



# IMPERSONATOR

FOR ALL ATARI COMPUTER SYSTEMS



# **THE IMPERSONATOR**

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## THE IMPERSONATOR

The Impersonator is a system of hardware and software that together will let you make back-up copies of your Atari computer cartridges. Special software (on the disk) allows you to read a program from a cartridge and save it on a disk. This saved file will work just like the original cartridge when it is used with the Dummy Cart (The cartridge-like board included in the package).

THIS IMPERSONATOR PACKAGE CONTAINS;

- 1) This manual
- 2) The Dummy Cart - The cartridge like circuit board
- 3) The Impersonator disk  
Containing 3 programs
  - Cartridge saver - saves a cartridge to disk
  - Automenu - automatically displays the files on a disk and allows you to select the one you want to run
  - Scan Converter - allows you to run cartridges saved with Scanalyzer (another Alpha Systems product)

### WHAT IS THE DUMMY CART?

The Dummy cart is the small plastic coated circuit board that comes with the Impersonator package. It is this device that allows you to bypass the copy protection on a cartridge.

About 90% of Atari cartridges are copy protected. This means that the programs on the cartridge will not run properly if saved to disk. The programs check to see if the cartridge is installed before running. This is where the Dummy Cart comes in. The Dummy Cart is inserted into the cartridge slot of your computer, after a file (containing the cartridge data) is loaded. This tricks the program into thinking that it is on the original cartridge and not just a copy on a disk. In other words, the disk file will run exactly like the original cartridge did, when used with the Dummy Cart.



## BACKING UP CARTRIDGES

Using the Impersonator is really quite simple, once you've done it a few times.

The first step is to use the Cartridge Save program to save the cartridge (you wish to back up) to disk. This turns the cartridge into a standard disk file. Once the cartridge program is stored on disk you can put the original cartridge away for safekeeping and use the disk cartridge file for everything.

To run the cartridge file you load it into your computer using the AUTOMENU program (or a normal binary load from DOS), then insert the Dummy Cart. About a second later you will see the familiar cartridge program running perfectly on your screen. Below is a detailed explanation of each step.

### NOTE TO XL AND XE OWNERS

Many cartridges require the Atari Translator to run correctly. Loading a cartridge does not require the Translator disk in most cases, but some cartridges will not run correctly unless the Translator is loaded first. See Appendix E for more information regarding the Translator disk.

## SAVING CARTRIDGES TO DISK

### 1) Preparing Your Computer

If you own an XL or XE computer you can skip this step because your system needs no preparation to run. Atari 800 and 400 owners must prepare your computers to run the Cartridge Saver. The Cartridge Saver program will ask you to insert the cartridge you wish to save. But, unfortunately, your computer turns off whenever you open the door leading to the cartridge slot. So, you must make your computer stay on even when the door is open.

First, open the door where you usually insert a cartridge. When you look inside, you will see a small slot on the right side. This slot contains a small switch that turns off your computer when you open the cartridge door. Your cartridge door must be open to insert the cartridge when the program tells you to. So you must put something in the slot so that the computer can stay on with the door open. You can use the wooden stick supplied in your package to do it.

With your computer turned off, find the switch and put the cotton end of the stick in it, propping up the cartridge door with the other end. Some people prefer to fold up a small piece of paper and push it in the slot in front of the switch. You can open and close your door any time (without having the computer turn off) if you do it just right.

After you have done this, try turning on your computer with the cartridge door still open. If you have done it right, your computer will turn on with no problems.

NOTE: If you have problems finding the tiny slot, watch closely as you close the door of your computer and you will see it under the cover on the far right.

## 2) Running the Cartridge Saver program

Do these steps after your computer is prepared;

- a) Insert Impersonator disk in drive 1.
- b) Turn on computer
- c) Hit START to run the cartridge saver program

IMPORTANT: You can skip the main menu and make the program load much faster if you hit the Space Bar a few seconds after your Impersonator disk starts to load.

## 3) INSERTING THE CARTRIDGE

You must gently, but firmly, insert the cartridge in the left slot (the only slot on XL and XE computers) when told to do so by the program. Sometimes your computer may lock up when you insert the cartridge. If this happens, just turn your computer off and try again. Try tilting the cartridge so that the right side goes in first. If your computer still locks up See Appendix B

NOTE: Some cartridges (BASIC, Assembler, Koala Pad, etc.) can be inserted before you turn your computer on. Just insert the cartridge and put your Impersonator disk in your drive before turning on your computer. If the disk loads, then just save the cartridge as usual.

