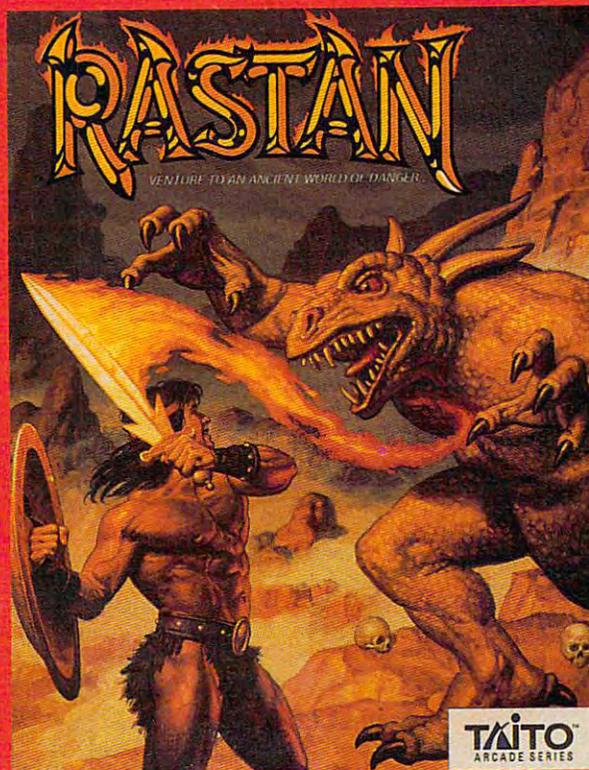


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VOLKSWRITER 4

Try weighing *Volkswriter 4*'s good points against its bad points and the scale balances evenly. The advantages simply don't cancel the disadvantages. On the good-points side of the scale, you have speed. You can't outtype *Volkswriter 4* and, though it doesn't reformat text at the speed of light, your pages take shape pretty quickly. Finding and replacing is, in fact, lightning-fast.

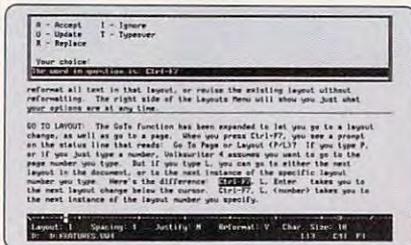
Also on the good side of the scale is *Volkswriter 4*'s list of features. This package boasts file merging that is as simple and elegant as you'll find in any other word processor. You have plenty of formatting choices—regular tabs, decimal tabs, indented paragraphs for long quotations, and so on. Style sheets transfer layouts from file to file, but they aren't as powerful as those in some of the more popular packages. As you find in much more loudly praised word processors, there's an option for sorting column information, and there's a function that performs mathematical operations on columns of numbers.

Most writers would demand that a word processor include a spelling checker, and *Volkswriter 4* answers that demand more than sufficiently. One of its most significant strengths—and biggest selling points—is its grammar and spelling checker.

Correct Grammar is a very apt grammar checker. But, although I appreciated its thoroughness, some people may find this computer grammarian a little overcautious.

The checker stops very often, sometimes on sentences that you've

written with a particular style in mind—perhaps on a sentence fragment, included for poetic reasons. And it stops on every single sentence that you start with a conjunction, patronistically telling you, "It is preferable to avoid starting a sentence with a conjunction." (If you ask me, it's preferable to be more direct and simply say, "Don't start a sentence with a conjunction unless you have a good reason.") Sentences that are written in passive voice, however, aren't flagged. I confess that I shook my fist at the computer a few times.



Verify and change spelling mistakes with *Volkswriter*'s spelling checker.

Correct Grammar finds most errors but, because it has to follow rules, you can trick it into thinking you've written grammatically graceful prose even when you've really written nonsense. It didn't, for example, catch the word *taught* used in a place where *taut* would have been the right choice.

All in all, Correct Grammar is a good utility, but if you get too frustrated, turn off the grammar checker and simply check spelling.

Volkswriter 4's negative points aren't as numerous, but each one weighs heavily against the program and is linked to the program's interface. It simply isn't intuitive enough. You can't guess at anything, and even the help screen takes some decipher-

ing. Thank goodness the manual is so well written or you'd be in real trouble.

Volkswriter 4 isn't menu-driven, and there's no mouse support either; it's function-key driven. Until you learn which key controls which operation, the interface can be very hard to figure out.

For example, the escape key closes your file unexpectedly and unsaved. Finding text is equally clumsy. Hit F7 to find text, hit it again to keep finding that same text string. *Volkswriter 4* searches through your document, looping from end to beginning until you stop hitting F7. It never tells you that you're at the end of the document. You must hit F10 and then F7 to change the text string. If that doesn't sound like a bother, you probably won't mind the interface. *WordPerfect* users have lived with this function-key style of movement for years—but even they are getting menus and mouse support in the latest version of that package.

If you can live with the quirkiness and obscurity of the commands, then you might get a lot out of *Volkswriter 4*. And, actually if *Volkswriter 4* is your first word processor, you might not be as critical of the program's interface as I was.

However, if you need a smooth and simple interface as much as you need power and variety in features, this word processor is out of balance. ▶

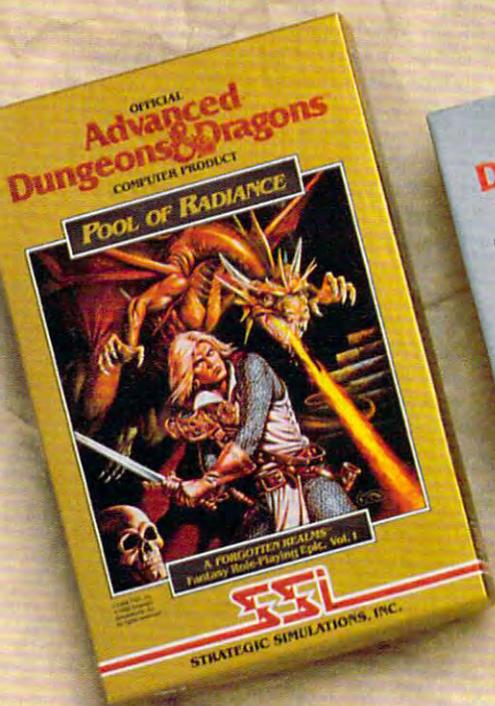
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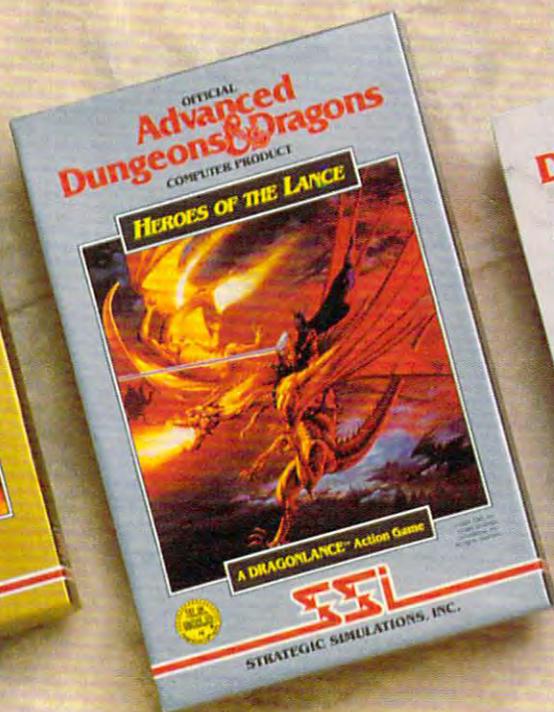


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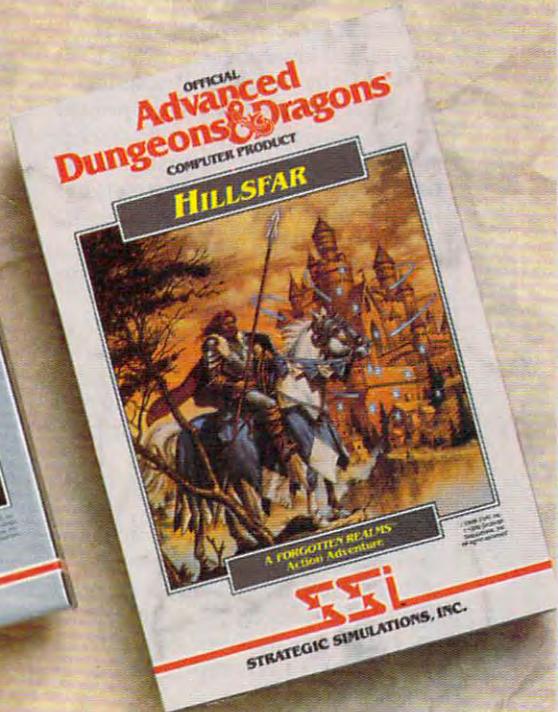
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GOSCRIPT

Professional-quality desktop publishing output doesn't come cheap, with PostScript laser printers costing over \$3,000.

