Stardock®

Window*fx*™

Version 3

Media Guide

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Introduction

WindowFX is a special effects program for Windows that allows users to add a variety of opening and closing, transition and other visual effects to the user interface.

WindowFX has been designed to be a great way to spice up your system while still adding some productivity benefits (such as maximizing windows to a specific size). Unlike many programs that fall into the "eye candy" category, WindowFX strives to not get in the way of doing real work on the computer.

Features
- True, alpha blended shadows under windows
- A set of minimize and maximize transition effects
- A set of window opening and closing effects
- Ability to have large icons on the desktop while having normal sized icons everywhere else
- Ability to apply light sources to different coordinates on the desktop that colorize titlebar/borders of windows*
- Wide range of semi-transparency options such as making windows, the star bar, menus, and more semi-transparent
- Various special effects for Windows desktop icons and their labels
- A set of special effects for menus when opened and closed
- User defined size for windows to maximize to.
- Able to add more transition special effects and shadows created by users
- And more!

WindowFX is part of Stardock's Object Desktop enhancement suite (www.objectdesktop.com). It is also available on its own for $19.95. A shareware version is also available at http://www.stardock.com/products/windowfx.

A Guided Tour

Getting Started:

One of the best new features in WindowFX version 3.0 is the updated and enhanced configuration window. From this window you can see all available options and easily view or change them at any time.
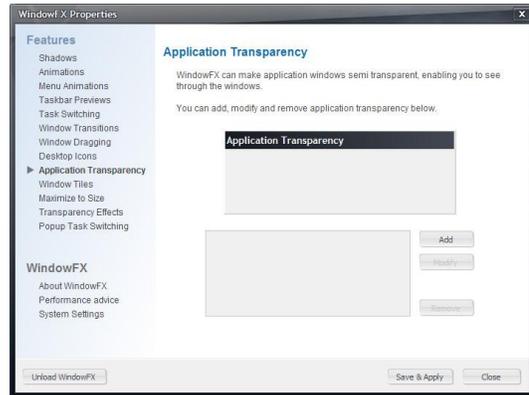
An easy wizard assists with initial setup the first time the program is accessed, and changes can be made at any time thereafter by accessing the FX icon in the system tray.

Shadows:

WindowFX 1 was the first program on the PC to allow the use of alpha blended shadows and heavy use of transparent windows. That was essentially all WindowFX 1 did. WindowFX 2 went far beyond this by allowing users to use user created shadow designs and pick between them.
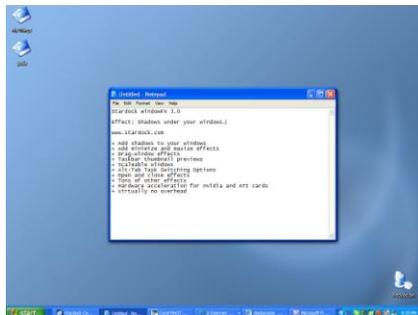
WindowFX 3 can apply a range of shadows underneath desktop windows and the taskbar, making them appear to "pop" off the page. A number of different set styles are included with WindowFX, or you can make your own to share with others.

WindowFX shadows also boast superior performance by making heavy use of video card acceleration. Users can change the color, size, opacity and shape of their shadows. You can also decide if you want to hide the shadows while moving and resizing the window (this feature will allow you to move or resize the window faster), apply shadows to menus, tooltips and even to toolwindows. (Toolwindows are the small, free-floating windows that you find in programs such as Adobe Photoshop. Each window supports a different type of tool for the program).

Performance Tip: For best results, be wary of combining too many special effects at once. Unless your video card has excellent support for the new XP visual APIs, having shadows and transitions enabled can cause noticeable performance degradation.

Animations:

WindowFX allows you to animate windows in a variety of ways when they first appear, and when they close.

Some of these effects include windows "sliding" in from a determined point on the screen, expanding, shrinking or even rolling. As with many of the options in WindowFX you can choose to select a random choice each time, or you can set animations to occur only when opening or closing a window.

Menu Animations:

Just like with the window animations outlines previously, WindowFX allows menus to animate when they first appear and when they close.