When you have successfully inserted the cartridge, the screen will prompt you for a file name (if the cartridge was 16K, a 16 will appear on the right side of the screen). At this point, remove the Impersonator disk and place one of your own formatted disks in your drive. Then enter the file name and hit RETURN. You must type "D2:" in front of the file name if you want to save the

file to drive two

The cartridge program will be saved to disk with the file name you selected. Then you are given a option to run the program again. If you want to save another cartridge, remove the cartridge you just saved before you restart the program.

The steps for removing the cartridge are exactly the opposite of inserting it. Just tilt the cartridge to the right (lifting the left edge out and leaving the right edge inserted), then pull out the right edge.



### RUNNING THE SAVED CARTRIDGES

Now is the time when you need your Dummy Cart (your small plastic coated circuit board included in the package). To run a cartridge file saved on a disk, just follow the steps below.

#### 1) Prepare Your computer.

Preparing your computer to run a cartridge file is exactly the same as you did to save it. XL and XE owners don't have to do anything, but 400 and 800 owners must follow the instructions explained earlier.

#### 2) Load The cartridge file

There are two easy ways to load the file.

NOTE: Some cartridge programs will not run properly on XL and XE computers unless the Translator disk is loaded first, but most don't require it.

##### a) Binary Load From DOS

To do this you must place a disk with DOS.SYS (Atari DOS 2.0S) and DUP.SYS into disk drive 1 and turn on your computer. You can use your Atari master disk that came with your drive (XL or XE owners may need to use the translator disk first and hold down the OPTION key if the cartridge requires it). After the DOS menu appears, put the disk that contains your cartridge file into your drive, and press "L" (this is for the binary load option). Type the name of the file you wish to load (the name you used to save the cartridge) and hit RETURN.

##### b) AUTOMENU

An easier way to load your program is with the AUTOMENU program which is on your Impersonator disk. See the AUTOMENU section of this manual for details.

#### 3) Insert The Dummy Cart.

After you load your file, the screen will say "PLEASE INSERT DUMMY CART". The program will then wait for you to put the Dummy Cart into the cartridge slot on your computer (the left slot on the 800).

The next step depends on what kind of cartridge you want to load.

##### a) Most Cartridges

In most cases you will need to turn off your disk drive BEFORE you insert your Dummy Cart. Some cartridges will not run properly unless your drive is turned off.

##### b) Cartridges That Access Disk Files

Many cartridges can access (LOAD or SAVE) disk files, such as BASIC, AtariWriter, Micro-Illustrator, Adventure Creator, Koala Pad, etc. To run a cartridge that uses disk files, you must have your drive on and a disk with DOS on it in your disk drive BEFORE you insert your Dummy Cart.

When you insert the Dummy Cart, it is just like you turned on the computer with the original cartridge, so you must have the correct disk in the drive BEFORE inserting the Dummy Cart. Any disk with DOS on it is good (DO NOT use your Impersonator disk, since this disk has an AUTORUN.SYS file on it which will run the Impersonator program). See Appendix A for more information.

##### c) Unprotected Cartridges

Your cartridge files created with the Impersonator have a special feature to let you run unprotected programs without the Dummy Cart. Instead of inserting the Dummy Cart when prompted, just hit the ATARI key (the key with the Atari logo on it), or the Inverse key on an XL. Remember that this only works with the few unprotected cartridges available on the market. The vast majority of the cartridges require the Dummy Cart to foil the protection scheme.

To insert the Dummy Cart, just locate the position of the slot by looking into the computer (XL owners must push the small silver doors above the slot open to see in). Now, with the label facing you, quickly and firmly pop the Dummy Cart straight into the cartridge slot, and about a second later your cartridge program will automatically appear on the screen. It won't work if you insert the Dummy Cart too slow, you must pop the Dummy Cart into the slot with a quick push. That's all there is to it. With a little practice you'll be saving and running all your cartridges in seconds. If you have problems, see Appendix B in the back of this manual.

NOTE: After running one program, be sure to remove the Dummy Cart before loading another one. A program will not load correctly if the Dummy Cart is already in the cartridge slot.

## AUTOMENU

Automenu is a user friendly menu program that will automatically show you the files on a disk and let you load a file with a single key stroke. Automenu can be used to load your cartridge files created with the Impersonator, or just about any other binary load file you have. AUTOMENU requires DOS 2, or another compatible DOS. DOS 3 will not work.

### PUTTING AUTOMENU ON YOUR DISKS

To put Automenu on your own disks, just complete the following steps (the order you do them in is not important).

1) Copy the "AUTOMENU" file from the Impersonator disk on to your own formatted disk (use DOS option "O").

Then rename the file to "AUTORUN.SYS" using DOS option "E".

2) Write Atari DOS 2.0S files to your disk (using DOS option "H").

NOTE: you can delete DUP.SYS if you wish to save space, since it is not needed.

3) Copy any binary load or Impersonator cartridge files onto the disk (again use option "O").

