



Decline and fall

Terence Green catalogues the highs and lows **surrounding the demise** of single-user Warp applications.

Things looked bleak for Warp users as the 20th century drew to a close. For months there had been no rumours of the demise of OS/2. IBM was no help at all, continuing to update the venerable operating system, releasing new drivers and issuing Fix Packs. September rolled around and with it a new Fix Pack, a new Netscape and a new Java. This was awful. Warp needed bad publicity in a hurry.

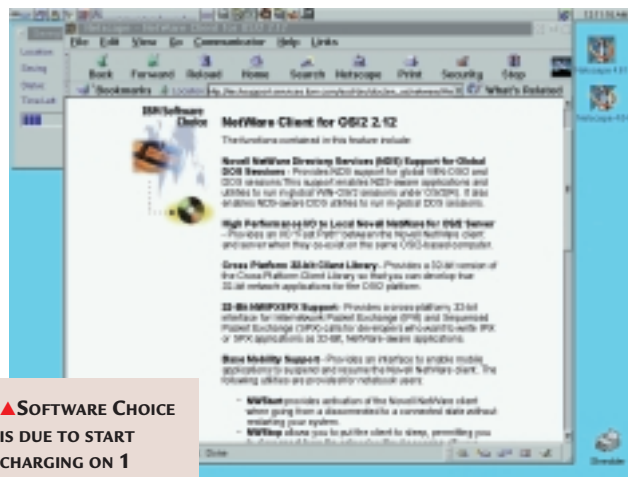
At last, towards the end of September, action! IBM told OS/2 developer Stardock it couldn't have the OS/2 client. Stardock had hoped to license the Warp client in an OEM deal, but when it came to the crunch IBM executives said the plan didn't fit their vision for the strategic direction of Warp 4 as 'an outstanding Java development and deployment environment'. Within days of Stardock announcing the news, an 'OS/2 is dead' story featuring the head honcho of Stardock made it onto the CNN website. It was a start, but not the tsunami of hysteria we were hoping for.

Finally, on 28 September, IBM came through, announcing that, as of 1 January 2000, the free download section of Software Choice would be closed to all except those who paid for a subscription. Software Choice is where Warp users have to go to download free Java and Netscape updates. The announcement, couched in the usual impenetrable IBM-ese, appeared to signal the end of single-user Warp subscriptions.

From Y2K on, according to the announcement, Warp would get a bunch of new stuff available only to corporates using gazillions of copies of the client. Users would have to content themselves with the steady stream of Fix Packs and device-driver updates resulting from continuing development of Warp 4.

This was more like it, especially as the announcement appeared to suggest future versions of the Netscape browser and Java would only be available through Software Choice, putting OS/2 Warp in the unique position of being the only operating system not to offer these free. The online community went ballistic.

'OS/2 is dead' threads spread all over the net like a rash. We were back in business with days to spare. It didn't matter that Netscape's source is free, so IBM can't sell it. Or that Sun's Java



▲ SOFTWARE CHOICE IS DUE TO START CHARGING ON 1 JANUARY 2000 – SO GET IT FREE WHILE YOU STILL CAN

wants its web presence to be less fragmented and more like the seamless ebusiness it promotes so heavily in its advertising. Hence the appearance of the new DeveloperWorks portal, PartnerWorld for its resellers, direct sales through the IBM Shop, and so forth. The changes at Software Choice appear to be a direct consequence of this strategy.

Under the terms of the Sun licence, IBM can only sell products based on the Java runtime. It can't sell the runtime itself. In theory, by calling Software Choice a product and including Java, IBM could charge for the runtime. But it's more likely that future versions of Netscape and Java, with other free downloads for Warp such as Fix Packs, will be consolidated at the main download servers in Boulder and linked into the Warp pages as well as through the Software Choice program for corporates. Still, one has to admire IBM's style. It outlines the Warp 4 client road map for the next 18 months and manages to provoke yet another 'OS/2 is dead' furore. Way to go guys.

Talking seriously now, we are nearly in the throes of the long-awaited year 2000 and hopefully it will go smoothly for you all. However, if you are having OS/2 problems and need some advice then go to www.software.ibm.com/warp/ and



▲ STAR OFFICE SUITE 5.1 FOR OS/2 IS AVAILABLE ON CD FOR A TENNER

licence precludes IBM from selling the runtime. These were mere details. Just when we thought that all was lost, IBM marketing had saved the day! Again!

Back in the real world, what appears to be happening is a worldwide rationalisation of IBM websites. IBM

look for the 'Warp and...' link in the bottom right-hand corner of the page under 'Related Links'. It'll take you to the 'Warp and year 2000' page.