Taskbar Previews:
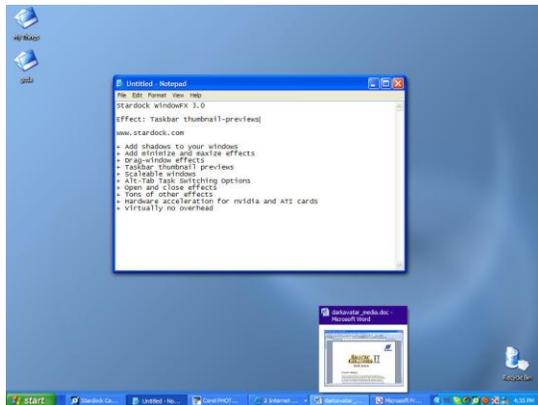
One of the most useful new features of WindowFX version 3 is the taskbar previews. In a typical day a user might have a number of windows open and minimized to the taskbar at any given time. The popup taskbar preview allows you to see a preview picture of the window in handy tooltip form as you mouse over them. Setup options for this feature allow you to set the size of the preview based on personal preference.

Task Switching:

The Windows operating system allows users to switch tasks using Alt + TAB. WindowFX extends and enhances this feature by allowing a larger graphical preview of the tasks as well as being able to change the hotkey associated with the action.
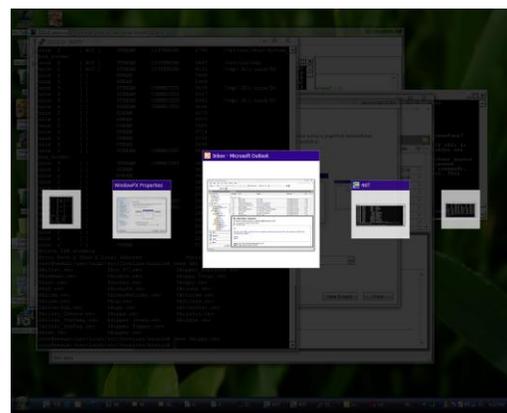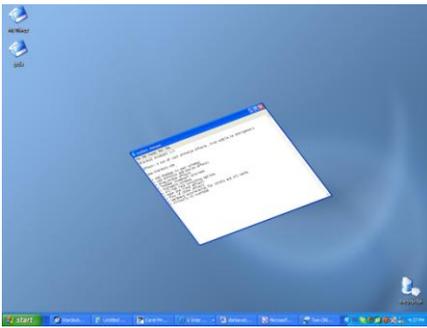
Popup Task Switching:

This handy feature lets you task switch without pressing any hotkeys on your keyboard. Pressing the user-defined mouse button will make a popup menu of currently running applications appear. You can scroll using your mouse wheel and select using the left mouse button.

Window Transitions:

WindowFX allows users to choose between a wide range of transition effects. When a window is minimized or maximized, it can morph into view. Stardock has gone to extensive lengths to make this more than eye candy; on a reasonably good, modern video card, there should be no performance hit whatsoever when a window is maximized or minimized (see system recommendations). When a user clicks on "minimize", a fluid effect takes place that on such systems will not interrupt the flow of work.

Performance Tip: Depending on your system, you may want to adjust how large a window transitions will affect.

Window Dragging:
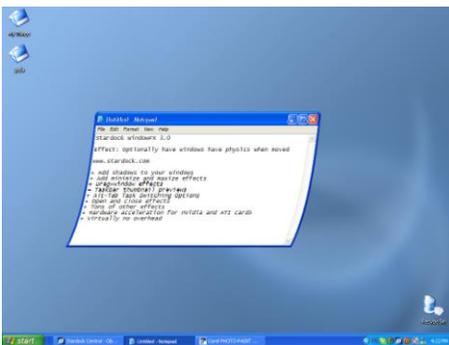
When you drag a window around your screen, WindowFX can add a number of different effects. You can choose to have the window turn semi-transparent, or have a dragging animation such as the "Basic Swaying" motion depicted above.

Advanced features allow you to limit the size of the window to be animated upon dragging, adding a "pulse" to the window or adding the ability to move a "ghost" copy and leave the original in place.

Desktop Icons:

Windows XP supports very nice, alpha-blended icons. As a result, many icon authors have begun making 48x48 sized icons which look more detailed and often look better. The problem with 48x48 sized icons is that their size is a detriment to screen "real-estate". WindowFX is the first and only program that allows users to have 48x48 icons just on the desktop while keeping the standard 32x32 sized icons everywhere else.