To use Automenu, just insert your disk (with Automenu on it) into your disk drive and turn on your computer. Be sure no cartridges are installed. XL and XE owners must hold down the OPTION key while loading, and use the Translator, if there are cartridge or any other files that require it, on the disk.

The selection of files will automatically appear on the screen, so just hit the corresponding letter to load the file of your choice.



## APPENDIX A

### LOADING CARTRIDGES THAT CAN ACCESS A DISK

Certain Atari cartridges can access a disk drive as well as a cartridge. Some examples are BASIC, ATARIWRITER, Adventure Creator, MicroIllustrator, etc. They can save and load disk files, and so they need DOS.

When you want to run a cartridge like this, insert a disk with DOS, or any boot disk you wish to load, into disk drive 1, then insert the Dummy Cart. DO NOT use your IMPERSONATOR disk. The IMPERSONATOR disk will not work, because it has an AUTORUN.SYS file on it which will run the IMPERSONATOR program.

When you insert the Dummy Cart the program will start and load the disk, just as it would if the original cartridge was installed in the computer.

Normally you won't want an AUTORUN.SYS file on your disk, because that file will run automatically. If you wish to use a cartridge without the disk, you can turn off your drives just before inserting the Dummy Cart.

#### SPECIAL CASES

A language cartridge like BASIC is a special case. You need BASIC to run programs that are written in BASIC. Running BASIC programs (even protected ones), is easy when you have saved your BASIC cartridge to disk with the Impersonator. First, load the BASIC file. When the prompt to enter the Dummy Cart appears, insert the disk with the protected BASIC program into your drive. After you have placed the disk in the drive, insert your Dummy Cart.

For instructions on how to save BASIC and another cartridge such as Monkey Wrench II to disk as one file, see Appendix F.



## APPENDIX B PROBLEMS

### 1) COMPUTER LOCK-UP

Computer lockup is when your computer seems to freeze and doesn't respond to key strokes or the RESET key. This happens mainly when you insert a cartridge to save it to disk.

If this occurs, reboot your Impersonator disk and try saving the cartridge again. Look into your computer cartridge slot and hold the cartridge directly over it, not touching the computer. Then slowly insert the right corner of your cartridge into the slot, and gently push down on it until it is all the way in. The prompt for the file name will appear on the screen. If it doesn't work, try again, it can sometimes take a delicate touch to make it work. Also, you might have a friend try it if you can't get it to work yourself.

If it still doesn't work, there are two other things to try.

1) The simplest way is to turn on your computer with the cartridge already installed and your Impersonator disk in your drive. Some cartridges will load the disk first. This makes it simple to copy, you just go to Cartridge Saver and enter the file name.

2) Sometimes the plastic case on the cartridge is too large to allow you to insert the right edge first. If it is, try removing the circuit board from the plastic case and try again.

- Remember, to run Cartridge Saver faster, hit the space bar a few seconds after you turn on your computer (this bypasses the main menu)

### 2) COMPUTER REBOOTS

If the computer reboots (starts loading from disk) as soon as you insert a cartridge or the Dummy Cart, then there are several possibilities.

a) There is static electricity on the cartridge. Touch something metal before inserting a cartridge or the Dummy Cart if there is static electricity in the air.

b) You are loading a language cartridge or other type that attempts to load from disk when it begins running. If this is the case, then just insert any disk with DOS on it (not your IMPERSONATOR disk) into your drive before inserting the Dummy Cart. Or, try turning off your drive before you insert the Dummy Cart. Some programs will run if the drive is turned off when the Dummy Cart is inserted. See Appendix A for more details on this type of cartridge.

### 3) CARTRIDGE FILE WON'T RUN PROPERLY

If a cartridge saved on disk loads correctly and prompts you for the Dummy cart, it should run exactly like the original after you insert the dummy cart.

If the program does not work right;

a) Try running the original cartridge in your computer and see if it does the same thing as it did with the Dummy cart. Some software may not work correctly on all Atari computers and this may be your problem.

b) Be sure it was reloaded correctly. When in doubt, load the file using the Binary load option of DOS, because not all menu programs load all files the same.

c) Be sure it was saved correctly. Try saving the cartridge

to disk again to be sure you got a clean copy. You may also want to try using a different disk.

d) The cartridge may contain special hardware to allow it to flip between chips to let it quickly swap areas of memory. No game cartridges currently use it, there is a utility cartridge that uses it and therefore cannot run correctly from disk. You can tell if the cartridge uses this method if it contains more than 16K.

e) The cartridge requires the Translator disk. Some programs will not run properly on XL or XE computers unless the Translator disk is loaded first. If the Translator disk is required, be sure to press and hold down the OPTION key while you turn on your computer.

f) See Appendix A

## APPENDIX C CLEANING THE DUMMY CART

As with all your cartridges, the contacts on the Dummy Cart can get dirty after extended use. A poor connection can result if the contacts on the board get too dirty. To clean the contacts just brush straight up and down with a clean pencil eraser or use alcohol.