LaserGo's *GoScript* software is an inexpensive alternative to purchasing a laser printer. With *GoScript*, you can print files intended for a PostScript printer on inexpensive dot-matrix, ink-jet, and low-end laser printers.

GoScript translates PostScript code into bitmaps that can be printed on non-PostScript printers. PostScript is a page-description language that's used to describe complex formatting information to laser printers. One of its most useful features is that it allows you to scale fonts to any size. Unlike most other printers, which only print in a few type sizes, PostScript printers can produce type in sizes ranging from minuscule to gargantuan. They can also print reversed and rotated text, a feat unmanageable by simpler laser printers.

With *GoScript*, a LaserJet, DeskJet, or dot-matrix printer can print many of the same files you could print to an expensive PostScript printer, complete with high-quality fonts and EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) graphics. I say *many* because I encountered files that were too complex for the program to print.

While it's obvious why a DeskJet or dot-matrix user would use *GoScript*, LaserJet or compatible owners will also benefit. For example, the LaserJet can print neither reversed nor rotated type. *GoScript* can give you both these effects.

Printing with *GoScript* is a two-step process. First you create a PostScript file, and then you print it using *GoScript*. PostScript files can be created two ways: You can create page layouts using a desktop publishing, word processing, or graphics program and print to disk in PostScript format; or, because PostScript is a computer language, you can write programs to produce graphics files. To print, you simply type *GS* followed by the name of the PostScript file.

Print times vary with the complexity of the files and the speed of your hardware. Without at least 1 megabyte of memory, *GoScript* is forced to do all of its computations on your hard disk, which makes the program extremely slow and inefficient. On an 8-MHz AT-compatible with 1.25 megabytes of EMS memory, a

page with mostly text with three small line-art files took approximately 2½ minutes to print on a LaserJet at 300 dpi. On the same computer without EMS, the same page took almost 20 minutes to print. An actual PostScript laser printer took only 1 minute to print the page, so 2½ minutes is a reasonable amount of time, but 20 minutes is simply not practical. Files with bitmapped images from paint programs or scanners will take substantially more time, with or without EMS.



GoScript gives you laser-printer-quality output from your dot-matrix printer.

Having EMS memory also helps dot-matrix and ink-jet print times. Printing the same file on an Epson 9-pin without EMS took 22 minutes and 42 seconds; with EMS, it took 9 minutes and 26 seconds. The HP DeskJet showed a similar improvement, printing the page in 25 minutes and 49 seconds without EMS, and 5 minutes and 35 seconds with it. (All print times are for the printer's highest resolution.)

I tested *GoScript* with files created by *WordPerfect* 5.0, *GEM Artline*, and *Ventura Publisher*. In most cases the files printed perfectly. However, using *WordPerfect*, a page with one graphic would only print if the body text was unjustified. When I justified the text, *GoScript* could not print the file, even with 580K of available memory. LaserGo suggests you remove all TSRs and device drivers to ensure that you have as much memory as possible, but even then there were files that wouldn't print. This can be especially frustrating because you can waste several minutes before *GoScript* announces that it can't print the file.

GoScript also had problems with some *Corel Draw* files. Pages with fountains (continuous tones of gray

progressing from light to dark) took so long to print that I thought the program was frozen. A LaserGo representative said that even with EMS, *Corel Draw*'s fountains can take up to an hour and a half to create on an 80386 PC or four hours on an 80286 setup. Also, you must manually add a Show-page command to some *Corel Draw* files with a text editor before you can print them with *GoScript*.

GoScript includes the same 13 typefaces that are built into basic PostScript printers. The fonts are sharp, well designed, and look good even at small point sizes. The Roman font looked odd when printed at 12 points, however. Because all of the included fonts are PostScript-width-compatible, you can use *GoScript* to accurately proof pages that will eventually go to a PostScript printer or typesetter.

GoScript can add more desktop publishing power to your printer. If you can work around the occasional incompatible file and you have plenty of time or memory, this program gives you PostScript power without a PostScript price.

DANIEL WILL-HARRIS

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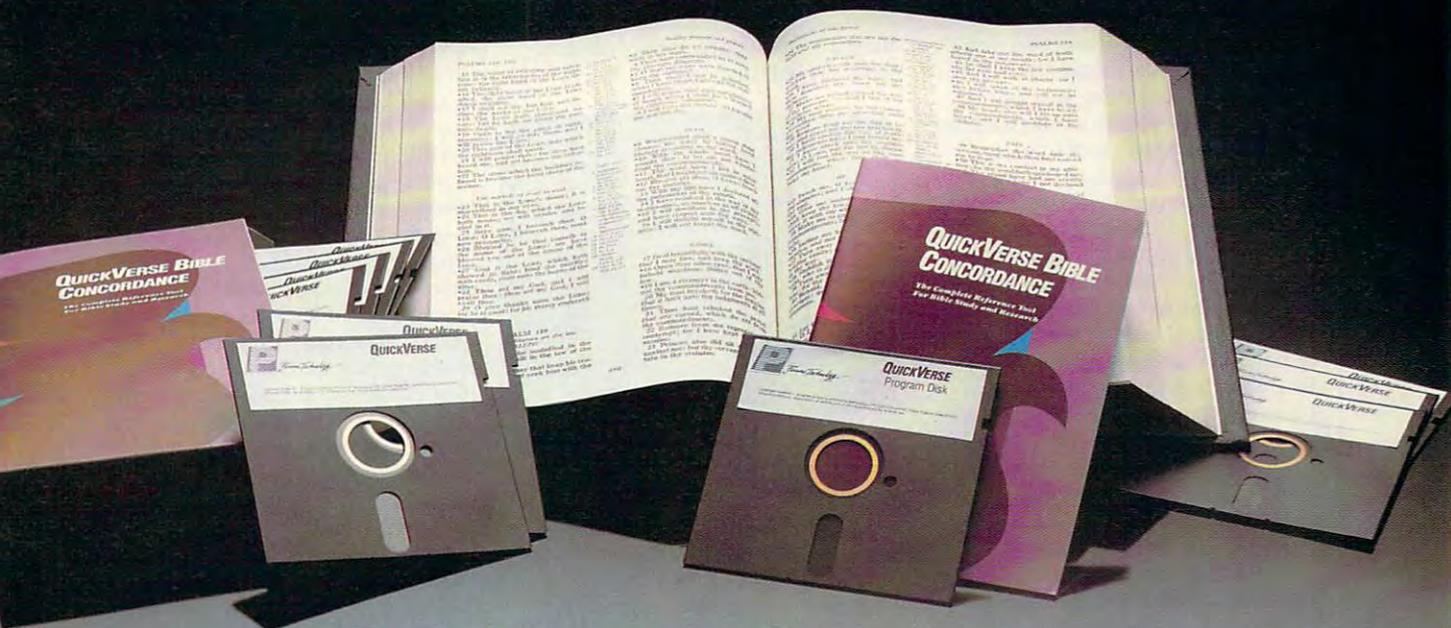
PIPE DREAM

To be a plumber, you've got to learn the basics. And the first basic is this: It takes more than a new leather tool belt and a shiny wrench. It takes experience, common sense, and, most of all, a feel for the odds. What are the odds that you're going to pick the right pipe joint from the box when all the lights are out and all the flooz is flowing?

