



Exploring the options

Tim Nott on the possibilities lurking in the background, **animating Explorer** and more.

Several readers wanted to know how I got the clouds background to the Explorer toolbars in the screenshot in November's issue. You don't, as Peter Geddes suggested, need a separate program to do this (but see later), and it's not as Mike Stewart suggested 'one of those settings buried deep within IE options'.

You can do this with a simple registry hack, so – making sure you have a recent back-up – go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Toolbar. The toolbar background is set from a string value entitled BackBitmap, whose value is the path to the image file, which needs to be in .bmp format. There are, it seems, no colour-depth or size rules to comply with.

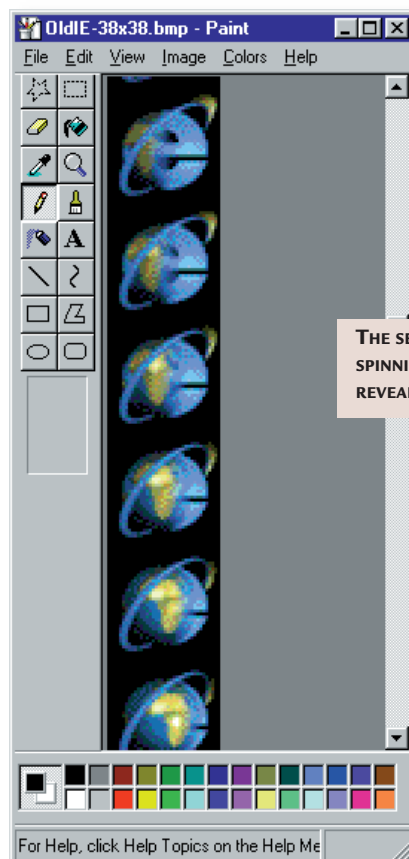
The size of the background will obviously vary with the toolbar arrangements and window size: the source image will be cropped and/or tiled to suit. Stick to pale, low contrast images if you want the menus and icons to remain legible.

Some readers may remember we did all this some years back in the Win95/IE3 days, but the settings have changed since then, and the shell enhancements in Windows 98/IE4 means that the background can be seen in Windows, as well as Internet Explorer.

Since we're here we may as well collect the set. The little logo at the top right of the window is slightly more complicated. For a start, the size changes according to the toolbar arrangement, whether large or small icons are used and whether icon labels are displayed. Hence two versions of the bitmap file are required.

The path to the smaller is given by a string value entitled SmBrandBitmap and the path to the larger by BrandBitmap – both these values being in the same location as BackBitmap. The larger bitmap should be 38 pixels square, the smaller 22 pixels square – again there's no colour-depth restriction, but the file must be in .bmp format.

If you want to animate these, such as the default IES spinning



THE SECRET OF THE SPINNING E-GLOBE REVEALED

e-globe, then there's no great mystery.

Using the bitmap editor of your choice, create an empty 'film strip' which is the width of the static icon and the height n-times the width, where n is the number of frames you want in the animation – the default e-globe uses 46 frames. Then paint or paste each square frame (there's no gap between them) into the film, starting from the top. The first four frames are a lead-in – when the last frame is reached in the animation, it starts over at frame five.

One rather more useful option is to change the

FAR TOO EASY – GET IEP TO DO THE HARD WORK FOR YOU

destination of the IE5 search button.

This URL is held in HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\SearchURL, under the Default string value.

If all this seems like too much effort, then there's a ready-rolled solution available. The Internet Explorer Personaliser, available from <http://accesscodes.hypermart.net/>

allows effortless editing of all the values mentioned above. It has an option to return to the default settings, should

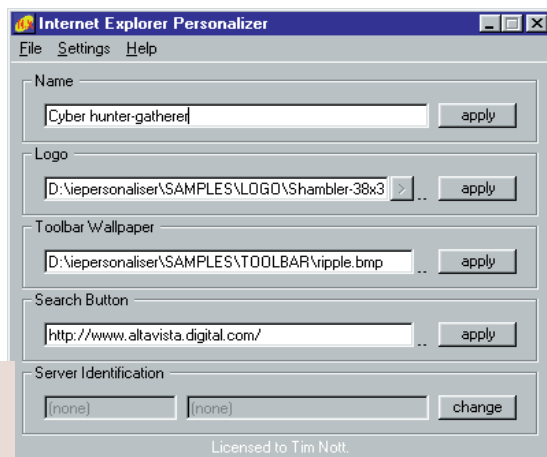
you really mess things up. As an extra bonus, it comes with tools to create and view animated logos and a range of sample logos and toolbar backgrounds.

■ Outlook Expression

On a related matter, following last September's tip on how to change the wording on the Internet Explorer title bar, Rob Pattison and several other readers asked how to perform a similar customisation – or decustomisation – of the Outlook Express title bar.

To recap, the IE5 custom title is held at HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main under the value Window Title. Note that unlike the options mentioned above, this is a machine-wide, rather than user-based setting.

