

AquaX III

Release Notes as of January 22, 2001.

First and Foremost

Thanks for downloading a copy of this Kaleidoscope scheme. I feel this is the most complete, most accurate, and most true-to-life representation of the OS X/Aqua User Interface available outside of the real thing.

AquaX and AquaX II (the previous, most accurate Aqua representations available) were pulled from public distribution at Apple Computer's request on May 15, 2000. Since then, I have made small efforts to update this scheme — then Apple released the Public Beta of Mac OS X. This release resulted in hundreds of requests for an update to my Aqua scheme as well as hundreds of requests for the scheme to be emailed for personal use. All that was done, and I have been promising the new version of my scheme, AquaX III, for quite some time.

Here it is.

Requirements For Use

- 1) Mac OS 8.5 or higher
- 2) Kaleidoscope version 2.3 (or higher), available at: < <http://www.kaleidoscope.net/> >
- 3) The AquaX III scheme file. THIS IS NOT A THEME! This is a Kaleidoscope scheme, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with Appearance Themes.

Caveats: The Wrong and Why

Since this is merely a representation or duplication of what the OS X user interface is like — made possible by Kaleidoscope — there are certain “items” in the scheme that cannot fully reproduce the actual, literal aspects of OS X/Aqua. For the most part, these errors are small and are nothing more than things to be noticed by those who are looking for them. Regardless, I wanted to list them here for you:

Window Shadows

OS X's Quartz engine allows extensive use of real-time alpha-channel drop shadows on all controls, the most obvious of which are the windows. Unfortunately, Kaleidoscope cannot duplicate this technology. This being the case, there are no drop shadows on any of AquaX III's windows. The “old school” method of applying shadows to schemes was to add a 1-pixel border around the windows. Again, this was the OLD SCHOOL way to do it, and it (quite frankly) looks like crud. Not to mention that to simulate the 90° drop shadows of OS X, it would mean adding a border around all three sides, which would look even worse. For these reasons I have elected to add no drop shadows to AquaX III.

Inactive Window Title Bars

Window Title Bars take a 75% opacity when they go inactive in OS X resulting in the desktop (or windows directly behind) showing through. My previous versions of AquaX forced a 50% white-on-blue for inactive windows, but this looks bad on machines not using a blue desktop image. AquaX III now shows the inactive widgets and the inactive text color against a 75% blue background that subtly — yet effectively — shows a changed state. The inactive window effect is now almost identical to OS X as far as Kaleidoscope's limitations will allow.

Utility Windows

OS X has two different window frames for titled and non-titled utility windows, as well as two different sets of widgets. The non-titled window is about 5 pixels shorter and the widgets are scaled smaller to fit. Though Kaleidoscope allows for custom non-titled utility window frames, it does not allow for non-titled utility widgets. This will be addressed in a future release of Kaleidoscope — but in the mean time, the titled window CICN is used to draw the non-titled window.

Widget Rollovers

Kaleidoscope doesn't support any rollover control as seen in OS X when you place your pointer over a window widget. This being the case, you don't see the “X” or “—” or “+” until you press these corresponding widgets.

Scrollbar Thumbs

This is the caveat that bugs me the most, but it's a matter of taking the lesser of two evils. The thumbs in OS X are shaped like pills with rounded edges, and they overlap into the scrollbar widgets, again, with Quartz transparency. Here's the problem with this scheme relating to the thumbs: keeping the smooth, pill shape while the widget sits in the scrollbar is easy, but a white edge is visible when you press the scroll widget while the thumb is resting against the widget.

The flipside is to remove the white edge mentioned above, but doing so distorts the smooth pill shape which is seen the majority of the time. Between the two, I elected to maintain the thumb's shape as you only see the white edge when pressing the scroll widget with the thumb next to it. When dragging into the scroll widgets everything looks fine, too, so this was the best solution in my opinion.

Also, Kaleidoscope cannot reproduce the pulse pattern seen in OS X's scrollbar thumbs. This effect can be (and is) simulated in the progressbar because of Kaleidoscope's ability to read a pattern into the CICN. However, this functionality is not yet implemented into scrollbar thumbs.

Background Sort Colors

I have made a slight change in the background of Finder lists to help keep everything "straight" as we're used to in pre-OS X systems. However, OS X eliminates the color variances and makes them all white (unless you choose to apply a picture or pattern to them).

Tab Height

In OS X, large and small tabs are 23 and 19 pixels tall, respectively. Kaleidoscope limits tab height to 21 and 17 before the tab CICN begins to overlap the pane CICN. This being the case, the tab height is incorrect by a couple of pixels.

A Note About Icons

Any icon in AquaX III that has a direct counterpart in OS X is created from the ORIGINAL OS X icon. Icons like the Default Folder, the Desktop, the "Apple Menu" face — these are icons taken directly from OS X. All that to say, what's in AquaX III is what's in OS X.

Icons for folders that have badges representing OS X icons (like the Favorites folder) use the OS X icon scaled-down to badge size.

Legal Stuff and Why I Shouldn't Have Done What I Did

Most of my schemes contain, and are bound by, an express copyright. With this scheme, I cannot apply an express copyright as the nature and representation of this scheme is all based upon Apple Computer's OS X operating system. All I did was take the existing interface and make it make sense to Kaleidoscope. The only thing I can copyright are the actual pixels — not the final product of those pixels.

This brings up a good point, too, about why Apple hates schemes like mine: I'm ripping them off. Just like I hate it when those PeeCee weenies "port" my schemes to WindowBlinds, Apple doesn't like it when we take what's theirs and "port" it to Kaleidoscope. Forget the legal mumbo-jumbo — what I just stated is the root of their argument and it's 100% valid. What I'm doing with AquaX is simply a cheap hack of the real thing, and no, it isn't right — no matter how the other Aqua scheme/theme makers try to justify it.

Should I have made AquaX? No. But I did. Why? Because I make schemes and I make them dang good, and all the other OS X/Aqua schemes and themes just plain ol' suck. If you want Aqua, get OS X — until then, get AquaX III. 'Nuff said.

The Future

This will, more likely than not, be the last full iteration of AquaX. If Greg adds some of OS X's functionality (like rollovers) I will update to take advantage of the new Kaleidoscope features. Outside of that, there isn't much to be updated until something major changes in the UI of OS X, or if someone finds a glaring bug in the scheme — and I'll update as necessary.

Until then, enjoy AquaX III and be sure to buy OS X when it gets released — it is, after all, our future.