The odds are better if you stick with me. I'll show you the ins and outs of the flooz, the twists and turns of the pipes. I'll show you how to win in the plumbing war, the game we like to call *Pipe Dream*.

First off, you've got to learn about the flooz. Now water—hot water, cold water, clean water, rusty

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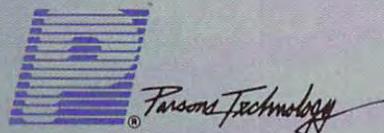


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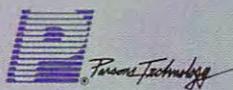
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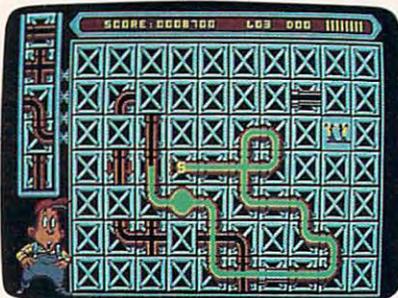
Macintosh version requires 512k or more memory and works with any disk drive configuration.

water—it's no big thing. We can easily deal with water. But flooz, flooz is another story altogether. When the green flooz flows onto the floor, you don't get a puddle, you get a monster. You get lost. It's fast-moving goo that moves sure and steady through all the trouble spots in your pipes. So just keep adding pipe segments to that tangled nest of copper snakes, and hope that the flooz doesn't pick up speed.

Now that you understand the flooz, let's move on to the tools. You get around the web of pipes with a mouse or a keyboard. (No sense wearing holes in the knees of your coveralls.) There's a frame that you move around in your work area, and when you find a place where you want to put the next pipe, just click that mouse button or the space bar and the segment hooks up to the others, as simple as that.

Well, not quite as simple as that. See, when that flooz is flowing, you don't have an extra second to rifle through the box of pipe segments to find the straight one for that spot or the elbow joint for this spot. You just take what's closest to you, use that pipe, then move on to the next spot. Sometimes, when the flooz is really flying, you'll be tossing pipe parts this way and that way all over the place.

Then you'll get to a spot where you'd give your best pair of shoes for that cross pipe you tossed aside a few minutes ago, and who knows when the next one will turn up?



Quickly connect sections of pipe and keep the flooz flowing in *Pipe Dream*.

As you get better at the work, you'll come up against tougher snags. Why, just the other day, I was working on a place with gaps big as your boot. Couldn't place a pipe there, no way. Just had to go around those spots. A friend of mine got a box full of one-way pipes, and I mean to tell you he was hopping mad. Nothing like facing a gullet-full of green goo and not having the right pipe to hold it.

When you get into a nest of pipes, you'll see some strange colors. Some-

times you go into a VGA-equipped place and you'll see bright, neon colors—vibrant blues, blinding green, and glowing yellow. Nothing like it. EGA-type basements look nearly as good. Other times you'll have to go to the CGA side of the tracks, where everything's pretty much rust-colored or black. Except the flooz. The flooz is always green.

Besides the colors, there's the sounds. The flooz has a song all its own. Sounds like a waterfall of lava or a whirlpool of jello. Not quite what you'd call a pretty tune, but it's a warning that the flooz is flowing. Some folks say they can hear some other songs, too. I think they're just getting plumb-drunk. I've heard the music, but I didn't really like it. I tuned it out pretty easily, just a simple click of a button.

Getting into each job isn't so simple, though. There's some newfangled lock on all the doors, something they used to call copy protection. Now, you just have to know the right combination to get in. Your boss will give you one of these paper dials, see. Just match up the picture on the front door with the color and you'll see the combination in this slot right here. Seems mighty troublesome, but it keeps crooks out.

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On the other hand, the people who run this business made it pretty easy to get in—once you have that dial. The company gives you a 5/4-inch and a 3/4-inch disk, so you don't have to worry about getting to a job and finding that you've got the wrong-size disk.

Next job we go to, I'll show you how we have some fun. We fight the flooz together. The two of us, hooking up pipes all over the place, at the same time. When the flooz flows through, we can tell who laid the most useful pipes. It's pretty confusing at first, but it's my favorite part of the job.

Plumbing's a tough job, and lots of folks who try it don't stick around to see what it takes to clean up a pile of flooz. But then there's others who can spell their names in pipe joints and never spill a drop of the green goo. They'll tell you that the job has got its rewards.

They'll tell you that even though you never win the war, there's those glorious battles where you take on the flooz and emerge victorious. They'll tell you how your blood races faster than the green goo. And how each level of the battle is—at the same time—more wearing and more challenging, more complicated and more fun.

If you've got it in you to fight the flooz, you can get that feeling, too.

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DESIGN YOUR OWN HOME

A custom house design is the dream of any homeowner, but the costs associated with that dream have been, until recently, pretty prohibitive. *Design Your Own Home* bills itself as a tool with which homeowners can produce professional floor plans and construction prints or drawings. To get things started, several standard floor plans come with the package. You can modify these pre-drawn plans or develop your own from scratch.

To start your home-designing career, choose an option from the main menu or from one of the drawing-tool icons. Although *Design Your Own Home* works without a mouse, I strongly recommend using one. Menu choices, commands, and cursor movements are clumsy without a mouse.

One of the program's nicer features is its capability to make as many as four image screens available at one time. Although you can't view the screens simultaneously, you can switch among them with a function key or the mouse. As you work, first and second floors take shape along with front and side views of your dream house.

You can merge or add previously saved floor plans to new plans, and you can also compare an existing floor plan with one on disk. For drawing, there are four different line types, five different line thicknesses, and up to 16 different colors.

Three more items worth mentioning are a symbols library, a dimensioning box, and text capabilities. The symbols library consists of pre-drawn architectural shapes that are commonly used in floor plans; sinks, lavatories, tubs, wiring, and lights, to name a few. You can modify these

shapes or create your own.

Whenever you draw geometric shapes such as boxes, lines, circles, or arcs, a dimensioning box at the lower right corner of the screen displays the width, height, length, area, or degrees of the shape, whichever measurement is appropriate.

For labeling, you can place two sizes of text either horizontally or vertically. After selecting the text tool, position the cursor, type the text, and then press the Enter key.

Design Your Own Home meets two important software criteria: It does what it's advertised to do, and it's easy to use. Anybody who has worked with an object-drawing program will easily pick up the commands and menu structure.

The program does have some limitations, however, especially when you compare its capabilities to CAD packages in the same price range. For example, the program doesn't let you easily erase, move, or copy different objects (unless they are tightly grouped), or undo individual mistakes. You also can't rescale objects that are already drawn or change the size of text.

Another problem is the program's grid function. Traditionally, a grid is used to align objects or drawn

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items at regular intervals. *Eight-foot grid setting* means that an object (such as a rectangle, a circle, an arc, or a line) will only be placed or started at eight-foot increments. With the typical grid function, if you locate the mouse at less than an eight-foot distance, the object automatically moves to the closest eight-foot interval. Unfortunately, *Design Your Own Home's* grid system cannot do this. Abracadata is aware of this problem and says it hopes to remedy it in the next release.

If your desire is to daydream about what your dream house could be, this package can assist you in your reverie. But if you're serious about producing floor plans or construction prints, a full-featured CAD package may be more in order. Several other drawing or paint packages offer the same capabilities as *Design Your Own Home*, excluding the symbols and pre-drawn floor plans, and come with a similar price tag.

