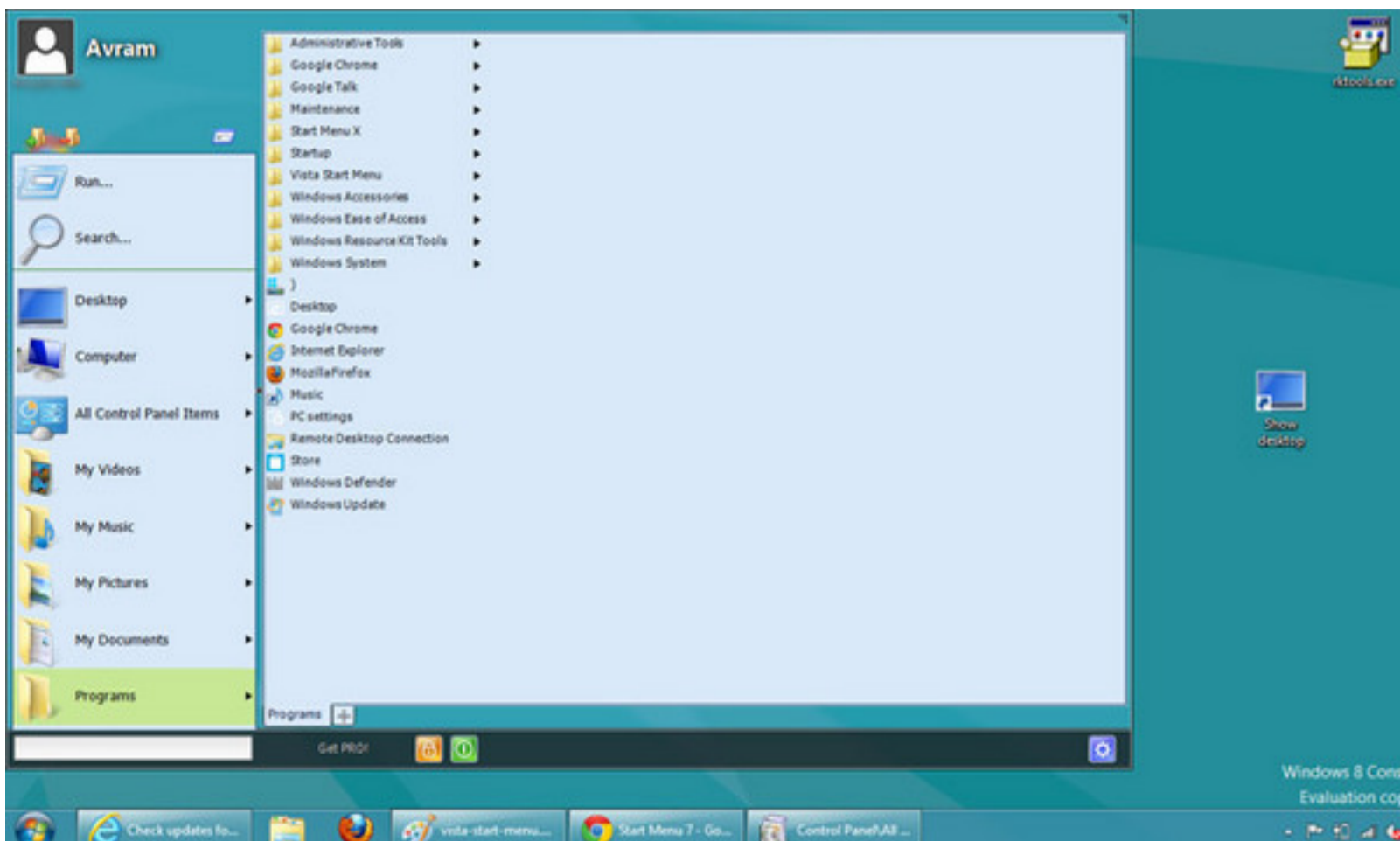


3 Ways to Bring Back the Start Menu in Windows 8



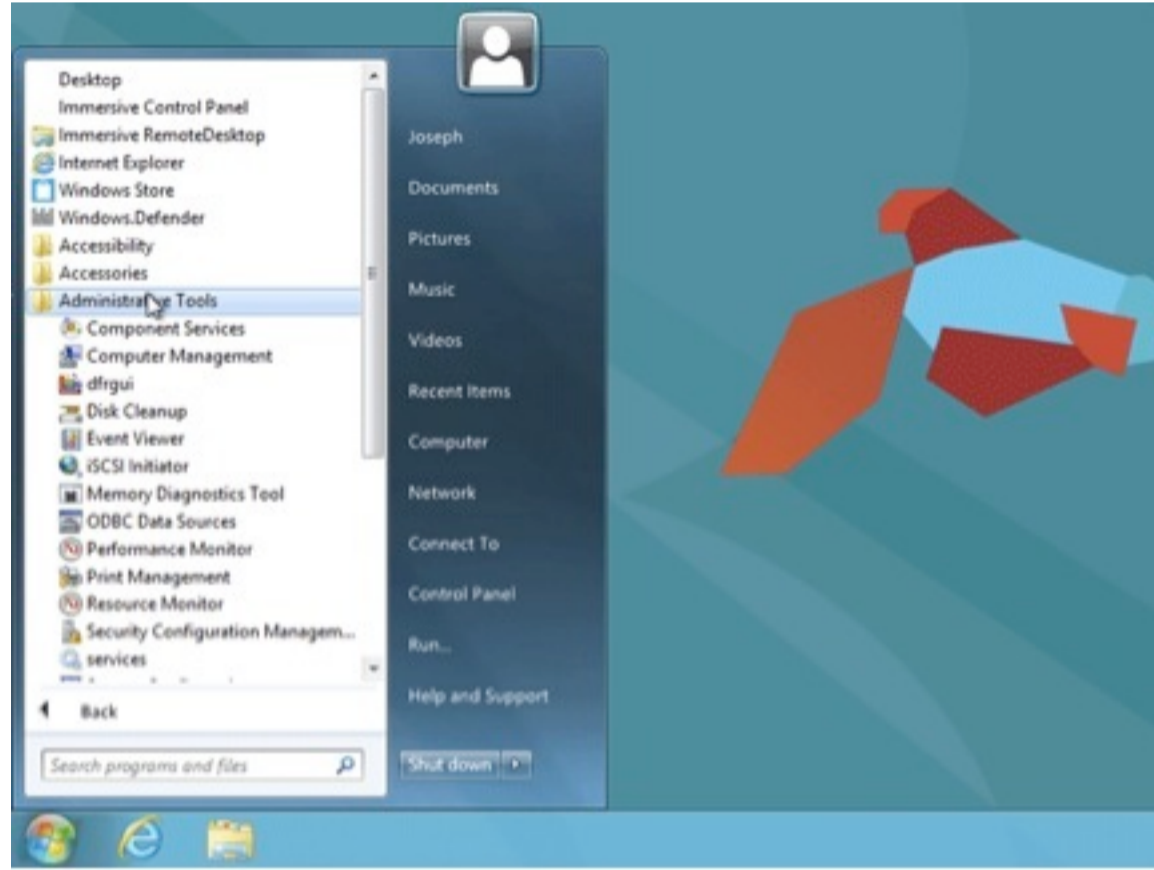
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With Microsoft's Windows 8 Consumer Preview, the world gets to try the new tablet-inspired Metro interface. But they are losing something — the Start menu. It debuted back in Windows 95, touted by Microsoft with the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up." For many of us hopelessly seeking the old Start menu in Windows 8, its theme song could be another Stones tune: "Miss You."

The Start menu was the place to begin most anything. It held a list of programs, shortcuts to documents, controls for tweaking Windows and even the Shut Down button. In Windows 8, those functions are scattered about. Instead of retraining yourself all at once, why not ease into Windows 8 by putting the Start menu back? Microsoft hasn't provided a way to do that, but others have.

