
The Paragon Report



PARAGON COMPUTER'S free Publication
with Information News and Views
for ALL ATARI users
February 1990

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PARAGON COMPUTERS
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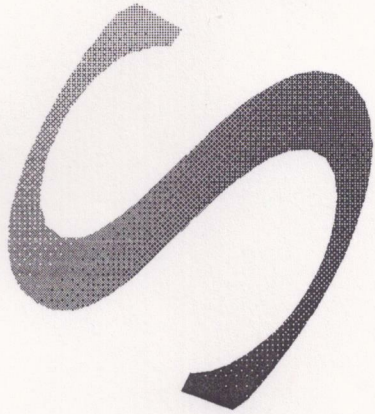
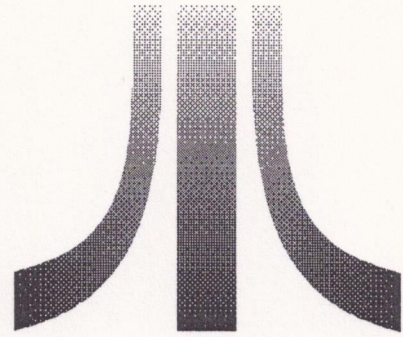
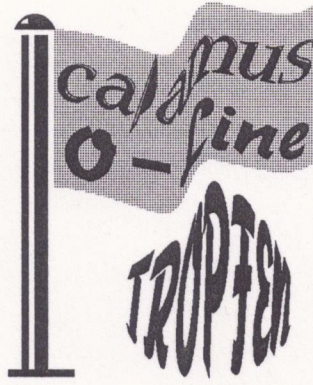
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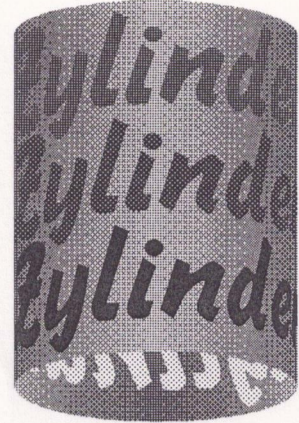
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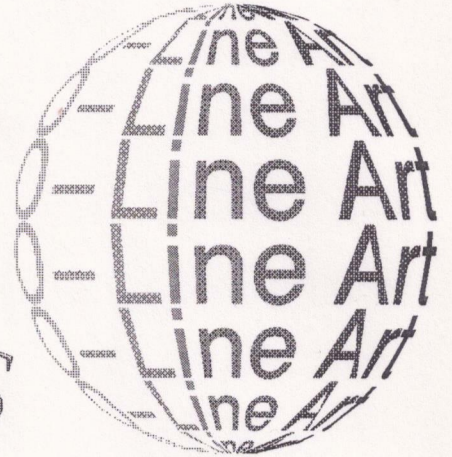
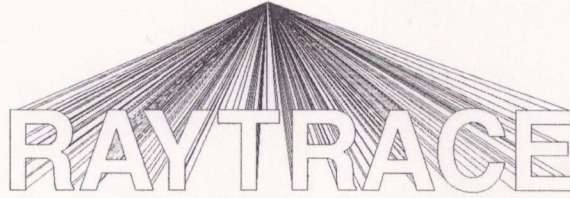
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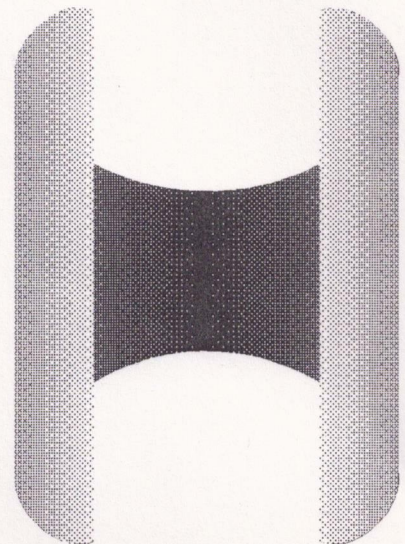


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Welcome to the eighth edition of **THE PARAGON REPORT**

The magazine of **PARAGON COMPUTERS** Pty Ltd.
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THE PARAGON REPORT contains reviews and information for Australian ST users,

The magazine is produced in house using the Paragon Desktop Publishing Solution, consisting of an ATARI Mega4. Megafile 44 hard drive. SLM804 laser printer, QMS Postscript Laser printer, Hawk CP14 Scanner, Augur OCR, Migraph scanner, PageStream, Calamus and Imagen Post Script Software.

