

THE COMPUTER CORNER

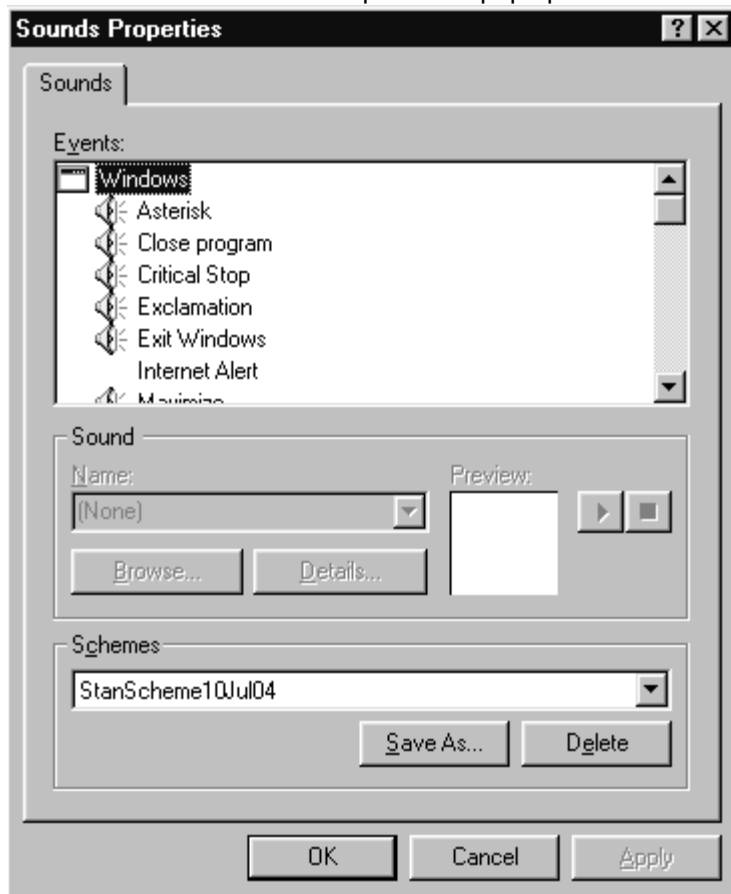
No. 121. Sounds

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When Windows comes up on my machines, my voice says "OK, Kaplan, get to work!". Then, as each program opens, a pop sounds. As programs close, the sound of a door slamming is heard. As other events occur, (critical stop, exclamation, question, and many others), various sounds are heard. In this way, I keep track of what is going on in my machine, often in the background with no visible indication on the desktop. Some of these are tongue-in-cheek, as the Windows Start above. For question, a woman's voice exclaims "What do you want me to do?". When I shut down, my own voice says "Thank goodness it is finally shutting down."

The point is, a myriad of sounds are available in Windows, and you can record your own to spice up what is already there. Or you can go out on the web (for example, <http://www.findsounds.com/types.html>), and find literally thousands of small sound files. Coupling sounds with events is not just for fun, it enhances your knowledge of what your machine is doing, and it may even alert you to problems that creep up.

How can you customize your sounds? Easy as pie. Click **Start, Settings, Control Panel** and find the Sounds icon. Click it and this panel will pop up.



Now click **Asterisk**, and the sound associated with it will show in the grayed out box labeled Name. Alternatively, if no sound is associated with Asterisk, or if you want to change it to some other sound, click the down arrow at the right of the box showing a grayed out (None) in this picture. If you don't find what you want in the pull-down box, click **Browse** and select a sound you find there. Whenever you have a sound selected, you can listen to it by clicking the right arrow in the **Preview** area (shown grayed out here). When you have gone through all the events listed and changed them to your own liking, click the **Apply** button (grayed out here, at the bottom). Then click the **Save As** button, type in some name for the scheme as I have done in this illustration (StanScheme10Jul04), and you will have a permanent record of your customized settings. Later, if you or some wayward program makes a change that you decide is not good, just re-invoke the scheme you created.

Windows 98 keeps its sounds in C:\Windows\Media, and the little applet shown here looks for its sound files there, so it is a good idea if you save

downloaded sound files to the same folder. That way, you can increase your choices as you increase the number of sound files in C:\Windows\Media. By the way, most are *.wav files. Files ending with this extension are always sound files.

Of course, all this assumes you have a sound card installed, and that it is working properly. If it is not working, everything in this Sounds applet will be grayed out. If your sound card is present but not working properly, it may be that your sound drivers are not installed. In that case, no sounds (and no PSK-31) until you solve the problem. That is a topic for a future article.

Now, how can you record your own voice? Plug a microphone into your sound card, in the microphone jack. Which one is that? Often (but not always), the mike jack has a little picture of a microphone engraved near it. Often (but not always), the mike jack is surrounded by a pink or red plastic ring. Often (but not always), it is the jack farthest from the 15-pin joystick connector on the sound card. Now, click **Start, Programs, Accessories, Entertainment, Sound Recorder**. A little Sound Recorder applet panel will pop up on your desktop. Select **File, New** so that you are working in a new file. Now click the red button to start the recorder, and speak into the mike. As you speak, a crude waveform of your voice should show in the panel. Click the button with the black square in it to stop the recording. Now click the right arrow to hear what you have recorded.

Each time you make a test recording, remember to select File, New, so you are starting with a fresh, blank file. When you like the result, click Save As and point it to your C:\Windows\Media folder, so it will be available when you associate sounds with events. That is it. A wonderful way to personalize and customize your machine.

By the way, you can record a sound file as outlined above and send it to a friend as an attachment to an email message. A talking Post-It note! Pretty neat! Send me one, if you are so inclined. Happy Computing!