



In The Cockpit

Zaxxon is just one of the very successful range of games that Atari has produced for its home computers. The player is the pilot of a jet fighter, in combat with other aircraft and pressing home a ground attack. The screen display becomes the aircraft's windscreen



Blue Max

A second dogfight game from Atari takes the player back to a rather different era. Blue Max, available on disk, cassette or cartridge, places you at the controls of a World War One biplane fighter. While it doesn't pretend to be a flight simulator, the game's main strength is in the quality of its graphics



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verification can be disabled with the command POKE 1913,80, giving a data transfer rate of 4.8 Kbytes per second. POKE 1913,87 restores verification.

The FORMAT DISK command formats a blank disk in a selected drive with 40 tracks, each divided into 18 sectors capable of storing 128 Kbytes of data apiece, with three bytes reserved for FMS use. DOS allocates eight sectors for the disk directory and one sector for the Volume Table of Contents (BAM equivalent) and reserves four sectors for DOS use, giving a total of 707 sectors x 125 bytes, or 88,375 bytes (about 86 Kbytes) available for storage.

The standard LOAD, SAVE and allied BASIC commands can be used to store data as program or data files by specifying disk as the storage device. Files can also be stored that can be read sequentially or randomly, one byte at a time. The directory and Volume Table of Contents are automatically updated as files are written or changed.

The 810 disk system was designed at least five years ago and though Atari DOS II has many powerful and unique features, the system is now outdated. The very low 86 Kbytes of disk capacity, the loss of a precious eight Kbytes of user memory and the high purchase price combine to make the 810 poor value for money. It is possible, however, that Atari will introduce a more modern equivalent at a competitive price to complement the increasingly popular Atari 600.

Atari Disk Commands

When manipulating files a standard file specification is generally used. This is:

COMMAND "DN:FILENAME.EXT"

where COMMAND is the DOS command; N is the drive number (1-4 optional on single drive); the FILENAME contains up to eight characters to identify the file (first must be alphabetic); and .EXT is the optional file extender (this can be used to indicate the type of data stored).

Where this file specification is required it is referred to as FSP. It is also possible to use 'wildcards' with some commands where '?' can be used to substitute for a single character and '*' can substitute for any number of valid characters after the '*'. To select an option on the DOS menu, type the appropriate letter and press (RETURN). In all cases FNM means D1:FILENAME.EXT.

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A. DISK DIRECTORY

(RETURN) displays a list of all file names contained on the disk in drive 1, the extender and number of sectors for each file.

B. RUN CARTRIDGE

This option returns control of the computer to the cartridge inserted, usually BASIC.

C. COPY FILE

This copies a file from one disk to another or to the same disk under a different name. For example:

D1:FILENAME.EXT, D2:FILENAME, EXT

copies FILENAME.EXT from drive 1 to drive 2. Similarly:

D1:FILENAME.EXT, D1:FILENAME.BAK

makes a back-up copy of a file on the same disk. The file name must be different in some manner and in this case the extender is changed.

D. DELETE FILE(S)

FNM (RETURN) deletes a specified file or files. If all files are to be deleted use '*' instead of file name and extender.

E. RENAME FILE

This renames a specified file and updates the directory. For example:

D1:OLDNAME, NEWNAME

Wildcards can be used to change the extenders of a group of files.

F. LOCK FILE

FNM (RETURN) software-protects a file from being amended or deleted unless the disk is re-formatted. Files thus protected are preceded by '*' on a displayed directory.

G. UNLOCK FILE

FNM (RETURN) unlocks the specified file or all relevant file names if used with wildcards.

H. WRITE DOS FILES

Follow the instructions displayed to save DOS to a formatted disk.