The information for the magazine is compiled using the latest in human technology, Eyes and Ears.

Thank you to all the ST users for the moral support and for the kind remarks on the first seven issues of **PARAGON REPORT**, (*please keep it up*). Due to numerous requests from readers of the first seven issues, we have included a list of our ST software and hardware, we would like to remind readers that our ST software list is updated every 3 days due to the arrival of new software, we also have specials on most software at the end of the month, to make room for new stock. Please call for the latest ST software and special list

We welcome any feedback on **THE PARAGON REPORT** and any comments, suggestions, articles reviews or news can be sent to (The Editor) c/o **PARAGON COMPUTERS** or leave a message on **PARAGON BBS** on (09) 325 5160 (its free) or phone (09) 221 3216. / 3lines. (human response). 9am - 5.30pm W.A.S.T. Monday to Friday. 9am - 12pm W.A.S.T. Saturday. or Fax on (09) 325 8251. 24 hrs.

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Pagestream 1.8

Was it worth the wait?

Was it worth the the wait ? Is it worth the money ? Is it really that much better? In the last month I've been asked these questions more times than I can remember. The questions are being asked about the Pagestream 1.8, the latest update of the popular and powerful D.T.P. package. The answer is quite simply yes, although at first there does not seem to be anything different in the 1.8 version only a BIGGER file size.

You notice nothing new when Pagestream is booted, your are faced with the same old desktop, only version dialog lets you know you are running the "1.8" update. Did it load faster ? or was it my imagination, yes I think it did. I used my Pagestream 1.52 'PGSTREAM.INF' file hoping it was compatible with 1.8, it hadn't crashed yet so it must be (like most I only read the book when all else fails). Open a new page, seems just the same as before. Better check the printer configuration ahh the printer driver is new, at least it has a '1.8' identifier the '.INF' file is working because it has loaded the correct printer driver, my 'F KEYS' and page setup.

Now lets open a 1.52 'DOC', it loads OK but some of the text is out of format. Checking the font selector you notice the first visible difference, an extra choice 'button' called 'manager' out comes the book. Now I know why the programme booted faster, with the 'manager' option Pagestream writes a small INF file in the PSFONTS folder which tell it what fonts to load, hence fewer file are loaded (only if you choose fewer fonts) at boot up. Also while looking at the fonts files I see that all fonts supplied now have POSTSCRIPT support, great if you have access to a postscript printer. Back to the 'DOC', so if I will have to reformat some of my older documents that not a real big problem, most I'll never use again anyway. the next visible difference is that the 'FULL PAGE' option in the VIEW menu now works! this one improvement alone is worth the A\$ 25.00 asked for the update.

Apart from the 'full page' other functions that now work with ease (and without crashes) are the 'ARC' & 'PIE' tools, although as of yet I've never needed to use them anyway. The 'RE SHAPE' function once you get used to the way it works, proves to be very useful. Last but not least the 'TEXT RUN AROUND' function now allows the use of NO margin around the block, this may not seem like much but it can improve the appearance of a document believe me.

Now I get sneaky, I try WITHOUT success to crash Pagestream by doing stupid things. Like rotating text columns 180 degrees and then using the 'UPSIDE DOWN' option in the style menu, no it didn't crash. Or import a 42K ASCII file (this really upsets 1.52) no problems. I even EXPORTED 2 pages of text to an ASCII file without the little bombs showing up. This is not to say that Pagestream is crash proof, I'm sure if you try hard enough it will crash but unlike the earlier versions 1.8 appears to be very stable.

The more you use Pagestream 1.8 the more you realize how much better it is than it's previous releases, the screen redraws faster, it doesn't redraw the screen at every text change (although sometimes you wish it did), the text column outline is now 'dotted' which helps stop mix ups when using lines & boxes, graphics import MUCH faster, the list just keeps growing as you use Pagestream 1.8. The changes are subtle, which makes it hard to pin down any one improvement as best or most useful but the improvements are there.

