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Put the Classic Start menu in Windows 7 with Classic Shell

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On more than one occasion, I've looked through the discussions for the Windows 7 blog posts that I have written here at TechRepublic and found messages from angry Windows users that go something along the lines of "Because Microsoft took away the Classic Start menu in Windows 7, I am not going to upgrade!"

When I see these types of messages, I imagine curmudgeonly folks sitting in from of an old Pentium II computer running Windows NT. Of course I know that is not a fair assessment, because a lot of folks that I know who use either Windows XP or Windows Vista use the Classic Start menu feature.

Still I have a hard time imagining anyone wanting to forego all of the underlying advances in the Windows 7 operating system just because of a dislike of the Start menu and other user interface features. However, everyone is entitled to their opinion.

In any case, those die hard classic Start menu fans have a champion out there. At SourceForge.net, which claims to be the world's largest open source software development Web site, a fellow by the name of Ivo Beltchev has created a wonderful program called Classic Shell. In addition to bringing the Classic Start menu to the Windows 7 user interface, Classic Shell brings a number of other classic features to Windows 7 such as the Windows Explorer toolbar, complete with the Up button.

In this edition of the Windows Vista and Windows 7 Report, I'll investigate all of the classic features that the Classic Shell application brings to Windows 7.

This blog post is also available in the PDF format in a free TechRepublic Download.

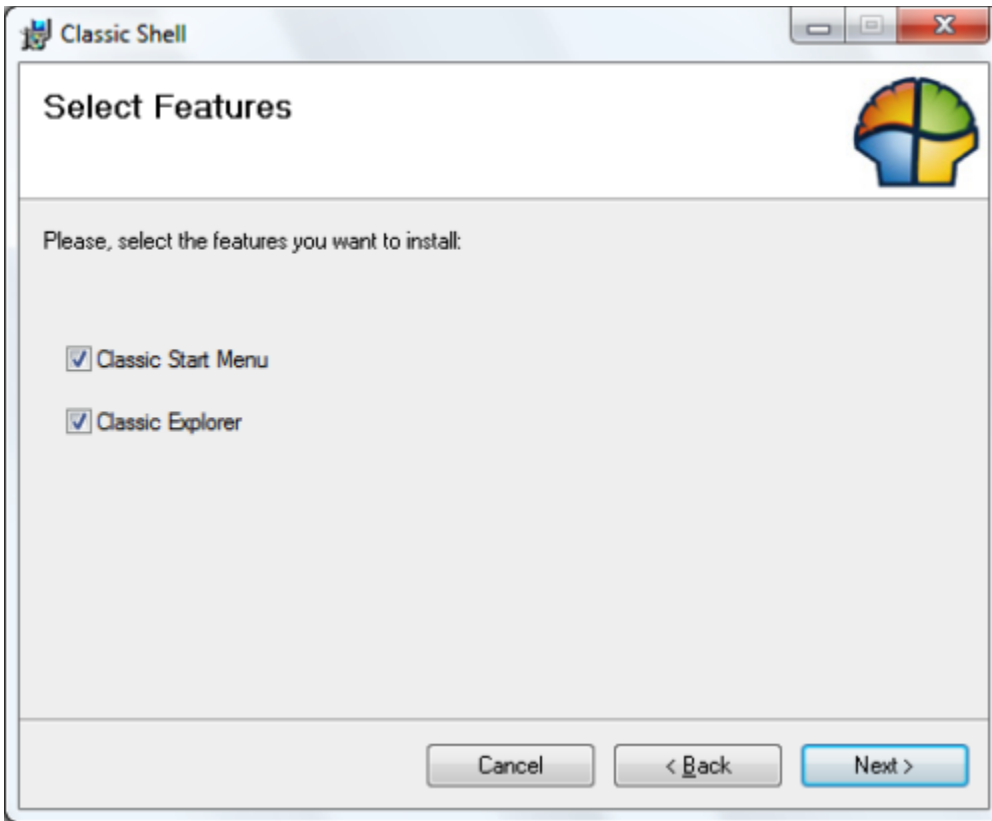
Keep in mind

At the time of this writing, Beltchev is publishing version 0.9.10 of Classic Shell, which he is calling the Release Candidate version. As such, you may encounter some glitches. However, I tested it for the better part of a week on my Windows 7 test system and didn't experience any problems. Classic Shell works with both the 32 and 64-bit versions of Windows 7 and appears to work in all editions. I tested it in the Ultimate edition of Windows 7.

