

TITLE: WINDOWS DISSECTED

WINDOWS INTERNALS by Matt Pietrek, Addison-Wesley, ISBN 0-201-62217-3, \$29.95

When I run Windows from a DOS prompt, I type WIN, and in a few seconds, the Windows user interface appears. I had a pretty good idea of what happens in between, but I was never quite sure. Windows Internals solved that mystery for me. From the moment I opened this book, I was transformed from a mere programmer to a Windows systems designer. It explains every aspect of Windows, including start-up and shutdown, memory management, program loading, the windowing system, the GDI (Graphical Device Interface), the scheduler, messaging, and dynamic linking. Each component is examined in great detail with the aid of C p-code.

Reading the first chapter was a real education for me, as it explains how the system goes from a simple DOS-based configuration to a complex multitasker while still relying on DOS. Each sentence is like tracing into a line of code, and this chapter provides a step-by-step process of explaining exactly how Windows works.

I was pleased to see that, unlike similar books, Windows Internals does not contain a discussion of basic programming fundamentals such as protect mode and selectors. It assumes that you are already familiar with them. Beginning programmers or readers not familiar with Windows programming should probably start with something more basic before reading this book.

The text is balanced with just the right amount of humor, and the book is surprisingly easy to read for such a highly technical subject. It includes listings for some handy little programs, but don't look for fancy diagrams or pictures--this is hard-core development material. Every experienced Windows programmer should read Windows Internals and keep it on the shelf for future reference.

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