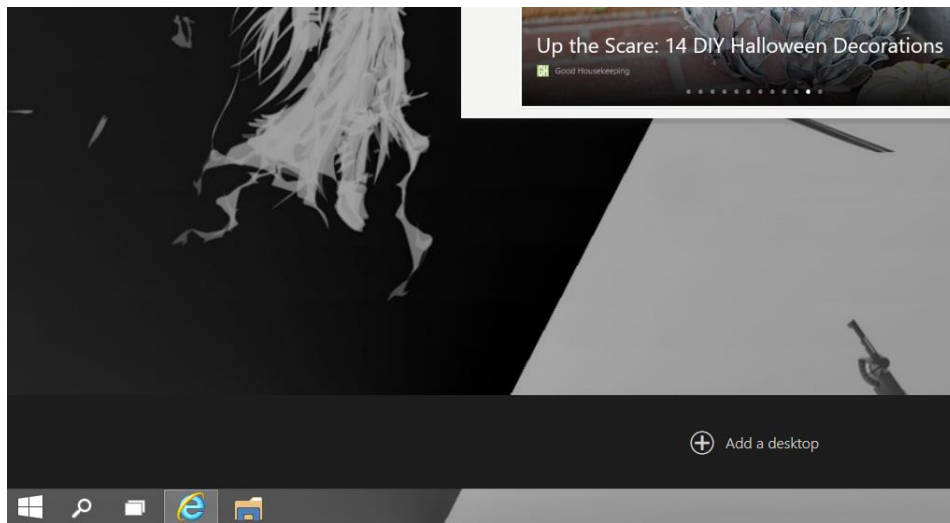
The Good

In effect, Windows 10 is really Windows 7 in a Windows 8 wrapping. While all the colored tiles and sharp corners were kept, several Windows 7 features returned with this OS upgrade. Upon logging in, users are greeted with the desktop, not the metro, by default. Gone are the days of struggling to find the desktop tile amongst the fifty-something other available apps. Hitting the start menu also no longer takes users on a technicolor adventure to a tile-filled user interface made for tablets; it brings up the good old start menu, a feature that never should have been removed in the first place. Switching between windows using alt+tab has been downgraded to what it looked like back in Windows 7, with no bizarre side bar with a confounding mix of open apps and windows. Speaking of apps, the line between apps and applications has been blurred significantly in Windows 10, apps don't take up the entire screen anymore and now function exactly like any other windowed application. Of course, none of these changes should earn any brownie points from Windows 7 users; to them nothing has changed significantly yet. It is one thing to correct mistakes, and another to actually produce improvements.

Several small but necessary changes have been added to various outdated Windows applications with this new OS. For the first time in Windows history, pressing ctrl+c in command prompt with text highlighted actually copies said text to the clipboard, and pressing ctrl+v pastes the text. In previous years, the command prompt was the only windows application that didn't support the ctrl+c copy shortcut. What's extraordinarily nice about this new command prompt feature is pressing ctrl+c with no highlighted text still registers as the interrupt signal that kills any processes that are running in the terminal at the time. There would surely be a lot of rage from converted OSX/linux users if this were not the case. Some features that are in the works but have not been released to the technical preview yet also include support for multiple tabs in file explorer windows and a new notepad that, supposedly, will be like the third-party program Notepad++.

Although not much has changed so far in the beta version of Windows 10, there has been one very popular desktop feature that Windows has been lacking until now: support for multiple

desktops. For the past couple years, OSX and linux distributions have given users the ability to work with several desktops at once, each with their own independent set of windows. Now, Windows also offers such a feature, hitting start+tab brings up a screen with all the currently open applications and desktops available. Users have the ability to both add new desktops and distribute their open windows throughout their multiple desktops. In the past, third-party programs like Dexpot have allowed users to do things similar to this, but it's nice seeing Microsoft integrating these pivotal features into their OS directly for a change.



Hitting start+tab allows users to add more desktops.