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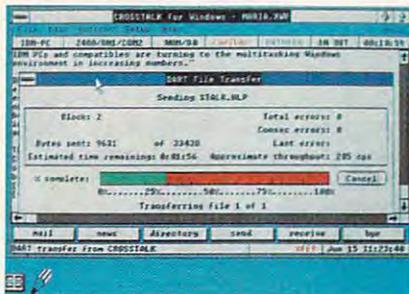
CROSSTALK FOR WINDOWS

Communications is probably not high on the list of applications you'd think would benefit from a graphical user interface. After using *Crosstalk for Windows*, though, you'll wonder how you ever got by with a text-based program. *Windows'* menus, scroll bars, and point-and-click interface are a natural for working with such esoteric functions as capture buffers and log-on scripts.

You'll need *Microsoft Windows* 2.03 or higher to use the program—a runtime version of *Windows* isn't included. Using the multitasking abilities of *Windows*, you can up- or download files in the background while working with other *Windows*-based software such as *Ami*, *Arts & Letters*, or *Excel*. For instance, you could enter *Excel*, have a macro call up *Crosstalk for Windows*, and download stock information from Compu-

Serve using *Windows'* Dynamic Data Exchange facility to place the information directly into the worksheet.

Crosstalk for Windows emulates a number of popular terminals, including VT52/102, IBM 3101, and VIDTEX. The program also supports IBM ANSI graphics, so you can view all of the neat graphics on your local bulletin board system.



The file-transfer status is portrayed graphically in *Crosstalk for Windows*.

Crosstalk for Windows' powerful script language allows you to automate online sessions. This BASIC-like language can access all of the program's functions. However, most users won't have to learn the script language, since sample log-on scripts for various online services are included with the package.

The program supports a variety of file-transfer protocols, including XMODEM, YMODEM, ZMODEM, Crosstalk, DART, CompuServe B, and Kermit. You can also do ASCII text transfers. *Crosstalk for Windows* handles baud rates up to 19,200.

The powerful text-management system lets you capture, edit, and send text without leaving the program or breaking off communications. A large scroll buffer captures text as it appears on the screen. You can set the size of the buffer up to 64K. You can edit text in this buffer by clicking on the menu bar to activate the scroll system. When you've finished making your changes, double-clicking on the menu bar returns you to the communications program.

You can use the mouse to initiate any *Crosstalk for Windows* command or function. Double-clicking the mouse on an empty space on the screen will send a carriage return, while double-clicking on the first character of a word will transmit that word as if you'd typed it.

You can create up to 48 separate macros, which are displayed by keyword at the bottom of the screen. Clicking on the keyword sends the macro. Macro assignments are saved along with the instructions and de-

faults for each system you want to use. Whether you are calling MCI Mail or CompuServe, *Crosstalk for Windows* comes up customized for that environment.

Even if you don't already know how to use *Windows*, you'll be impressed by how easy *Crosstalk for Windows* is to use. All features are accessed through four pull-down menus. Each menu has submenus that will pop up dialog boxes with examples, information, items to type in, or buttons to click on.

I told *Crosstalk for Windows* that I had a Hayes-compatible 2400-baud modem, and it automatically set all of the parameters for communicating with the modem. About the only thing you'll need to type is your name, your user ID for each of the services you use, your passwords, and the phone number you use to reach those services.

I couldn't find anything I disliked about *Crosstalk for Windows*. It's the best communications program I've ever used.

WOODY LISWOOD

IBM PC and compatibles with *Microsoft Windows*—\$195

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MENACE



You've just entered the strange world of *Psygnosis's Menace*. You're flying a short-range fighter through a vast array of guardians, creatures, and weapons that will try to foil your mission. They all have different strengths and attack methods. Defeating them requires quick decisions, split-second reactions, and the proper method of attack.

The gameplay takes some getting used to. You must use both hands and five keys to control your ship. Once you get accustomed to flying the ship, the game gets good. Wiping out the entire Draconian sortie on the screen leaves matter that can be converted into new weapons for your ship. You'll develop new strategies to annihilate enemies, and as you pick up new weapons you'll find the Draconians become mincemeat under your improved laser and cannon fire.

In typical *Psygnosis* fashion, the graphics are superb. Animated mon-

sters maneuver over horizontally scrolling scenery. Everything is smooth and flicker-free.

The sounds are typical shoot-'em-up effects. Shots, collisions, explosions, and lasers add energy to the game. Even on the IBM speaker, the well-done sound effects keep players on the edge of their chairs.

Be forewarned that this is an addictive game and you probably won't have any short play sessions. If fast-paced enemy blasting appeals to you and you appreciate smoothly animated graphics, give *Menace* a try.

RICHARD C. LEINECKER

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MATH CASTLE

There's trouble in the Land of Given, and it's up to your child to save the day. Welcome to *Math Castle*, a new educational program from Envision.

Alien spacecraft are headed toward your castle. You have just one chance to stop them: the Super Energy Beam, which zaps them with pure brain power and uses math problems as the catalyst to make it happen.

A steady stream of invaders is raining from the skies, and whenever one appears, a math problem appears, too. Answer the problem correctly and you activate the castle's Super Energy Beam and zap the invader. If your answer is wrong, the aliens blast the castle's protective force field. If you miss too many problems, the force field fails, the aliens bring in the Ultimate Castle Destroyer, and your castle is history.

Math Castle's main menu offers addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems and 12 play levels. The levels don't directly relate to difficulty but instead determine which numbers are emphasized in the problems. For instance, selecting level 7 and addition presents addition problems that involve the number 7 ($7 + 1$, $5 + 7$, or $3 + 4$, for example). Additional levels up to 40 are available through a user options screen.

The learning mode, which consists of target practice at the Weapons

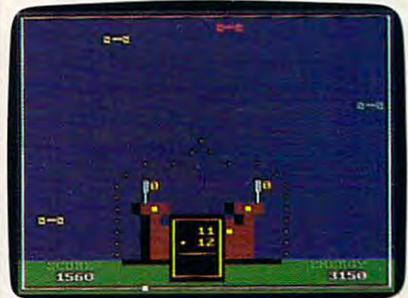
Training Center, is great for getting the feel of the game, but the real action is in the regular play mode. There, onscreen monitors track your remaining shield energy and your total score. Correct answers zap invaders, but if you make a mistake, the invaders let you have it. A warning appears on the screen, followed by the correct answer, and you get to try again with the same problem. This continues until you blast all the aliens or run out of shield energy.

Math Castle's problems come in predefined sets, and all problem sets are listed in the manual. You can also create your own custom problem sets—a feature that teachers and parents are sure to appreciate. *Math Castle* will store as many as 12 custom sets, each with up to 76 individual problems.

Math Castle is designed to reinforce general math skills rather than to teach a specific operation such as carrying. It accepts multidigit answers in tens/ones format. That is, the correct answer to $7 + 8$ would be entered by typing a 1 and then a 5 (15). There is no need to press Return. This approach lets the program quickly detect wrong answers.

Math Castle is a positive program, even when problems are

missed. If your child's defense wasn't perfect, the program transports him or her to the Weapons Training Center for practice with the missed problems. Practice sessions continue until the child correctly answers each problem that was missed. These review sessions can be bypassed, although you'll probably want to leave them in place.



You have to answer this problem quickly to protect the Math Castle from aliens.

Recognizing that children love to see their names in lights, *Math Castle* maintains a tally of the top ten scores for each level. Even when playing alone, children may find the Hall of Fame to be a great incentive. In fact, my daughter wouldn't rest until she had placed her name in all ten positions—and by the time she was

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Jetting away from their Key Palm island, the Quest team is off on another intriguing mystery in the jungle darkness of Guatemala. Who is stealing the great Mayan artifacts? What secrets wait in the hidden Temple of Tikul? What is the splinter of heaven?

Jonny Quest and the Splinter of Heaven possesses all the Action and suspense of the animated series. Plus you choose the course of adventure with interactive dialogue and hands on fighting sequences. The world is yours to explore, and you will feel like you're in it as you solve puzzles and combat enemies while attempting to solve the mystery.

Episode One is just the beginning! Stay tuned for further installations in this ongoing series of stand alone adventures!

