

# SING OS/2

## Talk to your computer with IBM's next version of OS/2 Warp

**Merlin is made easy with speech recognition, UI improvements and better Internet integration**

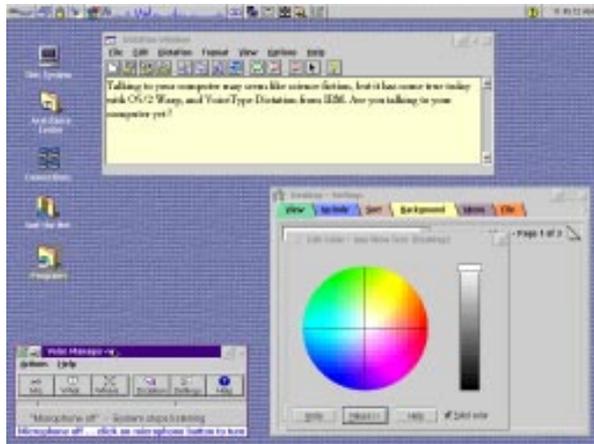
*NASHVILLE, Tenn., Apr. 23, 1996..*

That's the question IBM is asking thousands of software application developers this week at the IBM Technical Interchange developer's conference in Nashville, Tenn. The company today unveiled an early copy of the next version of OS/2\* Warp, code-named Merlin. Integrating IBM's latest VoiceType\* technology in speech navigation and dictation, an improved user interface which includes an enhanced version of the Lotus SmartCenter, and easier-than-ever Internet access, OS/2 Warp "Merlin" will be the first major Intel-based operating system with built-in speech recognition and will take the concept of ease-of-use to an entirely new level.

"IBM has just raised the bar on operating system ease of use," said Kathryn Dzubeck, executive vice president of Communications Network Architects, Inc., a computer consultancy in Washington, D.C. "Human-centric versus machine-centric input will provide a major productivity increase for corporate and consumer PC users."

### Talk, don't type

Built-in speech navigation and dictation capabilities in Merlin will allow OS/2 users simply to tell their computers what they normally would have to type or execute with a mouse.



Are you talking to your computer, yet?

The navigation portion will allow people to vocally navigate through menu bars and objects on the desktop in order to do things such as open files and launch applications, or pop onto the Internet hands-free with a simple phrase like 'Jump to CNN Home Page.' Working with a computer has never been so easy, and using a computer has never been so much fun.

Under Merlin, users will be able to

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## Is there Demand for OS/2 Games?

Brad Wardell (wardell@ibm.net)

Stardock is on the verge of announcing several new titles.

The question though is, is there still demand for native OS/2 games? Is OS/2 dying? Are users, like in the GalCiv days, still willing to join our beta programs? Entrepreneur and Avarice have been very late so we don't blame some users for being wary (though at least they're getting there and we've learned not to open up betas until they are really far among — trials of battle, for example, is already a beta 2 level project, and so is master of the empire now).

Avarice Preview, for whatever reasons (and I can think of many) has sold terribly (only a few hundred). It's a lot smaller and not up to speed with our other products but it's also less than \$30. But still, LESS than 500 units? It makes it a bit scary for us.

Last year, we sold a TON of native OS/2 games, but at around the end of the year, things really slowed down. Are users going to Windows95? We've had a lot of

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# The Final Analysis

Alvin Tan (tanalvin@singnet.com.sg)



We definitely must be living in very interesting times. I have not seen so much activity in the OS/2 scene for a very long time. In fact, some of my Net friends compared the few days and the coming weeks to be on par with the time just before OS/2 Warp was released.

The anticipation is great, agonising, hopeful and I should add for this time round, promising. Why do I say that? Well, OS/2 has matured very nicely since its early days and the Warp level code has stood the test of time. Just when our fellow friends and colleagues are discovering how short on promises Windows 95 delivers, many of us who stuck with OS/2 have found it to be very rewarding to see something great getting better.