Installation

Once you download Classic Shell from the SourceForge.net site, just double-click the ClassicShellSetup.exe file and follow the onscreen instructions. When you are prompted to select the features that you want to install, as shown in **Figure A**, be sure that you leave both check boxes selected if you want to revive the classic version of Windows Explorer as well as the Classic Start menu.

Figure A

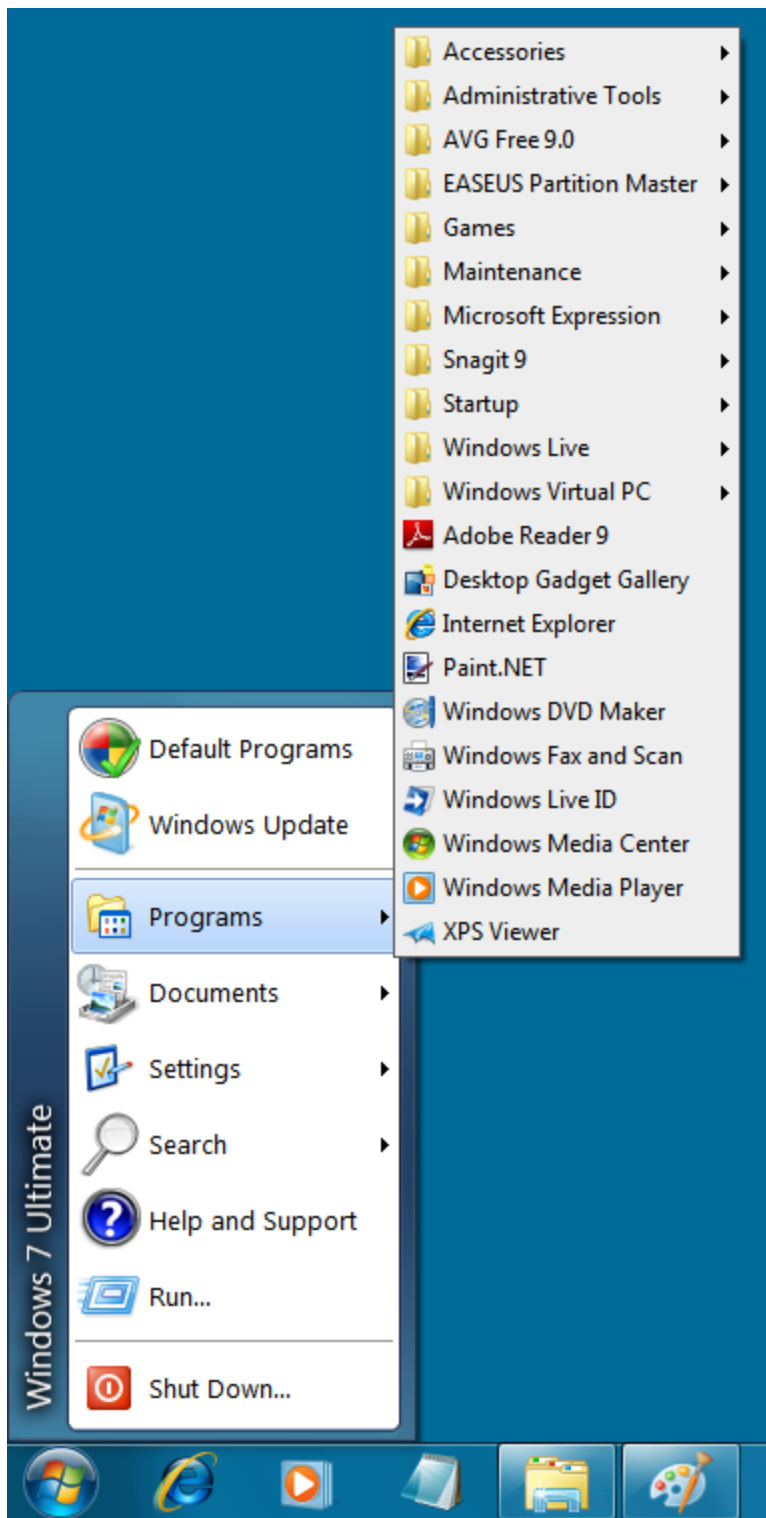


Make sure that you leave both check boxes selected if you want to revive the classic version of Windows Explorer.

