

I.O.U.

The Newsletter of the Independent Oric Users' Group

ISSUE No. 14 - late February 1987

EDITORIAL

A belated Happy New Year to all our readers, and a special welcome to all those who have recently joined IOUG!

Despite the obvious attractions of other home micros such as the A****d range, the Oric system has survived and has never, in my view, been in a healthier state. There are 2 disc drives available - the Microdisc, and OPELCO's recently announced new drive (can someone confirm it is actually available, and perhaps send in a review?). Three DOS versions exist - the original Oric DOS V1.1 and Rados (both supplied by Opelco with their drive, but does anyone know if RANDOS can be purchased separately?), and finally Eureka's SEDORIC (which is available on it's own). There are now three word processors - Author, Minitext (reviewed in this issue), and the latest, Wordworth (reviewed in Issue 13). We have the excellent database system, Megabase, to compliment the original Oric Base. There is quite a respectable games software base, recently boosted by new software from Eureka, much of it stocked by WE(Software). Prestel access is possible with the Oric modem, and there is also a comms. program available which allows the use of other modems with the Orics (see response section). The built-in Centronics and RGB i/f's allow a variety of printers and monitors to be used. There is even a new computer in the Oric range - the TELESTRAT, with enhanced features - pity about the price! All sounds pretty healthy for the Oric owner don't you think.

I work for a large national charity and use my Atmos (+ Microdisc) a good deal in connection with my work as a database and word processing system. I also use the database in my capacity as Competition Secretary of the local Photographic Society. The latest addition to my system is the Oric modem which I use to access Prestel (MBX 213547242). Developments which I would now like to see are a random access database program (which exploits the new features of Rados or Sedoric), and an improved comms. program which e.g. allows MBX preparation off-line.

Many thanks to all who sent contributions to me or to Gary. Keep them coming - every little helps - Alan will need your support for Issue 15.

That's all for now - Bye!

Arthur Jackson

NEWSFLASH

This appears to be the first IOU issue which has been printed with Author, using the dot-a right-justify feature. Observant readers will note that r/j does not work in lines using printer codes for underlining etc. Does anyone know a way round this?

Those of you who have a teletext TV set will have noticed that we are now featured on CEEFAX p.703 - the "NEXT" magazine User Group listing.

Good news for disc users! They are now available for less than £3 (check the mail-order ads.).

ROB PLANT informs us that FBC will exchange tape based programs bought from them for a disc version in return for the price of the disc only. Also they have a tape to disc copier on disc costing £7.95 plus the cost of the disc.

Rob's info. doesn't say how much they charge for the discs, but they can be

contacted for details at FGC (Mailorder), 20 Meadowcroft, Euxton, Chorley, Lancs. PR7 6BU. Tel. 02572-70088. Rob adds that "they seem a very helpful firm worth supporting".

RESPONSE

V. BUNCE of 94, Cumberland Ave., Welling, Kent, DA16 2PU wants to interface some electronic projects with his Oric-1 and asks for information on the memory addresses used for the I/O ports. He (she?) would also be interested in hearing what people use their Oric-1 (and Atmos? - Ed.) for.

Well, there is a Chapter called 'Interfacing' in Penfold's little Babini paperback "An Introduction to Programming the Oric-1" (ISBN 0 85934 104 6), which contains helpful information. Chapter 1 of Geoff Phillips' book "Oric Atmos and Oric-1 Graphics and Machine Code Techniques" (ISBN 0-07-084743-6) also gives relevant information on ROM page 3 addresses. Since I am not technical this is the best help I can offer - perhaps others can add suggestions based on experience!

MR. G.K.PIKE, 3 Pentridge Close, Nythe, Swindon, Wilts SN3 3RH would like to know where he can get a Pace interface.

PHILLIP DUNSTALL, who has an Oric-1, is interested in Oric Forth, and wonders why no other non-Basic programming language was adapted for the Oric.

Well, Phillip I guess it's the old problem of an insufficiently large user base for the commercial programmers who earn their living by this work. If anyone knows of any language other than Forth which has been produced for the Orics then I am sure we would all like to know!

Phillip would also like to know if there is a 6502 Assembler for the Oric-1.

The answer is Yes, I know of 2! I think the best known is Orion. Then there is a program called EAD65C which contains a number of toolkit extensions of interest to the M/C programmer, including an Assembler. Both of these are available from FGC (address above) - the latter exclusively from this distributor.