I thought that with OS/2 Warp v3.0, IBM has really extended itself in delivering a winning product with fantastic value. The bonus pack was a real hamper of goodies quite uncharacteristic of IBM when compared to their other products. With the slew of announcements, demos, teleseminars and bitmaps during the IBM Technical Interchange last weekend, we now know that IBM has surpassed itself all over again. This is the new IBM we're watching, folks - lean, mean and it knows

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## Talk to your computer with IBM's next version of OS/2

**Warp** (continued from page 1)

open multiple Web pages with a click on the mouse or a single voice command. The dictation component will allow users to dictate memos and other documents and then paste them into word processing or e-mail applications. With this technology, doctors will be able to review X-rays or examine patients and dictate their

duced a graphical user interface, OS/2 Merlin will alter the way people interact with computers — from new computer users to business professionals to anyone who wants quick and easyInternet access.”

### The technology behind the talk



Based on IBM's latest VoiceType technology, speech recognition in Merlin will run with any common OS/2-supported sound card, like Sound Blaster, which comes as a standard feature in most audio-enabled PCs. By integrating industry-leading VoiceType technology into the OS/2 base,

IBM is offering customers an incredible value.

With years of IBM research behind it, the speech technology in Merlin has advanced to a point where it is very easy to use. Merlin will be speaker-independent, meaning the computer will understand what most users say, without any training. And it even will know the difference between words with the same pronunciation yet different spellings, like to, too and two.

Merlin also will come with a continuous navigator, allowing users to speak as they normally do, without inserting pauses between words, in order to navigate through the desktop and menus.

The navigation vocabulary in Merlin will include common desktop navigation words. Dictation will come with a base vocabulary of

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findings directly into a computer. Insurance agents can vocally process claims. Attorneys can create legal briefs while flipping through research materials. And business professionals can dictate electronic memos while simultaneously reading through hard-copy documents.

With Merlin's built-in speech capabilities, users will be able to dictate memos and documents into a dictation window on the screen. They also will be able to customize their screens with selected backgrounds and font colors.

“We believe that speech recognition in computers will be the next major industry breakthrough when it comes to ease-of-use,” said Wally Casey, vice president of client product management in IBM's Software Group. “Just as the Macintosh changed the industry when it intro-

## Talk to your computer with IBM's next version of OS/2

### Warp (continued from page 2)

10,000 words and will allow the addition of up to 42,000 more unique terms. Customers also may purchase separate vocabularies for professions like healthcare and law. And speech will be supported in six languages: U.S. and U.K. English, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

### Applications support

This week at its developer conference, IBM is meeting with application developers to rally support for speech-enabled OS/2 applications. Currently, any OS/2 Presentation Manager (PM) object will automatically work with the VoiceType navigator. PM objects include menu-bar headings, drop-down menus and buttons on the screen.

IBM will be delivering a developer toolkit later this year, which will allow solution developers to add a richer set of speech functions to their applications.

"I'm excited about the new opportunities that will be created by integrating VoiceType into the OS/2 base," said Jim Karn, operations director for Pittsburgh-based Alien Robotics, a solution developer that voice enables software using IBM's VoiceType Dictation on a number of operating system platforms. "This will open up an entirely new level of solutions that we will be able to create for our customers and a

whole new set of business opportunities for our company."

As with previous versions of OS/2, IBM will provide premier technical support for application developers through its Solution Developer Program.

New user interface and Internet enhancements contribute to ease-of-use Merlin will boast more than just speech recognition. It also will sport a cleaner and more logical user interface with visual enhancements like three-dimensional shadowed icons, 256 colors, an array of customizable bitmaps and backgrounds, an attractive system font that reads well on laptop computers and customizable colored tabs in a newly-designed settings folder.

### The WarpCenter

IBM has taken the best of the SmartCenter technology from Lotus and the LaunchPad from OS/2 Warp to create the new OS/2 WarpCenter.



The WarpCenter is an object-oriented icon ribbon on the desktop in Merlin that will allow users to quickly and easily launch and group programs and check on the status of their systems.