Check it out

As soon as you complete the installation procedure, you'll immediately find the Classic Start menu in place, as shown in **Figure B**.

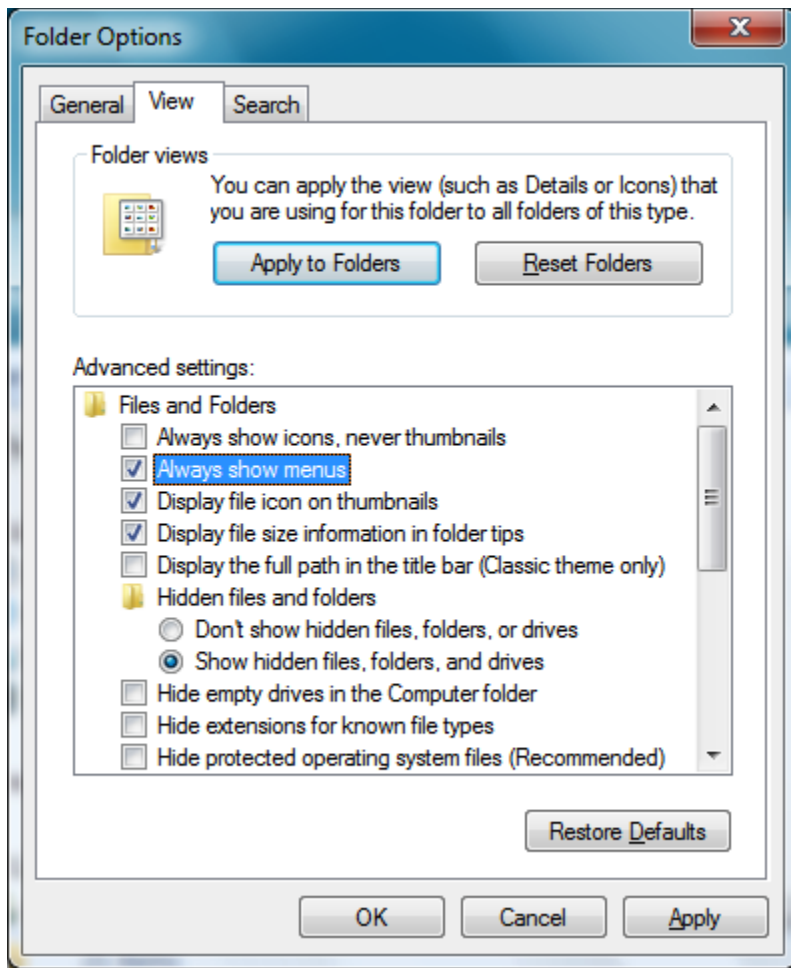
Figure B



The Classic Start menu is immediately available.

Reviving the classic version of Windows Explorer requires some configuration. First you have to enable the menu bar. To do so, launch Windows Explorer, press the [Alt] key to display the menu bar, pull down the Tools menu, and select the Folder Options command. Then, in the View tab of the Folder Options dialog box, select the Always Show Menus check box, as shown in **Figure C**, and click OK.

