

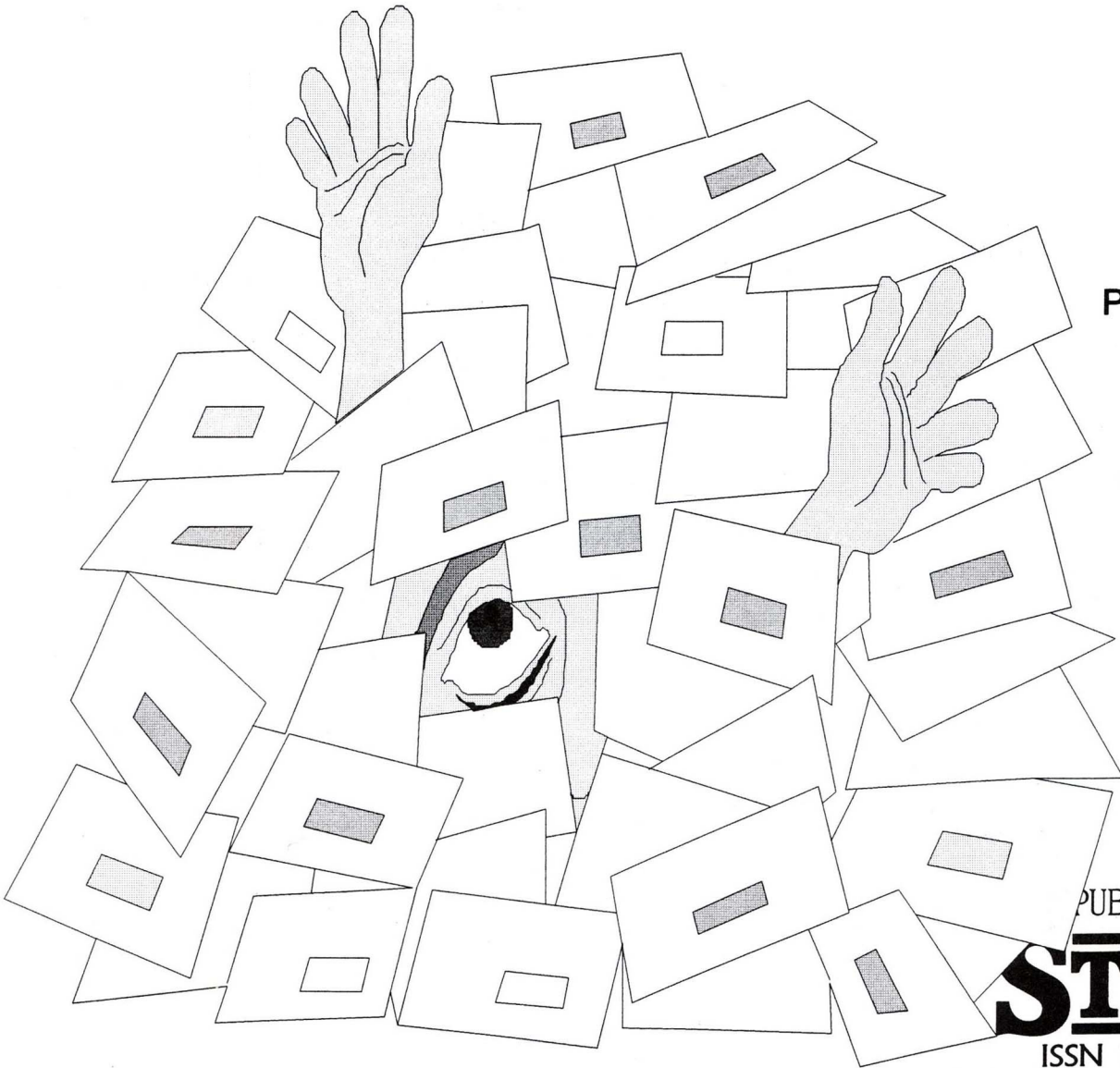
The world's best-selling Amstrad magazine

PCW TODAY

£2.10 Autumn 1997 Issue 7

SOFTWARE FRENZY!

We review all the latest big releases



NEW

Public Domain &
Programming
Columns

PLUS

Colour in
MicroDesign
Graphics in
LocoScript

PUBLISHED BY

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ISSN 1368-4485

Serving users of the Amstrad PCW 8256/8512/9256/9512/9512+/10/16

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BACK ISSUES

Strictly limited copies of issue 6, Summer 97 are available at £2.50 each. Sorry, issues 1-5 have now completely sold out.

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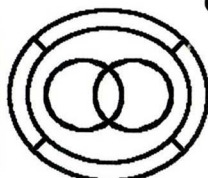
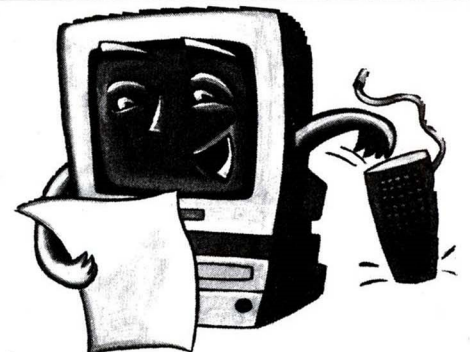
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PCW TODAY

HELLO and welcome to the latest edition of PCW Today. As you've probably already noticed, we've put the price up. A yearly subscription now costs £8, with the cover-price rising to £2.10.

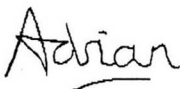
I hope you will understand the reasons for this price-hitch - our first ever! We've been on the road for a year and a half now, and in that time we've grown tremendously, both in size and readership. Starting from an extremely low financial base, PCW Today has increased in size, with every single issue. Thanks to some very supportive advertisers, we have managed to keep on growing. However, there is a limit, and we finally reached it. The extra £2 a year, will enable us to continue growing at the same dramatic rate in the future. Of course, these new rates will not come into play until your current subscription runs out.

Over the last few months, together with several companies, we've been working behind the scenes in efforts to raise the profile of PCW Today. You should start to see the evidence of this very soon, so watch out. If all goes well, PCW Today is all set to hit the big-time.

We're hopeful of expanding our circulation to 2000 - that's an incredible third of the old PCW Plus readership! As a PCW user, you can expect exciting times ahead. We're out to prove that the PCW is far from dead, and with your help we'll do it!

In this issue, we've instituted a few changes, but don't worry, Club News and The Tipsters will be back next time. Please do keep those newsletters and tips coming. I should also tell you that we've got a spanking-new telephone number - it's 01642 823117 - our address stays the same. Also, if your subscription is due, all cheques should now be made payable to: "PCW Today". Enjoy the magazine!

Yours as ever,



Adrian Braddy, Editor.

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NEWS

- No change at Amstrad
- PCW on the PC
- 'I6 prices slashed

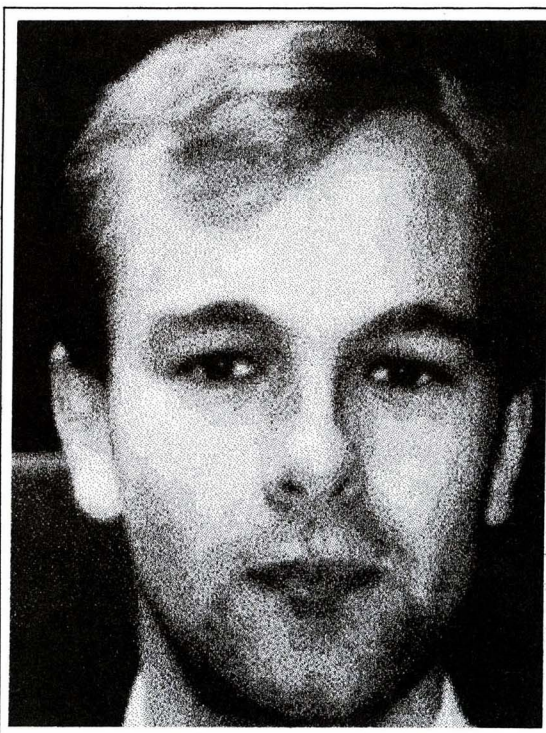
Exclusive: "Nothing's changed but the name"

OVER THE summer, the business pages of the Sunday papers were full of stories proclaiming the death of Amstrad. Betacom plc rose from the ashes of the old company, but many critics believed things would never be the same.

In fact, that could not be further from the truth. Cliff Lawson, the public face of Betacom explained: "There have been absolutely no changes whatsoever. The fact is that it's the same people, in the same building, doing the same jobs - and getting paid the same money - unfortunately! In fact the only thing that's different is the sign above the door that says Betacom plc rather than Amstrad plc. Well that's a lie actually, the sign still says Amstrad.

"That name is the strongest trading name Betacom owns. As far as users are concerned they're still going to see stuff in the shops with the Amstrad brand on them, for many years to come. The majority will never know about the share shuffling deal, which, at the end of the day, is all it was. It wouldn't surprise me if one day we go the whole hog and just change the name back from Betacom plc to Amstrad plc.

"Things look very rosy at present. The team in Brentwood is now effectively back to what it was in the late 80s. We even re-employed Bob Watkins as the new CEO, he used to be Director of Engineering back in the time of the CPC, original PCW and



■ So that's what he looks like! It's Cliff Lawson

1512. What's more, we're very busy, we have won part of the BSKyB digital satellite contract. This means Betacom will be one of the four manufacturers making digital set-top boxes for SKY which will be huge business for us.

"If you don't know what a DSTB is now, don't worry, in the coming years you most definitely will. A set top box is effectively the piece of household consumer electronics that will bring together all the functions currently performed by a TV, satellite receiver, internet terminal and home

computer all in one box with some extremely advanced electronics. Ultimately there won't be things like the PCW 16, the household will just have one massively powerful piece of computing equipment that does everything including word processing, home finance, games, internet and so on. It will probably all live inside the telly which will have a proper 16:9 high-resolution display. This isn't all going to happen in the first wave but in 5-10 years time that's the way everything will be integrated together.

"It's for these reasons that you'll have seen Microsoft buying up cable and satellite TV companies left, right and centre. They are also getting the latest Internet Explorer to offer "channels" as they will be the start of the drawing together of computers, TV, radio and the rest."

While Betacom are once again heavily involved at the forefront of technology, they haven't forgotten about the PCW. Cliff Lawson told PCW Today: "The current model is selling and there isn't much point in changing things - if it aint broke don't fix it! Remember that the PCW 16 is just a year old so it would be a bit premature to consider doing anything to change it right now. In the first few months there were a couple of problems in the software that took it from the original launch version 1.04 up to 1.11 However, since I issued 1.11 in April there have been no more major bugs reported and the software seems to be totally static now."