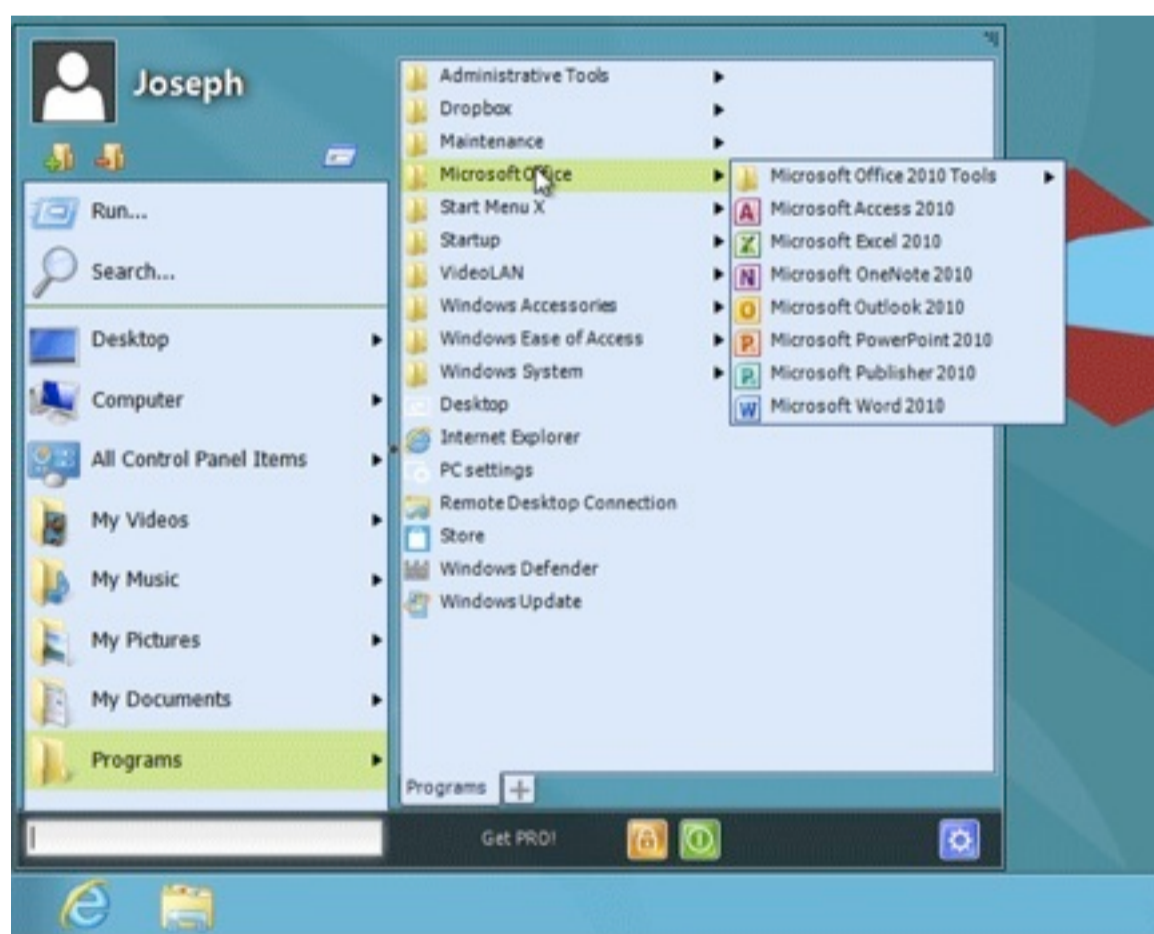
1. ViStart

Available through Lee-Soft, **ViStart** most closely replicates the Start menu as it existed in Windows Vista, and through add-on themes, it can also take on the color scheme of Windows 7. The menu looks and functions almost identically to what you're already used to, and it installs fine in Windows 8, pushing over your other toolbar icons to make room for itself. On the downside, it also installs two other apps. RegClean is installed in the background with no notification, and you are asked if you'd like the Babylon toolbar for the Internet Explorer browser. Thankfully, you can deselect Babylon during the install, and you can uninstall RegClean the way you would any other app.