It includes a "Warp button" that dynamically creates a view of everything on the computer desktop, a task list that indicates which programs are currently running, status indicators for disk space and battery power, a calendar, clock and timer.

Merlin's user interface features the new OS/2 WarpCenter at the top of the screen, 3-D desktop objects and a new settings control notebook with customizable colored tabs. Users will be able to customize their WarpCenter simply by dragging and dropping icons onto it and then grouping those icons into trays. A tray could group any combination of objects: folders, applications, even icons representing World Wide Web pages.

With the WarpCenter visible at all times in any application, users could launch a new application, check the contents of a drive or even jump onto the World Wide Web without minimizing the space within which they currently are working. The WarpCenter also can be deactivated if the user so prefers.

Merlin will include other features, like superior networking capabilities, great security and OpenDoc run-time support, that should distinguish it as the operating system of choice for the connected consumer to the large enterprise customer. Merlin will go into beta later this quarter and become generally available in the second half of this year.

### " Object Desktop 1.5 breaks all-time TI sales record in one day "

#### UN-Official Top Sellers of TI 96

- 1) Object Desktop 1.5
- 2) System Commander
- 3) Neon Graphics Light
- 4) Partition Magic
- 5) Galactic Civilizations 2



## “Milamber” introduced as Object

Ed note: This is extracted from Brad's IBM Technical Interchange Report... April 1996. The 1996 IBM

**Tuesday:** The first major session of the show was the unveiling of what was called “The Milamber Project”. The new official name is “Object Desktop Professional v1.5”. In front of around 600 people, ObjDesk Professional, Object Desktop 1.5, and Process Commander alpha were demonstrated for a good hour and 15 minutes.

**Object Desktop v1.5** - A powerful desktop environment that makes OS/2 more powerful, easier to use, more feature rich, and nicer to look at.

Version 1.5 of Object Desktop adds the ability to “package” your desktop or desktop objects and distribute them across the world or for your personal use. A lot of corporations quickly jumped on to this feature because they are upgrading from either OS/2 2.11 to Warp or Warp to “Merlin”. Object Package will allow users who want to upgrade to a new version of OS/2 to package their desktop into a single file and when they format, install the new

version, they can unpackage their desktop and Object Package will not only restore all their objects, but register their classes for them. Anyone who has ever had to search through their hard drives for “createwps.cmd” type scripts to recreate their Cset objects, Internet objects, etc. can appreciate this.

Other corporations were delighted that they could not reliably and easily standardize on a common desktop and distribute it across the enterprise. End users commented that they could finally set up their desktop in different ways and depending on their mood,

have choose the particular desktop they wanted. During my demonstration, I unpackaged “Quake” (a new game from ID). Because Object Package stores all the settings and icons, and such for an object, users will be able to trade DOS objects with each other (or trade entire desktops).

Version 1.5 also greatly improves the performance of the system, integrates Internet resources such as websites and email sites right into the workplace shell and provides a huge database of websites and email addresses to visit, and enhances most



Screenshot from Object Desktop 1.5

of the components of Object Desktop with features suggested by 1.0 (especially the Control Center and Object Navigator).

One of the most significant changes from 1.0 to 1.5 from our internal development point of view is that Stardock hired on former IBM workplace shell developers to ensure that we no longer had to “reverse engineer” our features. Now we know how IBM does their magic and we can now better complement their efforts by integrating seamlessly into

the operating system.

Finally, I introduced *Milamber*. *Milamber* was the project name to what we now call “Object Desktop Professional”. I admitted that our most difficult marketing task ahead of us is to differentiate the two. In a nutshell, here's how we differentiate them:

### Object Desktop 1.5

(now available at PCwares)

Price: \$89.95 (\$37 upgrade from v1.0 until the end of June)

Target Audience:

All OS/2 users with at least 8 megabytes of ram should look at getting Object Desktop.