New emulator brings CP/M to the PC

PCW PROGRAMMER, John Elliott has developed the first true PCW emulator for the PC. Known as Joyce, the package has been released on the internet as freeware.

The software can emulate the Z80 chip, the PCW screen, the keyboard and just about everything else, including that famous beep. What sets Joyce apart from other emulators such as MYZ80 is that it will run just about any PCW software. With the program in operation, you can use any 3.5" PCW start-up disks in the PC drive. Uniquely, all PCW graphics are implemented.

Joyce 1.20 can operate with a colour screen and there is even an emulated hard-drive of up to 100MB in LocoScript and up to 40MB under CP/M. John Elliott plans to further improve the emulator in future. He uses Joyce to write new PCW software, now that his PCW has started playing up.

If you want a copy of Joyce, you can download it from: <http://www.seasip.demon.co.uk/pcw.html> Before you can use it, you'll have to unzip it with PKUNZIP-D. Unfortunately we can't get it to work, so we can't give it a full review. However, it is apparently very good.

Latest version of LocoScript 4 is launched

LOCOSCRIPT Software have launched the full version of their latest word processor - LocoScript 4 - with it's exciting new graphics capabilities. There is also a new "Export to Loco 3" option to increase MicroDesign compatibility, and there are no bugs! There is a full review on page 8.

Meanwhile, LocoScript have announced that all PCW Today readers who buy LocoFile, can get LocoMail free. That's an amazing saving of £29.95 on the popular Loco add-ons. Contact 01306 747757 for further details. LocoScript also aim to unveil their new glossy catalogue in time for Christmas.

Betacom slash prices in time for Christmas

THE PCW 16 is now sold by several major companies including Dixons, Currys, PC World and Argos. All retailers have recently reduced the price of the PCW 16 to £200 giving rise to fears that the new computer is struggling.

Betacom's Cliff Lawson said this is not the case: "The price drop has been made because Christmas is approaching and it's traditional for us to do this sort of thing. A lot of Amstrad and Betacom products are very seasonal and the PCW 16 is especially so - at £200 I guess it would make the perfect stocking-filler."

Meanwhile PCW 16 users have been dealt a double blow with the news that Protext and Route Planner will not be developed for the machine. Protext Software's Brian Watson said: "I do not believe the potential sales warrant developing Protext 16. Unfortunately, the '16 has attracted a lot of bad press and the level of sales it deserves have not been generated."

One '16 package that is definitely going ahead is Inventory Master. The latest beta version we have received seems to be bug-free, so we expect an imminent release. Inventory Master will be available from ComSoft on 0141 5544735, priced £24.95.

More software on its way from P.D. Blake

PUBLIC Domain provider, P.D Blake has expanded his range still further. His latest release is Desk Pro, a package that replaces MasterBase. The feature packed database costs just £6, plus a 3.5" disc. All MasterBase files are fully-compatible.

Also now available from the copying service, are a huge range of LocoScript 4 graphics and the famous LocoScript screen saver. The address for sales has changed. Now contact: 99 Normandy Avenue, Beverley, E. Yorks HU17 8PR.

Route Planner is finally finished and ready to hit the road

ROUTEPLANNER, the long awaited motoring software from Comsoft, has finally hit the road. Richard Fairhurst, the writer of the software, had to overcome major obstacles in the conversion from CPC to PCW. However, all the bugs have been fixed

and if you have ordered Routeplanner, you should get it soon.

Industry bosses are hopeful that this latest big-release will give the PCW the boost it needs. One trade source told PCW Today: "We are at a critical stage in

the life of the PCW, if we get it right now, the PCW will last another ten years. Routeplanner could be the perfect tonic."

Routeplanner costs £24.95 and is available from Comsoft, 0141 5544735, or SD Microsystems, 0700 736427/01593 483750.

Letters from the Mailbag

Send your letters to us at: *The Mailbag*, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.



DOWN UNDER

Dear Editor: As an Australian PCW user, I thought you might like a brief history of the PCW over here.

Amstrad launched the PCW here in the mid-80s. They were reasonably well promoted and supported, and they sold many thousands over the next two or three years. However, with the advent of Windows in the hitherto user-unfriendly IBM environment, plus the rather high cost of Amstrad support and 3" floppy discs (CF2DD discs were \$16 each then!!) PCW sales declined rapidly and commercial support had virtually ceased in this country by the early 90s. Even our local magazine - *The Amstrad User* - suffered a name change and became PC orientated in Jan 91. Consequently, the majority of remaining PCW users were left to their own devices, while some found support from a variety of clubs, others were convinced that their machines were beyond economic repair and they should invest in the new and powerful IBM clones. In most cases all they needed was a new drive belt or two and a bit of encouragement.

Most of the clubs and user groups have faded away, although we do have one here in Brisbane. However I believe there are still quite a few PCW owners battling away on their own - still using LocoScript 1 to write their memoirs or whatever, because they haven't heard of anything later! Trying to contact them, however, is quite a problem, because there are no local PCW publications and few of them would be on the internet.

Hope I haven't bored you too much, but I thought you might like an insight into what it's like to be a PCW user on the other side of the world with little support other

than through the internet and magazines such as yours.

Mike Mackenzie, Australia

PCW Today: The situation over there sounds like an amplified version of what we get in Britain. We too have the problems of mis-information and over-zealous salesmen. It's all part of being a PCWer.

WHAT BUGS?

Dear Editor: I am at a loss to understand why LocoScript 4 has had so many critics. It is by far the best word processor I have ever come across. As for bugs - what bugs? I now use LocoScript in preference to MicroDesign because it is a lot simpler and quicker. In fact, my only problem is with the slow printing and the fact that a graphic must be on the same disc as the document.

I whole-heartedly recommend LocoScript 4 to anyone and if you've already got Loco 3, how can you hesitate to upgrade? £20 is nothing in today's software terms!

Peter Smith, Oldham

PCW Today: Well it's always good to hear such strong recommendations. I'm sure LocoScript will be offering you a job as publicist very soon!

MAKE IT MONTHLY

Dear Editor: What can I say, terrific magazine, top writers, superb content, great presentation. I've got a serious addiction problem - I can't get enough of your magazine. The only trouble is, the last two issues I've finished at the breakfast table, and then I've got to wait for another three months for the next one. What's stopping you from going monthly.

Mark Fenton, Stockton on Tees

PCW Today: Blushing madly! I'm glad you like the magazine, unfortunately, although we'd love to go monthly, it's not exactly practical at the moment.

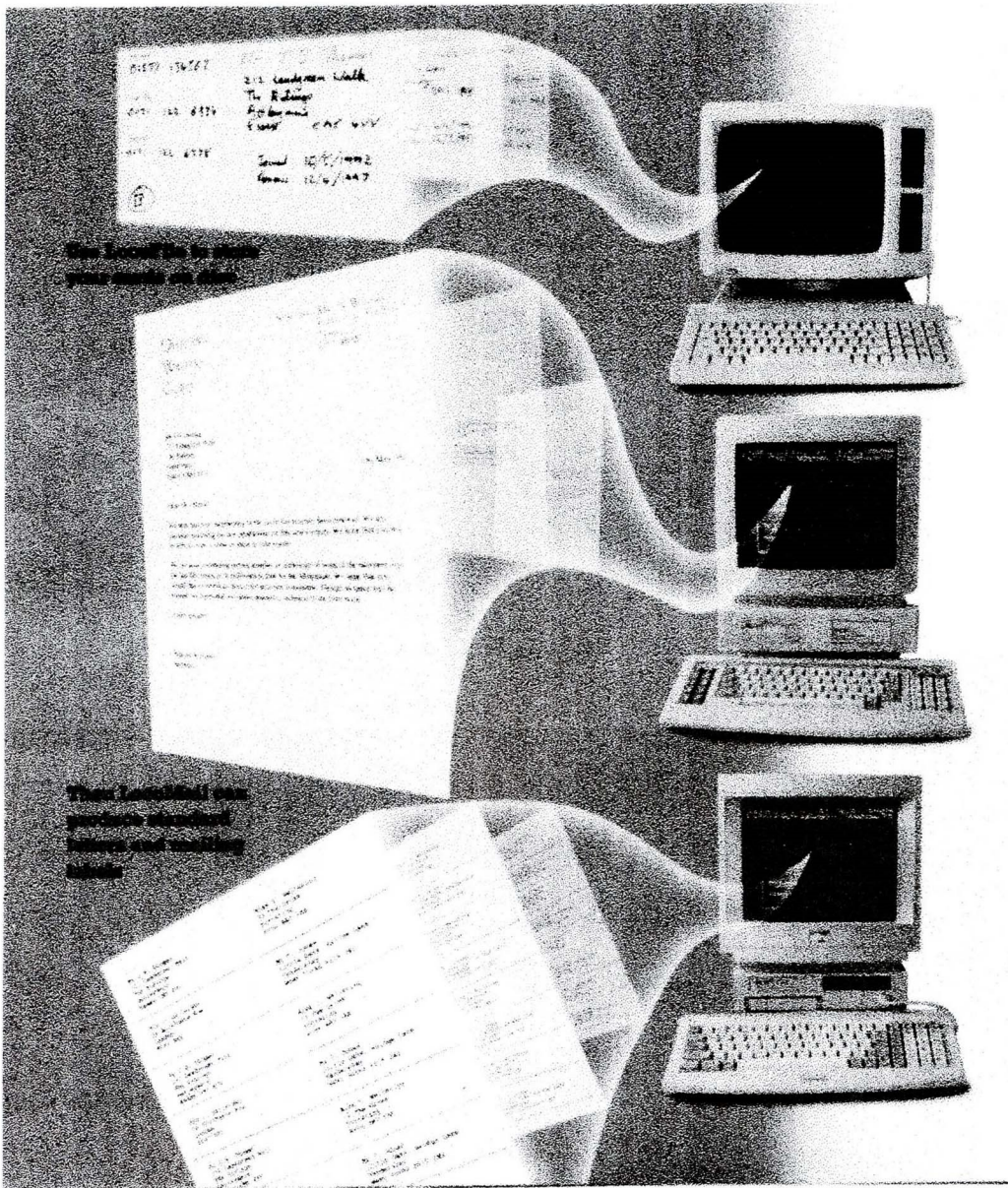
DODGY SALESMEN

Dear Editor: I already own an 8256 and a 9512, so when the PCW 16 came out, I had to get one. After scraping together enough money, I went down to the local branch of a "leading high-street store". There, crammed between the rival over-priced word processors, sat the '16. It was on, so I had a go and was impressed.

