



MANUAL



Win9x

1994-1996



Vision & Framework

eXo

Architect

TaraLonger

Curator

Dutchmagic

Archiving Managers

Python

Timber

Chief Acquisition Officers

Jemy Murphy

Smiling Spectre

bigjim

Wiki Wizard

Crypt1cMayh3m

Storage Janitor

Boohyaka

Discord Mod

nofunk

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THE STORY SO FAR...

The eXo projects started as a humble attempt to get my personal collection of MS-DOS adventure games running on my Windows XP machine in 2006. Eventually this led to eXoDOS, an attempt to make DOS games easily playable on modern machines. It was followed in 2015 by eXoWin3x, a similar project geared towards Win3x.

Over the past decade the eXo projects have come to encompass multiple genres and platforms, however requests for a Windows 95/98 pack have easily been the most requested project. Up until very recently the size and complexity of this project was impossible. Due to how often I was asked about this project, I created a video that covered all of the reasons the project was not currently possible.

Fortunately, this video was seen by TaraLonger, who took it as a challenge. He was able to solve dilemma of combining parent\child images with dynamic sizing images while still maintaining the speeds needed to keep the games playable. Progress moved quickly due to a combination of incredible dedication and a pre-collected library of Win9x games.

Thanks to the popularity of the collections, the team has continued growing and there are some amazing folks putting countless hours of their time into preserving these games. The eXo Project framework has allowed staff to begin creating projects based on the DemoScene and Interactive Fiction. Language pack curators have come forward to begin creating regional add-on packs.

Thousands of hours have been put in to these projects to ensure the best version of each game is available and that the games look and sound as they were intended. Thank you for downloading. If you grew up with these games, then I hope the collection brings back memories. If it's all new to you, then have fun discovering a pivotal era in computer gaming history.



Getting Started

Setting up eXoWin9x is designed to be as simple as possible. Once you have downloaded the collection, run the "Setup eXoWin9x.bat" file. This will extract all of the necessary files needed to run the collection.

The following files are required by the project:

.\eXo\eXoWin9x*. * (these are the actual games)
.\eXo\util\utilWin9x.zip
.\eXo\util\unzip.exe
.\Content\!Win9xmetadata.zip
.\Content\LaunchBox.zip
.\Content\XOWin9xMetadata.zip
Setup eXoWin9x.bat



Installation will take quite some time, depending on your machine. Once it is finished extracting files you will be asked some questions regarding global settings such as Aspect Ratio, Fullscreen vs. Window, and your screen size. You will also be asked if you want to keep Adult games. Selecting 'NO' does not remove the games from your system, it simply removes them from the front end. So if you don't want Larry hanging around, this is your chance to banish him from your front end.

Importing into an Existing Setup

To merge your eXoWin9x files into an existing LaunchBox installation, you will need to follow these steps, OR, you may simply run the eXoMerge.bat file.

1. Run Setup eXoWin9x.bat and let the process complete.
2. Ensure LaunchBox is NOT running.
3. Move the following files from your eXoWin9x folder to your existing LaunchBox folder
 - .\data\platforms*.*
 - .\data\playlists*.*
 - .\Manuals\Windows 9x*.*
 - .\Music\Windows 9x*.*
 - .\Images\Windows 9x*.*
 - .\Videos\Windows 9x*.*
 - .\Plugins*.*
4. Finally, move the entire .\eXo\ folder to your existing LaunchBox directory.

If you would like to store the games in a different location than your LaunchBox install, you may place the .\eXo\ folder anywhere you like and then use symlinks.

Using the Front End

Right clicking on any game in LaunchBox will bring up the context menu. From here you can:

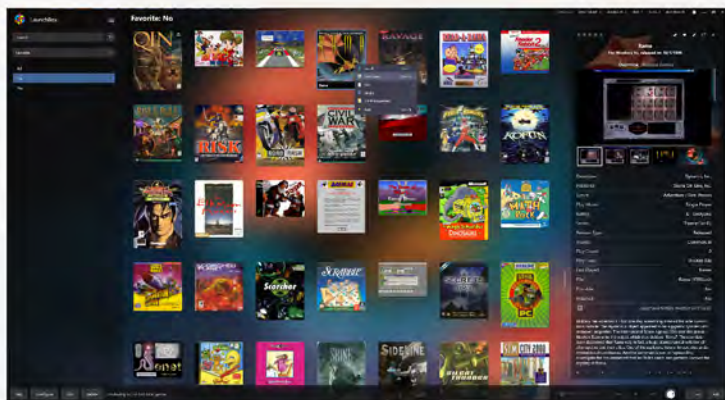
- Play

- Configure

- Game Manual

- View any extra documentation (maps, hint books, etc)

Hitting ENTER on any game will also launch it. If the game has not been installed, you will be prompted to install the game. Clicking Configure on the context menu will also do this.



Games in LaunchBox are linked to the LaunchBox Games Database. If you choose to update your collection or would like to scan for missing data, it is ***VERY*** important to not allow the wizard to replace existing metadata. eXoWin9x tracks several genre and series types that are not tracked in the games database. Replacing your existing metadata could cause a loss of these details. If this does happen, and you have your original setup files, you can run the Setup eXoWin9x.bat file again, which will reset your launchbox XML to it's original state.