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through, I could see a noticeable improvement in her ability to answer that particular set of problems.

According to the packaging, *Math Castle* is designed for children in grades 3-12; however, it doesn't seem sophisticated enough to hold the attention of the usual action-oriented teen. But with most elementary-school children, it's sure to be a hit. It's definitely worth checking out if you're looking for a package to help your kids build math skills.

STEVE HUDSON

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FAERY TALE ADVENTURE

One of the best-animated, role-playing games ever seen on the Amiga has ventured into the realm of MS-DOS orc-slayers. But *Faery Tale Adventure* is far more than just another clone of *Ultima* or *Bard's Tale*. This is the story of Julian, his brother Phillip, and his other brother Kevin, who lived peacefully in the land of Holm until an evil necromancer hit town. Up to seven quests are involved in your struggle to eliminate the villain, each netting you a different artifact.

This one-player game starts with you playing the part of brother Julian. Leaving the village of Hambry to seek keys, weapons, magical tokens, and other objects, you'll wander through brilliant wheat fields, between narrow mountain passes, and into labyrinths, towns, and castles. Nightfall is subtly reflected in the way the light slowly ebbs away, eventually leaving you in the dark unless you have a torch. Sunrise creeps in just as effectively. You can teleport long distances to save time by using Stonehenge-like circles of stone that are scattered about the land. This is an imaginative mechanism for a universal game element.

The landscape encompasses more than 14,000 screens. That's 144 screens high by 100 wide, so I hope you like drawing maps. All scenes are depicted with an aerial view of the surroundings, with characters seen in

profile. And though it's a big, big world, the designer paid extra attention to the fine points. You'll notice one such detail when your character's head slowly sinks lower in the water as he crosses a stream: All the lakes, rivers, and creeks vary in depth, a discrete yet significant display of detail.

Battles unfold in the open field or dungeon hall where you meet the monsters, not in a special combat arena as in many such games. Crisply animated, your character and the monsters swing maces, shoot arrows, and hack at each other with long swords. Long-range weapons are useful, for magic is limited to a few kinds of stones, jewels, and such. One spell will blast every monster on the screen into atoms, but most serve noncombative purposes, such as curing wounds.

The first few times Julian gets killed, a wimpy fairy godmother flits across the screen and revives him. But after a while this tactic no longer works, and at this point something novel happens: His brother Phillip materializes in their home town, enabling you to carry on the mission in his shoes. And if Phil gets killed, his other brother, Kevin, picks up the quest. Usually when your character dies, you must either restart with a fresh character or load a saved game. Both of those options, with up to eight saved games, are available.



Faery Tale Adventure requires you to perform a little magic of your own.

An inventive interface imparts information such as combat results and conversation in the form of text on a parchment scroll. A variety of push-button menus lead to submenus where you pick spells, use items, talk to people, and so on. Mouse, numeric-keypad, and joystick control are supported on all systems (even the Commodore 64), and you can switch among them at any time. Your character is exceptionally responsive to the mouse, and keyboard commands offer a handy way to manipulate objects.

Tandy and EGA adventurers will

enjoy all 16 colors but will miss the startlingly authentic sound effects found on the Amiga and C64 versions, since the MS-DOS version doesn't support any third-party sound boards.

While I enjoyed and highly recommend *Faery Tale*, I must point out some minor blemishes on an otherwise picture-perfect complexion. Because the landscape is so extensive and there aren't enough clues to steer you in the general direction for each quest, it's too easy to just wander around until you die—and we've all been there before. A few more clues from townspeople would have made a big difference.

And of the seven artifacts to be found, you can complete the game rather easily with just three, and, with extra effort, you can even finish off the necromancer with just one of them. Even so, *Faery Tale Adventure* is a smooth-playing, rewarding quest.

SHAY ADDAMS

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HOMEWORD II

Tandy has lined up developers around the block to support its *DeskMate* graphics interface, which it hopes will become the environment of choice for 8088 and 8086 computers. *HomeWord II*, from Sierra, newly released in a *DeskMate*-compatible version, offers users a serviceable word processor with a dictionary and thesaurus.

Installing the program on the *DeskMate* desktop is relatively simple, and anyone familiar with that environment will recognize the title bar at the top of the screen when the program loads. Drop-down menus titled File, Edit, Layout, Text, Options, Word Check, and Help augment *HomeWord II*'s word processing attributes.

Under File, you may perform the normal *DeskMate* functions such as save, delete, and print, as well as save documents as ASCII files, turn on automatic backup, and merge a created logo.

HomeWord II really shines, however, in its use of the *DeskMate* environment. You can view a graphic representation of your page, for example, and show underlined and bold text onscreen as they would appear on the page. To define text for editing, you use the Shift-cursor key combinations standard on *DeskMate* applications.

The program's main problems lie in its snaillike pace (it's easy to outrun the cursor while typing) and its sparse documentation. Sierra would like to think that the program is so easy to use that you don't need the documentation, and that's laudable; however, some of the program's functions aren't explained in the manual, which could be disconcerting for new users.

If you're a *DeskMate* user who has grown tired of the word processor that comes with that package, *HomeWord II* is worth a look. But before you make the leap, check out some of the higher-end word processing packages coming out under that interface. You may want a little more power for your prose.

PETER SCISCO

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MURDER CLUB

Does watching "Murder, She Wrote" make you wonder if you could solve mysteries? If the answer is *Yes*, then *Murder Club*, from Kyodai might be for you.

Game control is extremely easy: The arrow and enter keys do it all.

Using a joystick or mouse may make things even easier for you. This game requires no special knowledge of computers, so it's ideal for a beginner. For those of us who prefer relaxing to blowing out our minds at the arcades, this thoughtful strategy game offers an alternative to high-speed, quick-reaction games.

The playability, unfortunately, became a drawback as I got more deeply involved in the game. I had to follow the computer's lead rather than my own imagination. I'm an armchair detective who never misses "Columbo" and has always longed to direct her own investigation. A lack of

options frustrated my attempts. When I read a mystery novel or watch a mystery show, I know in the back of my mind that the author has everything under control, and all will be known if I'm patient and allow the story to unfold. I found I needed the same kind of patience with *Murder Club*.



Carefully interrogate the likely suspects to solve the mystery in *Murder Club*.

You begin with a basic rundown of the victim and the circumstances of the murder. A menu allows you to investigate; check with the lab, the library, or the prosecutor; or select from several other options. When you investigate, another menu asks you to choose one of three geographical locations. Within those three general loca-

tions, there are one or two specific businesses or homes you can go to. Once at your destination, you're confronted with a witness that you can interview. What I wanted at that point was the freedom to phrase my own questions or to ask follow-up questions if I knew the witness was lying or being evasive. What I actually got was a lot of menus with preplanned questions that elicited canned answers. As you get more deeply involved in the mystery, this becomes increasingly annoying. I felt as though I were reading a choppy written novel rather than playing a game. The only real control was choosing the order in which locations and witnesses were investigated.

To compensate for the tedium, *Murder Club* provides a nifty notebook with pictures of all the witnesses and suspects. I enjoyed making notes as I went along—just like a real detective! Eventually, after a great deal of tedious interviewing, there came a point at which I felt more in control. Even though many witnesses had told lies or were not what they wanted to seem, I was unable to obtain search warrants or arrest warrants for quite a long time. But once I did obtain my first couple of search warrants, I was able to locate some clues and ask a

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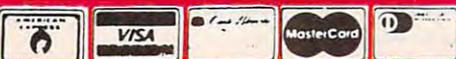
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few follow-up questions. Witnesses who had lied finally had to explain discrepancies in their statements. But again, it was all done through menus. I had to be satisfied with what the game was willing to feed me. I couldn't pull a Jessica Fletcher-style wide-eyed look, a Columbo-like, "Pardon me, ma'am, but . . ." comeback, or even a Kojak-ian strong-arm tactic to get more out of my witnesses. In negotiating with the prosecutor for a search warrant, I couldn't show him all the evidence I had to justify a search. All I could do was call up his menu, select *search warrant*, hope that my suspect was included on the list, and then hope that I would be granted a warrant.

