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A Better Way to Work and Play
Windows 98 ushers in the next generation of computing

by Lenny Bailes

If you're a home PC user who sees the potential in your computer as a valuable productivity tool and an all-out entertainment center, the future is at your fingertips. With the launch of Microsoft's Windows 98 operating system--the much-anticipated successor to Windows 95--your PC gets smarter, friendlier, more functional.

The capabilities of Windows 98 are as wide-ranging as your individual needs. You can play concert-sounding music and cineplex-looking movies. Plug in a portable camera or scanner and have it at your disposal within seconds. Set up an Internet account, fast, and pipe the Net directly onto your desktop.

Existing Windows 95 customers who have been particularly diligent about following the patches and upgrades to that system can get some of the advantages of Windows 98. That's some. But the true benefits of Windows 98 are the brand-new ones: a smarter interface, improved Internet functionality, new multimedia hardware support and better system maintenance... all in one package.

Productivity and Maintenance:
Get to work--fast

Hardware connection is a snap, with simple plug-in

When you want to print, scan, watch video, play a game or listen to music, who wants to wait around while configuring all the necessary hardware? To help you plug in hardware accessories and use them instantly, Windows 98 has gotten on the Universal Serial Bus (USB). As long as your computer has at least one USB hardware port, you can connect--all through this lone port--inexpensive, lightweight printers, scanners, digital cameras and high-performance stereo speakers.

Say, for example, that you're interested in scanning visuals for a newsletter. Storm Technologies Logitech offers a trim PageScan scanner that weighs two pounds and slips comfortably into a shoulder bag. While the sheet-fed PageScan comes with a CD full of software, you can just plug it in and use Win98's Imaging for Windows application to get an instant, full-fledged scanning interface. Add a modem, and your computer becomes a full-serve fax machine.

And whether it's letting everyone see the world to see baby's first steps or conferencing your old college friends, USB cameras such as Kodak's DVC 300 and 320 allow you to create home movies directly on your PC. or You can also turn it your PC into a futuristic "Internet Videophone." and conference with family or old college buddies. Microsoft's NetMeeting conferencing application permits users all

over the world to see and hear each other, or to share files over the Internet for the price of a local telephone call.

And, because we've all fumbled around on if you've had your fill of too-tiny notebook-computer keyboards and touchpads, Windows 98 allows you to plug in a full-sized external USB keyboard and/or mouse along with the computer's built-in devices.

Smarter Tools and Heavy duty storage

Ah, to have a child who doesn't need prodding to do homework, who cleans up after himself, who tucks herself in at night. To have a computer that never crashes; one that cleans up after itself and never runs out of storage space., That, in essence, is the idea behind Windows 98's new maintenance wizards, system utilities, and file system.. file storage system, FAT32. It Windows 98 takes care of you by taking better care of itself. Built to accommodate today's new, larger hard disks, FAT32 is an improved version of the traditional DOS and Windows file system.

It includes new tools to optimize hard-disk performance, provide system diagnostic information, automatically back up your system configuration and troubleshoot system problems. FAT32 is an improved file system that FAT32 obliterates the 2 gigabyte storage limit of the old DOS and Windows..system, FAT32 allowing users to create single disk partitions up to 1,000 times as large as the old version. Even if you have an older drive, FAT32 is more efficient in reclaiming storage space that was formerly tied up by the operating system.

Speedy launch

If you use a certain program every day, there's no small amount of frustration in waiting for it to load. That's why Windows 98 has added a new Disk Defragmenter to work in conjunction with FAT32, speeding up application load time and performance. Every time you start a program or open a folder, Windows 98 tracks your patterns of usage, noting which applications you use most frequently. When the Disk Defragmenter is run to optimize the hard disk, it rearranges your files and programs according to your priorities. The result is that, over time, popular applications like Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer and Adobe Photoshop will pop up as much as 50 percent faster than they did under Windows 95.

Internet:

Become an active explorer

From Web to desktop and back

Speed and flexibility are also key elements in Windows 98's Internet capabilities: Browsing among desktop files and Web sites is easy and effortless. has never been easier. The Windows 98 Active Desktop feature bridges the Windows Explorer file browser and the Microsoft Internet Explorer Web browser, allowing you to interchangeably display files and folders on your hard disk, system utilities, local network resources and Web sites.

By simply clicking an icon or typing in a URL address, you can switch from , say, looking at the Windows Control Panel or My Document contents to the Yahoo or Microsoft Web site. You can even build hot links to Web pages or remote Java applets directly into the Active Desktop. If you have a need for constant, up-to-the-minute news or stock information, you can set up a self-updating ticker or create a hot link to a Web reference site.

Even if you're less aggressive about exploring the Internet, you can always turn off Active Desktop with a Web-like single mouse-click (or switch it on again the same way).. and use Internet Explorer is ready to do duty as a separate, classic Web browser. Among the new, practical features of Explorer: It can now track and store all of the Web sites you visit (including pictures and sounds) on your local hard disk. If you click the History icon, a week-by-week index of your browsing history appears. When you're not logged into the Internet, you can choose "Work Offline" and revisit your favorite Web sites.

Some Web sites, called Active Channels, allow you to subscribe for automatic downloads of regularly updated material. You can order regular doses of news from CNN Interactive, Wired Magazine, CBS, MSNBC and CNN Sports. For entertainment, there's also The Comics Channel and MTV Online.

