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FF-what-inator?

FFMinator uses Mac OS X's accessibility API to enable "focus follows mouse" UI behavior. When active, the user interface's focus will automatically follow the mouse's position whenever it pauses over a user interface item.

If the mouse hovers over any part of an application window, that application comes to the foreground with the selected window at the front.

If the mouse hovers over a dock icon, and the corresponding application is running, that application comes to the foreground.

The hover delay is configurable by the user, generally 1 or 2 seconds at most is best.

But... why?

To get to the other side! Or something. Focus-Follows-Mouse behavior (also called "sloppy focus") can be really useful if you've got a ton of windows open and like to move between them smoothly. It's commonly seen in X Windows on Unix and Linux, and whatever else you might say about UIs on those platforms, FFM can be really convenient.

However those who don't like it tend to find it confusing. Such is life, and this is probably why Mac OS X has never had FFM until now.

And it's Mardi Gras here in FFMinator Land!

In the spirit of Mardi Gras, FFMinator includes a holiday theme. If you check the "SHOW ME YOUR BITS" box in preferences, your mouse acts as a Mardi Gras float. When this happens, your mouse pointer encourages applications to expose themselves to the pointer, showing their bits for all to see. As a reward, FFMinator throws the application some beads, or a teddy bear, or whatever it can find up on the float.

Because Mardi Gras is such a party, FFMinator may occasionally throw beads and gifts just for fun. After all, not everyone has a great set of bits, and there's no reason to ruin the party for them.

Oh, and plus: FFMinator is a Universal Binary. That's what we used to call a "fat binary", right? So FFMinator is a Fat binary in honor of Fat Tuesday! OK, so that was lame...

Source and Build Notes

FFMinator has two parts, a background application that actually implements the FFM behavior and a System Preferences pane to configure its behavior. The application is stored inside the preference pane as an alternate executable.

If you build the project and you don't get a preference pane, **please** make sure that the active target is "FFMinator" and not "FFMinatorTool". The first is the preference pane; building it will also build the background tool. The second is the background tool, which just builds itself.

Installation and Usage

The build result is a preference pane. On recent versions of Mac OS X you can just double-click the preference pane to install it. When you do this, System Preferences will launch and ask if you want to install the preference pane for the current user or for all users on the system. If you choose "all users" you'll have to enter an admin password, so don't do that, because Iron Coder rules say that's not allowed.

Once the preference pane loads, FFM behavior and "show me your bits" features can be enabled by clicking the appropriate checkboxes. When FFM is enabled, launchd is used to start the background tool and keep it running. As a result FFM behavior remains in effect across logout and reboot cycles, until either it's disabled or the software is removed.

When you're done with FFMinator, the preference pane includes an "uninstall" button, which is recommended. Uninstalling removes not just the preference pane but also its preferences and the launchd property list used to control the background tool.