

# MORE THAN SKIN DEEP BEAUTY

Putting skins over Windows Mobile is the current craze in cell town. But no one quite does it as well as SpB Shell.

**Y**ou have to feel sorry for those folks who develop Windows Mobile. They pour in their blood, toil, tears and sweat into one of the most popular mobile operating systems in the world and people do their best to ensure that it stays hidden. Seldom has a mobile operating system been “skinned” more.

Be it Asus, HTC, LG, Samsung or Sony Ericsson, all manufacturers seem intent on hiding the fact that their devices are running good ol’ Win Mo. Of course, there is reason for this cellular apartheid. Win Mo, for all its power, is notoriously stylus driven and not suited at all to this finger swiping age (no, we are not going to mention who started it all).

So most manufacturers try to have a finger-friendly shell over the conventional Win Mo interface – for instance, HTC has TouchFlo, Samsung has Touch Wiz and Asus has Glide.

But if none of those interfaces catch your fancy or you are simply looking for something different, we would steer you towards SpB Shell 3.0, the latest version of one of the best Windows Mobile interfaces.

Yes, it is not free (USD 29.95), but that does not stop it from being one of the best things in Win Mo life. Getting it involves coughing up the dough and then downloading the software from <http://www.spbsoftwarehouse.com/portfolio-socketpc-software/mobileshell/>. You can download a trial too, if you wish. Installation on our HTC Touch Pro was incredibly smooth, with the new interface taking over TouchFlo without any hassle or questions whatsoever.

On first sight, SpB Shell 3.0 seems to comprise two, very finger-friendly layouts – professional and lifestyle. The former is very much on the lines of the previous version of the software with details of time, calendar, calls and the like, but it is the lifestyle one which grabbed our attention with its ability to put stunning backgrounds and lots and



lots of widgets.

This is essentially your playing area – you can put just about any application you want on it and can even drag widgets to different parts of the screen. Incidentally, the lifestyle layouts spans three screens, so there is a whole lot of stuff you can plonk on to it.

You can switch between the two layouts by just swiping your finger up or down the screen. Incidentally, both look equally gorgeous!

Then there is a whole set of screens for different functions, including the two home screens. You have a screen for contacts, another one for launching applications, an SpB Menu, a call logs menu, and many more (there are twelve screens in all). You can either flick through the screens in Carousel view or if you are an XPERIA X1 fan, switch to a Tiles view, which shows the screens all arranged nicely in a grid.

An integral part of the skin are four buttons at the bottom, whose functions keep changing as per the screen being displayed. They generally allow you to tweak views as well as customise the screens.

The best thing of all this is that unlike other Win Mo skins, SpB Shell 3.0 goes beyond placing a few finger-friendly icons on the home screen. If properly used, you will find yourself using your Win Mo device without ever really having to go to the conventional Win Mo screen. And yes, you might even forget that you need a stylus, unless it is for extensive data entry.

If you are a Windows Mobile user, we think you owe it to your device – and your fingers – to skin it with SpB Shell 3.0. It is certainly worth every penny that it commands. Of course, you have to feel bad for those folks at Microsoft who develop Windows Mobile... ▲