Not all Pagestream problems have been sorted out yet, two little bugs still show there ugly heads. One is the text overflow symbol (the little box with the cross through it) does not show up unless the bottom of the text column is visible on the screen and will not disappear when the text problem has been corrected. The other is the LACK of a 'decimal tab' function, which makes it hard to align columns of figures.

Now the big test, printer output. Due to the fact I've not won the LOTTO yet, I still (like most) use a 9 pin dot matrix printer. This really has been my only criticism of Pagestream, the output to a 9 pin dot matrix printer.

The 1.8 update has not changed my views on this, such a POWERFUL user friendly programme with a very average dot matrix printer output. Especially when you consider that this programme has TOP quality output to almost any other printing device you care to mention, why not a 9 pin dot matrix I'm sure that would be the most popular type of printer. Although you cannot class the output as bad, it is NOT upto the same quality or print speed as say SIGNUM or FLEET STREET maybe version 2.0 will have that all figured out ?

Even though I've had my bite at the output, I still believe that there is not another D.T.P. package that comes close to Pagestream 1.8 in either value for money or usability. What other D.T.P. package will run on a 1 meg machine, work off a SINGLE D/S floppy, has no complicated installation, VERY user friendly (most are able to produce a document without looking at the manual) can output to most printers even linotronics and costs less than \$400.00 ? I can't name any can you ?

Yes it is worth the A\$25.00 for Pagestream 1.8 update, roll on version 2.00

For the Paragon Report

by

Peter Feszczur



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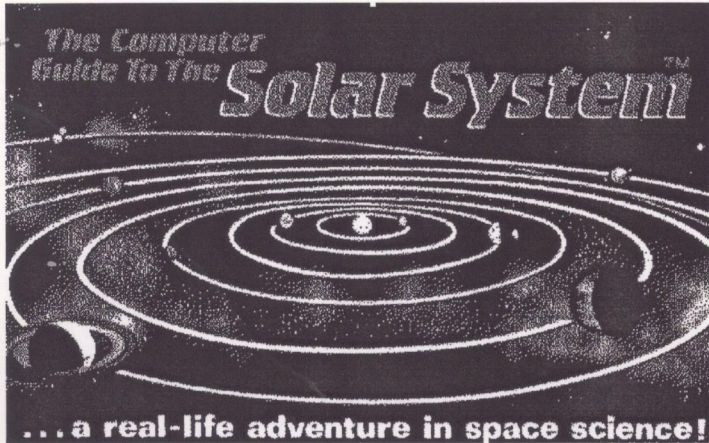


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The Computer Guide to the Solar System



"To boldly go
where no ST has
gone before
Solar System".

The Computer Guide to the Solar System by Winter Tech is a program that is one of the best if not the best educational program for the Atari ST range of computers.

What is it that makes it so good you ask? Quite simply it is one of the best thought out and presented programs I have seen on any machine for a while. The manual is not obtuse and even a first time round user who has at least mastered formatting and mouse movements will be able to use this program.

The program itself uses mouse input to control the program. The information is paced by how fast you actually click on the menus yourself. The screens are colourful without being overly garrish and convey the information excellently. The program interface itself can be only summed up as an excellent use of the machine.

The Computer Guide to the Solar System comes in two different versions and they are for a 520ST or 1040ST and above. The only perceivable difference is that the 520ST accesses the drive a little more often and you can't really run desk accessories that take up that precious memory. The only real detraction on the program is that you must use an extended format to get all of the files on the disk if you have a single sided drive a good one is 80 tracks 10 sectors. If you have a double sided drive and wish to copy both disks onto the one disk you must again create an extended format disk. You can achieve this with most Public Domain copy programs e.g. FCOPY2, HYPERCOPY, etc., you can also use the various extended format programs available in the Public Domain these are available at most Public Domain libraries and are useful to have anyway.

The only detraction aside let me now let you in on the things you can expect to learn about using this program. The area that I am touching on is just like introducing you to the first pages of War and Peace. The particular part that has been covered in depth was the Sun and there is also snippets from other areas as well.

The Sun's Structure

This tells you about the structure and composition of the Sun. The opening screen is a cross section of the Sun itself and then you get given a detailed explanation of the various parts for example the Chromosphere is a semi-transparent layer of gases between 10000 and 16000 km deep etc etc

Size and mass

This gives you various comparisons of how big the sun is in relation to x, y and z and give you an idea of just how big it really is. The Sun only weighs 332,270 times more than Earth trivial (talk about Goliath versus Atom Ant). Plus a plethora of other interesting facts about this aspect of the Sun.