#### APPENDIX D

##### CONVERTING FILES SAVED WITH SCANALYZER

There is a special program on the Impersonator disk for those of you who own The Scanalyzer. As you may know the Scanalyzer is an Alpha Systems product that is used to scan and analyze Atari computer programs stored on disk or cartridge. One of its features saves cartridge programs to disk (like the Impersonator), but then goes on to convert the files of pure binary data back into readable assembler language. The Scanalyzer allows you to modify the cartridge programs with your Atari assembler cartridge, or with the Scanalyzer's disk editor.

To make a protected cartridge file run from disk, you must either remove the protection (giving you an unprotected disk file of the cartridge), or use the Impersonator's Dummy Cart. Of course it is better to use the Scanalyzer to remove the protection (so the Dummy Cart is not needed), but this can sometimes be very difficult to do without a good knowledge of assembler language. So in many cases it is easier to run the cartridge file (or a cartridge file modified with scanalyzer) with the Dummy cart.

To run the cartridge file (saved and possibly modified with scanalyzer) with the Dummy Cart is very easy. Just use the "Scan Converter" option of your Impersonator disk. After selecting the Scan Converter option from the Impersonator disk's main menu, you will be asked to enter a file name. Just type in the name of the cartridge file (the one created with Scanalyzer) and hit the RETURN key. This will modify your cartridge file so that it will ask you to insert the Dummy Cart before it runs the program. Now your file created with Scanalyzer will run just like those created with The Impersonator. Just load the file and insert the Dummy Cart just as you do with Impersonator's files.

#### APPENDIX E

##### THE ATARI TRANSLATOR FOR XL AND XE COMPUTER OWNERS

If you own an Atari XL or XE computer you should know about the Translator disk. The Translator is a disk that changes your XL or XE operating system to make it much more compatible with Atari 400 and 800 software. A large number of programs won't run correctly without it. It can be purchased for a minimal fee (about \$10) from most Atari Dealers, most Atari users groups, or directly from Atari. Also there are several commercial translators on the market which have advantages over the Atari Translator. They are available by mail order if you can't find one in a local store. Also there are currently two ROM based translators which don't have to be loaded all the time like a disk. Any of these products will work fine with the Impersonator.



APPENDIX F  
SAVING TWO CARTRIDGES TO ONE FILE

FOR ATARI 800 USERS ONLY

If you have an Atari 800, the IMPERSONATOR will let you take advantage of the extra cartridge slot on your computer. You can use the IMPERSONATOR to save dual cartridges to a single file.

You can, for example, put BASIC in the left cartridge slot and Monkey Wrench II in the right slot. When you save the cartridges, they will be saved together into one file. The screen will indicate a 16K cartridge. You can save both cartridges easily if you insert them both, put the Impersonator disk in your drive, and then turn your computer on. This saves you from having to insert the two cartridges later.

When you load the file, it will work exactly as if you had both the original cartridges installed. You do not need two Dummy Carts to run the file, you need only insert your Dummy Cart into the left slot as usual.

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Following the initial ninety day warranty period, defective media will be replaced for a replacement fee of \$6.50.

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in protective packaging accompanied by: (1) a brief statement describing the defect; (2) a \$6.50 check or money order (if beyond the ninety day warranty period); (3) your return address; (4) the problem disk.

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# IMPERSONATOR

## CARTRIDGE BACK UP SYSTEM

YES... Now you can create normally running back-up copies of all your 4K, 8K, or 16K cartridges for Atari Computers. Alpha Systems special IMPERSONATOR package will let you save your cartridges to ordinary disk files. They will run exactly like the originals when used with the IMPERSONATOR.

Each disk holds up to 12 cartridge programs. Now you can put all your real cartridges away for safe keeping and use the IMPERSONATOR for everything!

The IMPERSONATOR is easy enough for a beginner to use. YES, IT REALLY WORKS!! The Impersonator does everything the high-priced cartridge back-up systems do ... and MORE!

## HOW IT WORKS

Special software that comes with the IMPERSONATOR allows you to save the data from a cartridge to an ordinary disk file quickly and easily. When used with the IMPERSONATOR, this file runs exactly like the original cartridge.

The Impersonator package comes with a special hardware device that plugs into your computers cartridge slot. It tricks your computer into thinking that a real cartridge is installed, allowing your disk file to work just like the original cartridge.

NOTE: This product is intended for use as a back-up tool for your own cartridges. Alpha Systems does not condone copying borrowed or rented cartridges.





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