

I.O.U.

The Newsletter of the Independent Oric Users' Group

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EDITORIAL

Hello everyone, my name is Allan Whitaker and I've accepted the challenge of producing an issue of the I.O.U. in order to assist Gary. Of course, Dave Cheeseman has previously produced an issue so perhaps others of you would like to have a go. If so then contact Gary.

The next few months, up to Christmas, could prove to be the best opportunity for the ORIC name to be relaunched into the British microcomputer market. This would basically be achieved by the sale of the new TELESTRAT computer with a PRESTEL interface but also new products to support the ORIC-1 and ATMOS.

As reported in issue 10, W.E. (Software) is currently acting as sole agent for ORIC/Eureka Informatique in Britain and has recently advertised the new Microdisc with SEDORIC DOS for sale and the TELESTRAT for future sale.

The initial pricing of the Microdisc and DOS was unrealistic but a more recent price list from W.E. (Software) declares a price of £239.65 (inc.VAT) until the end of September. The estimated price of the TELESTRAT is £414 (+carriage) which, I understand, includes the microcomputer, double-sided Microdisc, modem and PRESTEL cartridge or software. Doubtless the price represents value for money but is it competitive when compared against the likes of Amstrad?

To make any real penetration of the British micro market the pricing must be keen and the package comprehensive so that it can be used for its particular application immediately. I wish W.E. (Software) every success and look forward to the revival of the support of the ORIC computers.

May I thank all the members who sent me articles for this issue. Due to restrictions on space I've not been able to include them all but I will pass them onto Gary for consideration for the next issue.

A.W.

NEWSFLASH

Other price cuts (all inc. VAT) from W.E. (Software) include:- ORIC V23 Modem complete with interface and PRESTEL software for £49.95, ORIC/Eureka COSMOS Printer for £269.95 and a new programmable Joystick Interface from ORIC/Eureka for £32.55.

A new item of software available for ORIC modem owners and others interested in communications is 'Oricomms' written by John Rushton and Trevor Shaw.

The scrolling type software offers all the basic facilities needed to communicate with Bulletin Boards but also includes a simple "chat-mode" for user-to-user comms. The minimum hardware requirements are ORIC computer, ORIC modem interface and a modem. The package includes an 8-page manual which provides previously unavailable technical information about the ORIC modem interface, including details of how to connect other modems to it! Versions are available for the V1.0 and V1.1 ROMs.

For further details contact Trevor Shaw at 43, Matlock Avenue, Dawley, Telford, Shropshire, TF4 2EL.

RESPONSE

Austin Meeson has written to inform us that Currys are currently retailing 3" Maxell discs for £39.95 for a pack of 10.

Mr J.A. Jelly and a friend of his have also experienced problems with the cassette remote control relay within the ORIC (reported in issue 9) and a solution they adopted

was to store the computer in a fridge for half an hour or so. In fact, his friend left his ORIC in the fridge over night by accident which freed the relay contacts and, luckily, didn't damage the computer. I wouldn't really recommend this treatment as it could induce condensation and stress components or connections within the computer. There is no truth in the rumour that it free(ze) more memory for the user.

R.M. Dutton has suffered the same problem with 'The Hobbit' (see issue 10) with 2 copies so perhaps another data recorder may produce better results. I had problems with one copy because it tended to tighten up within its case after a number of loads and my Keisho recorder couldn't cope with the friction of the cassette. My Ferguson deck has no problems with 'The Hobbit'. Mr Dutton would also like to know where he can obtain a copy of 'Fishy Business', an adventure produced by Salamander.

Alan Riley has been busy, he has contacted the writers of 'Damsel In Distress' (IJK) who happen to live in Holland and contribute to a user group over there. He is hoping to hear more from them in the future. He has learnt of a way to access any one of the 20 screens by loading the program then pressing many keys simultaneously. This causes a number to be displayed at the top of the screen after which pressing a key on the top 2 rows of the keyboard will select a corresponding screen from the game.