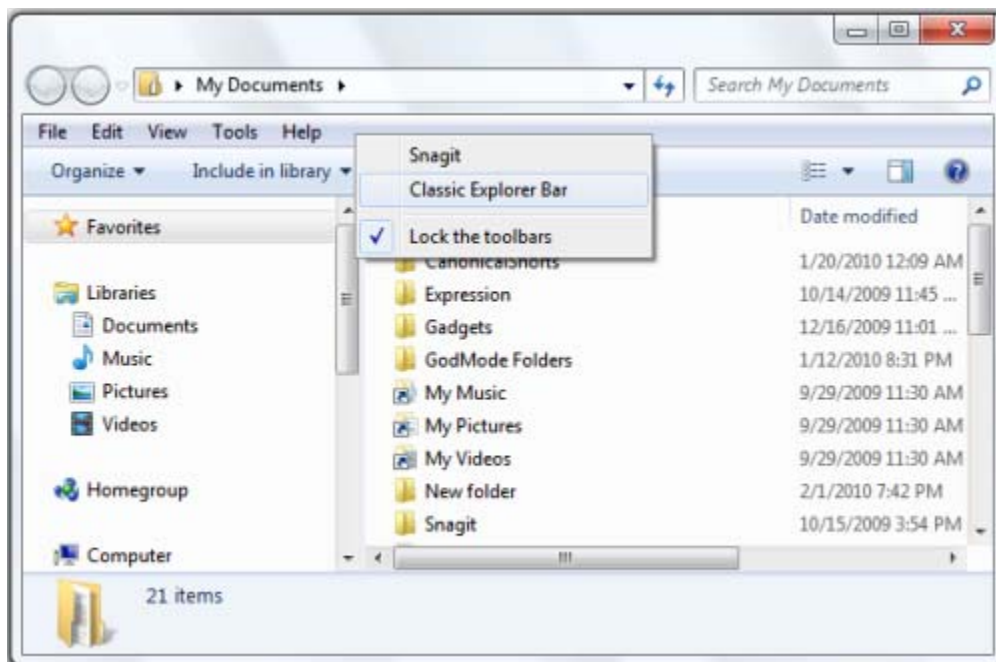
Figure C



Before you can revive the classic version of Windows Explorer, you have to enable the menu bar.

With the menu bar in place, you can right click on it and select the Classic Explorer Bar command, as shown in **Figure D**. If you disable the Lock the toolbars setting, you can position the Classic Explorer Bar, under the menu bar like in Windows XP.

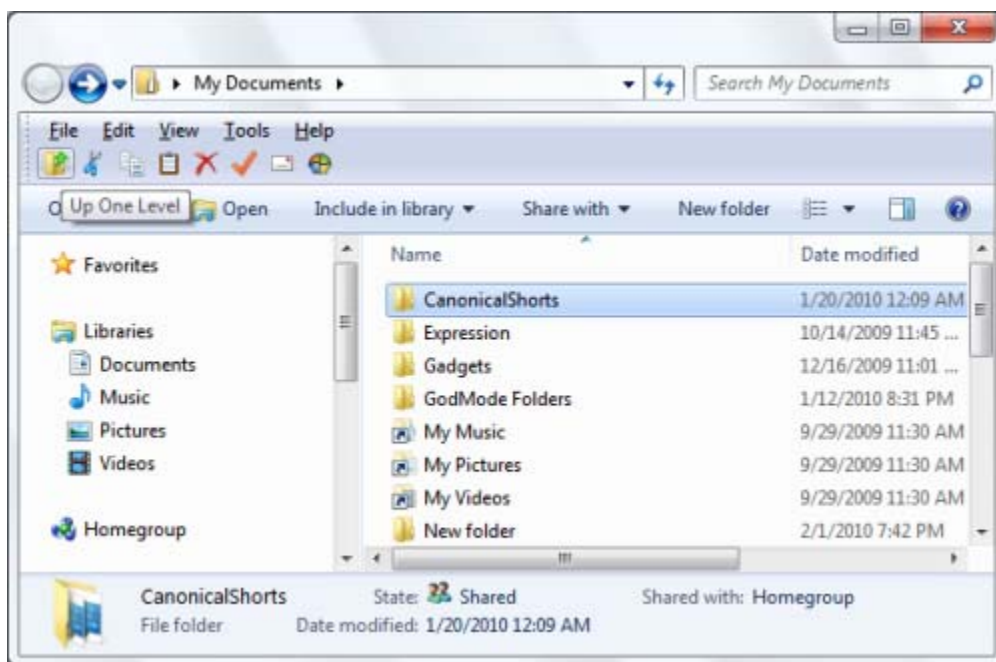
Figure D



Just right click on the menu bar and select the **Classic Explorer Bar** command.

In addition to the Up button, you have the Cut, Copy, Paste, and Delete buttons back as shown in **Figure E**. You also have a Properties button, that displays the selected item's properties dialog box, and an email button, which allows you to attach selected items to an email message. The last button is the Settings button, which displays the available configuration settings.

