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BUSINESS COMPUTING

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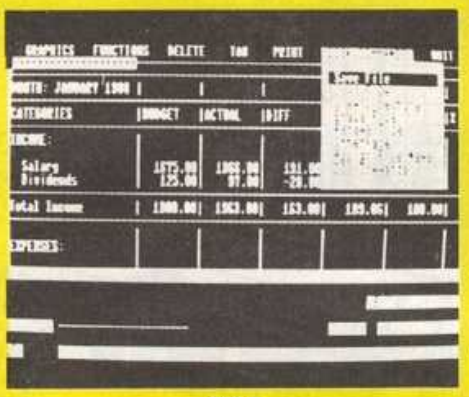


XV
Making room for a ROM Interword's advanced facilities for the BBC

Business software, or "serious" software, is regarded by many micro owners as the only valid reason for owning a computer – just as some will only be interested by games software.

However, there isn't such a sharp distinction in the marketing of most machines; they are sold into both areas, and most would claim to serve as "business' machines to some extent, some more convincingly than others.

The Amstrad PCW series is perhaps the first affordable micro which is unequivocally designed for business use – so does this mean that the serious side of software has now come to dominate the whole industry?

Whether you are used to using IBMs in work, or more used to zapping aliens than programming spreadsheets, this supplement should help you to make more of the serious side of computing. ◄

The rank and file

TONY BRIDGE ON THE LATEST VERSION OF CAMPBELL SYSTEMS' POPULAR MASTERFILE DATABASE FOR THE AMSTRAD CPC 6128

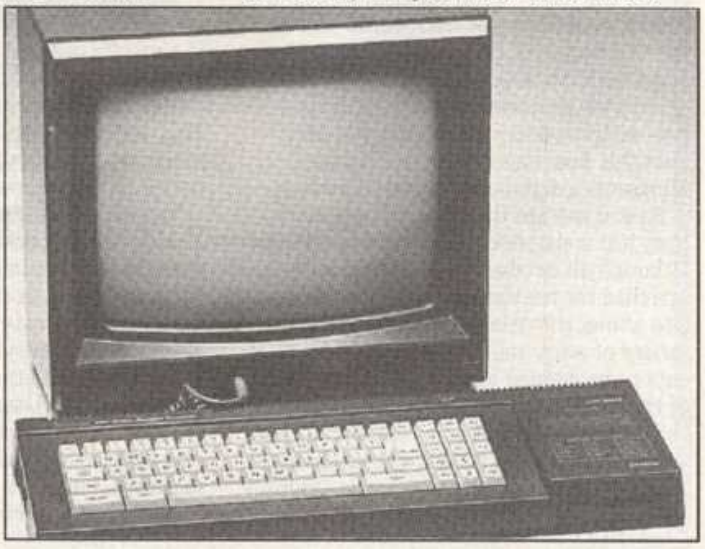
The most respected database system for the Sinclair machines was *Masterfile* from Campbell Systems: some three or four years later, it is still around and converted for the Amstrad PCW and CPC series. It's easy to see why this program is so popular; extremely well-programmed (it runs under AMSDOS, so there are none of the usual installation problems encountered with CP/M) and very robust, there seems to be nothing that Campbell Systems have not thought of in making the program as friendly as possible. Although the facilities within the program are impressive, one of the most endearing features of Campbell's programs is the constant updating, polishing and embellishment. Before we get to look at the latest version of *Masterfile*, however, let's take a quick trip round the basic program.

Layout

Many database programs have the failing that they offer fixed field lengths, limiting your screen layout options.

Masterfile approaches the screen layout design in a very flexible fashion: for a start, the length of each field is entirely flexible, so that you can type in data of any length (up to a maximum of 240 characters, which ought to cover *any* surname!). Not only that, but you don't have to design your screen until after all the data has been typed, if you wish, and not only that, but you may have many designs, each taking information from the same set of data.

To enter data, it is necessary to define at least one "data name"; this is the equivalent of a field and won't appear on the final display, being merely a signpost by which the program finds this particular field. Each name is given a one-character reference (for ease of use, normally letters of the alphabet, but most of the characters on the keyboard can be pressed into service), so that, in compiling your name and address file, you might use A for the first name, B for surnames and so on. Over 50 such names, or fields in more usual terms, may be used, but don't worry if you forget what they all stand for – a list of names and a short description can be displayed as an *aide-memoire*. So now, data can be entered and records added one by one to the main file. It's an easy matter to add new names at a later date, or simply to insert a unique name into just one record if desired – all of which would be extremely difficult if not impossible with most "card index" databases. Staying with our example of the address file, you may decide after entering 50 records, that you would rather like to



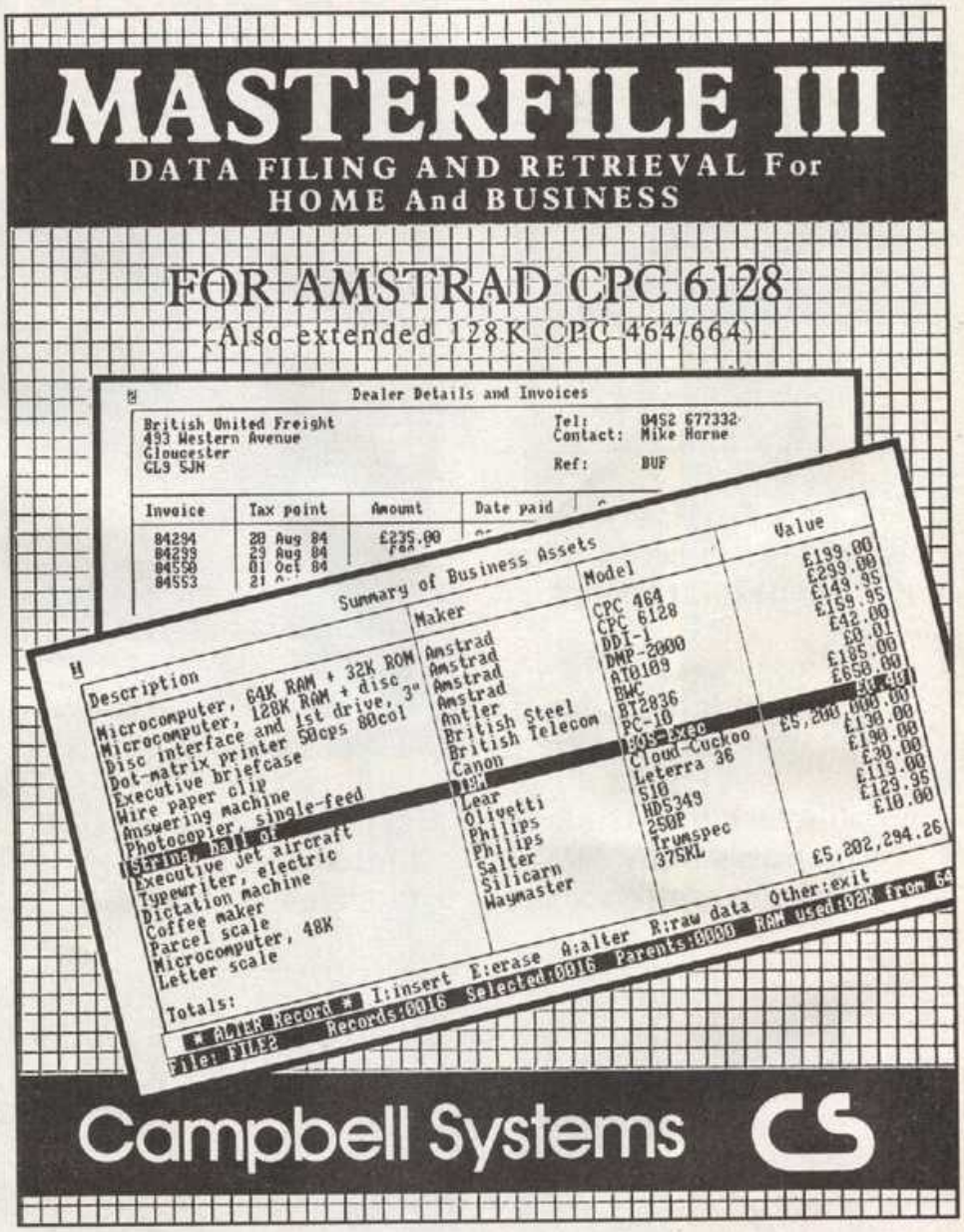
see details of birth dates. Simply insert a new "name" and carry on as before.

