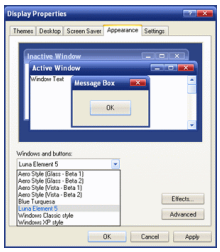
18 January 2007

By: Dragos Jijau, Software News Editor



"Hack" Windows XP Visual Styles

Unlock the theme system

The way Windows looked has fluctuated since its first version. Some versions looked almost the same (Windows 98 and Windows ME); Windows XP came with another look - a more colorful and vibrant one - while Vista provides a new shape. No matter which was the default look there have always been methods to replace the original look with a custom one. Programs have been created to add themes and visual styles for the eye comfort of the pretentious computer user. We all agree that more options to customize the look are always welcome. Though there is a little impediment attached. Using applications that change the shell look means losing some RAM which is unpleasant for those that use RAM eating applications or they just do not have enough installed on their systems.[ADMARk=1] Windows XP has a theme system which permits to change the default theme with new ones. Good news so far, but do not be too happy about it. The guys from Microsoft monopolized this feature. It means that Microsoft themes are only suitable to be installed and run on Windows XP, which is not fair. Microsoft does not offer a high palette of themes for all tastes. This issue can be solved using a trick that I will further present to you. Over the internet, there are many themes available for download; but before installing them, we need a little "hack" in order to give them permission to be installed. The pain in the back is represented by a naughty dll file (uhtheme.dll) which blocks the use of 3rd party themes. The most comfortable way to replace the dll is to install **Multi-Patcher**.Download it from **Softpedia** and then run the application and click Patch. You will get an alert about the File Protection. Do not panic, just click OK and then restart the computer when asked. The PC will restart and at the next boot the new dll file will work giving the permission for the new themes.Once we solved the restriction problem, we just need to search the Internet for themes to download. The themes directory used by Windows XP is found inside this path: Windows>Resources> Themes. It is s there where you need to unpack the downloaded themes. After you have placed your favorite theme inside the mentioned folder, go to Display Properties (right click on desktop > properties) and select the Appearance tab. Look for Windows and Buttons drop down menu and select your new theme. Normally, without the trick presented before, the new theme wouldn't have been available in the menu, but now it is there and ready for install. Select it and click apply. Now your Windows shell will look fancier. **Some examples of how your Windows XP will look:**

Copyright (c) 2001-2009 Softpedia. All rights reserved. Softpedia™ and Softpedia™ logo are registered trademarks of SoftNews NET SRL.