A salesman hovered over to just behind my shoulder with the usual "can I help you" line. I told him I wanted to buy a PCW '16. He immediately confided with me that it wasn't much good - there was no software with it and I'd be far better splashing out £1000 on a PC. I told him I had come to get the '16 and what sort of printer deals could they do. He then showed his utter ignorance by telling me that no modern printers would work with it. The thing was in fact useless. Needless to say, I walked out of the store in disgust. I have since bought the '16 from PC World and was most impressed - they even had a salesman with taste - he loved PCWs and his eyes lit up when I mentioned my 9512.

Frank Jones, Southport

PCW Today: Your experience is by no means isolated. In fact it seems to be worryingly common.



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Your PCW can be much, much more than a word processor. With LocoFile it's ideal for keeping records too.

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LocoFile and LocoMail are available for all models of PCW. Normally LocoFile costs £39.95 and LocoMail £29.95, but as a special offer to PCW Today readers, order LocoFile and get LocoMail free!

Both products include comprehensive user guides and work with LocoScript 2, 3 or 4.

If you have LocoScript 1, you will need to upgrade to LocoScript 4.

To order, fill in and return this coupon, or call 01306 747757

I'd like LocoFile and LocoMail for my PCW **£39.95**
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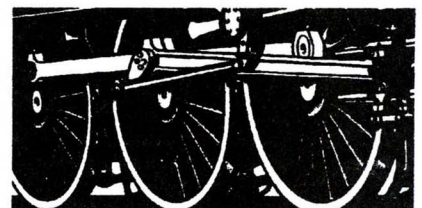
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SOFTWARE**

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LocoScript 4 Release 2

The latest version of LocoScript comes with new graphics capabilities

THE BATTLE has been a long and bitter one. Protext or LocoScript - which is the best PCW word Processor? Well that argument has finally been put to rest - by LocoScript Software.

Release Two of LocoScript 4 is, without doubt, the best word processor for the PCW. Some would argue that it is actually the best word processor on any platform. And, when used in conjunction with the Loco family of Spell, Mail and File, it does take some beating.

The long awaited second release of LocoScript 4 has several improvements on the earlier version, most notably its graphical capabilities. LocoScript 4 can now deal with MicroDesign 3 MDA graphic files. Despite rumours in several magazines, it does not matter which version of MicroDesign 3 you have, the graphics will all be compatible with Loco4.

Unlike DTP programs like MicroDesign, you cannot see the graphic on the screen. Loco 4 deals with images as it deals with style codes. In other words, you can only see that a graphic is there, when you choose to display style codes. Then, a picture is indicated by the code (picture).

To use pictures in your text requires forward planning. The images you intend to use must either be on the same disc as your document or on Drive M. Images that you use regularly such as a club logo are best kept at hand, so copy them to your start of day disc as you would fonts, and they will be copied to M: on start up.

Your LocoScript disc comes with a number of pictures already installed. But these are very limited and are really only useful for practice runs. You should really get hold of some MicroDesign graphics, easily obtainable from various companies and clubs. Be sure to ask for MDA graphics only, otherwise you will need to use MicroDesign to convert the CUT files.

Once you have the pictures you want, on your disc or M: drive, you can add them to

the document. The New Picture command is at the bottom of the Layout menu, accessed by pressing [f2]. Select this and you are returned to the Disc Management Screen. Don't panic, you have not lost all your work, you will be prompted to select a picture file. Simply move the cursor to the file and press [ENTER] twice. Instantly you will return to the document, with another unfamiliar menu confronting you. This is the Picture menu. This gives you the options to re-scale the image, to your liking. The picture is measured in characters at 10 per inch and lines at 6 per inch, to give you some idea of scale. However, it is best to leave the picture width and height and instead change the horizontal and vertical scaling. These range from 0.25x to 4x. A wider range than in MicroDesign.

LocoScript 4 treats every picture as a rectangle, as it was saved from within MicroDesign. This means that the text will not wrap around the curves of the picture.

Printing a document in LocoScript 4 that includes pictures is slower than printing without, however it is an acceptable speed and compares favourably with MicroDesign printing. The quality of print outs are excellent and while graphics may not appear on the screen, they certainly print out in their full glory.

LocoScript 4 will not easily print out graphics in more than one colour, but it is possible with a colour separation technique. For those of you who are less adventurous, pictures will print out in any of the seven colours that the text will, providing you have a colour printer.

LocoScript will never be a desktop publisher, but when used in harmony with MicroDesign, it comes pretty close. Wonderful effects can be achieved that put rivals like Word 6 to shame. The truth is that many PC word processors have no graphics capabilities whatsoever and if they do, they are clumsy and restrictive. After a bit of practice, LocoScript 4 can produce admirable results.

Apart from the graphics side, Release Two

includes a couple of other new features. Firstly all the bugs have gone and LocoScript now works smoothly and speedily once again. There is no more slow scrolling through pages with columns and printing has speeded up enormously. Another welcome bonus is the new "Export to Loco 3" option, which appears in the [f1] Actions menu in Disc Management. This options means that your documents can be used with programs like MicroDesign 3 or LocoLink for Windows. These programs will not accept standard LocoScript 4 documents. Simply converting your documents solves this little problem.

LocoScript 4 Release 2 comes with a new manual, once again in a startling shade of pink. This well written guide covers all the new features of LocoScript 4 including colour printing and columns, but it assumes a knowledge of LocoScript 3. I am unsure what new users, or former LocoScript 1 users are supposed to do. Bewildering features such as scalable fonts go unexplained.

LocoScript 4 is a brilliant advance on LocoScript 3 and deserves every success. Well done to LocoScript Software for sticking with the old computer. If you want the best out of your PCW, get LocoScript 4. At just £39.95, it is hardly going to burn a hole in your wallet. In future, there may be further versions of LocoScript, but for the moment, we can't see how they can improve on this one!

LocoScript 4 is available from LocoScript Software, 10 Vincent Works, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3HJ. Phone 01306 747757. You can buy LocoScript 4 with an Epson Stylus Color 600 printer for just £279, contact LocoScript for further details.

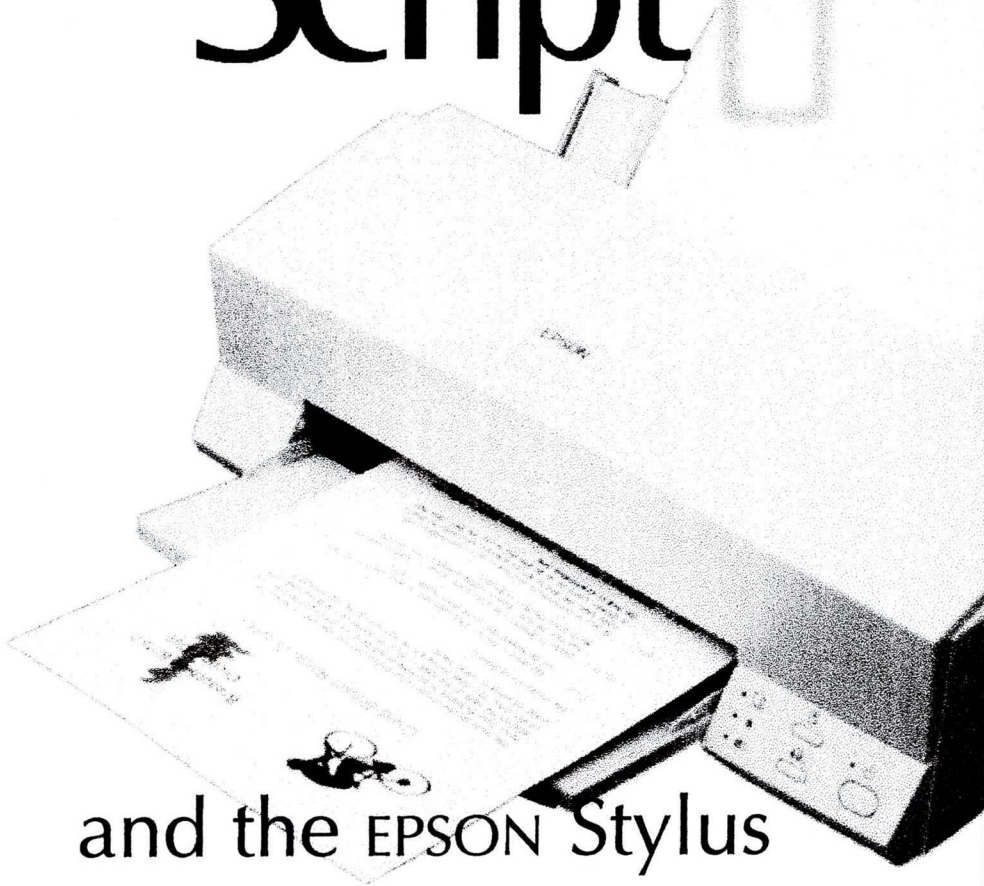
LOCOSCRIPT 4 RELEASE 2

Price £39.95 Company LocoScript
Telephone 01306 747757

Ease of use	●●●●●●
Features	●●●●●●
Documentation	●●●●●○
Value for money	●●●●●●

PCW Today Rating ●●●●●●

LocoScript



and the EPSON Stylus Color 600 Printer

a great combination for £279
 (plus £49.95 if you need a printer interface)
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- I'd like LocoScript 4 for my Amstrad PCW printer £39.95
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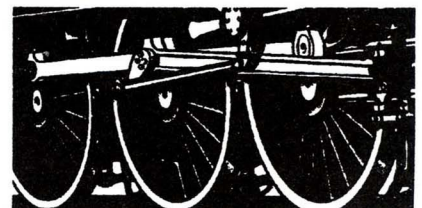
Payment by:

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Exclusive: RoutePlanner

It's here at last, and we've got the first review

AT LAST, after months of waiting and wondering, RoutePlanner has finally arrived. We've talked about it for ages, so does it live up to expectations? Ask a silly question - Richard Fairhurst didn't keep us on tenter-hooks for nothing - this is an absolute gem.

RoutePlanner is up-there with MicroDesign and LocoScript as a PCW giant. Hopefully it should give the aging Amstrad the boost it needs. Without a doubt, this is the biggest PCW release in years, eclipsing even the surprise LocoScript 4.

The package is truly original, there has never been a program of this kind for the PCW, ever. Okay, so it was written for the CPC first, but this version is far superior. Essentially, RoutePlanner will find you the best route between any two places in mainland Britain, in a matter of seconds. It is very similar to the acclaimed PC software - AutoRoute Express. Anyone with a car will find this an essential buy.

The RoutePlanner screen is extremely attractive, making superb use of both graphics and space. The majority of the screen is taken up by a line-drawn map of Britain (excluding Ireland), with the major cities pin-pointed. To the right of the map, the journey details appear once you have entered them. Below this are a set of great little icons. A traffic cone is used for the "avoid black-spots" option. Quit is accessed from a "motorway ends" sign. These are a couple of examples of the subtle touches that together make this program a sure-fire hit.

