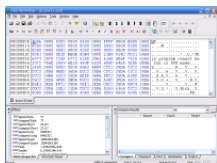


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By: Codrut Nistor, Editor, Software Reviews



The Hex Returns!

Prepare your gear and enter the Hex Workshop

WinHex was the first hex editor that I reviewed here, and starting it all over for the second time feels somehow strange, because this is not about system optimizers, antispyware tools or graphics editors. Low level file and disk editing are not things to do without knowing anything about it, and learn during the process. If this works for text editors, media players, image viewers and other programs that I can't think of now, hex editors are not that easy. Anyway, if you want to learn, you'll find a way to learn...just think about the fact that jobs in demanding fields like low-level programming are paid much better than things that everybody does, such as PHP or Windows programming. Today's elite program is called Hex Workshop and reached version 4.23 a few months ago. What I have here is a feature-limited shareware version that has an installation kit 3.6MB in size and was as easy to setup as hard it is to master. Don't be afraid, everything can be done if you set your mind on the right frequency, so let's do it! First of all, I hope you don't expect anything brilliant from this program's interface, because you won't get anything special, in fact Hex Workshop's interface looks old and outdated, as it happens with most if not all programs like this. This is not an eye candy and it doesn't have to be, it's a tool done by professionals for professionals, and you can notice that from the screenshots at the end of this review. When opening a file, you don't have to worry about its extension, since Hex Workshop opens everything that you can have on your hard drive and even more, the hard drive itself. First things first, after you open a file, you can choose to edit and view it in two different modes – ASCII and Hex. Once you have decided about this, you can use regular editing shortcuts, like Ctrl+C, Ctrl+V or Ctrl+X, and I am sure I don't have to tell you what they do...The Edit menu has all the features needed by a well done text editor, and its only special option is called Copy As and allows you to copy the selected block from the opened file into a specific format, from C source to UUEncoding data. The Disk menu has only two options available, but it's very important and powerful, because allows direct disk editing. Only one warning: be very careful with this feature! You can edit your drives at logical level, accessing each individual partition, or at the physical level, bypassing partition limitations and logical information. From here on, everything's just fine, since there is a complete set of tools waiting for you to use them, starting with the Base Converter, Hex Calculator and all the operations that you can think of (Byte Flip, Inverse Bits, AND, OR, XOR and others) and ending with the Structure Viewer and user customizable external tools. A workshop is a place to be in and get to work, not talk about it, so don't wait for me to describe everything and download the program instead! **The Good** Hex Workshop is a program extremely useful and easy to use, while its comprehensive documentation can help you a lot understanding the theory behind it. **The Bad** This is not a program that anybody can use, and the interface is not an eye candy, in fact it's not attractive at all, and these are the main drawbacks that I can think of now. **The Truth** Hex Workshop may not be a tool for the masses, but it was a nice program to play with, and if you dare, you may share this experience with me, no matter how skilled you are. Don't forget, if you try hard, everything is possible! *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*