ROB DAVIS wants to create a m/c ON ERROR GOTO routine, but needs help in finding where the BASIC error codes are stored.

I have referred Rob to the m/c listing on pp.142-3 of Geoff Phillip's book (for title details see the V.Bunce answer above). Any other answers please send to Rob at "Elsham", 113 Warwick Rd., Broughton Astley, Leicestershire LE9 6SA.

AUSTIN MEESON (Address in Exchange section) wants suggestions as to which modem he should buy.

The Oric V23 Modem is available from WE (Software) of Malvern. Also FGC sells "Oricomms" - a comms. program which permits the use of a number of other independent modems. Trevor Shaw of 43 Matlock Ave., Dawley, Telford, Shropshire, TF4 2EL seems to be something of an expert on Oric/modem interfacing and should be able to advise further.

I.O.U. EXCHANGE

FOR SALE - Oric Atmos 48K with books and software. Also reset switch and handmade dust cover with Atmos colour and logo. £65. Mr. S.G. Peirce, 31 Brancker Rd., Milehouse, Plymouth, PL2 3DW. Tel. Plymouth 500359.

FOR SALE - Printer Tandy VII. Centronics, tractor feed. Standard and expanded type. Works with Orics. Ideal first printer for listings etc. Sample p/o

available. £35 o.n.o. Arthur Jackson, 56 Driffold, Sutton Coldfield, W.Midlands, B73 6HP. Tel. 021-354-7242.

FOR SALE - Book - "Oric Advanced User Guide" (pub. Adder). £8 including p&p. Austin Meeson, 41 Roebuck Lane, Walsall, W.Midlands, WS3 1AH. Tel. 0922 477422

PROGRAMMING UTILITIES

System Date

Rob Davis has compiled a 2 page "Oric Helpsheet" containing numerous Peeks, Pokes, Deeks, Dokes and utilities. The sheet contains the following interesting utility:

"To have today's date held in RAM until you pull the plug can be handy. Either run this program when you power up (for tape users) or add them to 'BOOTUP.COM' (for disc users):

```
1000 INPUT "Enter date in format DD.MM.YY";DATE$
1010 IF LEN(DATE$) <> 8 THEN ZAP : GOTO 1000
1020 FOR Z = 1 TO 8
1030 POKE #3FF+Z, ASC(MID$(DATE$,Z,1))
1040 NEXT Z
1050 NEW
```

The date is now safely in the system RAM and is unaffected by NEW or !LOAD/CLOAD etc. To get the date out again and use it, add this line to the beginning of your Basic program:

```
10 FOR Z = 1 TO 8 : DATE$ = DATE$ + CHR$(PEEK(#3FF+Z)) : NEXT Z
```

and then by PRINT/LPRINT DATE\$ you will always have today's date - quite handy if you want to use it on a letterhead or as an identifier for the last time a file was updated."

Rob says "New wrinkles are always welcome", and I am sure that if you drop a s.a.e to his address given in the RESPONSE section above he would send you a copy of his sheet (Hope this is OK Rob!). *

Text/Graphics Split Screen

The following utility program from John Giddens splits the screen into - Top,HIRES/Bottom, TEXT:

```
10 HIRES:TEXT
20 PRINT CHR$(30);CHR$(27);CHR$(127)
30 DOKE#26D,48640
40 POKE#26F,11
50 REM ### ### HIRES COMMANDS
60 POKE#2C0,1: DRAW10,10,1: DRAW100,10,1
70 REM ### ### TEXT COMMANDS
80 POKE#2C0,2: PLOT17,17,33
```

The first line clears the HIRES screen and sets the computer into TEXT mode. Then a HOME,ESC,DEL combination will split the screen. The Poke and Doke set the top line of the screen to the position of the top of the text screen, also preventing your HIRES picture from disappearing.

From then on the first Poke is necessary before using HIRES-specific commands (e.g. DRAW) whilst the second toggles the ORIC into thinking it is in the TEXT mode and allows TEXT commands to be used (e.g. PLOT).

The following two lines cut out the protection for the HIRES section, which

will then disappear once the screen scrolls upwards:

100 DOKE#26D,48000
110 POKE#26F,27

(Though I haven't tested the utility yet, I note that #26F is the V1.0 address for the number of text lines. The equivalent address for the V1.1 ROM is #27E. - Ed.)

