

There is no mystery over who wrote the Blue Screen of Death, despite what some may want you to believe

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Somehow, there is a claim of a 30-year mystery surrounding Microsoft's Blue Screen of Death. The argument goes that there are three conflicting sources of authorship: Steve Ballmer, John Vert, and me.

But really, there is no conflict. There are three different blue-colored screens, and each has a different author.

First is the Windows 3.1 **Ctrl + Alt + Del** screen, which is a blue screen of unhappiness, not death:

Contoso Deluxe Music Composer

This Windows application has stopped responding to the system.

- * Press ESC to cancel and return to Windows.
- * Press ENTER to close this application that is not responding. You will lose any unsaved information in this application.
- * Press CTRL+ALT+DEL again to restart your computer. You will lose any unsaved information in all applications.

The text for this message was written by Steve Ballmer. (He didn't write the code to display the message; he just wrote the text that goes into the message.)

Windows 3.1 did not have a blue screen of death. If Windows crashed, you got what could anachronistically be called a black screen of death:

Could not continue running Windows because of paging error.

```
C:\>_
```

Next is the Windows 95 kernel error, which you could consider a “blue screen of death”, although Windows 95 lets you ignore the error, so it's not a true death. (Then again, there's no guarantee that ignoring the error will return you to a usable system.)

Windows

An exception 0D has occurred at 0028:80014812 in VxD CONTOSO(03) + 00000152. This was called from 0028:80014C34 in VxD CONTOSO(03) + 00000574. It may be possible to continue normally.

* Press any key to attempt to continue.

* Press CTRL+ALT+DEL to restart your computer. You will lose any unsaved information in all applications.

I was the one who brought this version of the Windows 95 kernel error blue screen message to its final form. (Some people have misidentified an early version of it as a Windows NT blue screen.)

The third blue screen of death is the Windows NT kernel error, and that's the one authored by John Vert.

```

*** STOP: 0x00000019 (0x00000000,0xC00E0FF0xFFFFFFD4,0xC0000000)
BAD_POOL_HEADER
eax=ffdf13c ebx=80089a10 ecx=08000800 edx=ff69bf60 esi=80088010 edi=8008b0f0
eip=801b9da5 esp=ff69bb8c ebp=e10076c8 p4=0002    nv up ei ng nz na po nc
cr0=80050039 cr2=e1053002 cr3=00030000 cr4=00000000 irq!:0    efl=ff69bb84
gdtr=80036000 gdtl=03ff idtr=80036400 idtl=07ff tr=0028 ldtr=0000

```

```

Dll Base DateStmp – Name          Dll Base DateStmp – Name
80100000 2c921d20 – ntoskrnl.exe    80400000 2c7d4b45 – hal.dll
80010000 2c360942 – Atdisk.sys      80001000 2c87e0ab – Ftdisk.sys
801e6000 2c42f49a – Fastfat.sys

```

```

Address dword dump  Build [v1.528]          – Name
ff69bbb8 80121efa 80121efa ff7b6c50 00000018 00000000 ff69bba8 – ntoskrnl.exe
ff69bc04 80115b00 80115b00 00000100 ff7b19b0 ff7a86a8 ff7a8730 – ntoskrnl.exe
ff69bc28 80115f67 80115f67 ff7b2600 00000246 80112beb 80190001 – ntoskrnl.exe
ff69bc34 80112beb 80112beb 80190001 00000246 80112beb 80190001 – ntoskrnl.exe
ff69bc38 80190001 80190001 00000246 80112beb 80190001 00000000 – ntoskrnl.exe
ff69bc40 80112beb 80112beb 80190001 00000000 e1007560 e0075688 – ntoskrnl.exe

```

Restart your computer. If this message reappears, do not restart.
Contact your system administrator or technical support group, and/or
peripheral device vendor.

This is a true “blue screen of death”: The system is unrecoverably dead at this point.

So we have the following table:

OS	Author	Release year
Windows 3.1	Steve Ballmer (text)	1992
Windows 95	ends with me ¹	1995
Windows NT	John Vert	1993

¹ I did not write the early version of the Windows 95 blue screen message, but I was the one who brought it to its final form.