



# Atari Stacy

*Finally . . . a portable ST!*

**T**he Atari ST is a great computer. In fact, it's my favorite. But there is no denying that setting up an ST (or any other full size computer) involves, as Sig Hartmann might say, "a lotta lotta cables." That's fine for home and office installations—a few garbage-bag ties and a couple pieces of ergonomic furniture will set you right. Unfortunately, it's not so great if you want to take your system on the road.

Thus it is that for some time now, the world (or at least the Atari-owning part of it) has eagerly awaited the announcement of a portable ST computer. Some of us waited patiently; others—particularly those who use the ST for music and for whom touring is a way of life—have waited with bated breath.

Now the waiting is over. Stacy is here. First, let's deal with the name. Surmise has recently run rampant about just what Stacy might stand for. Is it an acronym? Nope. The name of someone's illegitimate daughter? 'fraid not.

No, in the end, Stacy turns out to be the project name for one of the VLSI

chips used in the new portable . . . ho-hum.

Having dealt with the name, we move on to the machine itself. I had an opportunity to sit down and commune with the prototype Stacy while she was on exhibit at the June NAMM show in Chicago. Herewith, a first in-depth look at Atari's flagship portable computer.

## *It's . . . It's . . .*

. . . basically a 1040ST in a box—and a fairly small one, at that. Closed, the new Stacy measures only 13.3" deep by 15" wide and is about 4" thick at its thickest point. Open, the top edge of the pop-up screen rides 13.3" above the desktop.

The housing is made of molded, dark grey ABS plastic, and seems sturdy. The handle, although it appears somewhat fragile at first glance, is actually quite sturdy, as well. In its basic configuration with one floppy drive, Stacy weighs in at 15 pounds with batteries

## Atari Stacy

**Processor:** 68c000 (CMOS MC68000), 8 MHz

**Memory:** 1Mb standard; 2 and 4Mb units also available

**Dimensions:** 13.3"×15"×4"

**Display:** Reflective supertwist black-on-grey LCD emulating ST monochrome display. 640×400 pixel resolution

**Keyboard:** 94-key Atari ST compatible; built-in trackball

**Mass storage:** 1 720K 3½" floppy drive standard; chassis ported to accept second floppy drive or 20Mb hard disk

**Ports:** Cartridge, external power, joystick, mouse, MIDI IN, MIDI OUT/THRU, DMA, external floppy, video (ST-compatible RGB color/monochrome combined video output), RS-232 serial, Centronics parallel

**Operating System:** GEM; TOS 1.4

**Power requirements:** 8 C cells in battery pack; external power adapter

**Price:** \$1495;  
\$1995 with 20Mb hard disk

**Manufacturer:**  
Atari Corp.  
P.O. Box 61657  
Sunnyvale, CA 94088

installed. Though no lightweight, she compares favorably with similar, high-end laptop portables from manufacturers such as Toshiba and Mitsubishi.

The keyboard of the Stacy has 94 keys, just like that of an ST. However the layout differs somewhat from the desktop standard. The Stacy function keys are not recessed and lie in two rows above the main keyboard. Above the center of the keyboard are found the Help and Undo keys, while Insert, Clr/Home, and the cursor keys are above and almost flush with the right-hand side of the keyboard. The cursor keys are somewhat less accessible in this position than on a standard ST, but not grievously so.

**By JOHN JAINSCHIGG**



To the right of the main keyboard lie a miniature numeric keypad and an integrated two-button trackball, designed to substitute for the mouse when on the go. In general, I find the Stacy keyboard a bit more comfortable and professional-feeling than that of a standard ST. The key-return mechanisms seem to have more "bounce," and physical key-click is more audible.

The trackball is another matter. Though the mechanism in the trackball is clearly of highest quality, the ball itself is simply too small to manipulate with the palm—you must use your fingertips. This suffices for moving the mouse pointer around on the screen and for selecting from menus—you work the ball until the item you want to select is highlighted, then move your hand forward to tap the left button. Unfortunately, it doesn't work so well for click-and-drag operations and other fine manipulations that require a button to be held down while the mouse pointer is in motion.

I hasten to add that this is just my own impression; quite a few Atari employees, who have had more time to get used to it, told me that they now actually prefer the trackball to the mouse in both principle and practice. For my own part, I'm glad that Stacy will accept a conventional mouse—at least while in port, so to speak—and would be tempted to employ a Unix-style command-line interface in preference to the trackball while en route.

### The Display

The built-in screen emulates the 640x400 monochrome display of the ST and covers about the same area as the display of an SM124, if not a little more. It thus offers excellent legibility. Though original product descriptions and literature specified a backlit display, the current specification is for a reflective SuperTwist LCD—don't count on using Stacy in the dark.

The only slightly strange thing about the LCD, as compared to the SM124, is that its pixels activate marginally too slowly to quite keep up with the speed at which things happen on an ST screen. Fast-moving objects—such as the mouse cursor—tend to fade out as they traverse the screen, reappearing when they come to a stop. This is more distracting than annoying and is offset by the fact that the cursor tends to move more slowly under trackball control than under control of a conventional mouse.

The slow speed at which pixels dark-

en on the LCD might also explain the absence of a blitter chip in Stacy—the built-in screen doesn't work fast enough to take advantage of the extra speed offered by the blitter.

To the right of the LCD display is mounted a protective cover that fits atop the trackball, holding it steady when the machine is in transit. South of this cover are two knurled dials for controlling speaker volume and display contrast, a bank of busy lights for the built-in floppy and optional built-in hard disk, a low battery indicator, and the speaker grille.

The battery pack, containing eight rechargeable or alkaline C cells, fits into the left rear corner of the housing. Rechargeable cells are said to supply power for between 5 and 10 hours of use; alkaline cells for between 18 and 35 hours. This is considerably more economical than the performance you can expect from most other portables.

Continuing around the rear, we see, in a slightly more packed-together arrangement, all the ports we would expect to find on the backplane of an ST: printer port, DMA port, video port, RS-232 port, external floppy drive port, MIDI ports, and a power input jack (in this case, low-power DC, permitting Stacy to be run off AC or DC power—from a car battery, for example—depending on the adapter used).

Conventional mouse and joystick ports are also present on the right-hand side of the enclosure. On the left are a standard cartridge port and Mega ST-style bus connector.

### At Home or On the Road

The wonderful thing about Stacy, then, is that it can be your loyal traveling companion and double for your desktop ST, when you're at home. Just plug in a conventional monitor—color or monochrome—a regular mouse (unless you're a trackball fetishist) and an external hard disk, and you're ready to continue computing in couch potato mode.

Stacy is expected to be available in one-, two-, and four-megabyte configurations, though at the time of this writing, no prices had as yet been set for the 2Mb and 4Mb versions. A one-meg Stacy with built-in 720K, double-sided 3½" disk drive standard is expected to list in the neighborhood of \$1495. Adding an internally-mounted 20Mb hard drive will boost the price to a very reasonable \$1995. A two-floppy option may also be available. ■



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