

Start11 Fixes the Windows Start Menu

IT SEEMS LIKE NEARLY EVERYONE THINKS THEY COULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB WITH THE WINDOWS START MENU. STARDOCK SOFTWARE ACTUALLY DOES.

Love or hate the Start Menu, you probably think there are functions it should have or functions that should be implemented differently. Microsoft has added configuration options to Windows 11, but Stardock's Start11 goes even further.

If that name sounds familiar, it's because Stardock was founded more than 30 years ago. Initially the company concentrated on tweaks for OS/2, but soon switched to Windows. The company produces utilities to modify the Windows user interface and games.

Start11 fixes problems with the Windows Start Menu and adds new features. If you loved the Windows 7 Start Menu, Start11 can emulate it. Or Windows 10's Start Menu. There are four Windows 11 styles and each variant has a series of options and configuration settings.

You might not need Start11, though, because of improvements that have been made to Windows.

Users can eliminate the *Recommended* section of the Start Menu, carefully arrange pinned applications, and modify options that appear at the bottom of the menu. There's also PowerToys Run to start applications without ever seeing the Start Menu. If you haven't yet installed PowerToys, check it out in the Microsoft Store. It's free.

Starting with Windows 22H2, users could organize Start menu icons by

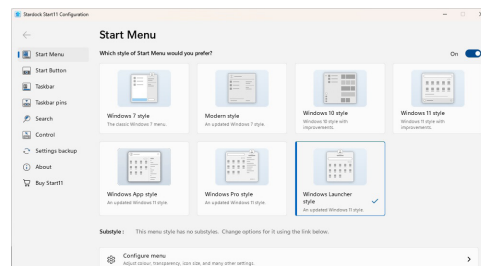
placing them in folders. The current version is 23H2. To create a folder in the Start Menu, drop one icon on top of another. Name the folder and add other apps by dropping them on the folder.

The Start Menu is now centered (like Apple does it) but you might not like this. Go to Settings > Personalization > Taskbar, and select the Taskbar behaviors option. Use the Taskbar alignment dropdown menu to change the icons from center to left.

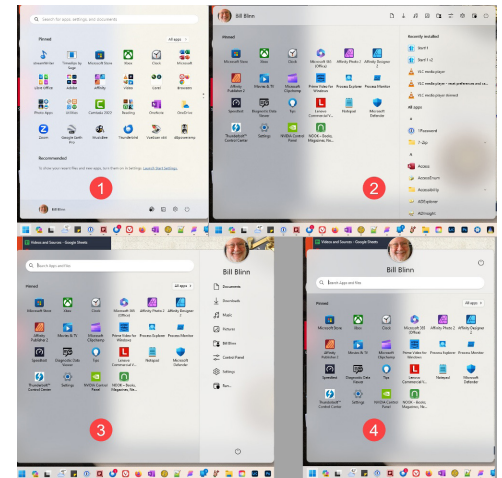
Need More Customization?

FOR \$6 (\$13 TO INSTALL IT ON UP TO 5 COMPUTERS), STARDOCK'S START 11 WILL HELP.

If you're not sure, there's a 30-day free trial. To give Start11 a trial run, you need to create an account, but no credit card information is needed.