Multimedia:
The Entertainer

Movies the way they were meant to be seen

Windows 98 works better, and it plays better, too! If it didn't, it wouldn't be much fun. but if it didn't play better, it wouldn't be much fun, would it? That's why one of Windows 98's its top priorities is to take multimedia to a new level.

For instance, short of being on the set with the director during the shoot, you can't get much closer to the movie experience than with Windows 98's support of DVDs (Digital Video Discs). DVD movies can be a film lover's dream. Some include an indexed browsing encyclopedia, scrapbooks, games and quizzes or an alternate director's cut with various selectable camera angles. Eight-track digital audio allows you to select standard Dolby playback, or--if you splurge for a 3-D speaker system like Altec Lansing's six-piece ADA600--you can hear the end of the world in glorious six-channel, surround sound. Many DVD setups also let you pipe the video across the room to a large-screen TV.

With a capacity to hold about ten times as much information as ordinary CDs, DVDs make their predecessors look like 45s. Windows 98 exploits the added storage capacity and speed of DVDs with a new file system and bundled DVD player. Under Windows 98, you can view the latest Spielberg blockbuster at better-than-laser disc, 30-frame-per-second, true-color resolution. DVD also gives you more interactive power over digitally processed films: Read Tom Hanks's dialogue in Spanish, or in five other subtitled languages. Switch language soundtracks. Pick standard VCR,

letterbox and widescreen display formats. Race through a quick rewind or fast forward. Add content.

Windows 98 supports the formats already used to create DVDs for stand-alone players, and adds a new UDF (Universal Disk Format) system that permits more efficient playback. While Windows 95 users can play DVDs through add-on kits such as the popular Encore from Creative Labs, Windows 98 users can watch a DVD movie while browsing the Internet, taking notes or updating a spreadsheet on a second monitor, all without any slip in performance.

Television on demand never looked this good

It's was only a matter of time before until channel surfing and Web surfing merged as and become one. The new WebTV application lets your family surf-and-watch broadcast or cable television directly on the Windows desktop, and all it takes is an inexpensive TV tuner card. And, with an ATI video adapter such as the ATI All-in-Wonder Pro, you can pipe TV to and from a VCR or dedicated television set. Microsoft specifically designed Windows 98 to work around the All-in-Wonder Pro, a combination video card, tuner and capture device, which can also record TV, CD and DVD output directly to files on your hard disk.

WaveTop, a scaled-down version of Internet Explorer and a new Win98 application, provides a fascinating glimpse of the future marriage of TV broadcasting and the Internet. Currently available in major cities nationwide, WaveTop automatically receives World Wide Web content through the carrier signal of your local PBS TV station, organizing it into a cache on your hard disk. To see if WaveTop broadcasts in your area, check availability at www.wavetop.net/aboutwt/availindex.html.

The WaveTop browser can be both schoolhouse and playground for kids, with enough free pictures, text and quiz games to keep them occupied for hours. WaveTop is organized into browsing categories, such as NewsTop, StockTop, KidsTop and FamilyTop.

Effortless computing comes home

Whether your priorities lie with maximizing work productivity, upgrading system maintenance, or being entertained--and let's face it, most of us want all three--Microsoft's Windows 98 can be a valuable tool.

In addition to offering greater stability than Windows 95, it delivers faster, simpler connectivity and maximized storage and organizational capabilities. And, with its ability to quickly and effortlessly meld one environment to another, Windows 98 serves as a major step on the road to an Internet/television/multimedia convergence that may shape home computing far into the 21st century.

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Multimedia seal of approval

To get the most out of your PC, choose one that's Windows 98 Certified

You can install Windows 98 on just about any PC (486 DX2/66 CPU, 16MB of RAM, and 250MB of storage space and a VGA graphics card are all you'll need. A PCI bus is recommended.). But to fully take advantage of its multimedia prowess, you'll have to look for a PC with the seal of approval--Windows 98 Certified. Microsoft has developed a series of Entertainment PC 98 System standards for such computers, which optimize a PC for the following uses:

Games--including the most sought-after titles, with the most vivid, realistic graphics and audio.

Education--using the most engaging titles, with innovations such as full-screen video and interactive animation.

Active Internet--providing enhanced Web communications capabilities, with such features as personalized, animated Web sites and chat rooms.

Personal communications--through multimedia e-mail, Internet audio phone, video phone and so on. Interactive, high-resolution television and movie viewing through higher-quality video and real-time links to content producers.

Connections--to home-theater surround audio such as Dolby Digital for games and DVD movies, and fast and easy copying, editing and playback of personal video. You can find out more about PC 98 at http://premium.microsoft.com/msdn/library/books/platform/pc98/html/03bas98_1.htm

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Portable power

Sony Notebook Computers and Windows 98

By adding a series of Windows 98 notebook computers to its product line, Sony Electronics delivers all the versatility and power of Win98 in a super-slim package, designed for users who want to travel light.

The specs:

Models: VAI0 505G and 505GX

Weight: 3 lbs.

Processor: 505G: 200Mhz MMX Pentium I
 505GX: 266Mhz Pentium II

Memory: 2.1GB hard disk, 32MB of SDRAM

Screen: 10.4" TFT (Active) SVGA screen

Drives: floppy and CD-ROM; detachable external units (CD-ROM drive is a separate option)

One PC Card slot; built-in K56flex modem

Note: The 505GX also has an iLINK (IEEE 1394) port to connect with high-speed imaging devices such as Sony's Digital Handycam camcorder.

For more information, visit www.sony.com/pc.