### Object Desktop Professional 1.5

(Ships in June)

Price: \$179 (\$99 upgrade from 1.0 until end of June, \$69 from v1.5 until end of June)

Target Audience: Power users and corporate users will want to have this.

Object Desktop Professional provides everything in Object Desktop PLUS:

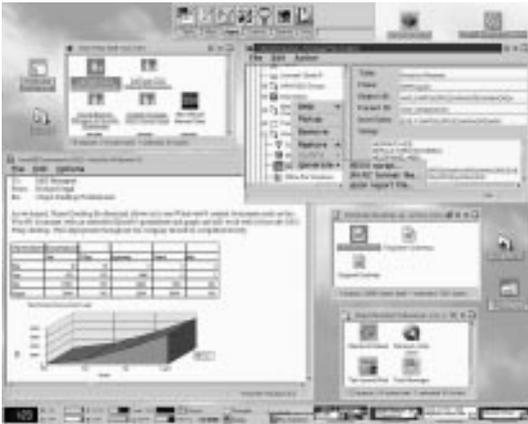
- (+) Security
- (+) Document Management
- (+) Object Advisors
- (+) Tape Backup
- (+) Object Inspectors
- (+) Object Package Adm.

In terms of security, you can now lock up folders and program objects so that users have to enter in a password. This can be done on an object by object basis or globally. You can also protect objects from being moved (make them “sticky”) or modified by users. After all, whether you're an IS manager or someone that lets others use their computer, the

# Desktop Professional 1.5

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Technical Interchange is sponsored by: IBM, Lotus, and Stardock



Screenshot from Object Desktop Pro 1.5

ability to keep someone from fooling with your stuff is quite nice.

The **document management** part is the portion of the presentation that caused people to stand up and applaud. Not because the presentation was great but because this feature is one that affects so many people in such a basic way. Here's how it works: Someone gives you a file. You can now double click on it or drop it onto the printer object and generally not have to worry what type of file it is anymore. Basically, Stardock has added filters to the base operating system. Makes sense doesn't it? Remember when word processors came with their own printer drivers, fonts, etc.? Now, the printers and fonts are built into the OS. Why aren't the filters? I demonstrated loading an Excel95 file (double clicked on it) and it came up in our mini-spreadsheet app (a viewer) and I could copy the cells I was interested in, paste them into Mesa/2 (or in this case Ami Pro) and the cells, formulas, etc. were preserved. After the demo, a user brought a huge Word 6.0 document with tables, charts, and an Autocad embedded OLE object inside of a ZIP

file. I double clicked on the ZIP file and it opened as a standard OS/2 folder (those of you not familiar with ObjDesk, it turns your ZIP files into behaving like standard OS/2 folders), I then double clicked on the long file named document and up it came, with all tables, graphs, and autocad diagrams in perfect place and with the

correct format. Object Desktop Professional handles HUNDREDS of formats from graphics to word processors to spread sheets to databases, to misc. to HTML.

**Object Advisors** is much harder to describe because its use can be very specific in some cases or extremely broad. Here's how it works, you bring up the master advisor, and when you click on an object that has an advisor defined for it, a Web object window pops up and displays information about the object (or whatever you want it to display). By default, Professional provides advisors for the most common desktop objects. You click on the Drives objects and a window comes up and displays "Use the drives objects to view the files and programs on your disk drives". At first, we considered this feature purely a great corporate training feature. Now, corporations will be able to create on-line advisors that work universally throughout the OS that explain what each object

does. No more blank stares when a new user wants to know what "Ami Pro" does. Going through on-line help can be very inconsistent and is much too slow at getting a new user up to speed. But as the show went on, its use became much broader. Because Object Advisors uses HTML, corporations could store all their advisors on a central intranet or on the internet itself. Shareware authors could build advisors for their shareware programs too. Picture this, you download PMMail 1.5 and it has an advisor with it. If you have Object Desktop Professional and click on PMMail with the advisor active, a window can come up and display information on PMMail. Then, it could LINK to PMMail's website where the latest information could be displayed about PMMail or any technical support questions could be answered. Technical support is almost always the bane of every developer, whether the corporate in-house developer or shareware author. By including an Object Advisor with your programs (whether custom in-house apps or shareware), the technical support burden could be greatly reduced. Moreover, because it is HTML, JAVA apps could be embedded!