While entering data, you may use several special commands: for example, there's no need to stick to the usual conventions such as "Jones, Fred" and "Smith, Joe" for the entries to be sorted properly, by surname – *Masterfile* requires a backslash ("/") thus: "Fred/Jones". At display time, the backslash becomes a space, while the sorting process looks first at Jones. A shifted 0 (zero) will force a line-break on display: while this makes for a pleasant display, it fulfils a much more important purpose. Our "card index" database will require an address for example, to be spread over 4 or 5 fields, labelled "address 1", "address 2" and so on, eating up a lot of memory. *Masterfile* allows you to type "36, Damson Lane_Hungriton_Eton", which will appear as

36, Damson Lane
Hungriton
Eton

with optimum usage of memory.

As with every other aspect of this package, designing your screen layouts is made as easy as possible for you. The first thing to decide is where on the screen the various fields should appear; the heading assigned to each field of data is entirely up to you and can be changed at any time. Then lines can be drawn on the screen to make a more attractive layout; again, this can be altered at any time to reflect new headings. While designing the screen, you can flick back and forth between the display itself and the design format, making instant changes.



Relations

One of the most important facilities available (and certainly the most unusual at this price) is that of "relational data". To make a change from our address file, consider a file containing details of your music albums. If you're an avid fan of Oscar Peterson, *Masterfile* will save you all the trouble of typing in his name over and over again. Simply define "Oscar Peterson" as a Parent with all the titles of his albums, and titles contained therein if you wish, the Children of that Parent. Now, instead of typing the name in full for each disc (and of course, your favourite artist could well be the Old Etonians' Philharmonic Orchestra and Choral Society, which would *really* be a chore!), all you need do is type a simple two- or three-letter mnemonic. Not only does this save finger-wear, but it also represents a significant saving of memory.

So you can see that *Masterfile* is more than just a simple electronic filing cabinet although all databases allow the data to be searched for relevant information, *Masterfile* also allows the data to be *displayed* in a variety of ways, and allows complete sets of data to be merged together, making it one of the most flexible packages around.

Through its system of nested menus (and a very helpful Help menu), the program strives to be as friendly as possible, allowing for colours to be changed, printer controls to be sent, keys to be re-defined (so that searches, for example, can be initiated with one key press) as well as allowing the user to drop into Basic for customisation of the program. Further, data may be easily sent to *Protext* and *Tasword* for more sophisticated Word Processing, or to *ProMerge* for use in personalised letters and so on.

Although I've only used fairly frivolous (though quite legitimate) examples so far, it is perfectly possible to use *Masterfile* in a more serious context; indeed, numeric fields can be used in very complex computations. This, together with the almost unlimited range of screen designs, should prove very useful to the businessman.

Version III is a great improvement on an already superb package. There are several changes that are immediately apparent to the long-time user of *Masterfile*: menus have been prettied-up with 3-dimensional shadows, data entry and editing are both easier and more attractive than before, and file operations (Loading, Saving and so on) are very much faster than before. Several new options are available during the display sequence, including instant switching between reports, and the highlighting of target records.

Included on the disc along with several well-planned and illuminating example files are several utilities: using MATCH, you can transport one set of data from a file to another file with matching records so that a file containing names and addresses may be merged with a file of names and telephone numbers, resulting in a file containing names, numbers and addresses; probably the most impressive and useful utility is the Spectrum-to-Amstrad data transfer program. Now you Sinclair owners don't have any excuse not to update!

Manual

Finally, the ring-bound manual, which was vastly improved for *Masterfile* Version 2.*n*, is now even better, with key-by-key examples and plenty of useful pokes. Also on the disc you'll find instant updates to the manual, which can be printed and kept for future reference.

Although *Masterfile* is about to be released for the PCW series, I haven't seen it on that machine; but I can assure you that you may buy it sight unseen – if it is anything like the CPC Version III, you'll not want for anything else. ◄

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Get to work on time

NOW THE COMMODORE 128 HAS ITS OWN SUITE OF INTEGRATED BUSINESS PROGRAMS. TONY HARRISON-SMITH CHECKS OUT TIMEWORKS

Soon a new name will appear in the UK computer software market; **Timeworks**. This American company concentrates on "Productivity Software", and is now releasing UK versions of packages including **Word Writer 128, Swiftcalc 128,** and **Data Manager 128**. All the packages reviewed link with each other to give a fully integrated suite of programs, the first we've seen specifically for the C128.

The programs provided for review were US versions. The only real problem with this was the American dictionary with the Word Writer 128, and the American examples and spellings in the manuals. Timeworks say that in the UK versions, the manuals will be re-written to a more English style.

Monitor

Timeworks Swiftcalc 128 is a spreadsheet, and it requires an 80 column monitor to be used. Swiftcalc 128 has a grid of 256 rows by 256 columns and it will allow the usual values and labels to be stored in the cells. The maximum length of the formulae in a cell is 240 characters. This allows very complex formulae to be used. Unlike most programs, the formulae in Swiftcalc can be edited using the cursor keys to correct the area required without rewriting the whole lot. To make the entry of commands easy for the new or casual user, Swiftcalc 128 uses pull-down menus and has limited help screens.

The rows and columns can be frozen to act as title areas and also cells can be locked and unlocked to protect data from accidental erasure. Cell widths can be altered either over the whole spreadsheet or in just a block of columns, and can be adjusted to any size between 3 and 20 characters. Data in the spreadsheet can be copied, moved and sorted, as well as searched and replaced with other data. An unusual feature which is only usually found in the more expensive business packages is the ability to set a cell to a value and then have automatic incrementing of the value in successive cells. This can save a lot of time when creating lists of dates, values etc which have a standard increment between each value.

