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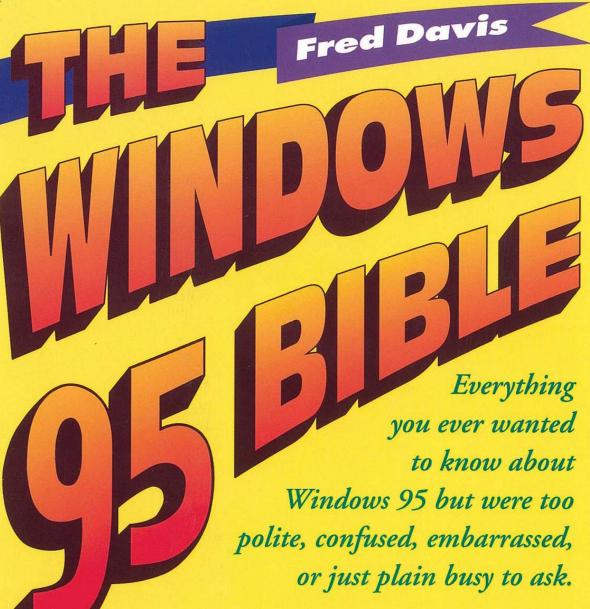*(awarded to the previous edition)*

THE WINDOWS 95 BIBLE

Fred Davis

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The Windows 95 Bible

by

Fred Davis

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Introducing Windows 95

Windows 95. You have to be a hermit not to have heard about it. Its release was backed by a quarter-billion dollar marketing blitzkrieg, but Windows 95 didn't remain just the focus of Microsoft's promotions. The product became the epicenter of a media quake, with shock waves spreading to newspaper headlines, television news, radio talk shows, and the most

critical communications medium of all—office gossip. Microsoft cleverly picked August—a slow month at the office—to roll out Windows 95, and during that time it seemed as if everyone was talking about the new operating system. Never has the introduction of a computer product received as much attention.

The Launch Party

Massive media exposure and manipulative marketing maneuvers transformed the release of Windows 95 from a mundane operating system upgrade into a cultural event of the first magnitude. My head spun as I attended the Windows 95 launch event at Microsoft's Redmond, Washington, campus on August 24, 1995. Carnival tents and a Ferris wheel were set up to welcome the Windows elite, and security seemed assured with scores of Seattle police surrounding the perimeters. The gala event was hosted by Jay Leno of "Tonight Show" fame. Not coincidentally, Microsoft and NBC announced a deal related to the Microsoft Network that same day. Leno flaunted the tie-in with a joke about Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft, saying, "NBC . . . it means Now Bill Compatible." Most of Leno's jokes played on the fact that Gates—who shared the stage with the comedian—is a nerd. Leno rode off toward the horizon in a midget car shaped like a Microsoft Mouse.

Then Gates took center stage and invited the two Brads who helped build Windows 95—Brad Silverberg and Brad Chase—to join him onstage. As a giant Windows 95 Start button rose above them, the lights dimmed, and Gates popped a $12 million token into a virtual jukebox. (Microsoft paid that amount to gain rights to "Start Me Up" by the Rolling Stones, the first time the rock group had permitted commercial use of one of their songs.) The speakers blared, and Gates jumped and gyrated to the music in an attempt to disprove Leno's portrayal of him.

Then the stage split open. The backdrop was pulled up like a curtain to reveal oudoor bleachers packed with the Windows 95 product development team, all dressed in rainbow-colored crew shirts bearing the Windows 95 logo. Like that of their suddenly rhythmic chairman, the wholesome faces of Microsoft were charged with excitement as they swayed to the music. We attendees were then ushered through the opening in the stage into the sunshine outside, with the music blaring and the dancing Bill guiding us through like Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea into the promised land.

All the hoopla left little time to think about Windows 95 itself. Even at the press conference, no one seemed to care about the operating system; most of the questions centered around problems the Justice Department was having with the Microsoft Network, which was finally permitted to be part of the

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