The tape backup portion is almost like a bonus. **Object Backup** will allow you to quickly and easily backup your entire system to floppies, ATAPI/IDE tape drives, network drives, and presumably zip drives. It's extremely easy to use, works very fast and is very reliable. There will be an upgrade path for users who want to add devices not supported by Object Backup out of the box (i.e. SCSI devices for example).

**Object Inspectors** is pretty straight forward. Every object on your desktop has a bunch of "low level" info on them. While most end users

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## “Milamber” introduced as Object Desktop

Professional 1.5 Brad Wardell

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could care less about them, any developer or IS manager needs to know what the IDs of objects are, what their settings are, and have the ability to change those things about the object. Object Inspectors does that. You just turn on the inspector and begin clicking on the objects you want to know about. The information appears and you can even create rexx scripts or RC files that will create the object. (Object Package does all this too is designed to do it for a large number of objects at a time).

**Object Package** administration tools allow IS managers keep track of their desktop backup packages (or power users to do the same thing for their own desktop packages).

That was pretty much it for that. I talked about how the OS/2 market has done great for us and that we believe that this show will demonstrate to anyone who doubts OS/2's future that OS/2 is alive, well and growing.

Thankfully, IBM was able to prove us right the next day...

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## The Final Analysis

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how to fight the good fight when and where it pays. Now, let's see if the marketing for Merlin will be just as good or better!

With Warp, IBM gave the world an object-oriented user interface and brought usability to a new level. No other GUI then and now is as flexible and extensible as the Workplace Shell. With Merlin, IBM is giving the world real voice navigation and dictation, that will literally allow you to talk your way through the system. IBM just raised the stakes on the new world with Merlin, let's see what other people can come up with. Mark my words, you WILL see voice navigation and dictation in Windows 97! Who can predict what OS/2 users will be up to by then?!

Another thing we can look forward to is third party software support for OS/2. The list of products for OS/2 just keeps growing and growing. However, the trend seems to be that once well-known names in the DOS/Windows world are significantly absent (except for Lotus, but you know the story). Instead, many other smaller companies are stepping in to fill the void. The most successful of which is Stardock Systems with their blockbusters Galactic Civilizations and Object Desktop. Other notable names include Softouch (the

Gammatech family), and CDS (BackAgain/2). Watch out for other titles coming out this year, and look out for a new class of OS/2 software - voice enabled.

However, all is not that rosy in the OS/2 world. John W. Thompson and other IBMers are conceding defeat in the desktop world to Microsoft as we speak. They are instead now going to focus OS/2 in the server market and to the “connected consumer”. But then again, think about it - the world of computing is moving at warp speed to the internet, intranets and more bandwidth. Even Singapore has a masterplan called IT2000 to connect each and every home to the local and global network. In the computing world of the 90s and the next century, the network is the computer and every user will be a “connected consumer”. Sure, Microsoft, you can have all the desktops you want!! IBM is going for the whole network!!

Lou Gerstner, Mark Zisman (Lotus) and even Bill Gates are saying that Internet functions will become part of the operating system by next year. We don't have to wait that long, Merlin will be there this year doing it.

So, is OS/2 dead? Let's not be too hasty yet, and enjoy the show opening in the next few weeks ahead.

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## Is there Demand for OS/2 Games?

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support from OS/2 users which has helped drive us to becoming one of the more significant producers of games (of any platform).

What we'd like to know, in your own opinions, is the OS/2 gaming market dying? Take a look

around you, are the people who you know who used to run OS/2 now running Win95 or something? Do you know people who have copies of GalCiv (or GalCiv2) sitting on a shelf and now use another OS as their main OS?

*ed note: please forward your comments to sg.comp.os2*