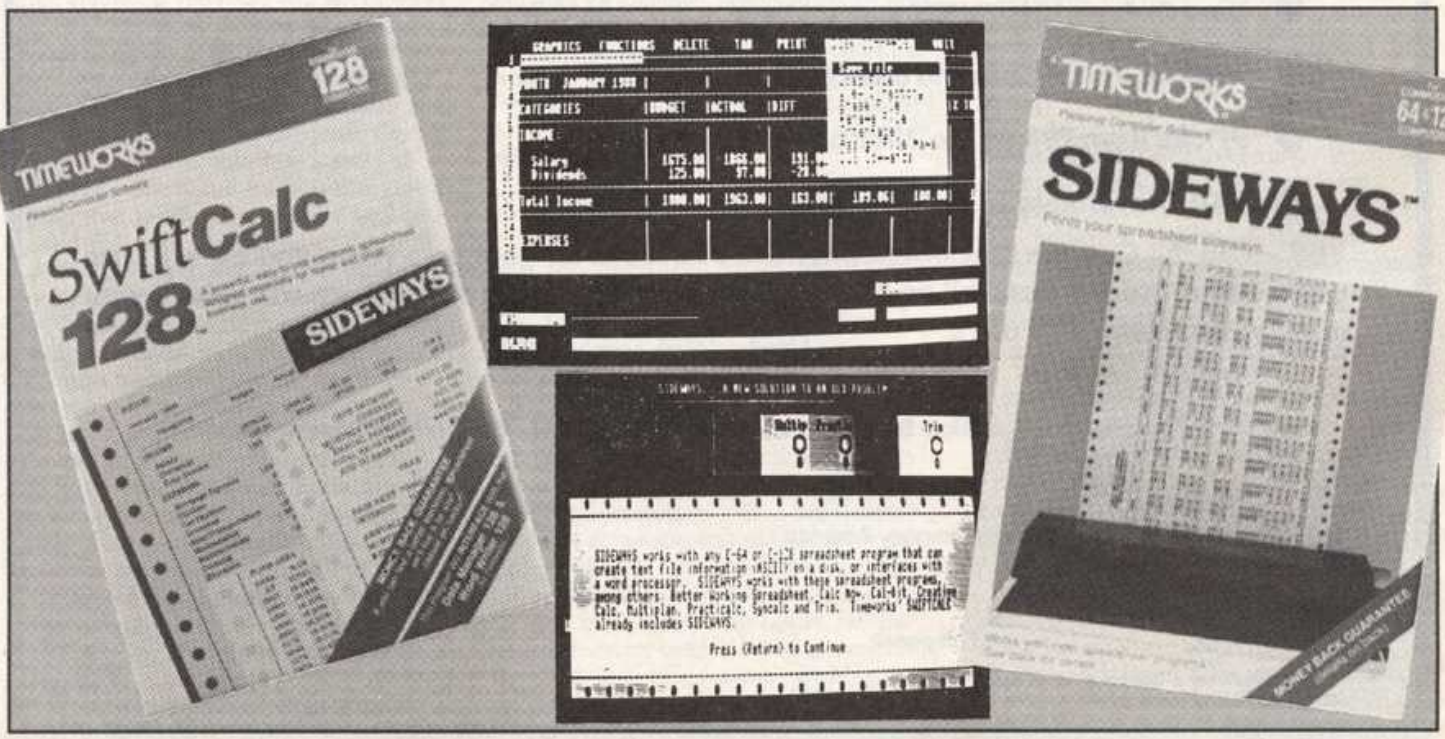
Swiftcalc 128 has many ways of displaying the spreadsheet data. The actual data can be printed out in the normal manner as with all the spreadsheets available. Swiftcalc 128 also allows the data to be printed **sideways** on a dot matrix printer. This allows a wide spreadsheet to be printed whole, rather than having to divide it into separate segments as normally happens. Swiftcalc also has the ability to represent the spreadsheet data in the form of graphs. The graphs available are bar chart, 3D bar chart, scatter chart, line graph, pie charts and exploded pie charts. The graphics can be dumped to a matrix printer but cannot be saved to disc. I have produced very impressive 3-D bar charts on a Commodore MPS-801.

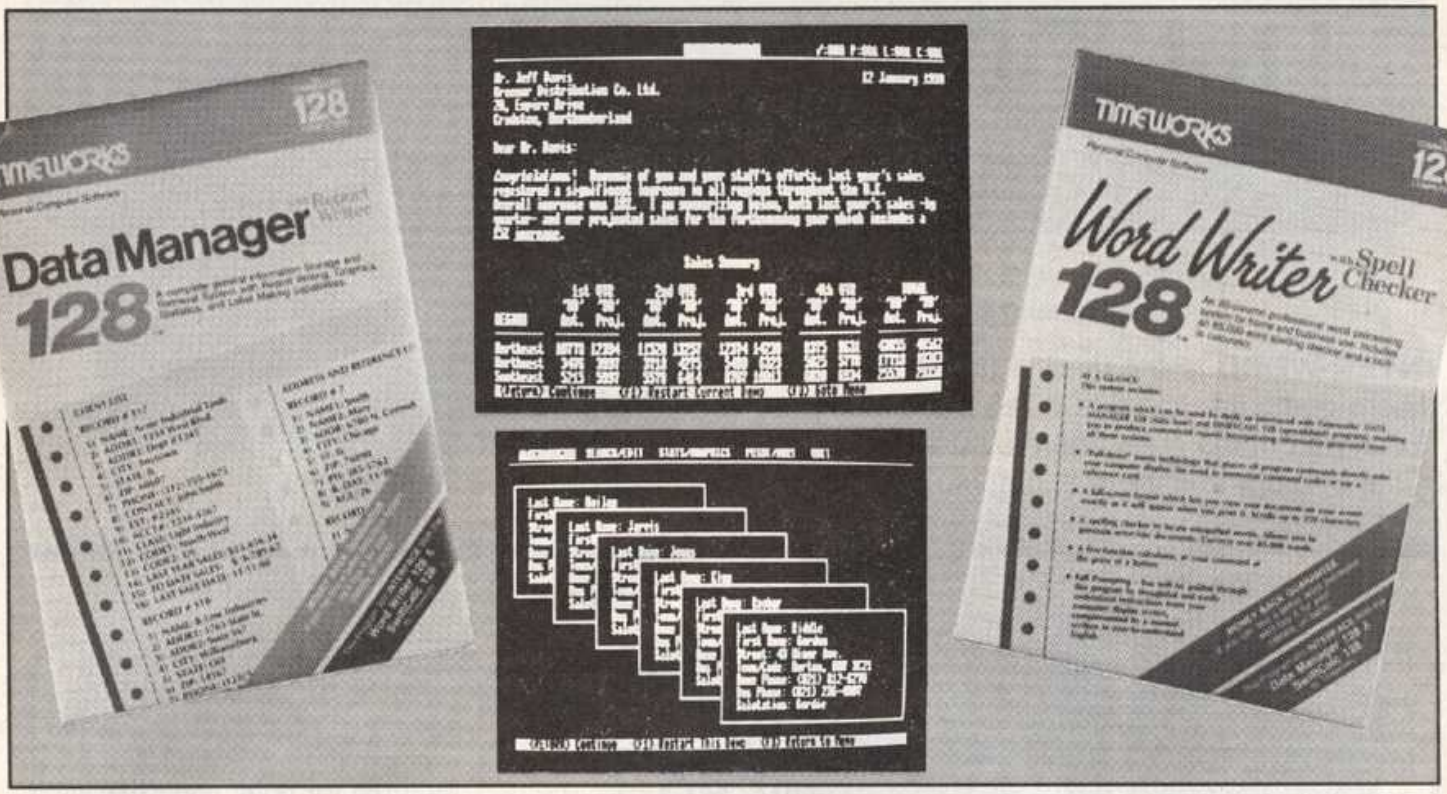
One of the main selling points of this package is the fact that it can be used as part of a integrated system. Swiftcalc 128 can receive data from the Data Manager 128 database as long as the data was saved into a file especially for use with Swiftcalc 128. This has the disadvantage that you cannot suddenly decide to extract data from the database. To get the information you have to load Data Manager 128, save the data you want into a file and then reload Swiftcalc 128. Areas of the spreadsheet can be saved as a special ASCII file for use with Word Writer 128. This will allow you to produce letters or documents with a table of values at the end of it.

Timeworks' Word Processor is called Word Writer 128. This is very easy to use, as it incorporates the same system of pull-down menus as all the other Timeworks packages. Unlike Data Manager 128 and Swiftcalc 128, Word Writer 128 will work in either 40 or 80 column modes. In 40 column mode several of the advanced features of this package cannot be used.

Insert

Like most good word processors Word Writer 128 will allow text to be moved around, copied to another area and new text inserted into the existing document. To allow for corrections a "search and replace" function is also included. Headers and footers can be set as well as up to 14 tab





positions. On startup there are 8 preset tabs in position, but these can be cleared and reset to your own requirements.

Word Writer has several advanced features built in. It is able to accept data and text from the two other packages in the suite, Data Manager and Swiftcalc. When editing a document up to three different fonts may be used, boldface, italics and underline. The difference with other word processors is that the different types of fonts can be viewed on the screen before printing. This gives a far better idea of what the finished document will look like, before wasting a lot of paper printing it out. There is a built in calculator which is very useful for doing calculations and entering the result into your document. (This can only be used in 80 column mode.) when writing a lot of text which uses indented paragraphs, an automatic indent function can be used. This really becomes useful when the words automatically wrap round at the end of a line. For the use of standard paragraphs or such like, word Writer 128 allows the merging of files into the main document.

Document

When it comes to printing out the document, several parameters may be set. These include justification, sheet feed, line spacing, number of copies, secondary address and top and bottom margins. The print option will also allow the printing of a standard letter with the names and addresses taken from a sequential file set up by either Word Writer 128 or Data Manager 128. for special printers, control character sequences can be set to utilise the printer's capabilities.

