BIG CHANGES FOR STUNT ISLAND

by
Mic Healey

There has been a "big enough" change recently in the world of running Stunt Island, and or its associated player (PLAYONE), to proclaim a new era of "quite good" compatibility is now a reality with the latest version of DOSBox (ver. 0.63).

For those who are unfamiliar with this free product, it is an excellent "Old PC DOS Emulator" for fast new machines running anything from Win98 though XP. There are also ports of DOSBox to other operating systems like Linux, OS/2, etc. DOSBox is essentially, a "virtual 386/486 PC" which can live happily inside your snazzy new multi-gigahertz behemoth... and, it lets these new systems and other operating systems run classic old (almost forgotten) DOS software with few issues - as compared to trying to get them to run in their stock provided VDM (Virtual DOS MODE) - without massive tinkering. Old style DOS requirements for sound, mouse, and joystick are all supported well in DOSBox.

Even better... DOSBox is a safe, easy, and simple install. Just run the downloaded executable, which will add the DOSBox Group to your Start Programs Listings. Go into DOSBox group and click on the DOSBox icon. Next, two smaller screens will open on your desktop: one overlapping the other. You need not worry about the back screen for now (it is of a reporting nature). Once you get the "Z Prompt" (yup... that's a Z), on the front screen - type this:

MOUNT C C:\STUNTISL   (assuming Stunt Island is in the default directory)
This simply mounts the virtual drive...

next just log onto the drive:
type:
   C:
start SI as usual by typing:
   STUNT

Yeah, its that easy!!

Use the same sequence for running the Stunt Island film playing utility - PLAYONE.EXE. Now you can enjoy all the great films of SI again...

 For a little more control... You can adjust the speed of the DOSBox emulation via [CTRL+F11] / [CRTL+F12]. Also, release the mouse control to other Windows programs via [CTRL+F10]. You can exit DOSBox at the prompt by entering "EXIT" and pressing return, or just use: [CTRL+F9]. DOSBox also comes with a very complete, rather easy to understand documentation and there is extensive help at their website.

Under DOSBox 0.63, Stunt Island now runs pretty darn well on a large variety of platforms. There are a couple of small (livable) issues which are probably totally fixable with some advanced fiddling around with various DOSBox settings... see the DOSBox website for more details.
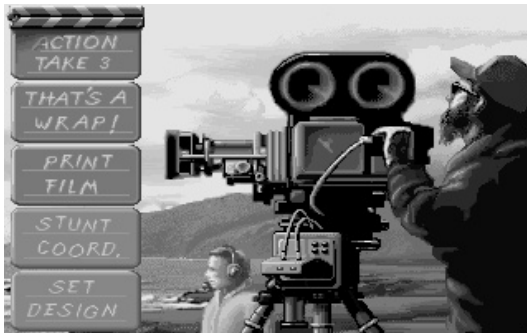
http://DOSBox.sourceforge.net/

Here is what I have noticed so far when using DOSBox with SI under WinXP SR2:

1. There is a slight stuttering or dropout in the sound routine in SI (mainly music). Adjusting the emulation speed either up or down can fix this - sometimes. Also, limiting the Windows processes running might help.

These small sound interruptions seem dependent on several factors including the speed of your system and the O/S in use. DOSBox documentation has details on this as well (since it seems a common occurrence). Also, visit the busy DOSBox forum for more help!

2. Here is a odd little SI/DOSBox glitch... When you go to the Stunt Island Airfield, take up an aircraft on a joy ride; and crash it - the next plane you try to take off with is broken. That is, you do not have any throttle control - the engine will not power up, and there is no access to views via the function key... Hmmmm.

To fix this issue... you need to fully exit SI and DOSBox. Then, restart DOSBox and SI to get it back. (Avoid crashing in the future... always a good idea.) This little glitch is only in SI under DOSBox with WinXP, it does not occur with SI under real MSDOS or MSDOS VDM in Win98, or even pure (blessed) MSDOS 6.22.

3. Here is something else to check... The first time you are in SI under DOSBox, check the Preferences Screen (ALT+P); as SI sometimes thinks its on a really slow computer and will automatically downgrade the graphical detail - just slide it back up to 100% and exit Preferences.

4. Within DOSBox, the full screen view of the emulated program will "not" take up the full screen under an LCD monitor. (This is a DOSBox thing.)

You can make the DOSBox Window bigger by changing the resolution of Windows down to something like 800 x 600 to get the window box larger. However, running on a CRT this is not a concern (as CRTs are always better for older programs as they are not limited in clarity to their "native resolutions" as are LCDs/TFTs, etc). With a CRT, the [ALT+ENTER] will give you the "Full Monte" without complaint w/DOSBox.

Finally - if your question is: Is Stunt Island still better under Windows 98 with a DOS mode compatible Soundblaster (example: Soundblaster Live 1024.), or even an ancient 486DX2-66 machine running just good old MS DOS with any compatible Soundblaster... or even, OS/2 (ver. 3) with a Soundblaster ?

The answer still is: Yes, yes, and yes... totally better. But... (and this is a B-I-G but), DOSBox 0.63 is pretty darn good!

If you fall in love with Stunt Island, you can always set up an older dedicated platform... (a Win98 machine is a nice compromise / a pure DOS6.22 machine the best); but for newer XP powered laptops... or folks who just want to see an SI movie or two, its a great way to enjoy and experience its intriguing world.

See you around on Stunt Island!