Nuclear Cycle

The nuclear cycle would have to be one of the most graphically well presented explanations I have ever seen and this sections definitely adds credence to the phrase a picture is worth a thousand words. It quite simply takes one of the more abstract concepts in our lives and transforms it into well animated step by step graphics. For this section alone the program is worth the buy.

The Computer Guide to the Solar System

Solar Phenomena

This area of the disk covers the theories behind Sunspots, Prominences and Solar flares.

Sunspots for instance were first observed in 300 B.C. They are also a little hotter than an oxygen acetylene torch at around 45000C. They also occur in an 11 year cycle. It then goes on to explain the various theories about sunspot formation.

Prominences

Prominences come in three main flavours it would seem and the largest ever recorded was over 1,600,000 km long (which just happens to be 4 times the distance between us and the moon).

Solar flares

This phenomenon (no relation to Demissos Roosauce) produce vast amounts of high energy particles moving along at about 4.3 million km/h give or take a few km/h.

Life Cycle

Just in case you wondered how its supposed to have all lit up this section answers your problems and more. You make also like to know that we have about 5 billion years left in the sun by which time we and a thousand other species will be extinct.

It also explains the death of a sun in great graphical and textual detail as well.

Data

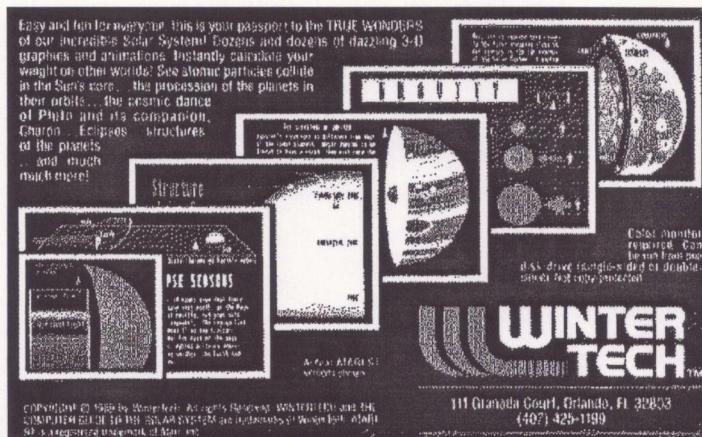
The usual statistics and figure that you expect in this section plus some other great snippets.

Phew!! and thats only covering the sun there is the rest of the Solar system to go yet!!!

Who can remember those boring geography/science lessons when you would colour in those bits of ocean etc. Well not to worry this program comes pre-coloured and with a lot more information of each part of the earths structure for you to absorb.

Just in case you thought the world was a great big green billiard ball you are wrong because its got a flathead and its pear shaped but if you were an alien flying by you couldn't really see this.

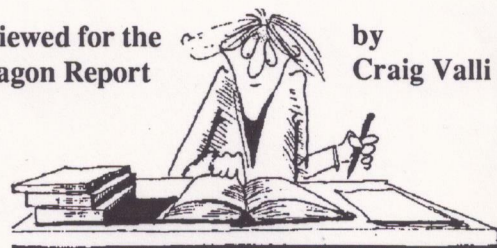
If you had an all terrain submersible vehicle and travelled at 90km/h it would take you 19 days circum-navigate the earth (without stopping). There is also an interesting comparison between the earth and the sun but you will have to find this out by buying the package (he! he!)



This package would have to be about the best yet for the Atari educationally and every family who is serious about their childs education should buy one of these instead of the next shoot'em up as this is truly a program too good to miss.

Reviewed for the
Paragon Report

by
Craig Valli





From Our Teknishun's Bench.

Have you ever ranted and swore at the dreaded "DATA IN DRIVE A MAY BE D A M A G E D " message appearing on your screen? You scream "Whaddya mean! I paid out good money for those disks, it must be YOU ya ratbag computer!!"

Your ST sits there with a smug look on its face and refuses to save your 10 hours of work, so after threatening it with dire consequences for its mutinous disobedience of your commands, you switch it off, pack it up and take it to your technician.