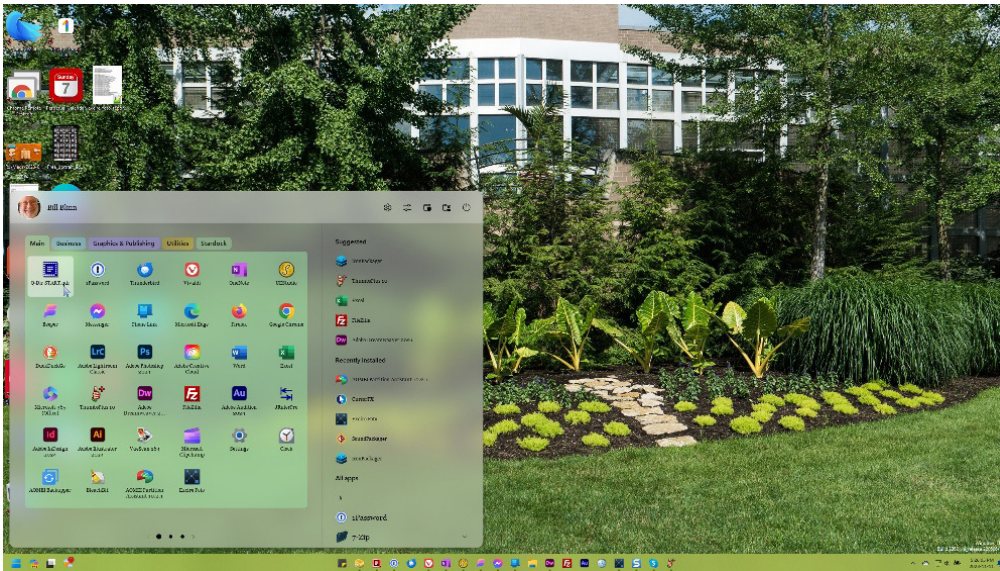
Once you have an account, choose one of the styles. I started with Windows Launcher, but decided later that the Windows App style was more in line with my use cases. I compared the (1) default Windows Start Menu with Stardock's (2) App Style, (3) Windows Pro, and (4) Windows Launcher options.



The format I selected currently has three menu panels and displays all installed apps on the right side of the Start Menu.

I also made the Start Menu and the Taskbar partly transparent and selected a color for the Taskbar because some icons can be hard to see when the computer is set up to change Desktop images frequently and the Taskbar color is selected automatically based on a color in the Desktop image.

Among the options Start11 offers is the ability to change the typeface the application uses. There are also selectors that modify the Taskbar and many other parts of the interface. I selected the App Style menu because a full list of installed applications is included and the ability to organize the Start Menu and to use the Power Toys Run feature allowed me to limit the number of applications shown on the Taskbar.



ONE OF MY PRIMARY COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE WINDOWS 11 START MENU IS THAT IT CONTAINS TOO MANY COMPONENTS I DON'T WANT, DOESN'T DISPLAY ENOUGH OF THE COMPONENTS I DO WANT, AND IT CANNOT BE RESIZED. STARDOCK'S START 11 RESOLVES ALL THOSE ISSUES AND INCLUDES NUMEROUS OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.

The user can also change the size of the Start11 menu, control which items appear at the top, and whether the list of all applications is always present or appears only when requested. Additional menu pages can be added, but one of the features I like most is the ability to create tabbed menu areas on

each page. These can be color coded, their transparency can be adjusted, and background textures can be added. I set the Start11 menu to be 125% of the normal size and added tabs to the main tab on the primary page for the applications I use the most, business applications, graphics and publishing,

utilities, and the various Stardock applications.

Besides Start11, Stardock offers other applications that modify the look and feel of the computer, including WindowBlinds11, an updated version of the application offered 30 years ago. Many of the utilities are combined in a package called Object Desktop for \$40 per year. Depending on how much customization you like, that could be \$40 well spent. Ω

Five Star Final: You are Viewing the Last Issue

I STARTED SENDING A NEWSLETTER TO CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS IN 2001. TWENTY-TWO AND A HALF YEARS LATER, THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE.

The first issue of *Dead Trees* predicted that wireless connectivity and home networks were in our near-term future. I also thought "mammoth" removable storage was coming soon. Maybe 5GB of storage, voice over IP, speech recognition, and OCR.

The newsletter was created using Ventura Publisher and mailed. The banner listed a website, a phone number, and a fax number.

By February 2003, the newsletter was in color and the name changed to *Random Thoughts*.

In June 2004, I retired Ventura Publisher and moved to Adobe InDesign. At version 3, InDesign still had far fewer capabilities than Ventura Publisher did, but Corel made it clear that Ventura development had ended.

By 2009, the fax number was gone.



January 2011 brought a name change. The name *nLightened Thoughts* seemed like a good idea at the time, and I added a New York City phone number to the banner in January 2016.

Later, I began to use email to deliver both the newsletter and monthly invoices and the final name change rolled out in March 2020.

Now it's time for the last issue. This

does not signal a change for current clients; I expect to continue working with you for as long as you want me to. But I am no longer seeking to add new clients.

From the department of irony: Although InDesign offers some features that Ventura Publisher didn't, Ventura still has a few capabilities that InDesign hasn't been able to match in more than two decades. Ω