■ Star Office 5

Regular readers will remember how we tried and failed to place the free version of Star Office 5 for OS/2 on the cover CD a while back. It was free to download, but the 70MB size was a bit of a disincentive. Now there's an easier way to get it. Sun has acquired Star Division and you can now order a copy of Star Office 5.1 from its website for the equivalent of \$9.95 plus shipping and handling.

The CD contains the full suite (word processor, spreadsheet, database, email, news reader, etc) for OS/2 as well as the complete Windows 95/98/NT, Linux and Solaris X86/SPARC versions. Order the CD from Sun at www.sun.com/products/staroffice/get.html.

■ SafeFire Firewall

With BT and the cable operators promising to have cable modems and ADSL all over you like a rash in the near future, it must be time to start investigating firewalls. Link Guard Solutions is offering a beta of its SafeFire Firewall for download from its site at www.lgs.kiev.ua.

SafeFire Firewall 1.0 is an OS/2 firewall designed to work with LAN-to-LAN connections, but it can also be used for ADSL and cable modem links.

■ The hunt for SETI

What do you do if you're stuck on a military base a few hundred miles from the North

▼ IF YOU'RE INTO OS/2, STARGAZING AND UFO SPOTTING, VISIT THE POLAR TEAM OS/2 SITE



DON'T TOUCH THAT DRIVE!

Robert Snoulton has Warp 4 installed in a dual boot or FAT16 drive with Windows 95, which he is using to experiment with the Win32 project. He wants to know if he can use Windows defrag or Norton Utilities to optimise the hard disk, and if not, is there an OS/2 solution?

Don't even think of it! Back in the days of DOS it was possible to use a DOS defrag on a DOS drive provided you had a backup. But that hasn't been possible since Windows 95 came

along with its weird way of messing with the FAT to support long filenames.

I doubt even the optimisation tools in the Gamma Tech and Graham OS/2 utilities are safe to use on a Windows 95 drive.

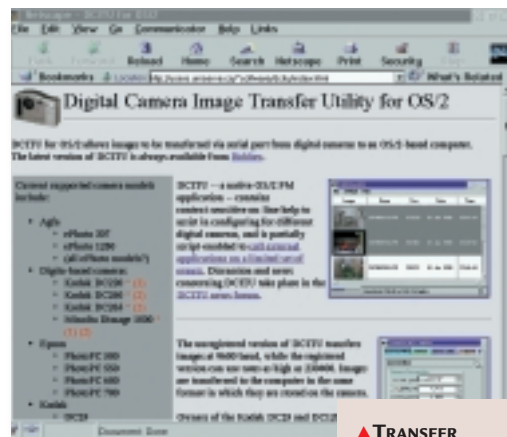
The problem lies in hidden files which OS/2 places in the root of the C: drive when installed on a FAT system. Called EA.DAT, SF and WP.ROOT.SF, (the spaces are intentional; they make it hard to move, delete, or copy), the files contain vital data such

as customisation settings, icons and desktop settings. If altered, all hell could break loose, to the extent of losing the desktop or being unable to boot OS/2.

It's better to keep Windows 9x and Warp on separate partitions. Although handy, the dual boot was a means to migrate from Windows to OS/2. For the long term it makes sense to partition the drive and run OS/2 on an HPFS-formatted drive, for reliability and performance.

Pole? Set up an OS/2 website and join SETI, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence of course! Captain Bekkelund of the Royal Norwegian Air Force runs the Polar Team OS/2 site at www.monet.no/~bekkelund.

As well as SETI and astronomy information – the night sky must look incredible up there – Captain Bekkelund provides loads of useful hints and tips for Warp.



▲ TRANSFER IMAGES FROM A DIGITAL CAMERA TO OS/2 VIA A SERIAL PORT

■ Let's get Digital

DCITU, the Digital Camera Image Transfer Utility, supports a lot of popular digital cameras, but unfortunately, it doesn't support my HP C30 or the Konica model on which it's based. However, it can be used with most other major brands, including Kodak, Olympus, Nikon, Epson, Agfa, Sierra and Toshiba. Check the URLs below for compatibility with your camera. With the registered version it's

possible to use DCITU it's possible

to connect your camera to an OS/2 port and transfer thumbnails (where supported) or full images at up to 230,000bit/sec.

DCITU can be found at <http://users.uniserve.ca/~software/dcitu/index.html> or on Hobbes at <http://hobbes.nmsu.edu/cgi-bin/h-search?key=dcitu>.

PCW CONTACTS

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