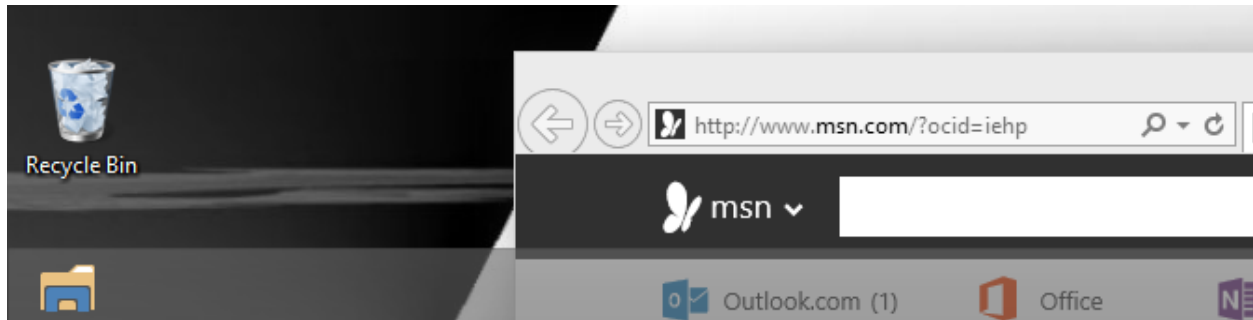
The Bad

While Microsoft has repaired most of the damage it was done with its implementation of Windows 8, a few relics of a time best forgotten still remain. Apps, for instance, still seem very out of place; they behave like applications but have their own distinct look. Generally speaking, it just appears as if Windows 10 is a mashup of Windows 7 and Windows 8 features, an ailment that Windows 8 also suffered from. From the perspective of a Windows 7 user, this is not such a huge deal, it's just strange, for instance, that there is both a Skype app and Skype application available for installation. There are no real conventions established for what functionality an app should have and what should be made into an application instead, this allows such sloppy redundancies to exist. The root of this problem lies in Microsoft's attempt to make an OS

marketed towards both desktop and tablet users. While apps are geared towards doing one specific task really well, optimizing resource use so they can run quickly on mobile devices, applications offer more functionality and are generally preferred over apps on desktops.

Disregarding apps, Windows 10 doesn't seem to offer much yet in terms of innovation. The one huge addition, multiple desktops, has been a feature in competing operating systems for years before. In Microsoft's defense, Windows 10 is still in beta right now and the entire goal of the technical preview is to test out new features they are thinking about adding to make all Windows users happy.

The Ugly



The mish-mash of icons and opacities existent in Windows 10.

When making a modern OS, looks play a larger role than they ever have played. Most consumers in the computer market couldn't care less about the specs of their computer beyond a certain point, what matters to them is how nice everything looks and feels. Because this Windows 10 install being reviewed in this article is booting off a 35GB virtual hard drive with only 2GB of RAM, commenting on the smoothness of the operating system would be doing a disfavor to Windows 10. The overall look, however, is not affected by specs, and it is quite the interesting look. As mentioned previously, Windows 10 looks very much like a mashup of Windows 7 and Windows 8. While Windows 7 kept the same sort of look throughout its system application icons and components, Windows 10 borrows from two very different styles and stumbles over itself in the process.

Generally speaking, Windows Vista and 7 are characterized by having very smooth and glassy appearances. This is due to an effect called Windows Aero which allows for some features to become semi-transparent. In Windows 8, Aero was removed in favor of bright, solid colors

and sharp edges. When these two styles collide things just look very inconsistent and gross. Also, for some reason, some system icons in Windows 10 have adopted a newer style, something that looks like the icons Apple uses in OSX Yosemite. The bizarre style that Windows 10 already has is only emphasized when the design of the icons do not follow similar conventions.

Conclusion

After looking at Windows 10, things seem promising. Microsoft seems to have caught on that users didn't like tablet-desktop hybrid style operating systems so they are trying to go back to their Windows 7 roots while maintaining the Windows 8 style. Windows is also attempting to add many new improvements to their built-in applications. The only thing about Windows 10 that could go horribly wrong is the clashing between two very different styles, because otherwise, Windows 10 operates a lot like Windows 7. Apps vs applications, glassy and smooth vs solid and sharp, old icons vs new icons, Windows operating systems have experienced a lot of drastic changes recently. With a few more new features, Windows 10 may eventually be worth upgrading to, but if it doesn't calm down and standardize their style, it may end up being a well performing ugly mess of an OS. Windows 10 is bound to change drastically before its release, so no decisions should be made about it yet; it's definitely something worth keeping an eye on over the next couple months.