To access the various screen options, you use the on-screen pointer, which looks exactly like the mouse arrow in MicroDesign. Sadly, you won't be able to use a mouse this time. Instead, the pointer is moved by the arrow keys. Holding down [SHIFT] speeds up the pointer and pressing the grid "hash" key in the centre has the same effect as the right mouse button. To select a function, you move the

pointer over it and 'click' with the hash key. This may sound a little complicated and it is true that it does take some getting used to, but after a little practice, you'll probably prefer it to the mouse.

To zoom into the map is very easy. Just move the pointer to the area you want to see and press the [+] key. Continue pressing this key and you zoom further into the map. The further in you go, the more detail is shown. You can zoom from 1 to 32, with the zoom-level always displayed at the bottom left of the map. Viewing at 32x reveals the most, roads are labelled, minor roads appear and more place names are shown. In places where town names would overlap, only one is shown. However, strangely, some quite major place names are missed for this reason.

It is possible to move around the map by using the scroll bars at the sides of the map. These enable you to move without zooming in and out. You can also click anywhere on the solid map of Britain, shown at the right of the screen, and you will move to that point on the main map.

Planning a journey is easy. Clicking on the rectangle at the bottom of the page brings up a list of place names, all in alphabetical order. Press the first letter of the town name, where you will start your journey from. A list of all towns beginning with that letter is shown in a window. Move the cursor down to the correct town and highlight it. Then click on the "From" button. Repeat this procedure for the destination town, only clicking on "To" at the end. Click "OK" to accept your choices and the two names will appear on the top right of the screen. Now click on "Fastest" and your route will be calculated.

The calculation takes a little time, but nowhere near as long as I was expecting. Around 30 seconds is usual. The route will be shown on the map as a bold line. Clicking "Fastest" again gives full details of turnings and cities along the route. This can be saved to disc or printed out, for reference during the journey.

It is possible to customise the route if you are not happy with what RoutePlanner suggests. If you do not drive at the speeds that RoutePlanner expects, it is possible to change this by clicking on the speedometer icon at the bottom of the screen. You can input your speed on all types of roads.

If you want, you can ask RoutePlanner to avoid black-spots. You may not wish to take the motorways or to go through big cities. Just click a place on the map or itinerary and click "OK". Then with one click of the traffic cone icon, you will avoid that particular black spot.

RoutePlanner will also let you estimate up to four routes at one time, this is handy if you want to plan your route in separate legs. Each route is shown in the box at the top right of the screen.

Saving a map is easy. RoutePlanner has a handy export option included, again with it's own icon. This enables you to save the currently-displayed map as an MDA file, for use in MicroDesign.

If you can afford the reasonable £24.95 price tag and you drive a car, you simply must get a copy of RoutePlanner. It is certainly one of the most exciting products ever to be seen on the PCW. Even if you can't drive, I'd recommend RoutePlanner. It's great fun to use and makes a handy atlas, it may even persuade you to take up lessons!

Route Planner is available from ComSoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow, Tel 0141 554 4735. It is also available from SD MicroSystems on 01953 483750.

ROUTE PLANNER	
Price	£24.95
Company	ComSoft
Telephone	(0141) 554 4735
Ease of use	●●●●●
Features	●●●●●
Documentation	●●●●●
Value for money	●●●●●
PCW Today Rating	●●●●●

Inventory Master

A novel new package for the PCW 16

THE THREAT of robbery or accident worries everybody. If you've experienced the shock of a car accident, or the trauma of a burglary, then you'll know just how unwilling you are to give insurance details to the police. The valuation process is not something you do best in a state of shock. All those dreaded forms and sums - not a task for the faint-hearted.

The answer is, of course, to do all your valuations before the inevitable happens. Then at least, you'll be ready to face those dreaded forms. Insurance companies heartily recommend it, so why don't more of us do it? The answer is simple, it's too complicated. We just can't face that tricky task because it might never happen to us.

PCW 16 users could soon have the perfect solution. ComSoft are set to launch the excellent Inventory Master to an expectant market. This unique software will enable you to make an inventory or check-list of all your possessions, room by room, giving details of the serial number and the original and replacement cost. Keep your information on disc, or on paper and it could save a lot of hassle.

Inventory Master will run from disc or

from the Cabinet and comes with an excellent manual and comprehensive on-screen help. On loading up, you are presented with an example of what the '16 will do graphics-wise. A great little picture of a house springs up while you are loading. In the main screen, it becomes clear that the program is similar to other '16 packages and is very easy to use. Across the top of the screen are 10 graphical icons which act as short-cuts to various functions.

The first time you boot up, the first job is to list your insurance policies. There are three - Home, Motor and Undefined. These should be more than enough for the majority of needs. There is space for you to type in the insurance company name, address, policy number and cover for each policy.

Inventory Master has pre-set a list of rooms from a typical home. Obviously, you will need to change this, as not all of us have a mansion! You can add, edit or delete rooms. Each room makes up a file, and you must enter the contents of each of the rooms. There is a limit of 250 items but who has that many things in one room anyway? If you do, simply divide your rooms up into sections.

Listing the contents of each room is an arduous task, but it has to be done. There are spaces for details, serial number, where and when purchased, replacement cost and re-sale value. This can be quite a tricky task. When exactly did you buy that 8256? If you can't remember, just take an educated guess, the program won't let you continue unless you have completed every field.

One little glitch that I spotted here is that the space given for the serial number is not long enough for all numbers. As I only have a beta-version this may be corrected in the full-release version.

Once you have finished you can be mighty proud, and filling those forms will be easy. It would be wise to keep a printed copy and a disc away from your house, because fire does not discriminate.

This is a terrific program and there has obviously been a lot of thought and time put into it. If we keep getting packages like this, the future of the '16 is safe. ComSoft have not released Inventory Master yet, but our latest beta copy seems bug free, so a launch cannot be far off. When it is available, it will cost just £24.95 and ComSoft can be contacted at: 0141 5544735.

Desk Pro database

The latest software from P.D. Blake

SOFTWARE whizz, PD Blake, didn't think much of our review of his last product, MasterBase, so he went off and completely re-wrote the program. The result was Deskpro and we like what we see.

Deskpro is described in the manual as "Probably one of the fastest and most user-friendly databases available for the PCW". Well obviously that's a little biased, but at just £6 I don't think you can go wrong with this terrific product.

As with MasterBase, there are again, plenty of databases. Probably one for every task you would ever need. The pre-set databases include an address book, a notepad and various large multi-purpose databases. There's even a home-inventory database, which is essentially a scaled down version of the software reviewed above, so if you've got an older PCW, it is possible to use it for Home Inventories too.

All the faults of MasterBase have been

sorted. It is now possible to flick through each file, or to list them. You can even search for a particular keyword. It is possible to print-out all of the files in one database in a list, or you can just print the one you need.

There is also a sophisticated screen saver control, and a selection of disc, file and print utilities. All in all, this package is definitely the best public domain database on the market Contact 01482 864230. after 7pm for more details.

Account Manager

We review the first piece of '16 software to be released

AS THE first serious piece of PCW 16 software, Account Manager has got a lot to prove. Critics have said that the '16 will never be big enough to support its own software and any software written for it won't be very good.

Well, if Accounts Manager had a point to make, it does so very well. Written by an Amstrad programmer, it has the feel of a well-made package and has everything home users will need to monitor their bank account and finances.

In truth, Roseanne is a superb operating system and when fully utilised, programs written for it are incredibly user-friendly. Account Manager is extremely easy to use, and is the most user-friendly accounts package I have ever come across.

The program runs in the same way as all '16 programs. It can be accessed from either the cabinet or from disc. Although loading from the cabinet is unbelievably fast - around four seconds - I would recommend booting from the disc. The increased loading-time will be compensated for by the amount of cabinet space you will save.

The screen you are presented with looks very similar to all '16 screens, as you can see from the screen-shot. You can use the mouse or the keyboard, or a combination of both and really, so long as you are familiar with the '16's pre-installed software, you will be able to use this package without any trouble.

You are given what looks very similar to a bank statement, with a running balance, and all transactions shown. You enter your account details by pressing the coloured keys on your keyboard, or by clicking the boxes at the top of the screen.

Account Manager allows you to save each of your accounts as a separate file. Each transaction can be marked as 'received', or not, which is very useful if you are dealing with a lot of cheques.

Number	Date	Memo	Rec	Amount	Balance
D	01/01/1997	Starting Balance	✓	+569.35	569.35
	16/01/1997	Mortgage (S)	✓	-265.76	303.59
002030	16/01/1997	Credit Card Dec	✓	-56.07	247.52
002031	26/01/1997	Shopping	✓	-46.63	200.89
D	05/02/1997	Wages (S)	✓	+856.00	1056.89
	14/02/1997	Car Insurance (S)	✓	-22.40	1034.49
002032	14/02/1997	Credit Card Jan	✓	-235.34	799.15
	16/02/1997	Mortgage (S)	✓	-265.76	533.39
002033	24/02/1997	Shopping	✓	-89.94	443.45
	16/03/1997	Debit Card	✓	-25.00	418.45
	28/02/1997	Nursery (S)	✓	-25.80	392.65
D	05/03/1997	Wages (S)	✓	+856.00	1248.65
	14/03/1997	Car Insurance (S)	✓	-22.40	1226.25
002034	14/03/1997	Credit Card Feb	✓	-651.36	574.89
	16/03/1997	Mortgage (S)	✓	-265.76	309.13
	31/03/1997	Nursery (S)	✓	-25.80	283.33
002035	05/04/1997	Credit Card March	✗	-215.35	67.98
D	05/04/1997	Wages (S)	✓	+856.00	923.98

Like PCs and Macs, the PCW 16 has an internal clock, which is fully utilised in Account Manager. Standing Transactions which occur on a regular basis need only be entered once. So if you pay or earn money at set intervals, Account Manager will do all the work for you. If you tell the program how often a particular transaction occurs, Account Manager will automatically update your account every time these transactions are due. And the best bit is, the '16 hasn't got the Millennium bug, so it won't stop working when we get to 2000!

Account Manager's other advanced feature is the Categories system. This enables you to define categories or transaction types for both income and outgoings. You can then display and print separate tools for any of the categories or for a combination of the categories. This feature will greatly help anyone who has to fill their own tax returns on the new self-assessment system.

The manual suggests that you set up yearly files, each of which can hold up to 2800 records. However, if you prefer, these can be set up to run monthly or bi-monthly records, if you use the records for regular budgeting. This flexibility is one of the major strengths of the package.