Data Manager 128 is a powerful database with many features, and like all the other packages reviewed, it uses pull-down menus. One of the main requirements for databases is security of data. To provide this there is a password system included in this package.

Records

This is not a totally secure way of protecting data, but it will stop the average user from accessing any data which they are not supposed to see.

Data Manager 128 allows records of up to 100 fields with a maximum field length of 251 characters. The total record length is 4096 characters, and can be split over more than one screen . . . There are several field types allowed including alphanumeric, numeric and date.

A unique feature of this package is that a record can be made to simulate a small spreadsheet with calculation from column to column and field to field. Data Manager 128 allows the use of statistical functions within a record format. The functions offered are sum, average and standard deviation.

Records can be retrieved by a number of ways. The first and quickest way is by record number. Unfortunately this is usually the last bit of information known! The other methods of retrieval are by Field contents, data range and amount range. With all these methods the upper and lower limits of the search range can be specified. Data manager 128 has also got an additional search feature: this is called cross searching (X-search). When using X-search, you can set your initial search parameters as normal and the list of records fitting these parameters will be created. X-search will then allow you to re-search only the records in the list just created for the next set of search parameters. This can be repeated several times, until the record required is found.

To make the database more logically ordered, there is a sort facility which will arrange the records in ascending or descending order of a given field in the record. This will improve the speed of any reports that access the database in a sequential order. The reporting of information from the database can be achieved in two ways. The first method is to use the built in report generator. This will allow a report to be compiled using selected fields from the records and print the data held in those fields. The second method of showing the data held is by using the graphics commands. This will give a coloured bar chart of values held in the records.

Value

In conclusion, for about £60 each these programs are reasonable value for money. The set of packages when used together are claimed to be particularly suitable for small business use; I think that this is a fair statement. It would be nice if there was also an accounts package for this suite, but that would just be the icing on the cake. The main feature that will really sell these packages to the small business is that there is a free technical help phone number that will answer any problems! ◄

Programs: Word Writer, Switcalc, Data Manager

Micro: CBM 128

Supplier:
Timeworks, PO Box 453, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 1ST Tel: 0628 74678

Price: £59.95 each

INTER-WORD

INTER-WORD is the third in the ROM-LINK series of application programs for the BBC Micro-computer and this is the most ambitious suite of programs to be written for this machine. Each part of the suite offers a superior alternative to the competition. As a complete integrated suite of programs there is nothing better available for any micro computer.

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•Built in support for different printers. There is no need for additional printer drivers, as the user can define the codes required for bold, underline etc. Once defined for a particular printer these codes can be saved for later use. Like WORDWISE, INTER-WORD also has the ability to send any control codes to the printer at any point in the line, thereby giving access to all its features.

•Powerful search and replace facilties include wildcards, and a case sensitivity control. There is also a quick 'go to' search option.

•Special attention has been paid to screen update speed, ensuring this is one of the fastest screen editors around. There is no waiting around for the text to reformat.

•If the page size is changed, or the margins are altered, all text is re-formatted to the new settings instantly.

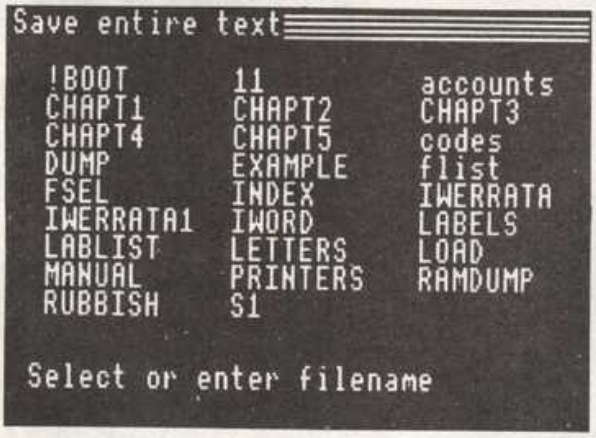
•Any specified part of text, page or range of pages may be printed (or spooled to disc) via simple to select menu options.

•Fully compatible with DFS, ADFS, ECONET and any other Acorn compatible filing systems.

The format of text in **INTER-WORD** is controlled by rulers rather than embedded commands. A ruler can be inserted at any point simply by pressing a single function key. This ruler will affect the format of all text after it. By simply dragging the margin or tab indicators on the ruler all text controlled by this ruler is instantly re-formatted to the new settings.

INTER-WORD supports documents much larger than memory. This special 'multi-file' mode is both simple to use and far superior to other forms of continuous processing. By linking a list of files together INTER-WORD is able to treat these as if they we just one long piece of text.

The multi-file menu allows the insertion and deletion of any file and the printing of the whole document.



A special file selector is used whenever a filename is requested. Instead of having to remember and type the required filename, INTER-WORD will display a list of all the filenames. The user simply has to move the highlight to the required one and press RETURN.

When text is saved, all the current options are saved with it, including cursor position, screen mode and colours, current page layout etc.

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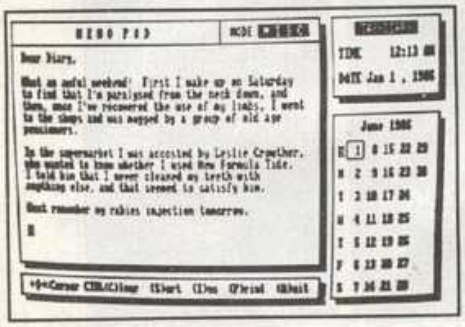
Amstrad leads the way

TONY KENDLE LOOKS AT THE LATEST AND BEST SOFTWARE FOR THE UBIQUITIOUS AMSTRAD PCW8256/8512

No prizes for guessing that this is an electronic diary program from the makers of the Tasword word processor. What did surprise me is that it is such an attractive and easy to use program that it overcame my conviction that pen and paper is really the only sensible option for a diary. Still in the long run it may prove to be something for true VDU freaks only.



The main screen layout consists of a window of diary text and four surrounding box displays showing the current options, the date and time and the calendar for the current month. This calendar is programmed correctly from 1753 (don't ask me why) up to December 2100 – long enough for the most ambitious of us I expect.

The diary is accessed from disc on a month by month basis and data can easily be inspected or edited into a given day as long as you have the appropriate password. You can also use a search option that incorporates wildcard characters to track down certain entries. Any displayed page can be printed out.

I do feel that more work could have been got out of the computer to justify the effort of loading up the disc. One idea for example is that you could record appointments with some sort of 'alarm status' so that when you log on the time and date a warning can be given of important events coming up that week.

However, on the whole it is an attractively designed and good value utility that should do well. ◄

Program *Tasdiary* **Micro** Any Amstrad CPC with discs **Price** £12.95 **Supplier** Tasman Software Ltd, Springfield House, Hyde Terrace, Leeds LS2 0LN.

Releasing a new word processor for the PCW machines is a bold move even when the program in question is very cheap and also successful on other machines. What features are there available with Tasword 8000 that would attract users away from the familiar Locoscript?

Firstly Tasword is a remarkably easy program to get to grips with – the help menus are so self evident and extensive and the options available so straight-forward that there is almost no need to refer to the manual at all.

This is not to suggest it is unsophisticated – indeed it is an improvement on the Taswords released to date, it is faster and has some welcome additions – you can embed markers in the text, for example, to help you move around quickly, merge files at the cursor position, and the find/replace is vastly improved.

The display is completely 'what you see is what you get' and you can use the arrow keys to get anywhere you like on the page to begin typing – just like a pen and paper. It's a small point but impossible on most word processors and a very friendly feature for beginners.

Locoscript has many excellent features – templates, embedded format rulers, multiple block storage, alternate header footers etc. – but Tasword can challenge these with a word count, four notepads for jotting reminders, an extensive scientific/foreign character set and two extra fancy fonts supplied for printing.