Alan also visited IJK in Blackpool to discuss the future support for the ORIC computers. He learnt that 3 new releases are planned before the end of the year and support will continue as long as the demand is there. Unfortunately, IJK has experienced a fall in its sales within the last year because the French market is now virtually self contained. So now their main sales are to FGC, OJ Software, OPEL and W.E. (Software). To remain viable the company produces for a wide range of computers but intends to await sales of the TELESTRAT (Stratos) before producing software for it. IJK has tried to import software from France but on sending handouts to dealers didn't receive a single reply so had to drop the whole idea. Let's hope that they continue to support the ORIC for some time because there is no doubt that they are the lead software house for ORIC games.

REVIEWS

ORIC/Eureka Microdisc and SEDORIC DOS

This review has been partly extracted from a French review and access to the Microdisc manual.

The ORIC single-sided Microdisc has been internally modified to allow a cassette deck to be used with the Microdisc connected at the same time. The Microdisc's separate power supply has also been modified to prevent overheating. The hardware is now very reliable and allows the easy transfer of your cassette programs to disc.

The software has been totally revised, resulting in an increase in storage capacity and a far superior DOS to ORIC DOS V1.1. With ORIC DOS the format was 40 tracks each containing 16 sectors of 256 bytes, i.e. 160 kbytes capacity per side. With SEDORIC (the name is derived from System d'Exploitation Disquette) the values by default are 42 tracks with 17 sectors giving 178.5 kbytes per side. These parameters may be controlled by the user when formatting a disc and the number of tracks may vary from 21 to 99 and the number of sectors per track vary from 16 to 19. The default values provide an increase in capacity without a reduction in reliability whereas the trade-off for the increase in sectors to 19 is a reduction in reliability and read/write access times. The transfer rate is truly exceptional; for example, the ATMOS demo occupies 149 sectors on the disc (i.e. just over 37 kbytes) and loads into memory in less than 4 seconds. This corresponds to a rate in the order of 10 kbytes per sec. 5.25" and 3.5" disc drives can also be connected to the system and 80 track formatting can be carried out as SEDORIC allows up to 99 tracks.

Other powerful facilities provided by SEDORIC are briefly described as follows:- RENUM allows renumbering of BASIC programs, MERGE joins 2 BASIC programs by merging, SEEK looks for a string of characters in a program, CHANGE exchanges all occurrences of a string with another specified string and NUM provides automatic line numbering. Other extensions to BASIC are provided which includes commands to control the keyboard in terms of its access and its layout. The keyboard can be inhibited altogether by the KEY OFF command and KEYIF enables any individual key to be tested. Similarly, the user may define particular functions to keys then save, load or modify the definitions. The control of disc errors is also provided. CREATEW and WINDOW permit the creation, with a full screen editor, of a screen containing strings, commands and data that can be saved into a file and recalled and used later. Note that with SEDORIC the DOS keywords do not have to be prefaced by the exclamation mark (!) but if the QUIT command is used then ! is compulsory.

The proper control of files is provided by SEDORIC with sequential, direct (random) and disc access and operation is facilitated by straight-forward BASIC commands. The HIRES screen (or part) can be easily saved and by linking certain images and utilising the speed of transfers graphic animation can be created.

SEDORIC possesses a number of reserved variables that provide information on certain aspects of the system in an instant. One can access the 6502 registers, determine the HIRES cursor position or determine if a file exists on a disc. An annex in the manual deals with these variables and another annex provides entry points of various DOS routines and the addresses of system variables which will be of particular use to the machine code programmer.

The SEDORIC disc also contains a number of utility programs. In particular, two files named ROMORIC1 and ROMATMOS enable the loading of the alternative ROM, as required, into the area of overlay memory normally occupied by the DOS. This enables all ORIC software to be used but has the limitation that the DOS cannot be used once the psuedo-ROM is loaded. Another utility called CONVERT transforms all ORIC DOS V1.1 files into SEDORIC format but it does not affect ORIC DOS data files saved by STORE.

Without doubt the Microdisc with SEDORIC DOS provides a quality peripheral for your ORIC which will greatly increase your enjoyment of programming. The French manual is being translated into English and is adequate for learning to operate the disc. If you already own an ORIC Microdisc then the SEDORIC DOS disc and manual can be purchased seperately from W.E. (Software) for £69.95, or can be obtained directly from Eureka for 460 French francs.