You can either define your own categories, or use the pre-defined ones which include cash, car, shopping and so on. Once you have saved the categories, they are used with all other files in the folder, great if you have more than one account to juggle.

There is a print option with Account Manager which will print out what is shown on screen in a simple and clear table. Although basic, it is as good as the statements you receive from your bank.

Another handy feature of the program is that you can set your most used account to be the one that appears when you first start-up. This means that you can quickly check your account details, without having to bother about finding the right folder and file.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your point of view, Account Manager struggles with negative figures. So if you go into the red quite a bit, you may fool the program. Otherwise the program is a very easy to use and comprehensive package.

Account Manager available from Creative Technology, 01889 567160 for £24.99.



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SS7 1RD. Tele: (01702) 551618.

In the Public Domain

Kathleen Thorpe checks out some of the best budget software around

OVER The next few issues, I'll be taking a look at some of the best Public Domain software on the market. Public Domain is the cheap alternative to buying commercial software, you only pay the copying fee and postage. You can purchase PD from suppliers like PD Blake or Data X Change, or download it from the internet.

The following routines were written by Keith Simons and are included on many PD titles. The versions I have are on the PCW Compendium disc. There are far too many routines for me to go into great detail over all of them, so I have picked three of my favourite titles.

LABELS.BAS

This is more than just a label printing program, it is also a good database. When you run the program, you are first asked for the length of your labels. This is the measurement from the top of one label, to the top of the next label, in sixths of an inch. So if your labels are one and a half inches long, the number to input is nine (9 x 1/6) then press [RETURN].

An index card is then displayed on screen with a help menu and also an options menu which is:

Left Arrow	see previous label
Right Arrow	see next label
P	Print this label
D	Delete this label
E	Edit this label
N	New label
F	Find a label by name
EXIT	To finish

A clock is also displayed to indicate how long you have been using the program - for some reason.

Use the cursor keys to scroll through the help menu until the card is blank. This is where you can type in the address information. When you have finished that

label, press [EXIT]. You will then be asked what name you want to store it under. All labels are stored alphabetically after the help files, so keep the disc write-enabled.

Labels.Bas is very simple to follow and quick to use. With the find facility, it makes an economical database with the ability to print labels. If you are not concerned with sophistication and classy packaging, you may want to take a look at this little routine.

SEARCH.BAS

This is a text editor which runs through Basic. When you enter the program, you are presented with a menu as follows:

1. To load a new file
2. To save this file
3. To print this file in DRAFT quality
4. To print this file in HIGH quality
5. To use a blank file
7. To finish using

Unlike RPED.BAS, Search.Bas has no file length limit and when you reach the editing screen, you will see that you can use style codes. These include the basic italics, bold, condensed and underline as well as tabs, line spacing and so on.

These codes are simply entered along with the main body of text. Remember to take the codes off when they are no longer needed. In my opinion, Search.Bas is good enough to use as a very basic word processor, because of the styles you can add. However there is no word wrap and the PCW beeps rather alarmingly as you near the end of each line. In spite of this I enjoy using it when I'm working in CP/M. It can be used to type a note which can be inserted as ASCII into LocoScript.

WORDC.COM

Simply put any ASCII text file on a disc with Wordc.Com. At the A> prompt, type Wordc <FILENAME.EXT> press

[RETURN] and a message will appear on screen. This is followed by a series of dots. The longer the file, the more dots appear. When the count is over, the number of words is printed after the dots. I can't tell you if there is any limit to the number of words that can be counted at once, but I tried it on a file of 44k in length, containing over 5,000 words and it coped quickly and easily.

This program is handy for those people who use a word processor without a word-count, such as earlier versions of LocoScript. I find it useful for documents typed in PD word processors like Search.Bas.

Q&A.BAS

This is a trivia quiz, disguised as noughts and crosses. A grid is drawn on the screen, three boxes across by three boxes down. The boxes are numbered from one to nine.

Choose a box and type its number, each number relates to a question which has a three possible answers. You are playing against the PCW and if you get the answer right, a cross will be put in your box. If you get it wrong, the sneaky old PCW gets a nought instead. Three crosses in a row and you win.

There are about 100 questions in the listing, enough to keep the game going for quite a while without repeating questions. But if you are interested in Basic programming, you can add more, as long as you stick to the principles of public domain. Your added questions can be released as shareware if you wish.

There are a few other entertaining listings on PCW Compendium, such as Fish-net. Bas, Simuln.Bas and Animate.Bas. They can be an amusing diversion from word processing, desktop publishing or programming.

There'll be more Public Domain next time.

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What's on the menu?

In the first of a great new series, PD Blake gets to grips with BASIC

THE MAJORITY of PCW users purchase their machine as a first time computer. A newcomer will find many confusing things on their CP/M master disc, especially BASIC.COM. This is mainly because it is not very well documented, and the only manual you will get is the one for Locoscript, which doesn't say much, if anything, worth noting about BASIC.

There are manuals available, and the best one I've seen so far (yes I know I've complained about them in the past, but credit where credit is due) comes from Locoscript Software. It is very comprehensive, both as a guide for beginners and a reference for old hands, the price, as far as manuals go, is quite

reasonable too (mine cost £15, or thereabouts, but that was a while ago). It is a good book and well written, as it should be, after all, it was Locoscript Software who wrote BASIC.COM in the first place.

Still, there are those who haven't got a manual, and those who don't want one, mostly because they believe that they probably wouldn't be any good at writing programs, or they think that nothing useful could be made from such a simple language. Well, I hope to prove them wrong, by showing both how easy BASIC is to use and the useful things it can be made to do.

The easiest way to do this is by showing example programs, something you can copy and see what it does. First, to get into

BASIC just type A>BASIC from CP/M and press return, then type AUTO and press return and start writing from line ten, pressing return after each line.

I won't bother to tell you what the examples do, only what they are, just read the statements beginning with REM. They should give you a good idea. The best way to find out is to write them as a BASIC program yourself.

When you have written them just type SAVE"FILENAME.EXT" and press [RETURN]. To run them type RUN and press [RETURN]. To load them in future type LOAD"FILENAME.EXT" and press [RETURN] then type RUN. HAPPY PROGRAMMING

1) The first example is a simple menu program.

```

10 CLS$=CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H":REM 'string definition to clear screen'
20 PRINT CLS$:REM 'clear the screen and home the cursor to the top left corner'
30 PRINT:PRINT"1) Option 1    2) Option 2    3) Option 3":REM 'display the options'
40 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN 40:REM 'if no option is chosen loop until one is'
50 K%=VAL(K$): REM 'makes INKEY$ recognise numerical keypress only'
60 IF K%<1 OR K%>3 THEN PRINT CHR$(7):GOTO 40:REM 'if the key press is out of the option range this makes a beep and continues to loop'
70 ON K% GOTO 100,200,300:REM 'loops to the appropriate option'
100 PRINT CLS$
110 PRINT"This is option 1....."
120 PRINT:PRINT"PRESS ANY KEY"
130 WHILE INKEY$="":WEND:REM 'loops until any key is pressed'
140 GOTO 10
200 PRINT CLS$
210 PRINT:PRINT"This is option 2....."
220 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 210:REM 'this is how a screen saver works - it will continue until you press any key'
230 GOTO 10
300 PRINT CLS$
310 e$=CHR$(27):a1$=e$+"b?":a2$=e$+"b"+CHR$(0):REM 'this sets up for a flashing screen'
320 PRINT e$"c"+CHR$(0):FOR n=1 TO 100:PRINT a1$;a2$;:NEXT:REM'this actually makes the flashing'
330 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 300:REM 'this keeps it flashing until you press a key - just like a screen saver'
340 GOTO 10

```


2) To further add to example 1, change the following lines...

```
30 PRINT:PRINT"1) Option 1    2) Option 2    3) Option 3    4) Next example": REM 'display the options'
60 IF K%<1 OR K%>4 THEN PRINT CHR$(7):GOTO 40: REM 'if the key press is out of the option range this makes a beep and
continues to loop'
70 ON K% GOTO 100,200,300,400: REM 'loops to the appropriate option'
```

and add these lines concerning cursor control...

```
400 PRINT CLS$
410 TOP$=CHR$(150)+STRING$(20,154)+CHR$(156):REM 'defines string for top of a box'
420 LIN$=CHR$(149)+CHR$(27)+"p"+STRING$(20,32)+CHR$(27)+"q"+CHR$(149): REM 'defines the filled area of the box'
430 BOT$=CHR$(147)+STRING$(20,154)+CHR$(153): REM 'defines the bottom of the box'
440 PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y";CHR$(32);CHR$(32)+TOP$:PRINT LIN$:PRINT BOT$:PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y";CHR$(35),CHR$(32)+STRING$(50,32):REM
'draws the box and defines where it is drawn - and clears the bottom of it away each time'
450 PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y";CHR$(33);CHR$(32)+LIN$:REM '
460 PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y";CHR$(34);CHR$(32)+LIN$:REM 'tells the cursor to add another line to the box
470 PRINT CHR$(27)+"Y";CHR$(35);CHR$(32)+BOT$:REM '
480 K$=INKEY$: IF K$="" THEN GOTO 440:REM 'returns the box to normal and starts again until a key is pressed'
490 GOTO 500
500 PRINT CLS$
510 REM 'short message - if you don't want to add this put GOTO 10 in line 490'
520 PRINT:PRINT"You can make the box as big or small as you like, just by adding or taking the print":PRINT"commands. CHR$
stands for character, and means the characters which cannot normally be"
530 PRINT"found by the usual means. The numbers are the characters ascii value. To find the ":PRINT"various, and useful
characters just change the numbers in brackets and see what happens.":PRINT"But don't mess with number 27":PRINT:PRINT"Press
any key"
540 WHILE INKEY$="" :WEND
550 GOTO 10
```

Well that's it for this time, if you didn't understand it do the sensible thing and buy a BASIC manual. If you do understand it then you will have learned a few simple commands and routines that allow you to mess about with the screen a little. I know that you're thinking it's not very useful, and it probably isn't by itself, but combined with more complicated routines it can help make a program look that bit more professional.

YOUR LISTINGS



Are you a programming buff? If so, we would appreciate your listings and programming tutorials. It doesn't just have to be BASIC. We'll print listings in any PCW programming language. Simply send your listings and tutorials - preferably on disc - to: The Programming Column, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.

Multi-coloured MD!

Roy Martin and Phil Manning investigate producing colour DTP pages

ALTHOUGH the Amstrad PCW is a monochrome computer, it is possible to print in colour, without purchasing a new printer. MicroDesign users can print pages in a wide variety of colours. Mono-colour effects are readily achievable, just by changing the colour of the ribbon. Ribbons in a wide variety of colours are available, either as replacement ready-filled ribbon cassettes or as self-load refills.