ISSUE 15

Gary is aiming to distribute issue 15 between 11th and 15th April. Please allow at least one week (and no more than three weeks) after the latter date ~~before querying about non-receipt of your copy.~~ Expected cost is 40p. People ordering it individually should send payment - cash (2 X 20p pieces, please) or cheque/P.O. - plus an A5 s.a.e. to reach him by 4th April to:

I.O.U.G., c/o Mr. G. Ramsay, 1 Kingsway Crescent, Burnage, Manchester, M19 1GA

Issue 15 will be prepared by Alan Whittaker. If you are not sending any payment then you may prefer to write directly to him at:

I.O.U.G., c/o Mr. A. Whittaker, 8 Staley Hall Rd., Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 3DT

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS

First Class Postage - £2.90
Second - £2.65

In both cases also send five A5 self-addressed (no stamp) envelopes. Covers a maximum of five issues, production costs permitting.

N.B. An A5 envelope is approx. 228 X 162 mm or 9 X 6.5 ins. Cheques/P.O.'s payable to I.O.U.G.

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

The subscriptions of those of you for whom the first issue of your subscription was No. 10 are now finished. Unless otherwise informed First-class subscribers have a zero balance and Second-class subscribers one of 5p.

Details of renewals are as above.

REVIEWS

MAZE RALLY

Reviewer: Neville Clark

This program was written in Denmark by Nikolej Henrichsen and Jesper L. Jensen, and published in this country by Financial and General Computing.

The loader screen gives an early indication of the excellent graphics to come. Depicting the maze in which the action takes place one has time to familiarize oneself with the confines of the maze during the five minute loading time.

Loading completed, the menu screen is displayed featuring more impressive graphics and the options available. Two screens of comprehensive instructions are

provided, while on a different screen skill and sound levels are selectable. Scott Joplin's 'Entertainer' which is almost a standard feature for Oric arcade games forms the background music. This music can be totally eliminated if required, though I prefer to leave it on. Pressing the action start takes us into the maze. Remaining fuel is displayed across the top of the screen. Vertically displayed down the right side of the screen are the 12 flags which have to be collected. Initially shown in blue, the colour changes to yellow as each one is collected in the maze, thereby giving a continuous indication of flags collected. Beneath the flag display is a radar system which displays the position and direction of travel of opposing cars. Lives left, shown as cars, are displayed below the radar.

While the scrolling maze concept is not new, interest and excitement are generated by the random meanderings of some of the cars and kamikaze intent of others. It is possible to halt the progress of enemy cars by the judicious use of smoke which is controlled by the space bar putting the enemy cars into a spin for a short time.

Impressive graphics, smooth action, and ever increasing speed as you progress through the skill levels, with up to 9 opposing cars, make this a totally addictive, thoroughly enjoyable arcade game. I can unreservedly recommend Maze Rally and can only hope that our Danish friends are working on another blockbuster like this one.

Price - £6.95. Available exclusively from FGC (address in Response section above).

"MINITEXT" Word Processor
Reviewer: Rob Davis

Available for either disc or cassette, Gordon Cornell's program has been an excellent buy. Written completely in machine code, it has made correspondence an easy task rather than a chore and makes the typewriter look as archaic as the Model T Ford.

MINITEXT permits easy creation of standard documents (letterheads especially) and you can add, delete, or move text. A simple to use menu allows the user to select exactly which text format is required. It is easy to compile your document in whatever column size you wish; 40, 60, 80, 120 or any other. You can set left margin, single or multiple line feed, page numbering, length of page, and with the automatic formatting option, type in your text continuously and watch the Atmos right-justify it for you.

With 80 column mode set, you have 2 lines of screen per printer line, and with 40 column mode set then WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) prevails. Embedded printer codes are also supported, allowing Form Feed, change of font, character sets etc. to be easily "built-in" to your document.

Text amendment is simple too. The EDIT facility lets you un-justify, slip in extra letters, words or complete lines. Paragraphs can be added later on using the powerful MOVE command. There is a FIND facility and you have the option to SWAP any words you wish.

Output is to printer, disc, tape, or screen and most of the Oric disc commands are allowed.

If you have a printer and some correspondence, I heartily recommend this system. As with all powerful applications it is necessary to sit down with the manual for a little while, but it is well presented and covers all aspects of using MINITEXT.

Price - £20. Available exclusively from OPELCO, Imperial Court, Station Parade, Virginia Water, Surrey, GU25 4DH.