Outlook Express 5, just for the sake of inconsistency, keeps its title back in the



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Questions & answers

Q I can never get DEFRAG to work properly in Windows 98, because a program I can't find is continually writing to the drive, forcing DEFRAG to start again from the beginning. It occurred to me you could just use the DEFRAG command in DOS and bypass this problem, but I haven't tried it, what do you think?

STEVE MARSHALL

a Nice idea, but the there's no such thing as a DOS defrag with Windows 95 or 98.

A better strategy is to try

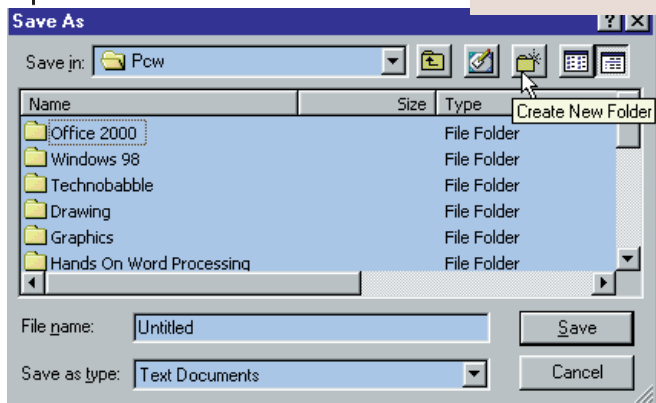
that is the Windows interface.

Q Every time I right-click on a directory to get the pop-up menu, I expect to see an option allowing me to create a subdirectory there and then, instead of having to go back to File, New, Folder. Is there a utility out there to let me do this or am I going to have to try to write one myself?

STU PHILLIPS

a You need to right-click in, rather than on the folder – that is either in the right-hand pane of Explorer, or in a Folder window, with nothing

CREATING NEW FOLDERS ON-THE-FLY IS EASIER THAN THE FILE, NEW, FOLDER ROUTE



pressing Control, Alt & Del together to find out what is running. You can then select the 'hidden' programs and close them one by one. Don't close Explorer, however, as

selected.

Note that you can also create new folders on-the-fly when saving files. Click on the folder-with-a-star button in the Save As... dialog.

Q When entering the phone number to be used by DUN how do you insert a pause? I've tried * and #, but neither seems to work.

CRAIG SHANKLIN

a A comma is what you need.

Q I have noticed that in some programs and on some web pages, one of my fonts looks a bit weird.

This is obvious in Internet Explorer when a web page cannot be displayed. I get the message web page unavailable offline and the font used to display that message looks rather rough at the edges. Could you tell me which font is bust or even if it is the fonts and how I could repair it?

MICHAEL ARM

a The font used to display this message is Verdana. Close all applications, open the fonts folder, and make sure 'Hide Variations' is not checked in the view menu. Delete all versions of Verdana, if present. In Windows 98 (original version) you can replace these from WIN98_47.CAB in the Win98 folder on the CD-ROM. If you have another version of Windows, then the files may be elsewhere on the CD. If you have the original version of Windows 95, then give up

now, because it isn't there. You can find files in CABs using the MS-DOS EXTRACT command – type EXTRACT /? for full instructions.

If that fails, then you can find the fonts at the Microsoft website – www.microsoft.com/typography.

Q My Windows 98 registry has become huge! System.dat is over 5MB, so I thought I would remove some applications I never use.

Sure enough, the relevant entries had been removed when viewed in Regedit, but the file sizes have stayed exactly the same as they were. How can I reclaim this wasted space?

KIERAN DOYLE

a According to the Windows 98 resource kit, the registry checker, which runs automatically when Windows starts or on demand, has an option, set in SCANREG.INI, to optimise the registry when it is run. This doesn't seem to make much difference, though.

For a more thorough job, restart in MS-DOS mode and run the command-line version, as follows:

SCANREG /OPT /FIX

This will take a few minutes, but will completely reconstruct the registry. As with all registry actions, make sure you have a recent back-up first.

this scrolling menu rapidly started to annoy me.

So off I went, surfing the Internet in search of a cure. And I found one. Type the text shown in Fig 1 into Notepad. Save it as MENU.REG. Check you have a recent good registry backup first, then double-click on MENU.REG to merge it into the registry. And lo! You should then have the option shown in the screenshot, under Explorer, View, Folder Options, View. Selecting this option will recall the multi-column menu display that we thought had gone forever.

■ Size doesn't matter

Stuart Taylor sent in a short and sweet tip, which I'd never realised. Alt & double-click on an icon takes you straight to its properties.

■ IP hunt

I'm not an online gamer myself, so I haven't had this problem, but here's a useful tip from Phill Sacre. You might want to find out your IP address – for many providers this is assigned by the server, rather than being specified in the DUN settings.

There is a program in the Windows folder called WINIPCFG.EXE. Run this and, if you're connected to the Internet or a network, it will show your IP address. Phill adds that this works in Windows 98 and later versions of 95.

PCW CONTACTS

Tim Nott welcomes your feedback on the Windows column, but cannot deal with queries concerning the PCW CD-ROM or website. Contact him via the PCW editorial office, or email win@pcw.co.uk