

I.O.U.

The Newsletter of the Independent Oric Users' Group

ISSUE No. 11 - late August 1986.

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.