A couple of tales from my bench might shed some light and give you some ammunition to prevent an attack of the monstrous "Data Damaged" gremlins. I get a lot of single sided ST drives (SF 354) that come in after refusing to read or write data and with most of these its is simply a matter of re fitting the drive belt (Yes, Gloria, they really did use belts in those days) then testing the drive and give it back to the customer. The other day though I had one come back for the THIRD time, an event unheard of for a technician who "can cure a rainy day". I checked the belt and it was not stretched much so I could not figure out why it should be coming off all the time.

Anyway, what else to do but put it back on again, re assemble the unit and test, no problems. This time though when the lady came in to pick it up I was waiting and I came out from my lair 'round the back' to serve at the front counter. "Tell me about your computer system" says



I, using a catch all kind of question much favoured by bar tenders and psychiatrists. "Well, actually it belongs to my son who uses it to play games and do essays and things."

"Ohh year, so it is set up in his room then?"

"Yes, he has it neatly arranged ready to use whenever he wants. Matter of fact this disk drive is in a drawer and the cables tuck neatly out of the way 'round the back," she says.

"How does he change disks when he has to?" I ask, getting more interested by the minute.

"Well he opens the drawer a little bit, tilts the drive up, and pushes the eject button and changes disks."

"I suppose that the drive might slip and drop down into the bottom of the drawer every now and then, wouldn't it?"

"Now that you mention it, mostly he just sort of lets the drive go after changing disks, after all its is only tilted up an inch or so."

So there it was. Now maybe your saying that the belt should not come of with a little vibration but remember that disk drives are designed to give a short spin as each new disk is inserted to help seat the new disk in place. Any belt will come off quite easily if it is pushed sideways while it is driving. (Have you ever seen someone change a belt on a pump or other machinery by giving it a sideways flick when the machine is running? Have you seen anyone struggling to get that same belt off when it is not running?)

In any case the drive was moved so that it did not suffer a bump during disk change and the belt has stayed put now.

I had trouble with a new drive in a Mega ST, in fact our own one that runs the cash register in the store. (So now you feel lots better, don't you now that you know that even WE suffer system problems!) The Cricit cash register data files



were being backed up daily to the hard disk and about twice a week to the floppy disk. Just about every time we did a floppy backup that \$%^!@% @%&!@ message "Data on Drive A may be damaged" would come up and we would have to reformat the disk then all would be well. Everything you could imagine was tried including the most expensive disks we could get but to no avail. It looked as though the drive mechanism would need to be changed but I wondered "If the drive is crook, why does it always work OK after a fresh format?"



As a mechanical engineer, I knew that unfortunately mechanical equipment (disk drives) is nowhere near as reliable as electronic components so I suggested that the

problem could be that the sliding components in the

From Our Teknishun's Bench.

drive were sticking, after all the hard disk system meant that the floppy disk drive was not used except for the few times when backing up the Cricit data.

Whenever we reformatted a disk, what we were really doing was exercising the drive's moving parts, forcing the heads to go completely over the entire disk surface and then back again to write the directory and File Allocation Table. If we backed up to floppy everyday, would we prevent the mechanism from sticking? Sure enough, that is what we did and now the same ole' floppy has been in the drive for weeks without a format command since the first one when it was put there.

What should you observe from this? Well if you own a Hard Disk drive, you may have problems unless you use your floppy drive regularly. If you don't have a hard drive you'll know only too well that your floppy drive will get plenty of use. If you don't use your computer every day, you may suffer the same problem but it will show itself in different ways. Mechanical stickiness in the floppy drive will show up as difficulty in loading self booting disks. Try switching the computer off, boot the desktop and format a couple of blank disks to exercise the drive. Switch off again and boot the disk you want. Be careful of any games disks where the high score gets written back to the original disk (or save game feature). If your mechanism has become sticky through inactivity, there is a good chance that the data may be put onto the disk in the wrong place, possibly right over the top of information which is vital to the running of the game.



I've kept the most serious disk problem till last because you'll be more likely to remember it that way. A few drives have come in for repair and when I open them up the read/write heads have been physically separated from the head assembly. Unlike earlier floppy drives which used standardised parts and cost several hundred dollars each, modern 3.5 inch mechanisms are custom produced by each manufacturer in batches. The race to knock a few dollars out of the price is so intense that from



batch to batch the mechanisms change radically to take advantage of continually improving technology. In all

probability the drive in your ST computer is different from the one in mine! So the heads have been damaged and as good a technician as I am, I cannot get replacements for your mechanism and anyway a whole new drive is only a little over \$200. (Six years ago a set of heads could cost \$250!)