WindowFX can also arrange the icons on the desktop in a "tile" mode with the description to the right of the icon.

Application Transparency:

WindowFX can make application windows semi-transparent, enabling you to see through the windows. This feature is set on a per-application basis and can apply various levels of transparencies to Windows. Users can define different windows to be different levels of transparency. One nice effect is to make the Start bar transparent. There are various options to allow windows to become solidified when the mouse pointer is over them. WindowFX can even have windows ignore mouse clicks.

Transparency Effects

These options let you make your taskbar and menus semi-transparent similar to the application transparency shown above. They can also optionally be set to fade back to full visibility when the mouse cursor is over the window.

Window Tiles:

WindowFX can "tile" your open applications on the desktop, showing you small preview window of the applications and files you have open.

When tiled, windows scale down in size so that they are dramatically smaller but can still be interacted with like a regular window. This feature is highly customizable, and is useful when multi-tasking.

Maximize to Size:

Sometimes you do not want a window to maximize to full-screen. This feature allows you to decide how large a maximized window will be. You can even have different sizes when *ctrl* or *shift* is held down.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does WindowFX do?
A: WindowFX can be described as "coolness, cast into code". Possibly a better description is "a program to add semi-transparency, shadows and transition effects to your windows and menus on Windows XP. Either way, if you're looking for sheer eye candy, look no further – WindowFX is for you.

More specifically, WindowFX has the following features:

- Fades, rolls, slides, dissolves, blinds and expansion effects for windows and menus, of varying length and direction.
- Semi-transparent windows, with either permanent transparency or variable pulsed transparency on dragging.
- Scriptable minimize and maximize transitions - have your window twirl into the taskbar or cascade in little pieces.
- Custom-shaped shadows with user-configurable color and opacity – also allows WB skins to define their own shadows.
- User-defined maximized window size and position limitations.

For more information, see the WindowFX product page at
http://www.stardock.com/products/windowfx/.

Q: What is the best video card for WindowFX?
A: The answer to this question changes regularly. You want a video card that supports hardware alpha blending and supports APIs that allow fast access to DirectX from the GDI APIs. Stardock worked most extensively with nVidia, ATI, and Matrox on performance.

On a well supported video card you should have no delay at all when you minimize a window with a transition. Moving a window around with a shadow on it should cause no slow down. WindowFX comes with a performance advice option.

Q: How can I make WindowFX work faster?/ Will it slow down my machine?
A: A lot of new users will turn on every effect available in WindowFX and then find it slows down their system. For most users, they will have to make a choice between the various effects they decide to use in WindowFX. Too many effects turned on at one time can result in a performance hit to your machine; the GPU cost of each of these add up quickly. For example, if you want shadows, you should probably not use transitions on minimize and maximize.

You can also adjust the time transitions are allowed. Longer transition times look nicer but may interfere with PC productivity.

Q: Does WindowFX work with older versions of Windows?
A: Due to the nature of its effects, which require specific support from the operating system and drivers, WindowFX will only run with all features enabled on Windows XP. Some non-graphical features may work on earlier versions of Windows but support for them is not a priority and the feature set in this area is unlikely to improve.

Q: What's new in Version 3.0?
A:
- Additional animations and transitions
- Popup task switching
- Taskbar previews
- Graphical task switcher
- Easy set-up wizard
- Updated, easy-to-use interface
- Updated 64-bit support

Q: I hear WindowFX is part of the Object Desktop suite. What is Object Desktop?
A: Object Desktop is a suite of desktop enhancement utilities designed to allow users to turbo-charge their Windows experience. It's like getting the next version of Windows today! The suite is loaded with over a dozen programs designed to give you everything you need to customize your user interface and to make your computing experience more enjoyable and more productive.

Object Desktop comes with such programs as WindowBlinds, DesktopX, IconPackager, Theme Manager, ObjectBar and much more. For more information visit: www.objectdesktop.net

Specifications

WindowFX Version 3.0: $19.95 to register on its own or $49.95 as part of Object Desktop (www.objectdesktop.com).

This upgrade is free to existing customers.

System Requirements:
- Windows XP or 2003
- 256 MB RAM
- 2 MB hard drive space

System Recommendations:
- Direct X 9 compatible video card with updated drivers.

Developer: Stardock Corporation (www.stardock.com).

Home page: http://www.stardock.com/products/windowfx

Free trial version available for download.

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