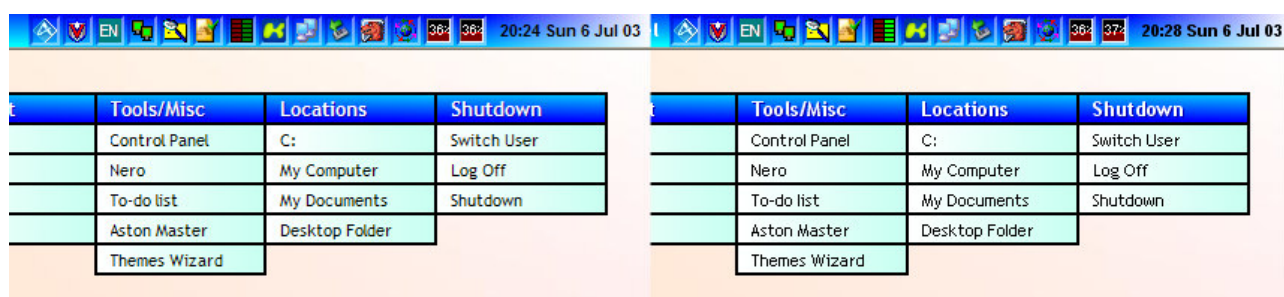


Clean

A lot of themes I've seen look great but don't allow you to customize them to meet your own needs – instead, you're stuck with buttons for the programs that the theme's creator uses. To me, the whole point of using a shell replacement like Aston is that it allows the user to mould the desktop to suit their purpose.

That is the concept behind 'Clean'. No gimmicks, no frills, and no buttons for programs you don't even own, let alone use. Instead, it relies heavily on TopPanel and VertPanel, so that all the applications you ever use are never more than a 'Show Desktop' (I use the hotkey combination Win+Space) and a mouse click away.

It includes custom skins for most plugins, and a set of mouse icons. You can run it in any resolution – the wallpaper doesn't mind being stretched. It looks best in 32 bit colour, and with ClearType enabled.



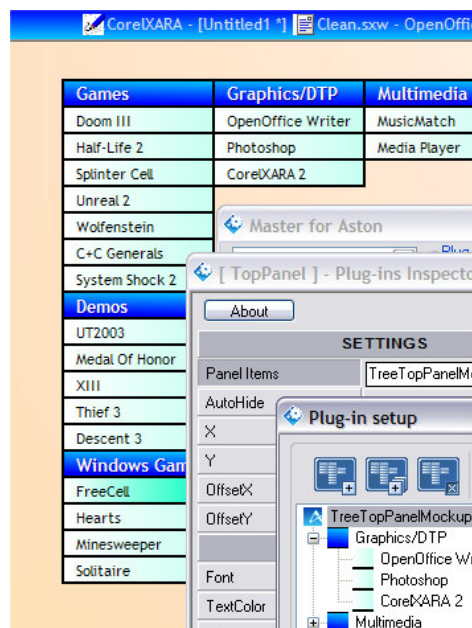
With ClearType

Without ClearType

To enable ClearType in Windows XP go to Control Panel ► Display ► Appearance ► Effects. I'm not sure which other Windows versions support it. In fact, I don't even know if this theme will work in other versions of Windows since I run Linux on my laptop ;-)

Setting up TopPanel and VertPanel is straightforward if a bit tedious. In Aston Master, go to the 'Plugins' list and add them from the Plugins folder. Double-click on them and you'll be able to make the necessary adjustments in 'Panel Items'. Use the icons '1.bmp', '2.bmp' and '3.bmp' for subitems (inactive, mouseover and pressed respectively), and 'titleL.bmp' for items. For the right-most item (i.e. 'Shutdown' in the above illustration), use 'titleLR.bmp'. Apologies if I didn't explain that very well – hopefully it will become obvious what I'm talking about when you come to do it.

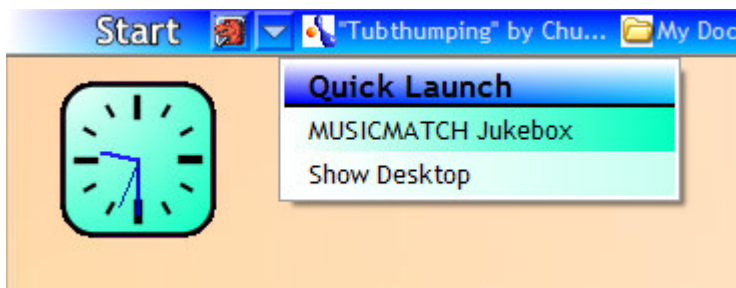
VertPanel is essentially the same when it comes to customizing, except that the top-most item should use the icon 'titleLR.bmp' and all the ones below it should use 'vertpanelttitle.bmp'.



Look! Future-proof theme =8-) (as of 10 July!)

If you want to use VertPanel and TopPanel together (for example, as in the mock-up I made for this theme, if you've got a bunch of games that take up too much desktop space to be in TopPanel) just position VertPanel 114 pixels to the left of TopPanel (or if you want it on the other side, 114*[the number of TopPanel items] pixels to the right). This is the 'X' setting in the Plugins Inspector. While I'm on the subject, you might want to position TopPanel and VertPanel on the right hand side of the screen, so as to keep it out of the way of the Start menu – experiment with the 'X' setting to find out what works with your setup and resolution.

Some of the buttons in the mockup I included with this theme work (you can play Minesweeper and open the Control Panel, for example) but most don't, because I don't know where you keep your software.



This theme includes Quick Launch buttons and a skin for DCClock, as well as new mouse icons. Incidentally, I've heard that true colour mouse icons don't work so well without XP, so you may want to disable them. Oh, and this theme looks best if transparency is turned off everywhere.

I can't think of anything else you need to know about using this theme, so I'll stop rambling now.

Installation

Copy the 'Clean' folder to 'Themes' (inside 'Aston'), and run Theme Wizard (should be in the Start menu). This theme uses the font 'Trebuchet MS', which I think is bundled with Windows, but just in case it isn't I've included it in the Zip file. Sue me.

Credits etc.

This theme is, as far as I know, completely original – I wanted to include someone else's wallpaper (cos this one sucks!) but there's so much great art on places like deviantart.com and shadowness.com that I figured I'd let you choose.

I made it with CorelXARA 2 – a tragically overlooked piece of software, which is quite frankly bloody brilliant. It's essentially a vector editor, but it's so versatile that you can easily replicate a lot of the effects that you'd normally use something like Photoshop for. Touching up was done in – wait for it – MS Paint.

This document was written in OpenOffice.org Writer (better value for money than MS Office) and the PDF was produced by PDF995 from pdf995.com (although I gather OpenOffice.org are working on a PDF exporter – just another reason to dump Microsoft).

Questions and comments to reggie_the_potato@hotmail.com, unless you're writing to sell me something or complain that my theme went crazy and killed your dog.

Vernon Binks
10 July 2003