Multi-coloured printing requires a more sophisticated technique. Because coloured ribbons can only print in one colour at a time, a series of print runs is required - one run for each colour used. The range of designs is only limited by your imagination and available colours. The idea of printing onto coloured paper should not be overlooked since quite unusual and unexpected results can be achieved. Printing for fabric is also a possibility, if unique T Shirt design is your style. However, for that you will need special transfer paper

The primary problem you will encounter is ensuring that each colour image is printed in exact registration with every other colour used, so there is no unattractive overlapping of colours. Using tractor-feed paper or one of the inexpensive paper guides is recommended to keep the paper in the same position during each run.

The following guide will work best with the PCW's own dot-matrix printer and MicroDesign 3, however you can adapt it for other printers and other software, whatever best suits your own particular system.

Somewhere on the printer path of your printer, a marker is required. This being a hi-tech process - we used a straightened paper clip, secured to the printer frame by sticky-tape. Wind the paper onto the printer, to its normal start-position and with a pencil, make a line which aligns with the marker. Wind the paper back about half an inch and then carefully advance the

paper again until the pencil line and the marker exactly realign again.

Every time the paper is reset to the marker, it must be made to approach the alignment from the same direction. This ensures that the inherent back-lash in the drive-train is biased in the same direction every time.

Usually it is best to start with the black outline of the chosen image. This will be called the master. This image should have no in-fills at this stage, and any corrections should be made now. It is tricky to edit mistakes after the first stage.

Across the top of the page, well clear of the image, put a series of boxes, almost touching, one for each colour run to be used, this is including black as a colour. These boxes must be set on exactly the same level as each other, you'll see why, later. Re-save this image as an MDA, even if it is a whole page, onto disc.

Print out this page, and fill in with coloured pens, all those parts, including black, where colour is to be put. You are limited only by your imagination and the variety of print-ribbons you have available. However, as this is your first time, a good maximum will be three or four colours. Try to keep the areas of colour quite fine. Anything too elaborate can look over-the-top and messy.

Set the MASTER.MDA towards the top of the LAYOUT screen. All subsequent reloadings of all images must be placed exactly on this spot on the screen. Call up the OPTIONS menu, turn the cursor readout on and select mm. Exit back to LAYOUT and press [EXTRA] then [0] to set the cursor reference to 00 00. On each and every subsequent loading, check the new image is located at 00 00 before pressing [ENTER].

On the assumption that much of the master image will remain black, modify it in accordance with your hand-coloured masterpiece. Where sections of your master

image are to be in-filled with black, use GRAPHICS and FILL. Those parts where you wish the black to be replaced with a colour, erase using [UNIT]. Write the word black in the first left hand box and erase the rest of the boxes. Save this completed image as BLACK.MDA. This will be used in your first print run, with the black ribbon.

Reload the MASTER.MDA to the 00 00 reference point and use GRAPHICS to infill all those areas you wish to carry the next colour, for example, blue. With [UNIT], erase all those areas you wish to become the new colour, leave the rest as it is. Also erase the second box at the top.

Load the master again, in its usual alignment, and in EXOR mode. This will invert your work, and highlight your deleted sections. You will be left with a colour separation image for blue, or whatever colour you intend to use next. Using GRAPHICS WRITE, write the name of that colour in the second box, at the top of the page. Save the full image in the name of that colour, for example: BLUE.MDA.

Repeat the above image for each of the remaining colours, using the top boxes, in turn, to identify the colour of the separation image. You will end up with a colour separation image for each colour of print run.

Reset your paper exactly as before. Check you have the first (black) colour ribbon in the printer and load the black image to the 00 00 spot and print as many copies as you need, plus spares for mistakes. Rewind the paper to align the markers as you did at the beginning. Change the ribbon to your second colour - blue in our example. Load the next colour image and print. Be prepared to stop printing and adjust the start point if the check boxes at the top of the page do not line up exactly. Repeat the process for each colour.

Don't be afraid to experiment, you will be surprised at the effects you can achieve. Remember, practice makes perfect.

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Bitwise string operators	BOX/PLANE/ORB
Store or display sorted directory with file size	POLYGON/FIGURE/SPRAY
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Basic98 comes with an integrated editor that can create and read an 'infobase' of up to 100 64k files and 4094 topics. This has been used to create the 532k manual, which can be viewed in the lower half of the screen as you are writing a program, and which is automatically reopened, with the source code position, to explain any compilation or runtime error that occurs.

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New technology for your old PCW

David Landers finds out how you could improve your PCW's performance

CIRTECH'S Flash Drive is a super-fast start up system that holds information from two start-of-day discs: one CP/M and one Loco. It dramatically reduces the time taken to get your PCW up and running - with the bonus of adding extra storage capacity - and here's how to make the most of it.

First here are a couple of tips for CP/M users. Think of the Flash Drive as a hard-disc systems for programs. It can hold CP/M utilities and all your favourite applications as well as the main EMS/EMT system file. Programs load far more quickly from ROM and you'll never mislay the disc! Before installing, set program and submit files to 'System'. Using the standard CP/M SET.COM utility, the command is - SET filename.ext[SYS]. Alternatively, the job will be both quicker and easier if you have a file-manager like NewSweep.

Setting its System attribute makes a program available from groups other than '0' - it also hides that file from the Disc Manager screen when you boot LocoScript. Remember that, in CP/M, you must use DIRs to get a directory listing of such files, (in LocoScript, use [f8] to show hidden files)

Before installing, check any SUB files for drive designators - the read-only Flash Drive is A: in CP/M and the first floppy drive is C:. So you may need to change certain lines - when a SUB file copies something to disc, for instance, your PROFILE.SUB should, at the very least, use SETDEF to define the search path. A sensible path would be A:,M:,* (Searching ROM before RAM, then the current default drive, whichever that is).

Don't use PROFILE.SUB to load an application unless it's a 'front-end' that you run every time. If you use The Network from Creative Technology, you must put a

Network 'Key' disc into the floppy drive at start-up to comply with anti-piracy requirements. In fact, this is no bad thing. It means you can end your PROFILE.SUB file with the command NETWORK and only put the floppy in when you actually want to run the program. (There will just be a beep and an error message on those occasions when you don't.)

When you install CP/M on your Flash Drive, remember that PROFILE.SUB and SUBMIT.COM must be named explicitly before FCOPY will accept them. Make sure that you reserve Flash space for Cirtech's specially modified DISCKIT and also for their COPYDISK utility - the latter is very

“...super-fast start up system”

useful. As well as backing up the ROM, it will copy a whole disc from drive to drive, regardless of format or size. It even prompts for a new floppy if it fills the current one. For those of you familiar with MS-DOS on the PC, it works like XCOPY - which means it copies file by file rather than track by track.

Incidentally, with COPYDISK on the Flash Drive, you've also got a handy tool for defragmenting your floppies. As discs tend to get more and more full, the files on them become fragmented. In other words, bits of newer files tend to get written all over the place - wherever there's room - and this can slow down disc access quite considerably. Provided you've got two floppy drives, (or sufficient RAM to copy a complete disc to M:) you can get COPYDISK to copy one drive to another.

The files on the new disc will be written sequentially, allowing noticeably faster access. Verify this new disc, then reformat the old one for further use.

Flash Drive holds two PCW start-up systems and LocoScript users benefit greatly from the time it saves when booting a Loco 'full-house'.

LocoScript's Disc Manager will be showing your floppy drive(s), then the Flash Drive (which is C: under LocoScript) and finally, Drive M:. This means that scrolling the screen from one end to the other can still take ages, even with all the CP/M files hidden on drive C:. Rather tiresome if you like to work in M: and save copies to A: - but there is a shortcut.

When you need to copy a document from M: to A:, press [f3], [ENTER] for "Copy file". Instead of using the cursor keys to move laboriously across the screen, press [ENTER] again (as if you wanted to copy to the group you're already in). The usual confirmation menu will appear, with the highlighted bar on the top line, against "New filename". Tap the down-cursor twice to drop to the "Drive" line and type in A. Press [ENTER] and the file will be copied instantly to the same group in Drive A:. If you want another group (or if you have 'named' your groups differently on the two drives) you'll have to alter the second menu line, too.

A similar trick can be used to move across the Disc Manager screen without actually copying anything. Press [f3], [E], [ENTER] as if you intended to erase whichever file is currently highlighted. This time, when the confirmation menu comes up, hold down the [Z] key long enough to mess up the filename, then change the Drive letter as before. When you press [ENTER] now, LocoScript won't be able to locate any ZZZZZZZZ.ZZZ files on the new drive and will tell you to "Cancel the operation". Fine - do that (by pressing [ENTER] or

[CAN]) and you'll find that you've jumped into the drive you wanted.

The Flash Drive is 'read-only' - meaning that you aren't allowed to alter anything on it. You might expect that in this situation, LocoScript would offer to send an edit-result to Drive M: - which is the usual response when the program can't perform a disc-write. But (presumably due to a programming glitch), this doesn't happen unless you set the document files themselves to [RO] (read only). Then you can edit a Flash Drive Document, save the changed version on M: and copy that to a floppy - though not back to the Flash Drive of course.

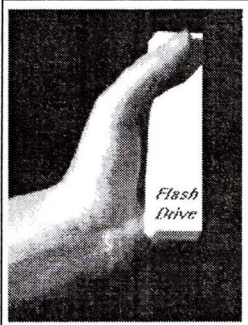
This can be a useful facility. For instance, you might simply wish to view lengthy documents full of reference material. Or perhaps you have standard business

documents which need personalising before they're issued. In either case, the Flash Drive would be an ideal place to hold them - just remember to set that Read-Only attribute beforehand. As previously, this has to be done via CP/M, using SET.COM or a suitable file-manager.

If you have LocoMail installed, you'll be able to Fill and Merge on Drive C: - so design suitable 'FIL' documents for standard letters and invoices. They'll always be to hand, and unlike a TEMPLATE.STD, you can hold several in the same group. In fact, with LocoMail on the system, any document can be viewed on C: simply by Filling. [RO] status is no longer necessary and the document needn't contain LocoMail codes. Similarly, LocoFile datafiles on C: can be inspected and printed, (but not altered). They run in the normal way, though certain options won't be

available. There's not much point in having these datafiles automatically copied to M: at start up, so give them anything other than the usual 'DAT' filename-extension - LocoFile won't mind.