Of course, I'm just an armchair detective—maybe that's what it feels like in real life, too!

Murder Club supports all of the PC graphics modes and requires just 384K of RAM. The graphics are fairly static and aren't particularly relevant to the mystery; don't feel like you're missing out on anything if you don't have state-of-the-art equipment. The game uses two disks, so two drives or a hard disk are handy.

This is a good game for beginners who like slow, cerebral games. For about the price of a hardcover book, it's more challenging than simply turning pages and waiting for a fictional detective who is smarter than you to hand you the solution on a platter.

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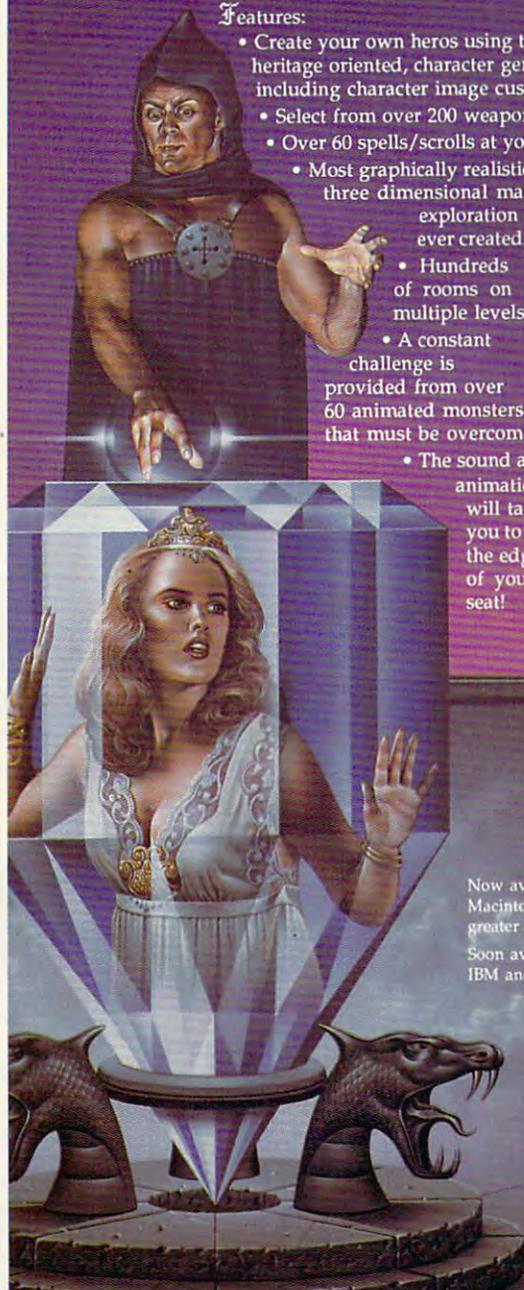
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trate on cavalry. A ranger will have mostly bow units. Priests and mages will have a variety of the three.

Each of these military strategies has advantages and disadvantages that are clearly defined, allowing you to play several times before you tire of the game. You journey through the realm, gaining experience for both your characters and yourself until you are ready to tackle your first major challenge, a nearby city.

Maintaining a working budget with your city's taxation income and building a powerful army are the hardest parts of this phase. After a time, money will start to flow; then the game becomes an exercise in destroying and conquering tougher and tougher adversaries. Eventually you steamroll through the final few cities standing between you and the throne.



View the landscape from overhead and plan strategies in *Sword of Aragon*.

There are just a few problems with the game. For example, the battle sequence, at times, moves very slowly. The computer can take up to 15 minutes deciding just where it wants to put those goblin armies. Some battles can take up to an hour and a half.

Another problem is that toward the end of the game your armies become so skilled that nothing can stand up to them. Much of the finesse that made the game so challenging in its early parts is lost. There is also very little problem solving of the type that makes D & D games so enjoyable.

Lastly, the documentation is occasionally in error or incomplete. The rules intimate that you can train characters to gain experience without fighting battles, but I found this not to be the case. You can only train armies. There is also no information in the documentation concerning some of the unit information that appears on the screen during the battle sequence. You can eventually figure this out while playing, but it would be helpful to have it spelled out in the rules.

Those objections aside, to pass up *Sword of Aragon* could be a great

mistake. If commanding armies and characters and managing cities interests you, if becoming a computer Napoleon gets your blood going, then *Sword of Aragon* is for you.

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STAR SAGA: TWO—THE CLATHRAN MENACE

Challenge and suspense await you in *Star Saga: Two—The Clathran Menace*. This second installment of a three-part adventure from MasterPlay has an engrossing story line and superior writing.

As a sprawling science-fiction epic, it's equal parts interactive novel and computer-moderated role-playing, a self-contained scenario that picks up where *Star Saga: One—Beyond the Boundary* left off. Opening moves summarize the action that took place in the first game in case you missed it or forgot some of the details.

The Clathran are an alien race, bent on conquering the universe and extinguishing all human life. Their vast armada of warships form the Survey Line, which is sweeping inexorably toward the Nine Worlds and which, incidentally, cuts off segments of the game as it advances. Why the Clathran possess such an obsessive hatred of humans and how they can be stopped are only two of the mysteries that you must solve. Play the role of one of six characters who set out to discover what they can about the invading aliens.

The heart of the game is a set of 14 booklets, which contain more than 970 entries spread over approximately 560 pages. Dozens of cultures, hundreds of encounters, and a multitude of decisions permeate the entries and provide you with a pulsating adventure.

This nongraphic computer pro-

gram serves as an electronic dungeon keeper that moderates each turn and handles all the essential bookkeeping. Each participating player selects moves and actions from the onscreen choices via the keyboard or mouse, and the computer responds to the player's choices by directing him or her to the appropriate text entries. If combat or a transaction take place, the computer logs the transactions and reports the results of combat.

Trade and combat are essential elements of the game. The strong economic segment is based upon a pseudobarter system. Much of the early and middle segments consist of trading in order to obtain offensive and defensive weapons needed to upgrade your ship for the inevitable encounters with the Clathran Survey Line.

Combat occurs frequently. While this adds to the excitement and pace of the story, the fact that combat is totally controlled by the computer dilutes its impact as a gaming element. When a battle occurs, the computer selects an offense and a defense for you and matches it against the enemy's offense and defense, applying all ratings to an internal combat matrix. It then displays its choices and the results.



Plan strategies carefully as you play *Star Saga: Two—The Clathran Menace*.

Although you can improve your offensive and defensive options through trades, purchases, and training, you have no input once combat ensues.

Star Saga: Two can be played solo without losing any of the story's punch. However, more than any other computer adventure game, this product is designed to be played by a group of people, each taking on the role of one of the well-developed, multidimensional characters. Engage in meetings, trades, and the cooperative exchange of information with one an-



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other, while at the same time pursuing clearly defined individual goals.

In spite of the weakness of the combat module, *Star Saga: Two* rates high marks. The writing contains all the elements of topnotch science fiction, and the game, though quite linear, is so rich in detail, puzzles, and surprises that you'll have a hard time ending each play session. As a matter of fact, now might be a good time to start *Star Saga: Two*; after all, the Survey Line is moving closer and closer!

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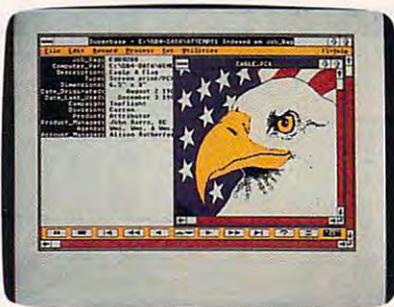
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SUPERBASE 2

Now you can add database management to the growing list of compelling applications that make *Microsoft Windows* worth looking into. *Superbase 2*, from Precision Software, is a *Windows*-based relational database manager. As is common with *Windows*-based applications, *Superbase 2* includes a runtime version of *Windows 2.0*, handy for users who don't already own the stand-alone version of that graphical operating environment.