It turns out that the heads get damaged after the metal slide shutter on the floppy disk gets sprung out slightly so that the disk does not pop out when the eject button is pushed. If the disk is forced out in any way at this point **YOU CAN WRITE OFF YOUR DISK DRIVE!**

Better to pack it up and bring it in for repair. As long as no force is used the heads should be undamaged and in that case a technician should be able to dismantle the computer and drive for removal of the disk and you would get a small bill for labour. Discard the offending disk, keep a vigilant eye out for other disks with sprung open shutters and you won't have any further problems in that area.



Well! back to my soldering iron. Keep on number crunchin!

Trev
for The Paragon Report



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Protex Word Processor

Reviewed for the
Paragon Report

By Alan Duplex



PRO POWER WITH PROTEXT

PROTEXT is a text editor/word processor available for many computers and the ATARI ST version is both powerful and fast. The first thing you will notice is the lack of the familiar GEM menus or windows however it does allow access to loaded desk-top accessories by providing a drop down DESK menu when you press the right mouse key.

Despite not using GEM, Protex's display is attractive and easy to follow, even in colour. The choice of colours can be set and saved using a special configuration program, which also lets you configure 69 other presets to suit your needs. It even allows you to totally redefine the keyboard layout, great if you want your "Q" where your "A" used to be! The Atari version extends this redefining ability to the screen with an instruction SYMBOL to enabling you to change any of the displayed characters.



I used this to redefine the screen characters used for the line drawing mode so I could take advantage of my STAR Printers ability to print the IBM graphics characters. Line

drawing mode places special characters, lines, corners and joins as you hold down ALT and use the arrow keys.

Arnor (Protex's authors) believe that mice and word processors don't really mix. Mainly because a word processor necessitates you having your fingers on the keyboard, and always removing them to reach for a mouse can slow you down. Not being a touch typist I can't really make a judgement either way, but at first, I did find I was looking for the mouse to do block moves, but as I become more familiar with Protex's keyboard commands I don't really miss the mouse. Protex does however recognise the mouse but only to duplicate the action of the cursor keys.

Protex is much faster than my trusty old First Word + and with a 70,000 word spell dictionary more of an aid to someone like myself who couldn't spell to save my life (Good thing I'm not asked to do this very often.). The spelling dictionary is backed up with some powerful instructions for finding words, including the ability to solve anagrams or find all words matching a search string ie. "f???e???" would match all words 8 characters long starting with "f" and the fifth letter "e".(My version found 21) This feature will be appreciated by crossword buffs.

When using Protex there are two main modes of operation, Edit mode and Command mode. Edit mode is used for dealing with the your text while Command mode is more like the DOS environment of other computers. It has many instructions that are similar to MS DOS instructions such as DIR to list the current directory and LOAD to load a file. These instructions can be typed from the keyboard or stored in an Ascii file then later executed with the instruction EXEC "filename". Protex even provides an auto execute filename "EXFILE" that will be executed automatically when Protex starts.

The real power of Protex comes with its way of mail merging. It uses special commands embedded into your text to extract variables from a data file and insert them into your document. These commands form a programming language that can be used to do some very clever things with words and numbers. In fact Arnor have released Protex Office an invoice generator and Protex Filer a data base program that turn Protex into much more than just a word processor.

The manual supplied with protex is well written and supplemented by four tutorial files. The only criticism I have is the way the pages are numbered. The manual is divided into 6 sections and each of these has its own page numbers, divided again into parts and pages. So a typical page is labelled WORD 2-3 but there is also a Merge 2-3 and I found this a little confusing.



Protex runs on any ST with mono or colour monitors and includes many printer drivers or you can create your own printer driver easily.

Reviewed for The Paragon Report
by Alan Duplex.

Life WAS meant to be EASY

At some time or other in one's life you come across that little 'something' that you were never looking for. But once you have 'found' it, one cannot think how you ever managed without it.