The DOS keywords are as follows:- APPEND, BACKUP, BUILD, CLOSE, COPY, CREATEW, CRESEC, DEL, DELBAK, DELETE, DESTROY, DIR, DKEY, DNAME, DNUM, DSYS, DTRACK, ESAVE, EXT, FIELD, FRSEC, INIST, INIT, JUMP, LDIR, LOAD, LSET, LTYPE, OPEN, PMAP, PROT, PUT, QUIT, REN, RESET, REWIND, RSET, SAVE, SAVEM, SAVEO, SAVEU, SEARCH, SMAP, STATUS, SYS, SYSTEM, TAKE, TRACK, TYPE, UNPROT, WINDOW, [, <, &, >.

The BASIC extentions are:- ACCENT, AZERTY, BOX, CHANGE, ERR, ERRGOTO, ERROR, HCUR, INSTR, KEY OFF/SET, KEYDEF, KEYIF, KEYSAVE, KEYUSE, LCUR, LINE, LINPUT, LUSING, MERGE, MOVE, NUM, OLD, OUT, PR OFF/SET, QWERTY, RANDOM, RENUM, RESTORE, RESUME, SEEK, STRUN, SWAP, TKEN, UNTKEN, USER, USING, VUSER, WIDTH.

League Champions from FGC for Atmos 48K only. Price: £5.95 from FGC, £4.95 from O.J. Software.

This is FGC's answer to Addictive's Football Manager. Loading time is approximately 5 mins. 20 secs. After loading is complete there is a somewhat loud rendition of the old Match of the Day tune. This could become quite annoying, especially if you want to

play the game without disturbing other people, because it cannot be switched off.

After the music has finished you are asked to enter your name as the team manager. You are then asked to pick your team from the list provided. If your favourite team is not included then you can pick any team and then change its name. There are 14 screens of instructions for you to read through at your own leisure. These explain the purpose of the game and how to play it very clearly.

This is strategy game and your task is to guide your team from division 4 hopefully to the division 1 championship. Along the way you have the chance to win the F.A. Cup and the Charity Shield. Whilst attempting to do this you also have the problem of trying to remain profitable.

Each division consists of 10 teams and there are 9 league matches to the season plus the F.A. Cup games, how many of which depends upon whether you are knocked out or not. You choose your team from the squad (if you wish you can change the names of the players to suit your choice of team) of players, some of whom may be injured and thus not available. You then see a comparison of various attributes between your team and the opposition and have the option of changing the team before playing the match. After opting to play the match you then have the nail-biting task of watching your score be calculated and then the oppositions to decide the match.

There are many aspects to this game including the transfer market, loans and the various attributes of each player including his skill and energy.

It is very wide ranging and it is difficult to do it justice in a review which is already a bit on the long side. One very big plus is the excellent use of menus and prompts which makes the game extremely playable. My only niggle is that the time it takes to calculate the league table is just long enough to be annoying during a long playing session. Thankfully you can save the game to tape to give yourself a bit of rest.

In my opinion this is an excellent, very addictive game which will appeal to fans of strategy games and to followers of football.

Gary Ramsay

IOU EXCHANGE

ORIC-1 or ATMOS mains adaptor for sale - £4. Contact Austin H. Meeson, 41 Roebuck Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 1AH. Tel Bloxwich 477422

ATMOS, games and books for sale - ring Mr D. Foster on Leeds (0532) 567940, after 6 pm weekdays.

The Hobbit, Killer Caverns, Oric Flight, Multigames 1 and more for sale - ring Mr L. Saunders on 0903-762361.

PROGRAMMING

The following tips from Mr J.T. Brassel of Shadwell, London have been received:- To give a neater look to numerical output a function can be defined to justify decimal points in columns by printing leading spaces:

```
DEF FN SF(S)=L-INT(LOG(S))
```

where L is set to the length+1 of the largest number to be printed. The function is called as:

```
PRINT SPC(FN SF(S));S
```

To provide an absolute DRAW command the following 2 functions can be defined:

```
DEF FN XPOS(X)=X-PEEK(#219) DEF FN YPOS(Y)=Y-PEEK(#21A)
```

calling these functions will draw from the current graphics cursor position to the co-ordinates X and Y.

E.g. DRAW FN XPOS(X),FN YPOS(Y),1