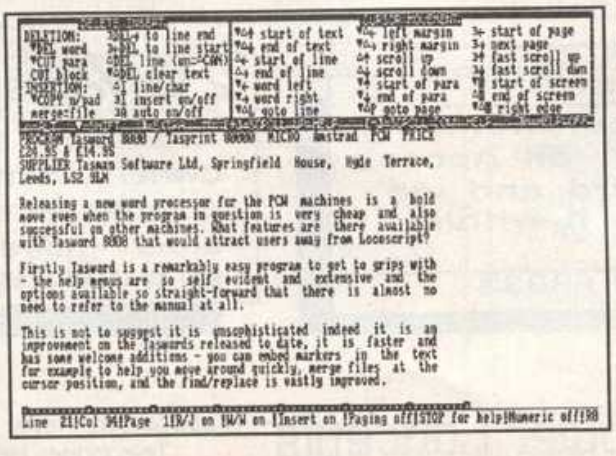
Tasword works with pure ASCII text which makes it suitable as an editor for program listings etc, and at least readable by almost any other utility available. It is also invaluable for editing and re-formatting any ASCII files you may have created by transferring data down a modem or between different utilities.

A quite sophisticated mail merge option is capable of making tests on the data supplied to decide what to print. The only feature this lacks is the ability to re-format the text prior to printing meaning that a ragged right edge is inevitable.

Perhaps its greatest strength is the fact that the Ram of the M drive is used by the program for directly storing the text as you type it. Very large files can thus be created, about 100K on the 8256 and over 300K on the 8512. Because text is held in RAM, moving around large files and making changes is very much faster than with Locoscript or any other word processor I know.

Tasprint 8000 supplies another six fonts that can be used with Tasword, directly with any ASCII files or via a sort of direct 'typewriter' option. ◄

Program *Tasword 8000/Tasprint 80000* **Micro** Amstrad PCW **Price** £24.95 & £14.95 **Supplier** Tasman Software Ltd, Springfield House, Hyde Terrace, Leeds LS2 0LN.



Regular readers will know that I have already given an enthusiastic review to Prospell in its CPC incarnation so I won't go on again at great length here. This version of Prospell has been written to run under the CP/M+ operating system which means that it will also work on the CPC 6128 but in truth it has really been designed with the PCW computer in mind because it is designed to work with files produced by the Locoscript word processor.

Prospell will handle ordinary Locoscript documents (not just page image files) in any group and to any length (if the file is very long and you are trying to

ATARI ST

Power Without The Price!

FREE SOFTWARE

When you buy one of the new Atari ST computers from Silica Shop, you will receive a large and varied software package free of charge. This package covers several applications and comprises a total of nine titles. All ST's now have TOS/GEM on ROM, and the total list of free software is as follows:

1) GEM - *DR Desktop environment with WIMP (in ROM)*
2) TOS - *Tramiel Operating System (in ROM)*
3) 1st WORD - *Word Processor by GST using the GEM environment and multiple windows*
4) BASIC - *Personal Basic by DR (with manual)*
5) LOGO - *Logo language by DR (with manual)*
6) DOODLE - *Simple paint/doodle drawing package (works on mono or colour systems)*
7) MEGAROIDS - *Asteroids type game by Megamax*
8) NEOCHROME - *A powerful colour paint and graphics package (only useable with colour systems)*
9) CP/M EMULATOR - *Allows the use of DR's Z80 C/PM software to run on any ST system*

3rd PARTY SUPPORT

The power and potential of the ST range of computers is causing a flood of new software titles, peripherals and accessories from third party manufacturers. Titles range from word processing to spreadsheet programs, from graphics and games to database management - all with those easy drop-down menus and windows. With the list of companies producing ST software including dozens of top names, you can expect some first class titles for the new ST range. The following includes a selection of the third party manufacturers who have developed, or are working on, products for the ST range:

ABACUS	EXTENDED S/W	MICRO-ED INC	ROBINSON SYS
ACADEMY	FIDELITY	MICROPRO	SCARBOROUGH
ACCOLADE	FIRST BYTE	MICROPROSE	SIERRA ON LINE
ACTIONSOFT	FIRST PUBNG	MICROPRO ENG	SM SOFTWARE
ACTIVISION	FLIP 'N' FILE	MIGRAPH INC	SOFTEK
ADVENTURE INT	GLENTOP PBNG	MILES COMP	SOFTLABS
ANTIC	GST SYSTEMS	MIRACLE	SOFTLOGIK
AMERICAN COVERS	HABA	MIRAGE	SOFTWARE COMS
ARTWORX	HAYDEN	MIRRORSOFT	SECS
ASHTON TATE	HIPPO	MONARCH DEV	SOFTWARE PUNCH
ATI	HISOFT	MOSAIC	SOFTWORKS
AUDIO LIGHT	INFOCOM	MULTIFORM	SORCIM/IRUS
AZTEC	INSIGHT	MULTIMATE	SPINNAKER
BATTERIES INC	INSOFT	OCEAN	SST SYSTEMS
BAYVIEW	ISLAND LOGIC	ODIN	STONEWARE
BECKEMEYER	KNOWLEDGWARE	OMNITREND	SUBLOGIC
BETTER WORKING	KUMA	OSS	SUNDATA SERVICES
BLUE CHIP	LASERSOFT	OTHER VALLEY	SUNSHINE BOOKS
BOS	LEHRNER	OXXI	SUPPLEMENTAL
CASHLINK	LEVEL 9	PAPERLOGIC	SYSTEMATICS
CHANG LABS	LIONHEART	PARADOX	TALENT
CHELTEK SYST	LLAMASOFT	PENGUIN	TDI
CHIPSOFT	LONGMINSTER	PHILON	TELARIUM
COMPUTE!	MAINTHINK CORP	PLANNER	TK COMPUTER PRO
CROSSBOW MUSIC	MAP COMPUTERS	PLANTIR	TOP EXPRESS
DATABENCH	MARK of UNICORN	PROGRESSIVE	TOWNGATE
DATACODE SYS	MARK WILLIAMS	PROSPERO	TYNESOFT
DATA SYSTEMS	MARTIN CONSU	PRYORITY	UNISON
DELTRON	McGRAW HILL	PSION	VIP
DILITHIUM PRESS	MEGAMAX	PSYGNOSIS	WASON MICROCHIP
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EXECON	MICRODEAL	RISING STAR	XLENT

520ST-M

NEW 512K 520ST-M KEYBOARD: The new 520ST-M keyboard costs only £346.96 (+VAT=£399) and is yet another price breakthrough for Atari Corporation. The keyboard now includes both an RF modulator and cable, allowing you to connect it to an ordinary domestic television set. In addition, the keyboard is supplied with 512K RAM, a mouse and a free set of 3½" disks containing applications software. The TOS operating system and the GEM graphics package are now supplied on 192K ROM chips which are already installed in the keyboard. This means that the operating system will automatically boot in when you switch the power on. In addition to the keyboard, you will also need to purchase either a ½Mbyte disk drive (RRP £130+VAT) or a 1Mbyte disk drive (RRP £174+VAT). Either disk drive will provide you with fast information retrieval and a vast amount of storage space. If you prefer not to use your own TV set, you may connect your ST to a monitor. You may purchase the Atari SM124 monochrome monitor (RRP £130+VAT), or one of Atari's two Thomson colour monitors. Alternatively, you may choose one of the many third party colour monitors which are available.

NEW 1024K 520ST-M+ KEYBOARD: In addition to the standard 520ST-M, we have a new keyboard which we are calling the Atari 520ST-M+. The M+ is a 520ST-M keyboard which has been enhanced by a third party RAM upgrade to 1 megabyte of memory. The 520ST-M+ is available from Silica at a retail price of only £433.91 (+VAT=£499). This product will provide you with an alternative to the 1040ST-F, but at a lower price. Additionally, it features the advantage of the 520ST-M's built in modulator.