Flash Drive is available in two sizes. The larger, 2MB model has the potential for storing an awful lot of LocoFile data - and this needn't be confined to your own, personal database files. Three Inch Software's Thesaurus, for example, is in LocoFile format. With this 772k datafile on C:, LocoScript gains a permanent thesaurus that pops up instantly while editing - just like it's PC cousin. Believe it or not, the PCW version is arguably better. Out of curiosity, I checked 'cousin' on both. Script Professional 2 Plus, with "No entry for this word", was shamed by the 3" Thesaurus which offered 24 associated words and phrases!



■ The Flash Drive is, as you can see, not only powerful but compact too

Flash Drive comes in two sizes, 1MB and 2MB, with or without a through connector and prices start at just £65. It uses the latest EPROM technology - which stands for Erasable, Programmable, Read Only Memory.

Once programmed, data is retained even when the PCW is switched off. But, if necessary, the EPROM chips can be erased and re-programmed from scratch.

Cirtech, the manufacturers are on 01835 823898. However, you may need to upgrade your version of CP/M and/or LocoScript in order to use it - if so, speak to Creative Technology (01889 567160) and/or LocoScript Software (01306 747757).

Three Inch Software can be contacted on 01908 690704: their Thesaurus requires LocoFile and a 720k floppy drive the software comes on a special, extended-

format, 3" or 3.5" disc). It costs £14.95 and is highly recommended for all writers.

No matter what they call it, LocoScript v2.5 is really LocoScript 3 in cut down form - Flash Drive works with either, from versions 2.56/3.06 on, as well as LocoScript 4. CP/M must be version 1.15 or 2.15.

A clever Public Domain program, CCPCH, allows more than one PROFILx.SUB to exist on the Flash Drive - chosen by key-press at star-up. But accomplishing this demands a considerable level of CP/M expertise.

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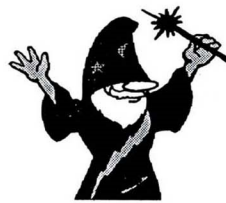
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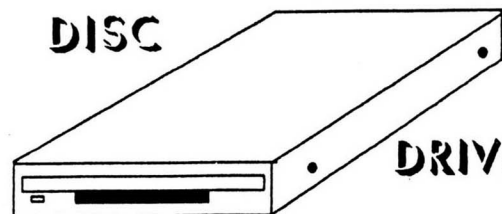
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Indexing the files

Rod Shinkfield continues his LocoScript tutorials

IN THE last issue we learnt how to sort LocoScript files so they organised between four discs. As letters are written and saved in the appropriate groups on each one of the four letter discs, so the management screen will become filled with more and more anonymous filenames.

The example letter, PCWAPR12.96, used last time, would be easy to find as we know what the filename is. We also know that the letter code 'PCW' stands for 'PCW Today'. And, therefore, all filenames beginning with a 'P' must be found in the group PPP on the I-P letter disc. But what we don't know, nor can we often remember is what each letter contains while hiding behind their filenames (see the Disc management screen shown in the last issue of PCW Today). It would not be practical to open all the files in group PPP to search for PCWAPR12.96, should we forget it's filename or need reminding of it's contents.

One method to find out what a letter may contain would be to place the cursor on each filename shown on the disc management screen. Press [f5] and [ENTER] to bring up the Inspect document menu and then see by the brief note on the three short lines allowed in the Inspect document facility, what the letter is all about. But, unfortunately, you have to remember to type in the details in the first place. Inspect document is one of those handy little LocoScript features it is so easy to overlook. Also, as it still means each filename must be inspected in turn, it would still be too time consuming to use over many filenames.

A better method would be to create a LocoScript document named INDEX.nnn (INDEX.AAA, INDEX.BBB, INDEX.CCC and so on), which would not restrict you to three short lines. You could save such an INDEX.nnn file in each group. Then, opening the index file in group PPP, for example, would allow you to scroll down the index until you recognise the letter you want by the list of contents. After noting down the letter's filename and

```

A: PPP INDEX.PPP Editing text. Printer idle. Using M:
Layout 1 Pi2 LSL CR+0 LP6 Page 1 Line 1/9
f1=Actions f2=Layout f3=Style f4=Size f5=Page f7=Spell f8=OPTIONS EX
0 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
PPP↓ LETTER INDEX.↓
↓
PA - Painting Association↓
PA_DEC12.96 Contents of letter are written along this line
PA_JAN05.97 Contents of letter are written along this line
↓
PC - Painters Club↓
PC_DEC04.96 Contents of letter are written along this line
PC_MAR27.95 Contents of letter are written along this line
PC_MAY20.97 Contents of letter are written along this line
↓
PCW - PCW Today ↓
PCWAPR12.96 EXAMPLE LETTER ↓
    
```

closing the index file, put the cursor on the now known filename and display the wanted letter on to the screen by pressing [E] and [ENTER].

Another advantage of such an index file is that further information can be added to a letter's details at any time. The only restrictions are the usual ones of a file becoming over-large for quick opening and closing to inspect the contents. But more on the subject of over-large LocoScript files another time.

So let us now create an index for group PPP. Open a document in group PPP and name it INDEX.PPP. Hold down [SHIFT] and tap [f2] and [ENTER] for New Layout. As the index file is not usually printed out, margins could be removed completely, any text being allowed to stretch in a single line from position 0 and even as far as position 255. Later on, holding down [ALT] while pressing the right cursor key will scroll you along the line while giving you time to quickly scan the details. To return to the beginning again, simply press [SHIFT] and [LINE].

How you lay your index files out is naturally up to you, the important thing is that it does the job and displays enough information to allow you to find a saved letter. If you cannot remember the letter's filename but can recall a unique word, or you have used key words, [FIND] could be

used to search through an opened index file and take you straight to the letter you want.

Another good tip is: on finishing editing and before saving a letter, make a block copy of any key details, or even block copy the whole body contents of a short letter while it is still on the screen. These can be inserted when details are being added to the index file later. Doing so avoids having to type out such details again.

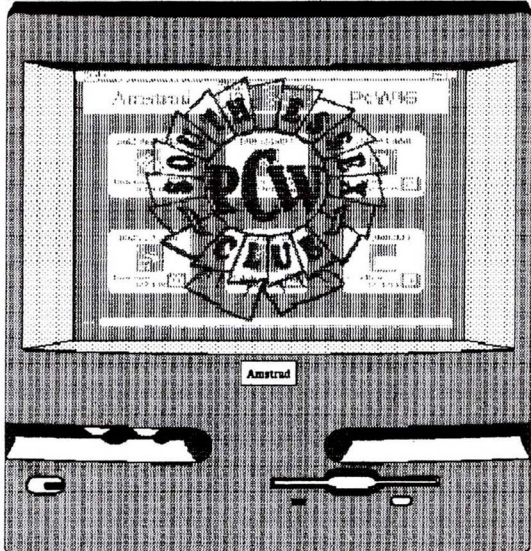
After creating an index file for each group, because of the initial letter 'I' in the word INDEX, each index file will be saved alphabetically. This means that it will be found in different areas from group to group and so would need searching out amongst the other letter filenames. To keep every index file as the top file in each group, put an apostrophe first, to make 'INDEX.nnn. SO now, index files, because of the apostrophe, will always be found at the very top of each group - which is very handy.

Let's quickly recap what has been covered so far in these LocoScript tutorials: How to organise discs, how to name letter files and how to create an index to help refine saved copies of your letters. In the next edition, I want to create an ADDRESS.nnn file. Very handy for the safe alphabetical storage and quick retrieval of names and addresses, plus other important details like telephone numbers.

THE DISC DRIVE

ISSUE 8

AUTUMN 95



The magazine dedicated to the Amstrad PCW

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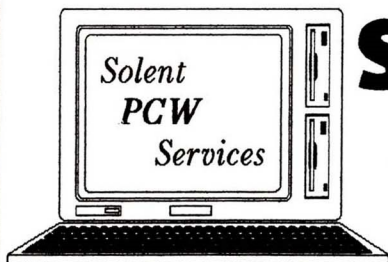
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Back to basics

MicroDesign Maestro - PD Blake is here again to help DTP beginners everywhere

THIS time and over the next few tutorials, I'm going to give all the newcomers to the PCW a quick crash course in using Microdesign. You won't learn everything, but I hope it'll be enough to get you started.

I decided to go back to basics after a letter from Frances Briggs, who has recently bought a PCW bundled with Microdesign however, unfortunately there was no manual or tutorial guide. I don't know if Creative Technology sell manuals separately, without the program, but it is always worth giving them a call. There must be many more new PCWers with a similar problem, so here goes.

Firstly we are confronted with a Microdesign master-disc - the last thing we want to do is ruin it - so the simple answer is: DON'T USE IT. Instead boot up CP/M - turn on the machine and put in your CP/M+ disc. When the system is ready, insert your Microdesign masterdisc in drive A: and type MD3MAKE then [RETURN] (ensure you have a couple of blank and formatted discs when you do this). If you follow the simple on-screen instructions and pretty soon you will have a start-of-day or working disc. From MD3MAKE you can also make a copy of the Microdesign Library disc, which should have come with Microdesign.

In this, the first tutorial for beginners, I will attempt to guide you through the task of designing your first page. This will be in A4 size and will include a 'header', the main body of text and one simple illustration (the finished product is shown here to scale).

The text and pictures are used as an example, feel free to use whatever content you like. If you don't have any images or clipart just leave the space blank for now. I would strongly recommend that you purchase some clip-art from one of the libraries - it certainly brightens up your work.

You can also of course use any fonts you like, or think will look best. Those shown

in the illustration are simply to give you an idea of what your page will look like when it's finished.

There is one simple rule with fonts - don't use too many on one page - try to keep it simple and neat. Make sure you don't go to the opposite extreme, using the same print style throughout can look boring. Try to find fonts that complement each other. Just looking at a magazine or newspaper should give you good idea of the kind of things that work well.

The page is, for simplicity's sake, made up in five stages. Following these five stages should lead you to your first finished page.

First you should select your fonts. Put your Library disc in the drive and press

“your first finished page”

[F3], then choose whether you want your font to be stored in slot number 1, 2 or 3, and press [ENTER] again. To choose your font, move the cursor keys and when you have highlighted the font of your choice, press [ENTER] once more. Repeat this until you have all three fonts that you want in their numbered slots. A word of warning, don't choose overly large fonts for the main text, or it won't all fit on the page. A font like STAN is good for body text, and try a bold font like GUARDIAN for the header.

Section A on the illustration shows the header. To create this is not as hard as it looks. First we have to enter LAYOUT. To do this quickly press [EXIT] then [L]. From LAYOUT we can create the box which borders the header. To do this simply press [B] for box and use the cursor keys to stretch the box so it is the right size and in the correct place.

The next step is to add the illustration. Your chosen graphic can either be a CUT file, a SCR file or an MDA file. This time, because it is the easiest, we will use an MDA file, the other two formats will be covered in the next tutorial.