A custom plugin has been included which populates a playlist with every game you install. This is very useful for showing just the games that have been installed and are ready to launch. The playlist is called "Installed eXoWin9x Games".



Network Multiplayer

This era was the start of PC gaming becoming synonymous with on-line multiplayer. The early years were modest with a transition from serial and modem connections to LAN and IPX. Eventually online services such as TEN, GameSpy, and MPlayer attempted to allow players to find opponents all over the world.

MMO (massively multiplayer online) games also found life during this period. Many of these no longer have active servers. When possible, we have preserved these titles in ways that allow the user to play them in a local mode. Occasionally new servers for old games are hosted by fans. In those cases, we have taken advantage of those online servers.

Due to limitations in the way Windows 95 & 98 are emulated, we have not found a reliable way to allow multiplayer gaming via modem or serial connections. We have, however, setup many games with IPX & TCP/IP connection scripts.

The host computer will often be tasked with setting the session's options (map, game type, etc). In some games the host sets all options, including options specific to the client's game. For this reason it is best to discuss the preferred options before attempting a multiplayer game. Several games also require knowing how many total players will be joining before starting.

Some games are unable to run multiplayer properly in DOSBox. These games have been setup to run multiplayer games in 86Box. A menu will be displayed on launch which will give you the choice to Host a game, join a game, or play a solo game, along with which emulator will be used in each instance.

If you experience connection issues, you should verify your ports are forwarded properly and that DOSBox is not being blocked by your firewall.

Copy Protection

Copy protection was quite common before the CD-ROM was introduced. Generally it manifested itself in a form of asking the user to type in some code, number, or word from the included documentation. To thwart copy machines, publishers began to use dark ink on dark paper or even elaborate code wheels.

Most of the included games in eXoWin9x did not have any copy protection. It was generally believed that simply having the game on a CD-ROM was protection in itself. However, there are a few games that do ask you for information that can be found in the manual (or other included extra). These have all been included in the pack. Right clicking a game in the front end will display links to its manual and extras.



Emulation

How do all of these ancient games run on your modern computer? Emulation! eXoWin9x uses DOSBox-X and 86Box in order to virtually re-create the hardware and software that Windows 95/98 expects to see. DOSBox-X relies on a CONF file to define the machine including RAM, video card, sound, CPU type/speed, and dozens of other variables.

To keep the size of the project reasonable, a standard Windows OS image is used as the 'parent'. A differential image is created with all of the changes the game makes when it is installed. A script is also run each time you start a game to add any registry entries to the parent image that are required. This allows us to save quite a bit of space by not having to pack a copy of Windows with each game.

We are also using dynamically sizing virtual harddrives. This allows the drive to report to windows that it has up to 2 gigabytes of free space, while only taking up as much disk space as the files that actually reside in the image. This methodology allows images to expand, preventing blank space from eating up your storage.

Add-On Packs

At this time there is no add-on pack for eXoWin9x. As the pack matures and we begin to wrap up adding games, the focus will shift to books, catalogs, soundtracks, documentaries, and TV shows that focuses on the era. To keep the download size of the project reasonable, these extras will be contained in separate add-on packs. This is already being done with the eXoDOS project, and will work similarly. Once an add-on pack has been released, you would simply download the add-on, run the setup file, and the files will be added to your existing project and menus.

Download On Demand (Lite Version)

EXoWin9x does not have a "lite" version. The lite version of eXoDOS relies on the number of people seeding the full torrent to be healthy enough to support downloads of the full version as well as individual transfers for the lite version. Due to this, the lite version cannibalizes the number of full users, which in turn harms the health of the project. Understandably, this is a very large project, and not everyone has the drive space for it. However, as a volunteer project, we also do not have the funds to support a paid host for it either.

Save Games

Save games, high scores, options, and any other changes you make to a game are stored in it's personal virtual hard drive (VHD). This is loaded as the D: drive. When saving your game, if you are given the option where to place it, please select the D: drive. The C: drive is replaced each time you boot. If you come across a game that forces saves, options, or other settings to be written to the C: drive, please let us know so that we can fix the game for the next release.

Foreign Games

Unlike other eXo projects, eXoWin9x does include some foreign games. While there will likely be language packs released for eXoWin9x in the future, we have included these both for preservation purposes and as a proof of concept. This is due to these games requiring special builds of Windows 98 that support regional characters.



Support

The quickest place to get help is the eXoWin9x Discord channel. Scan the QR code to join or type the following link into your browser:

<https://discord.gg/37FYaUZ>



Website

All current projects can be found on the the Retro eXo website, including torrent links to the full and lite versions of each project.

<https://www.retro-exo.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/eXoRetro>

<https://wiki.retro-exo.com/>

Contact

If Discord isn't your thing you can reach me at retroexo@gmail.com

Thanks

Several people have helped the project over the past decade that are not directly involved with the project. Each of the following people and websites have contributed to the success of the eXo projects.

The volunteers who give their time to improving this project
Jason Carr & CBeatt13 @ LaunchBox

DOSBox Staging

ripsaw8080

old-games.ru

mocagh.org

The TDC project

And everyone who has helped improve the collection in the Retro eXo Discord server. The project as a whole has been improved exponentially thanks to your help.



NOTES

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

eXoDOS Enough



Are you eXoDOS Enough?

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EXOWIN 9x

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