In addition to the standard *Windows* menu bar, *Superbase 2* uses a second row of icons positioned across the bottom of its display screen to simplify the process of retrieving records in a database. To view the next record in a file, for example, you simply click on an icon showing a single arrow pointing to the right—reminiscent of the play button on a VCR. Conversely, a single-arrow icon pointing left calls up the previous record in the current database. Double arrows pointing right and left (fast forward and rewind) allow you to scan records in ascending or descending order, respectively. Other icons let you quickly access the first or last record in a file, pause a database scan, and even enter SQL-like queries to extract records matching specific search criteria. *Superbase 2*'s implementation of this VCR-based icon structure noticeably decreases the program's learning curve for any new user already familiar with operating a home video recorder.

Another area in which the *Windows* interface elevates *Superbase 2* above traditional DOS database programs is in the flexibility it allows while examining individual records. Character-based database programs tend to present your records in a relatively static manner; once you create a report or display screen, there's no easy way to alter its original design. Analyzing data with *Superbase 2*, on the other hand, is a much more dynamic process. To change the position of a data field on a *Superbase 2* display screen, for example, you simply use the mouse to drag that field to its new location. As a result, you're more likely to examine the records in your *Superbase 2* file from several different angles. This enhances your understanding of the relationships between the data that files contain.



Superbase 2's graphics interface lets you integrate graphics with your data.

Of course, simplicity and flexibility mean little if a program doesn't possess enough power to make it worth using. But *Superbase 2* has power to spare. Record size is limited only by the amount of memory installed on your system. Theoretically, a single file can contain up to 16 million individual records. How many records your databases will hold depends on the available disk space. You can assign up to 999 index fields to a single database file. *Superbase 2* supports limited relational capabilities by including a special lookup function, which allows you to access data stored in multiple files from within the current database. Because it's a graphics-based program, *Superbase 2* even lets you incorporate graphics into your database records. You could, for example, include scanned images of employee photographs in a personnel file. As an added attraction, *Superbase 2* can read *dBase* data files in their native format. This feature alone should alleviate some of the pain commonly associated with switching from standard DOS to the *Windows* environment.

Power comes at a price, of course. In the case of *Superbase 2*, you'll have to contend with increased hardware demands and decreased speed. Graphics programs inevitably perform more slowly than their text-based counterparts, so if blinding speed is an overriding concern in your database operations, then *Superbase 2* might not be right for you.

Superbase 2 operations are fully explained in the program's comprehensive user's manual. It includes a *Windows* primer for those unfamiliar with that graphical environment. Though not context-sensitive, an indexed online help system is available to answer most questions.

Superbase 2 adds a new dimension to DOS database management and is a must for any *Windows* user. Even if you don't run *Windows*, you may still consider switching to *Superbase 2*. It's definitely a harbinger of things to come.

JACK NIMERSHEIM

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COUNTERPOINT

Running applications occupies your computer most of the time. Faced with the dreary DOS prompt, you must remember what directory holds your program and what command starts it. If you're tired of that routine, consider an alternative: a graphical user interface (GUI). The term is applied to a wide variety of programs that differ greatly in cost, complexity, and system requirements. The common element is that menus and icons replace the DOS command line. Just point and click and the computer does the rest.

Busarow's *Counterpoint* is a simple, easy-to-install GUI, although it calls itself a Graphical Menu System. While it doesn't have all the bells and whistles of *Windows*, it takes you quickly to your program from a menu and an icon screen.

Counterpoint requires a hard disk. Once you've installed the program, type *CP* from your root directory and the program's screen will appear.

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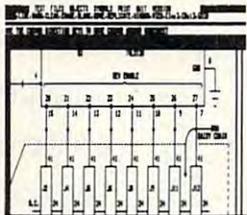
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(You can load the program automatically from your AUTOEXEC.BAT file, too.) Designed for use with a mouse, the program also operates well with keystrokes.

Icons are the heart of the program. Selecting Icons from the main screen brings up a submenu from which you can create, edit, or delete icons, as well as edit commands. When creating an icon, you're allowed three lines of 11 characters each.

I use *Quicken* often, so I decided to install it first. You can specify the installation as an application or a submenu. I wanted to go directly to *Quicken*, so application was my

choice. You'll have to decide whether to leave *Counterpoint* resident while your application runs. The program isn't as hungry for memory as many other GUIs are, but it does swallow between 70K and 100K.

Quicken isn't large, so I let *Counterpoint* stay resident. I entered the lines so that the program could be found and run (CD IQ2 and Q), and was back at the main *Counterpoint* screen. I moved the cursor over the icon labeled *Quicken*, clicked twice, and up came the main menu of *Quicken*. Exit returned me to the main *Counterpoint* menu.

I also use *WordPerfect* often, so I

created another icon and labeled it WP 5.0. Because I keep my *WordPerfect* files in several subdirectories, this time I specified a submenu. I created several new subicons, labeling them and making their command sequence appropriate for my subdirectories. Since my *WordPerfect* program is quite large, *Counterpoint* couldn't stay resident.



Get organized and navigate easily with the *Counterpoint* graphics interface.

Now when I clicked on the WP 5.0 icon in the main menu, a new screen offered the icons of my subdirectories. When I clicked on one of those, there I was, promptly, in *WordPerfect* with the files I needed.

Additional features of the program include a screen-saver and a logo editor (it lets you replace the *Counterpoint* logo on the screen with one of your choice).

Busarow's documentation is terse, but adequate. No mention is made of technical support to the user.

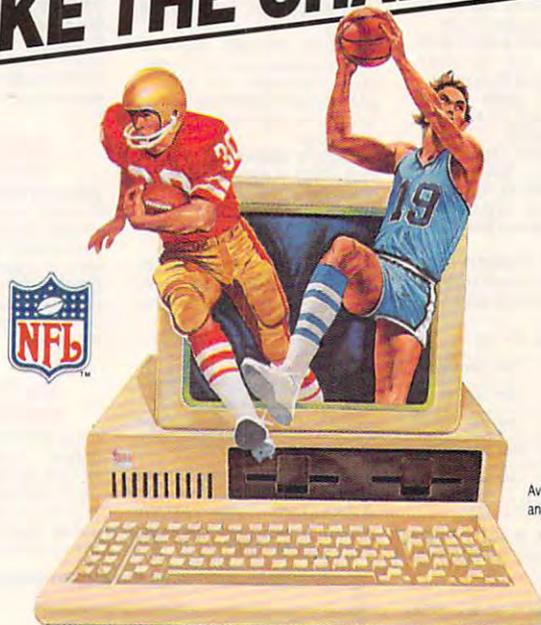
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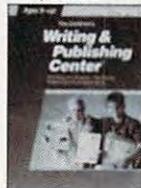
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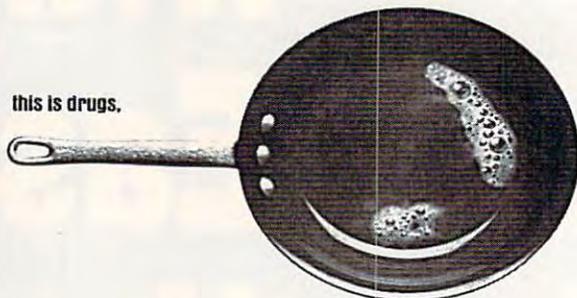
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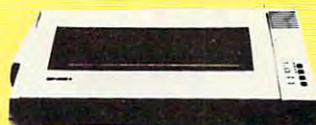
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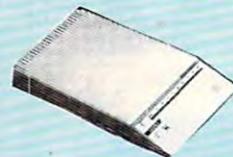
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* Includes 3.5" and 5.25" floppy drives.