Press [F1] and a small window should appear on your screen with the filename *.MDA highlighted. Just tapping [ENTER] will give you a list of all the MDA files on your disc. Again use the cursor keys to select one and press [ENTER] to confirm. A box representing your picture will appear on the page. Use the cursor keys to position the picture on the page. If you wish, you can scale the picture now too. To make it half size, hold down [EXTRA] and press [FIND], to make it double size hold down [EXTRA] and press [UNIT].

To add the text the quick way, just press [G] and move the box which appears on the screen over the spot where you want the text for the header to begin and press [ENTER], you will now be in the graphics section of MD. From here you can write directly to the page simply by pressing [W] and positioning the strangely shaped cursor that appears. You can also vary the style of the font, or even change the font by holding down [EXTRA] and pressing any of the keys shown in the EXTRA keys box to the bottom right of your screen - they correspond with the keys at the right of your keyboard (experiment with them to see what they all do).

Now you have completed the header, we can move to sections B and C. In the example, the main body of text is split into two parts - there are two short columns on the left and one longer column on the right.

Press [EXIT] then [E] to enter the editor and simply type in your text as you would with any other wordprocessor. Make sure that you do not use [EOL] as in LocoScript, in MD it means EXIT not end of line!

It is also possible to add style to your text,

or even change the font, by using the [+] and [-] keys. When you press one of these keys a small menu bar will appear with [BCDHIJLORU123 CAN] showing. B means **bold**, C centered, D **double**, H highlighted, I *italic*, J justified, L left justified, O outlined, R right justified, U underlined and the numbers represent the fonts. CAN will get rid of the menu.

Once you have written your text it must be MARKED before you can typeset it to the page. Personally I find the manual's way of doing this a little tedious so I do it like this, first save the text using [F5], then clear it by pressing [EXTRA] and [CAN] together, then load it again by using [F6]. I know it sounds a little long winded but you but you would have had to save it eventually anyway - this way, at least you won't forget!

Now you are ready to 'set' the text to the page. Just press [EXIT] and then [T] to enter TYPESET again. Press [W] and a window will appear. To set the text on the left hand side of the page, press [RELAY] and choose 2 columns from the menu which appears. Now move the window to the right place and make it the right size, leaving enough room for the illustration at the bottom and press [ENTER]. Now press [T] and then [PASTE]. Don't worry about the clicking sounds as the text appears in the window, it's only MD checking your style codes. For the single column of text follow the same instructions, only choose 1 column instead of 2 and position the window as in the demo page shown.

Section D is the end text and is purely optional. It was written in the graphics section as demonstrated in A. To place the graphic shown in E, simply follow the procedure already described in A.

Once you have completed your page, make sure there is a disc with enough space on it in the drive and use [F6] to save your page. You can then print it out from the LAYOUT section by pressing [P], setting the options in the print menu and then pressing [ENTER] to confirm it. Now you can take your first page and show it to everyone you know, just to prove you're as clever as you always said you were. However, if you're not so clever and made a few mistakes, don't panic.

Simply pressing [WORD] will UNDO most actions, although sadly not all of them.

Don't worry if you haven't any .MDA graphic files, though there should be some on your Library disc, as they are easily obtained from many places. See the ads in PCW Today for the best deals, just remember to shop around because you can pick up clip-art for next to nothing or you can pay a fortune for it, either way it mostly the same quality.

Next time around I'll give you a guided tour of the GRAPHICS section in full and show you just how much it can do. So if you haven't any CUT or MDA files then get some for Christmas.



The Martian Chronicle

The newsletter of the interstellar PCW users club (MAY 2145)

NEW DISCOVERY

An exciting new discovery has been made on Mars. It is believed to be an earthling of some kind. This strange specimen appears to be alive, though oblivious to it's surroundings. No one quite knows what kind of Earth creature it is, but top scientists from Jupiter claim that it could be a lost Japanese tourist judging by the amount of photographs it has taken. So far it has avoided the natives and seems quite happy scuttling around the rocks.

really are strange creatures, aren't they.

**PROBING
URANUS EARTH**

The creature is not intelligent, sources at the University of Neptune say, as there are very few intelligent creatures in the galaxy. However some of the most remarkable of these few creatures do actually live on the planet Earth and are commonly known as PCWers. Plans are now being made to send a probe to earth in the hope of

communicating with these creatures. The PCWfinder, as it will be known, will carry all kinds of sophisticated equipment such as it's own Keypress and Hand held scanner. It may even have a CT-RAM, with a possible external printer and Flash Drive, but most important of all, it will descend into the Earth's atmosphere waving a copy of PCW Today magazine in a friendly gesture in an attempt to avoid being shot down by the Neanderthal-like dwellers on the surface, known as PC & MAC users.



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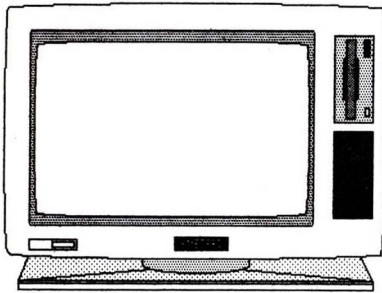
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Prottext in its CP/M version is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW; it also happens to be the best value word processor on the Amstrad CPC too. On one disc, the program features include:

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- * Prottext handles printing in columns with ease
- * simply configured for more advanced purposes
- * Prottext can easily produce ASCII files to let you transfer the text between computers, either by software or by e-mail
- * the free Prottext Users' Club is available to all Prottext users for the open exchange of tips, templates, and information

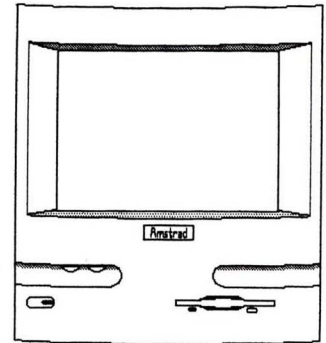
Prottext has had 12 years continuous development. Despite being packed with advanced features, above all, **Prottext v2.23** is fast and very easy to use. It is a tribute to the programmers that the user-friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout it's development. Because of **Prottext's** wide range of useful features, it is impossible to cover everything here, but further information is available from Brian Watson at **Prottext Software, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA**. Alternatively, you can phone 01353 777006 (from 7pm-9pm weekdays, or any time at weekends)

CP/M Prottext, the one-disc word processing solution, costs £25. It is available from **ComSoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, GLASGOW G31 2HW**. Orders may be placed by phone on 0141 554 4735, quoting your credit card details. Please state the computer model and your drive A: size when ordering.



Amstrads Anonymous

For people with a serious PCW addiction



WE ALL love having a go at our good mates, the PC users. These poor deluded people walk around in massed gangs seriously believing that their pricey Pentiums are the best thing since sliced bread. They have to be pitied don't they!

I myself, have to admit to owning and using a PC, a sin of the highest order, I know. Just recently I upgraded to Windows 95, (upgrading's a thing all PCers have to get used to, simply because it has to be done so often). I must confess, using that particular 'state-of-the-art' software absolutely terrifies me, (Please don't bother suing, Mr Gates, I have no money left after all that upgrading!).

Seriously though, my computer now crashes with an alarming regularity and this turns me into a nervous wreck every time I use it. What, with the threat of the 12,000 viruses which lurk around every corner and scary things like 'software conflicts', I tend to dash back to the safety of my PCW before I start chain smoking or worse!

I honestly believe that the best way to remove stress from the work-place is to replace all the PCs with PCWs. Good old Joyce and Anne have a calming effect. Nothing ever goes wrong, everything's reassuringly familiar and there's no noisy cooling-fans constantly buzzing in your ear! Okay, so it's pure fantasy, but if everyone used PCWs in the office again, NHS waiting lists would be a thing of the past!

You don't see much about Amstrads in the press these days, so it was refreshing to read Simon Hoggart in the Guardian recently: "My Amstrad word processor almost died this week", he wailed, "only a fellow Amstrad owner can tell you how

bleak a moment that was." With you all the way, Simon! Anyway, he goes on to declare his undying love for the computer, as PCWers have a habit of doing: "It's so slow you can make a cup of tea while it's saving a file and I like that very much," he continues. "Two years ago I thought it was sick unto death, but a Chinese expert in our local computer store breathed it magically back to life." Sigh of relief!

The esteemed Mr Hoggart goes on: "Now I have a fancy new laptop which has gone wrong as often in two months as the Amstrad did in seven years. We Amstrad users are like Morris Minor owners; we know they are technologically redundant, but we'll do almost anything to keep them on the road." He's certainly making sense so far!

"The other day, after an hour of cajoling and pleading, of prayer and offering chicken soup through the air vents, it finally coughed and spluttered back to life. I was overjoyed. Still, I would give it away, if I could find a home where it would be loved and cherished. But I fear that even Albanian schoolchildren would scorn an Amstrad."

Well, I'm not so sure about the last bit, but Simon Hoggart has certainly made some strong cases for the good old PCW. Needless to say, a copy of this magazine will be winging it's way to his desk in the very near future. Three cheers to Mr Hoggart for increasing awareness of our endangered species and well done to The Guardian for printing his words.

Can you believe it - it's almost two years since we first saw the PCW 16 - admittedly it took Betacom a further year to release the thing, but it has been around for a fair old time now. Anyhow, it seems about the

right time to assess the impact of the 16. Question One: Where's all the promised software? Question Two: Why did Amstrad ever bother writing anew Operating System?

Users are beginning to wonder how much new software will actually ever appear. So far we know there will be no MicroDesign, no Route Planner and no Protect. One cannot help but wonder what else will fail to materialise. To date there have been only two major releases and both pretty obscure at that!

As it stands, the 16 is a superb computer but the lack of software is of great concern. I just hope that Amstrad, Betacom, or whoever it is, hasn't shot itself in the foot and killed off its most popular ever product. Why oh why, didn't the programming whizzes just write a graphical front-end to CP/M - something similar to The Network - I know modern computers now need WYSIWYG technology to sell, but it would have been so easy to write an advanced LocoScript for a speedier machine. Once again, another lost opportunity to challenge the PC superiority. Wasn't CP/M the forerunner of DOS anyway?

If you've got a '16, good on you! They're not all bad, by any means. I use mine for quick letters and the like, at which their speediness is unsurpassed by any computer. The flash drive is a revelation. If you're thinking of buying one, I'll say go for it as long as you've got the money. It's certainly a great little toy, and it's a PCW. At £200 in the sales, who can go wrong?

That's all for now. There'll be more from Amstrads Anonymous next time. Cheerio!

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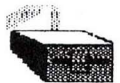
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