£347

1040ST-F

For the businessman and the more serious home user, Atari have introduced the 1040ST-F, a low cost powerhouse which can be introduced to a business environment as a stand-alone system, or can support a mainframe computer as a terminal. The new one megabyte 1040ST-F enhances Atari's 'value for money' reputation in the marketplace as it is the first personal computer available with one megabyte of memory for less than £800. You can purchase the 1040ST-F as a monochrome or colour system. The price of the monochrome system is £799 (+VAT = £918.85), with the colour system at only £999 (+VAT = £1148.85). The new 1040ST-F not only features twice as much memory as the 520ST-M, but also includes a one megabyte double sided disk drive and mains transformer, both built into the console to give a compact and stylish unit with only one mains lead. The 1040ST-F is also supplied with a free software package. Unlike the 520ST-M, the 1040ST-F was manufactured solely with business use in mind and as such is supplied with a monitor. It does not include the RF modulator or lead. We now have stock of the 1040ST-F at all four branches of Silica Shop. Call into your nearest branch for a demonstration.

1-4 The Mews, Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 4DX
117 Orpington High Street, Orpington, Kent, BR6 0LG
Lion House (1st floor), 227 Tottenham Court Rd, London, W1
Selfridges (1st floor), Oxford Street, London, W1A 1AB

£799

THE ATARI EXPLOSION!

If you read the specialist computer press, you will have noticed that there is one company which is getting a large slice of editorial space at the moment, that company is Atari Corporation. Atari have been making the news since the launch of their new 16/32 bit range of ST computers. Led by the powerful figure of Jack Tramiel and under the banner 'Power Without The Price', Atari are manufacturing new computers at unheard of prices, with the power to challenge firmly established market leaders. With the introduction of IBM compatibility, a CP/M emulator, a powerful networking system and a communications package for their new low cost powerhouses, it doesn't look as if it will be long before there is an explosion of the magnitude which will see Atari placed firmly besides such names as IBM and Olivetti in the personal computer marketplace. Read on for more details of what Atari are doing, and how they are putting their 'Power Without The Price' computers beyond the reach of the competition.

FREE CP/M EMULATOR

This newly annouced CP/M Emulation Package, will enable software written under Digital Research's Z80 CP/M operating system to be run on the ST family of computers. There are several thousand applications written for CP/M in the UK alone, and several of the major CP/M software development houses may convert their programs to 3½" disk format for the ST range. The CP/M emulation package is supplied FREE OF CHARGE by Silica Shop with all ST computers.

IBM COMPATIBILITY

To make the ST available to those businesses who currently run IBM systems and are looking for a low cost expansion method, Atari have announced a co-processing unit for ST computers. This processor will open the ST range to all IBM or IBM compatible software applications. The unit, which attaches to the ST computers via the DMA (Direct Memory Access) port, contains an Intel 8088 processor with 512K of RAM and will accept a 5¼" disk drive. In it's ST mode, the unit will also act as a second disk drive, offering the user an additional 500K of memory. The IBM co-processing unit should be available in late Summer 1986. If you would like to be informed when it is released, please complete and return the coupon below. We will send you further details as soon as we have them.

20Mbyte HARD DISK £739

The new Atari hard disk for the ST range has just been released. All ST computers already have a hard disk interface built into them so there is no external interface required. The memory size of the disk is a massive 20 megabytes (unformatted) with a data transfer rate of 1.33 Mbytes per second. At a price of £739 (+VAT=£849), the 5¼" hard disk offers massive storage with fast access at a very reasonable price.

NEW ST SOFTWARE PACKAGES

There are now hundreds of software packages which have been announced for the Atari ST range. Titles available now include DB Man, a DBase 3 clone as well as H & D Base, a DBase 2 clone. In addition, PC Intercomm is a VT100 emulator which enables you to use any ST keyboard as a terminal connected to a mainframe or mini. Other programs include a Lotus 1-2-3 clone (see paragraph below).

VIP PROFESSIONAL - LOTUS 1-2-3™ CLONE

This is probably the most impressive program to have been released so far for the ST range. VIP Professional is an extremely easy to use, integrated spreadsheet, database and graphics program which is identical both in features and commands to Lotus 1-2-3™. The same spreadsheet analysis, information management and extraordinary business graphics are all combined in one easy to learn, affordable package. What's more, VIP Professional not only has all the features of 1-2-3™, you can also type the same commands to do the same things. Probably the most surprising feature of VIP Professional is not its total compatibility with Lotus 1-2-3™, nor its ease of use, but its price. Lotus 1-2-3™ for the IBM PC/AT costs £395 (+VAT=£454.25), whereas VIP Professional for the ST is a mere £169 (+VAT=£194.35). That's less than half the price! If you would like further details of VIP Professional, please return the coupon below.

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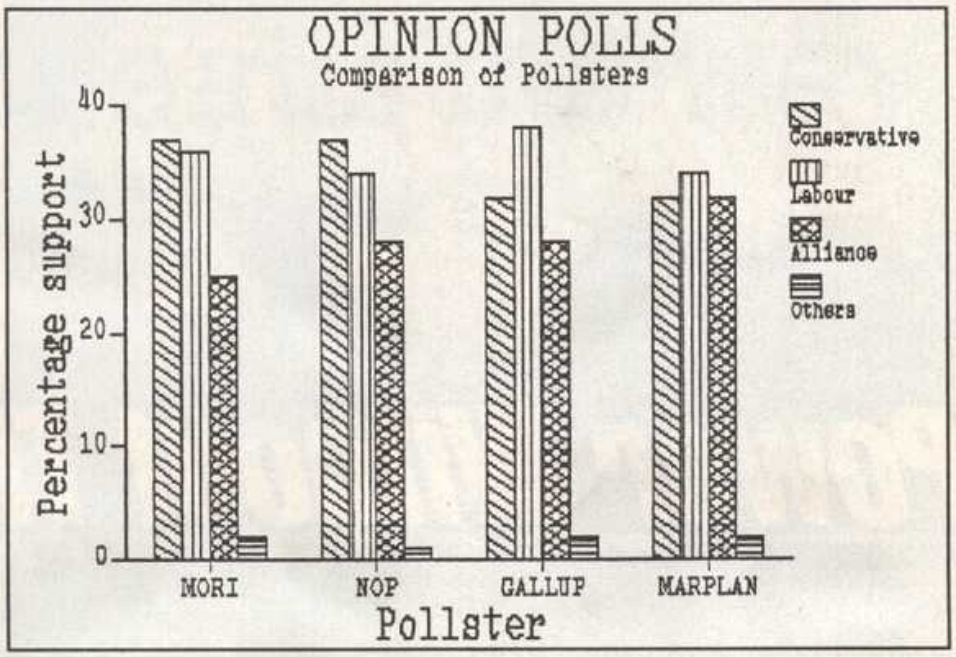


run everything in one drive you may have to change discs a couple of times – but then long files are a nightmare to create with Locoscript anyway so you may not have these problems).

As well as Locoscript documents Prospell will also handle Wordstar/Newword format and ASCII text (e.g. Tasword 8000 or any plain CP/M text editor) and it is very fast.

Unrecognised words can be changed, viewed in context, ignored or you can even ask Prospell to attempt to find the words in the dictionary that you have been trying to spell in the first place.

The correct spelling of words can found using wildcards for letters you are unsure of (also useful for crosswords), there is an anagram finder and also options for editing the dictionary, adding new words etc. Different dictionaries can be created e.g. for different technical subjects.

Prospell can not correct mis-spelt words that happen to form something else that is elgal, e.g. Oxen and Oxon, but even the most diligent proof readers miss things – especially if you are 'convinced' you know the correct spelling. I've found it an absolutely invaluable aid so far and I'm sure it will be a boon to many Locoscript users. ◄

Program *Prospell* **Micro** Any Amstrad **Price** £29.95 **Supplier** Arnor Limited, The Studio, Ledbury Place, Croyden.

As its colourful name may suggest The Cracker is no ordinary spreadsheet, it is one of those rare breed of programs that have been subjected to a major rethink about how they should be made to work to suit the average user.

