What was the starting point for the Panther Win32 kernel?

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When I presented a list of cat-related code names from Windows 95, commenter dave wanted to know whether the Panther kernel was derived from the 32-bit DOS kernel or the Windows/386 kernel.

Neither.

Here's the table again, with some more columns of information:

Component	Code Name	Based on	Fate
16-bit DOS kernel	Jaguar	MS-DOS 5	Morphed into Windows 95 boot loader / compatibility layer
32-bit DOS kernel	Cougar	Win386 kernel	Morphed into VMM32
Win32 kernel	Panther	Windows NT kernel	Cancelled
User interface	Stimpy	Windows 3.1 user interface	Became the Windows 95 user interface

The original idea for the Jaguar and Cougar projects was to offer a 16-bit MS-DOS environment that could be "kicked up a notch" to a 32-bit protected-mode MS-DOS environment, with virtual memory and multiple virtual machines. They used the MS-DOS 5 and Win386 kernels as starting points. (Why wasn't Jaguar based on MS-DOS 6.0? For the same reason NASA didn't use the Space Shuttle to rescue the Apollo 13 astronauts.) This project as originally envisioned was cancelled, but the work was not lost. The projects took on new life as the Windows 95 boot loader / compatibility layer and as the Windows 95 virtual machine manager, respectively.

The idea for the Panther project was to start with the existing Windows NT kernel and strip it down to run in 4MB of RAM. This project did not pan out, and it was cancelled outright. It was replaced with a Win32 kernel written from scratch with the 4MB limit in mind.

The Stimpy project survived intact and became the Windows 95 user interface.

I doubt the code name was the reason, but it's interesting that the ferocious cats did not carry out their original missions, but the dim-witted cat did.

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