That's happened to me a few times in my lifetime (not that I'm over the hill or anything like that, it's just that I'm a lucky kind of person!), the last time was just last week. The little 'something' this time was a small 'ute' program for the old 'ST'.

The funny thing about finding that 'something', is that you find it quite by mistake. I was at a friend's house (who of course is a proud owner of an ST as well) where I saw on his bookshelf, the small owners manual from the software package named MAXIFILE. We weren't "talking computers" (not much anyway) but my eyes and thoughts kept wandering back to that MAXIFILE manual. After a while it got the better of me, I just had to ask what the hell it was. I was told to have a look, because he had not had the time to try it out. Well, that was the end of about two hours.

It turns out that this excellent software package by CODEHEAD software, is written by (the almost legendary) Charles F Johnson. The man who produced G=PLUS the replacement for GDOS, had now turned his hand to a replacement TOS 1.4 (well not quite a replacement). All the features that this very tightly written (only 64K and without any annoying .RSC file) utility are too numerous to mention, though I will list the most useful (to me).

The first is that it can be used either as .PRG or a .ACC application, so that it can be run from the desktop if you haven't a lot of free memory to play with (520ST) and in any resolution. But where it really shines, it has most of the TOS 1.4 features without gobbling 200K of memory and it has a very friendly user interface.

Sure there are plenty of public domain files utilities that have some of the wanted TOS 1.4 features. Then there is the excellent (commercial) NEODESK 2, but none come close to MAXIFILE for both the features and user interface. Read the list below and you will see what I mean.

* MOVE/ COPY/ DELETE/ RENAME/ ARCHIVE/ UNARCHIVE/ LOCK/ UNLOCK/ HIDE/ SHOW/ andtouch any combination of files and/or folder.

* Has every file and disk feature of the GEM desktop and more.

* The intelligent disk copy duplicates the source disk (that are not heavily protected).

* Can RENAME a FOLDER with ANY version of TOS.

* Print directory listings across the full width of the page, not just in one column down the l/h side of the paper (think of the trees this will help save).

* Formats disks in the twister format (with TOS 1.2 version and higher) and with an extended format option. e.g. 82 track 10 sector.

* Displays up to 80 filenames/folders at one time.

* Attach comments to any file or folder, with the ability to print them.

* Keyboard equivalents for all operations.

* Template filtering, permitting all operations multiple file type.

* Full file information dialog box.

The list goes on and on. Apart from the above features, there are a few that need to be highlighted.

The MOVE option when used on files into and out of folders (on the same disk) is very fast, because it operates like TOS 1.4. It only moves the file directory listing, not the whole file. Another handy little feature is the SHIFT-CLICK function, it works by holding down the shift key while selecting a file, all other items in the current directory/folder with the same extension will also be selected. A very useful and time saving function.

Supplied on the disk is a Item selector with the terrible name of little green file selector (where do the yanks get there names from?), this looks like an updated STart selector (which I'm sure was written by CFJ) only it interfaces with MAXIFILE, a very neat idea. Also on the disk is a small shareware program called PINHED14 (see what I mean about the names?) this little utility program is worth the price of the whole package (but don't forget that it's not, you are required to send the stated amount if you make use of the program). It makes .PRG's and .ACC's fastload. (cuts pagestreams loading time by half, off the hard disk), you have to see it to believe it.

Now we get to whet started it all, the manual. Not flash with lots of glossy pages, not in a plastic covered 3 ring binder. No the manual is just a well laid out (folded A4), readable 66 page plus appendix, with the needed information and a few tips. I don't know why it caught my eye on the book shelf, I'm only glad it did.

The manual also quotes "Furthermore when you use MAXIFILE in conjunction with CodeHeads HOTWIRE, the two programs together can serve as a complete replacement for the GEM desktop. I don't know anything about HOTWIRE but if it's only half as good as MAXIFILE it must be worth while.

After reading all of this, you probably think "yep it sounds great, but bet it costs the earth" your wrong!! the package sells for less than \$40.00. This shoots down the whingers who pirate software and put the blame on the price. If you only buy one piece of software this summer, this should be the one. The only thing I'm not happy with is, that I was beaten to the post by not buying it first.

Oh, if you are ready to rush out and buy MAXIFILE, I'm sure you know where to find it on the shelf, that's right, PARAGON COMPUTERS

by Peter Feszczur