If you are looking for a spreadsheet that can just do lots and lots of number crunching The Cracker is probably not the most powerful program you can buy: it is certainly more limited in size than say Multiplan, giving you a maximum of 52 columns, 255 lines and 18K of data. However this is probably adequate for something like twelve month financial reports and the program also has a selection of powerful features that in my opinion make it one of the best buys around.

Perhaps the most notable feature is that it is extraordinarily friendly and easy to use. Every command you type, using a single letter keyword mnemonic system, is checked as it is entered to see that it is both legal and makes sense in terms of the sheet you have defined so far. If an error is found an explanatory message is displayed on screen (in English rather than the normal CP/M garble). If that still isn't enough help screens can be called up at any time.

The Cracker also keeps track of the logic of the sheet you have defined – it gives each entry a rating for order of re-calculation to ensure that only after any changes only one calculation is necessary to ensure a correct result. It may sound an obscure point until you have tried using a program that doesn't have this feature. Similarly you cannot remove data if a calculation somewhere else in the sheet depends on it to make sense, at least not without first confirming that this is really what you wanted to do.

Other strong features are some nice graph drawing functions (high quality screen display and also hard copy) which are extremely simple to use, much easier than DR Graph for example (although The Cracker can also feed data directly to this program as well). Database functions will let you sort and search things like names and addresses and even print mail labels.

There are also I/O port controlling options – build a loop containing inbuilt date and time options and it can control your lights whilst you go on holiday.

An ordinary spreadsheet it isn't, versatile and friendly it is. ◄

Program *The Cracker II* **Micro** Any Amstrad CP/M+ **Price** £49.00 **Supplier** Newstar, 200 North Service Road, Brentwood, Essex.

Colleen's Payroll System was originally intended to see the light of day as "Amsoft Paymaster", but Colleen has now taken the decision to market the software under its own name, and seems to be offering a remarkable bargain.

The payroll system is intended for small and medium sized companies. It can handle records for up to 500 employees in up to 10 departments.

The Payroll System is fully protected by a password routine, and includes a help file which can be accessed before you plunge into the main program.

The program is set up by entering the start date, then details of the company, tax district, numbers and names of departments, details of employees and so on. New departments or employees can be inserted at any time – and also deleted.

Payments can be calculated on a weekly or monthly basis, and the program takes into account complexities such as Statutory Sick Pay, holiday pay, P45s and so on. The Colleen Payroll System comes with a substantial 60-page manual and is also available in a version tailored for Southern Ireland. At the price – £29.95 – it appears to represent remarkable value for money, and should fulfil all the technical and legal functions required of any payroll package. ◄

Program Payroll System **Micro** Amstrad PCW **Price** £29.95 **Supplier** Colleen, 18 Bishop Street, Penygraig, Tonypandy, Mid Glamorgan, 0443 435709

An excellent example of a program written for a vertical market, Supernews from Bubblebus fulfils a very specific purpose, yet has a large enough potential audience to keep the price down to acceptable limits.

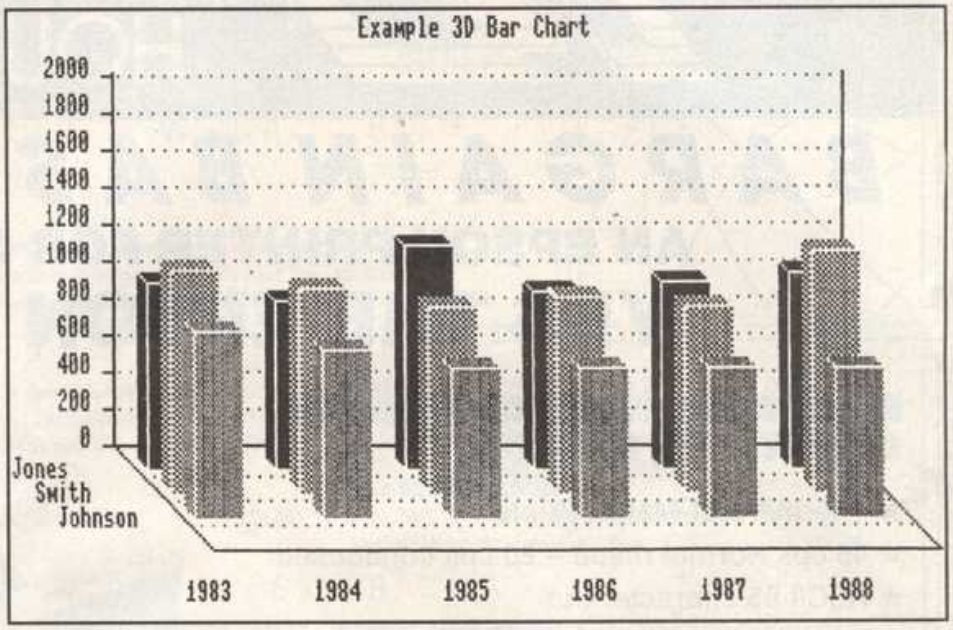
As its name implies, the program deals with administration for newsagents, and can save hours of work every day by automating the process of compiling delivery lists and handling customer accounts.

Supernews has been updated and adapted from versions for CBM and Einstein machines, and the PCW version includes many improvements suggested by users of earlier versions. For a start, it's designed to be used by computer-naive newsagents; the RETURN key is used to select options, rather than making the user direct a cursor around the screen to select options.

There are two major file structures; for customers and for publications. The customers' list is divided into rounds, and includes details for name and address, holiday "stops", substitutions in the case of publication being unavailable, charge rates for delivery, state of credit and, of course, all the daily, weekly or monthly publications ordered.

Up to 400 publications can be listed by number, with full details of supplier, retail cost, wholesale price, number of copies required, and so on. The newsagent has an option to print out the wholesaler's order each day, and can also use the rounds list to calculate whether the cost of paying delivery boys is being covered by the delivery charges – something which is often too complicated to calculate by hand.

Supernews includes many options which would not occur to the uninitiated user, but which makes all the difference to the newsagent; order requirements for future weeks, special routines to cope with time-specific weeklies like the Radio Times, reminders of overdue accounts, a sale option to put small purchases from the shop onto a customer's account, special accounts for such things as Christmas clubs, and so on. At £190+VAT, the program might sound expensive by home computer standards; but to the overburdened newsagent, whose only alternative in the past has been to invest in an expensive system such as Apricot or Tandy, the PCW micro and Supernews makes an economical combination.



Bubblebus hopes to produce more similar programs for vertical markets such as hotels, garages, video shops and so on. With the increased penetration of the PCW, the market for such vertical programs is growing as never before. ◄

Program Supernews **Micro** Amstrad PCW **Price** £190+VAT **Supplier** Bubblebus, 87 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1RX, 0732 355962

```
ROUND  1 WED   25/06/86
-----------------------------------------

12 HIGH STREET          1 SUN
                        1 GARDEN WEEKLY
-----------------------------------------
18 HIGH STREET          1 SUN
                        1 THE TIMES
                        1 TELEGRAPH
-----------------------------------------
THE GEORGE HOTEL        3 SUN
                        3 THE TIMES
                        1 TELEGRAPH
-----------------------------------------

TOTALS FOR 3  CUSTOMERS
 5      SUN
 4      THE TIMES
 2      TELEGRAPH
 1      GARDEN WEEKLY
-----------------------------------------



ROUND  2 WED   25/06/86
-----------------------------------------

1 LOWER ROAD            1 SUN
-----------------------------------------
149, Maney Hill Road    1 TELEGRAPH
-----------------------------------------
160 Maney Hill Road     1 SUN
-----------------------------------------

TOTALS FOR 3  CUSTOMERS
 2      SUN
 1      TELEGRAPH
```

Compact Software's extensive range of IBM PC programs are now to be made available for the Amstrad PCW machines.

Distributors such as Rowtall Computers will be selling the Compact Accounts package at £199.99. Compact Accounts includes sales ledger, invoicing, purchase and nominal ledger routines, and can transfer data to popular packages such as Supercalc, Multiplan, Wordstar, Newword and Cracker.