Figure E

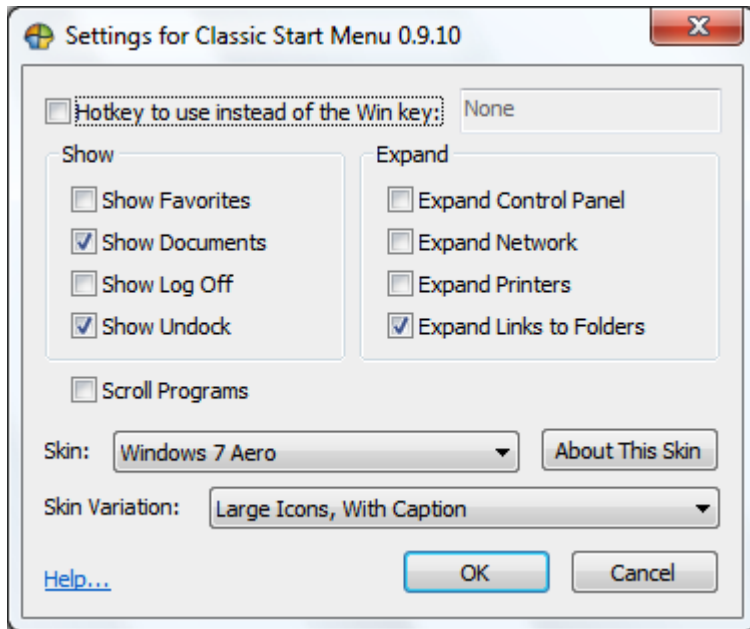


With the **Classic Explorer Bar** command enabled, you now have the **Up** button back.

Tweaking

You can tweak the Classic Start menu, by right clicking on the Start orb and selecting the Settings command. You'll then see the dialog box shown in **Figure F** and can change a host of options - you can even apply several different skins, including a classic Windows 9x/2K colored skin.

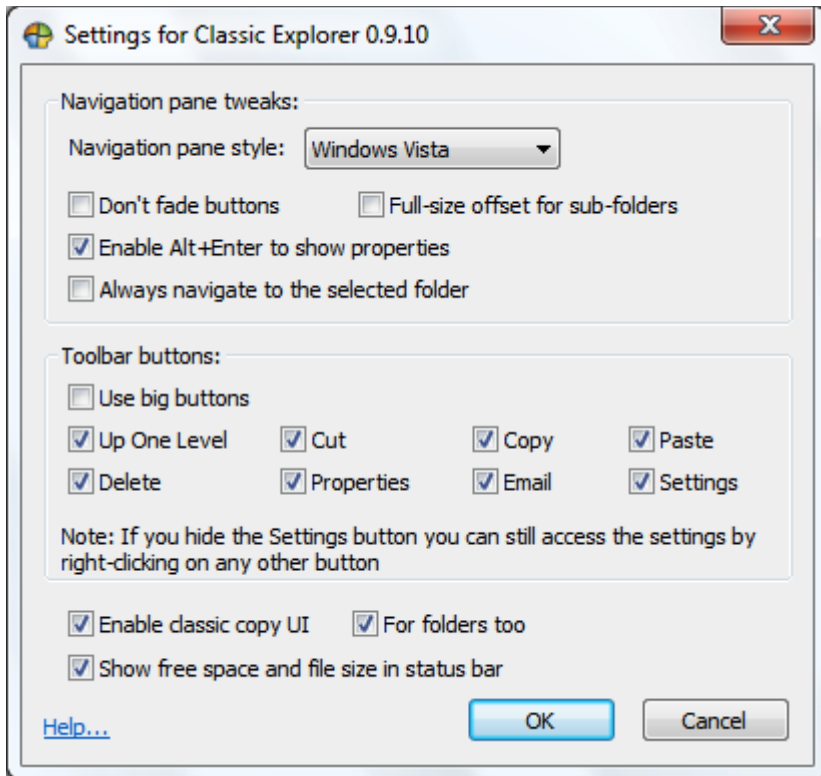
Figure F



From the Settings dialog box, you can configure a host of options including different skins.

You can tweak the Classic Explorer Bar by clicking the Settings button. When you do, you'll see the dialog box shown in **Figure G** and can change a host of options - you can even select the type of navigation pane that you want to use, such as Windows XP Classic or Windows Vista.

Figure G



You can tweak the way the Classic Explorer Bar looks and feels.

Bonus features

In addition to the Classic Start menu and Classic Explorer Bar, the Classic Shell program brings back a few other classic features. Can you find them? Report your discoveries in the discussion area and describe what those other classic features are.

What's your take?

Have you been willing to forego Windows 7 because it didn't have the classic Start menu feature? What do you think of Classic Shell? Is it enough to make you change your mind about Windows 7? As always, if you have comments or information to share about this topic, please take a moment to drop by the TechRepublic Community Forums and let us hear from you.

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Greg Shultz is a freelance *Technical Writer*. Previously, he has worked as *Documentation Specialist* in the software industry, a *Technical Support Specialist* in educational industry, and a *Technical Journalist* in the computer publishing industry. *Read his full bio and profile.*

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