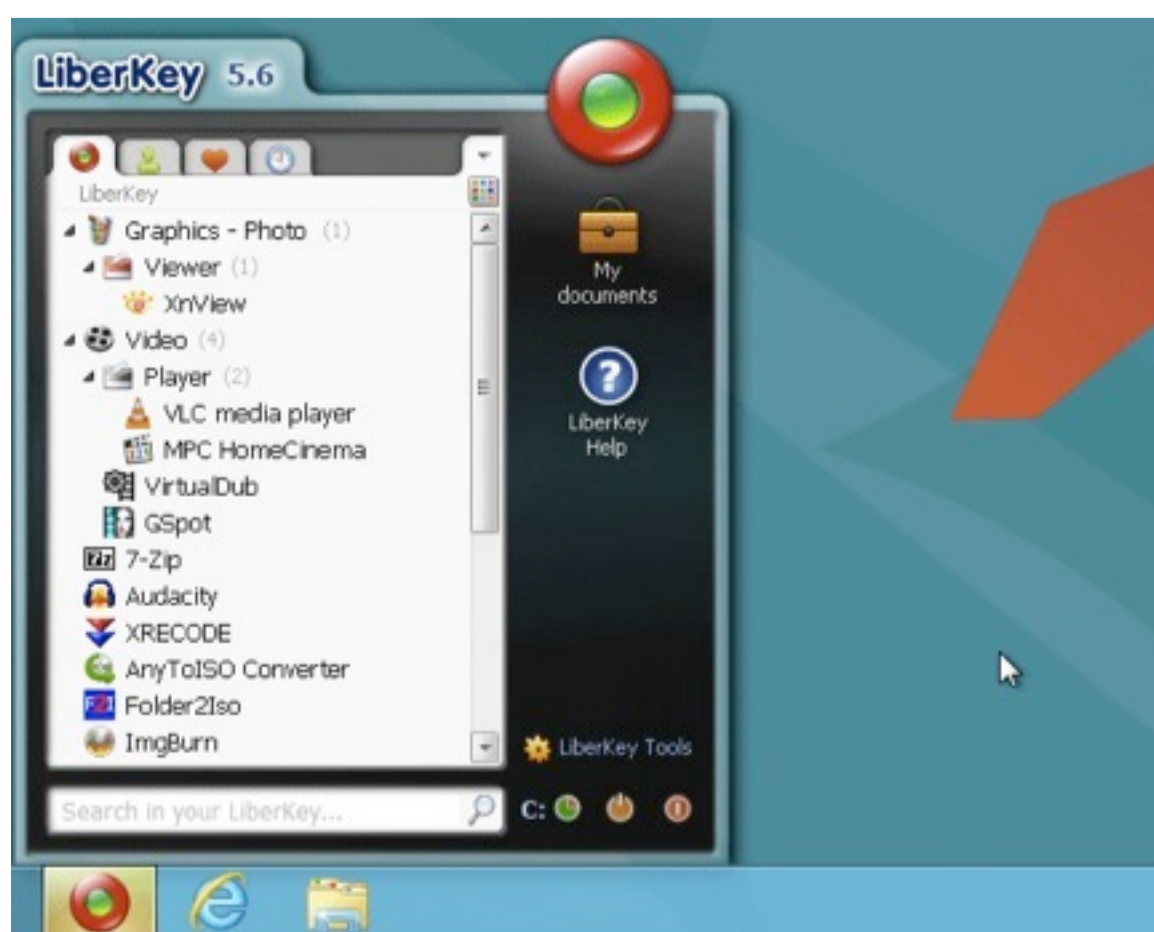
2. Start Menu 7

Start Menu 7 was supposed to be a flexible Start menu replacement for Windows 7. But it can also be installed on Windows 8. The menu itself behaves much like the normal Start menu, but is more configurable, and it can sort items alphabetically. A paid upgrade (\$20) adds tabbed menus and one-click app launching. Though the menu itself is very similar to the Start menu, this program resides in the task bar, so you need to click in the lower-right corner of the screen to launch it. So this option won't fix your obsession with the lower-left corner of the screen.



3. LiberKey

LiberKey is a menu system originally intended for applications that run from a portable flash drive instead of the built-in hard drive. But you can customize it to link to normally installed apps like Microsoft Office, as well as to folders and even Web pages. Though it doesn't give you a Start menu like the classic "orb" in the left corner, you can pin its red circular shortcut to the taskbar and move it to the left-most position. When you open the menu, you can position it anywhere on the screen, so dragging it to the lower-left corner will best replicate the look of the old Start menu.



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