Compact accounts claims to contain everything necessary to run a small to medium sized business, maintaining records of all customers, transactions, invoices, statements and debts. The separate modules are available individually at £69.99 each.

Also available are Day Book, Stock Control, Payroll, and "Nucleus" program interfacing packages. At around a third of the price of identical IBM programs, the Compact range is backed up by training courses from West Midlands dealers Rowtall Computing. ◄

Compact Software Ltd, 1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH14 1QX, 0306 887373.

Rowtall Computing Ltd, Belsize House, 1A Caldmore Road, Walsall, WS1 3LX, 0922 615411.

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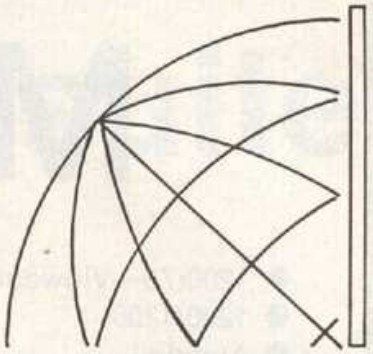

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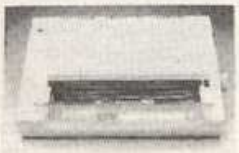
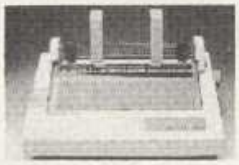


▶ **LTR1 Printer.** Letter quality printer for only £119.95



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Four ROMS en suite

Successor to WordWise, InterWord offers BBC users integration and a host of new features, as Cy Noble finds out

Here is yet another word processor (WP) from Computer Concepts, whose **Worldwise** is probably the most widely used WP for the BBC computer. Their second was **Worldwise Plus**, which is a souped up version of the original, and very good it is too. Now comes Inter-Word, and you may be wondering why.

The answer is that Computer Concepts has a suite of Inter-roms which can all use the same data sets and do much more than a straight WP can. Others in the suite are **Inter-Sheet** (a spreadsheet), **Inter-Chart** (does graphs and pie-charts) and, in the pipeline is a database, **Inter-base**. There is also a spelling checker which works with all their roms.

Computer Concepts' ideal is that you can produce business reports incorporating tabulated figures from the spreadsheet, illustrated with graphs and pie charts produced by Inter-Chart using the figures from the spreadsheet, and text from the WP. All of it in one integrated document because any rom in the suite can use commands processed by any other rom in the suite.

Brevity

At this point I must say that the manual is very cursory: not friendly enough. It confuses me in parts and I'm a fairly experienced programmer. The information is all there but brevity seems to be the order of the day. I could not get some commands to work and that is probably the fault of the manual. Also, 'Wordwise' seems to be unhappy about having Inter-Word in the same computer. I lost the first copy of this review, using 'Wordwise' to write it, with Inter-Word still aboard.

In order to integrate the program with the other roms in the series, it is not possible to load 'Wordwise' text directly into Inter-Word. So if you already have either of the previous word processors from Computer Concepts,then you will need to use a small Basic program, printed in the manual, to prepare a new version. This strips all the embedded control codes from the text so you will then have to go through the text again replacing them with the Inter-Word equivalents. If Computer Concepts wants Wordwise users to upgrade to Inter-Word then they should think about supplying a proper conversion program which will replace the Wordwise control codes with Inter-Word ones.

This sort of thing uses lots of memory, which the standard Beeb is not too well endowed with, so they recommend a shadow ram board if you intend to produce large documents. However, there is a multi-file option whereby a document can be split among a related set of files and the WP will shuffle them back and forth automatically as you edit. Nevertheless you are warned to keep an eye on how much memory each individual file uses and always leave plenty of leeway for additions. As these files can be on more than one disc there is no theoretical limit on the size of a document.

What you see is what you get, and in this respect Inter-Word is hard to fault. The screen even shows underlining and bold text where these options are selected. No printer control codes are shown in the screen text, and what you see on screen is how it will look on paper. The character 'under' which a control code sequence is hidden will be shown reversed, ie black on white rather than white on black as normal.

An interesting point is the choice of 40, 53, 80 and 106 columns of text with 25 or 32 lines of text on screen. With a good monitor and a magnifying glass 106 cols is useable if you are addicted to eyestrain. Better to use a lesser width and select the number of columns you want to use when you're ready to print.

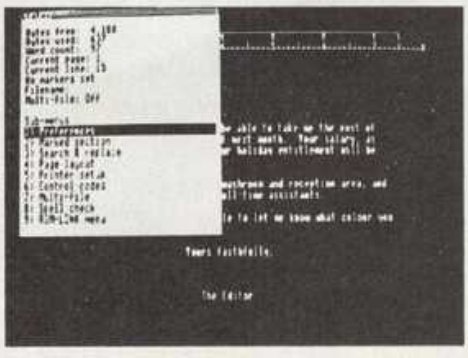
Tabs and margins are set using the cursor keys to 'pick and drag' symbols on a 'ruler' at the top of the text. This 'ruler' is effective down to the next ruler which you can insert and manipulate where required. Up to sixty 'rulers' can be used to manipulate the text to your satisfaction. This feature is a joy to use.

Windows

You can select the 'ink and paper' colours for your own comfort and switch the interface on or off from within the program, and these are really useful if you spend long hours slaving over a hot computer. If the width of your page is wider than the screen width selected, then you get a sideways scroll until you get to the edge of the page and automatic word wrap takes you on to the next line.

Everything is menu driven using that flavour of the year, pull down menus in windows, where the cursor is used to highlight the option you wish to select. With the multiplicity of menus it is sometimes difficult to remember which one offers the option you want. Some of the commonly used ones are duplicated on the function keys. This approach is fine for the beginner, but gets a little tiresome when you have to wade through menus within menus to reach a simple option.

Inter-Word is certainly an advance on most other WP packages, but I would argue that simplicity can be a virtue. ◀



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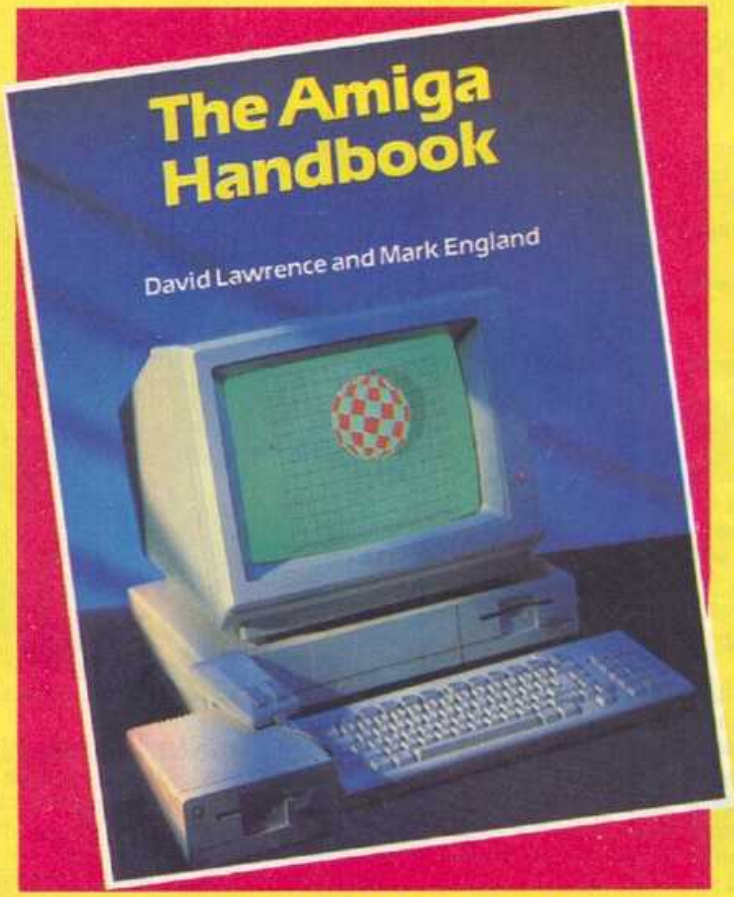

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