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- 80286 Microprocessor 8 or 12 MHz (switchable)
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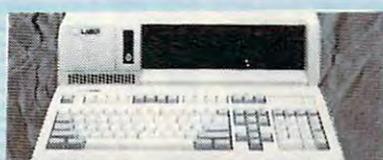
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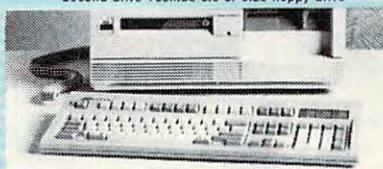
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*DUAL FLOPPY	\$739	\$899	\$1059	\$1199
*30MB SEAGATE	\$939	\$1099	\$1249	\$1399
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* Second drive Toshiba 3.5 or 5.25 floppy drive



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80MB Seagate	\$2029	\$2169	\$2299	\$2419



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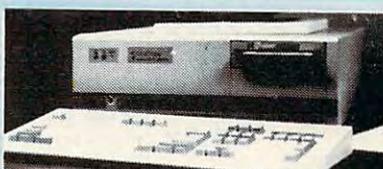
- 80286 Microprocessor (6/12 MHz)
- Socket for 80287 co-processor
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- 1.2MB 5.25" floppy disk drive
- Seagate ST02 SCSI host adaptor
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- 8 Expansion slots (8/16 bit)
- 102 key enhanced keyboard
- 1 Parallel and 2 serial ports
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- ✓ 5 Drive bays (not just 3) INCLUDED

\$1599⁹⁵ Starter System

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84 MB Seagate	\$2259	\$2399	\$2549	\$2749
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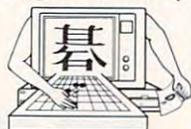
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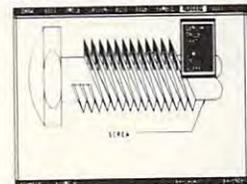
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CONVERSATIONS

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K E I T H F E R R E L L

To Les Crane, chairman and CEO of The Software Toolworks, it's *all* software.

"I've been in the software business all my professional life," Crane says emphatically. This despite a career that includes stints as a contract actor for Universal, pioneering radio and network television talk shows in the sixties, and a Grammy for his recording of *The Desiderata* in the seventies.

Software?

Sure—since college, even. In 1952, while attending Tulane University, Crane landed a job as a disc jockey for a commercial radio station. "The first time I picked up a copy of Nat 'King' Cole's 'Mona Lisa' and put it on the turntable," he explains, "I was programming entertainment software."

He goes on. "In television, when I was making videotapes for broadcast on ABC, we were certainly producing entertainment software. When I was making movies, the film was entertainment software. In 1972, I produced and recorded *The Desiderata*; certainly that was entertainment software."

The lure of interactivity is nothing new for Crane. "That has always been the appeal for me in *all* electronic media. I was one of the pioneers of two-way talk radio." He made a name for himself with an innovative call-in program in San Francisco.

He pursued interactivity in new media, as well. "We invented two-way television. At KGO-television we discovered that you could delay videotape. I did a show where people could call in and interact live with what was going on in our studios."

It's all software, it's all interactive. "The focus of my interests and activities has not changed at all over the years. The hardware has changed a bit. But the software itself still looks like records, a little different size and shape maybe, but it looks like records.

So I've always been in what I like to think of as the interactive software business. Interactivity has always been the leitmotif of what I've done."

Computers were a natural for Crane. "I bought my first computer, a TRS-80, back in 1977 or 1978. It had a gigantic 4K RAM and 4K ROM. I saw the interactive potential and got tremendously excited. That's when I began programming my first computer software venture, a computerized version of the *I Ching*." The program still sells by mail.

Hooked, Crane expanded his software business, releasing *Software Golden Oldies*, a collection that includes *Eliza*, *Pong*, *Adventure*, and *Life*. The anthology did well, but The Software Toolworks really took off with the 1986 release of *Chessmaster 2000*. Crane followed that smash with *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing*, a sophisticated typing instructor; *Twist & Shout*, a spreadsheet utility; and, more recently, *Life and Death*, an interactive medical movie.

With sales measured in the hundreds of thousands and products that are respected by peers as well as consumers, Crane and The Software Toolworks have become an important part of the software firmament.

The range of products, as well as the name of Crane's company, says something about his attitudes and goals. "Software is a mind tool by which we unlock all of the creativity and intellectual energies we possess and unleash them through the powers that are made available to us by the computer. A computer engages you even more effectively than a book or a movie because you are changing the programmatic material and interacting with the media in ways you've never been able to before."

How does Crane decide which products to release? His years in the entertainment industry help. "Coming from a show-business background, I've never wanted to be subject to the vagaries of the faddish entertainment marketplace. I like to think about music publishing. There are hits, and

then there are *standards*. I'd much rather have the rights to *White Christmas* than to Madonna's next single. When we look at a product—*Chessmaster*, say, or *Mavis*—we want to make sure it becomes *the* standard in its area."

A man of enormous personal charm and persuasiveness, naturally enthusiastic about his company and the software industry, Crane is not unaware of the large social risks that electronic media may bear: People interacting with machines may have less time to interact with other people.

"We may see," he says, "a social devolution, in that people are going to be spending much more time cocooning, if you will. Having an interactive home entertainment center might see us move toward a reemergence of nuclear types of families and family groups."

That's not necessarily negative, but extensions of the trend could be. "As electronic media become more appealing, people are going to spend less and less time with literature, say, and more with electronic amusement devices. I think that would be a terrible Hobson's choice. It's not a great tradeoff."

But it is a tradeoff that's taking place. People are reading less. Despite his enthusiasm for computers, Crane remains a committed reader, peppering his conversation with references to books.

He's concerned that, thanks again to electronics, the shift from book to electronics may take place rapidly. "Because of television, because of game machines, computers and Nintendo, and so on, we are raising a generation of illiterates—and that's scary as hell."

Crane isn't running scared, though. He's confident that the combination of interactive electronics and human imagination will ultimately produce a new synthesis—new entertainment, new tools. It doesn't matter what form it takes, what platforms or media they require. To Les Crane, it will all be *software*. □



NEW PRODUCTS

M I C K E Y M C L E A N

Star Boosts Speed

The Star Micronics NX-1000 II Multi-Font printer is 25-percent faster than the original NX-1000 Multi-Font model. This nine-pin dot-matrix printer offers near-letter-quality text at 45 characters per second (cps) versus 36 cps for the previous model. The draft output is 180 cps compared with 144 cps with the older model.



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A parallel interface with Epson LX-800 and IBM Proprinter II emulations enable you to run almost all existing software. Other features include automatic paper loading and an adjustable push-style tractor feed.

The retail price for the NX-1000 II Multi-Font is \$299.

Star Micronics, 200 Park Ave., Suite 3510, New York, NY 10166

Circle Reader Service Number 200.

The Great One

The award-winning Amiga sports simulation, *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*, by Bethesda Softworks, has now been released for IBM PCs and compatibles. Endorsed by the Canadian Amateur

Hockey Association, the game features many realistic aspects including penalties, power plays, sudden-death overtime, instant replays and fights on the ice, in addition to the chance for you to play with The Great One. You can assume the role of player and/or coach or let the computer play both teams.

Hand-pick your own team and set each player's skill level, or choose from four classic Stanley Cup teams—the 1970 Boston Bruins, the 1970 St. Louis Blues, the 1971 Montreal Canadiens, or the 1971 Chicago Blackhawks. If you want to join Wayne on the front line, select either the 1988 Edmonton Oilers or the 1989 Los Angeles Kings. Additional International and NHL Team DataDisks are also available separately.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey for the IBM PC and compatibles carries a suggested retail price of \$54.95. The Amiga version sells for \$49.95.

Bethesda Softworks, 15235 Shady Grove Rd., Rockville, MD 20850

Circle Reader Service Number 201.

Taxing Times Ahead

Chipsoft's 1989 *TurboTax Personal/1040* package features pull-down menus and increased mouse support. Online help, including IRS instructions, is available, as is enhanced telephone support with a toll-free fax number and an IRS bulletin board.

TurboTax offers the Visual 1040 system for graphics-based machines. New forms offered this year include Schedule D1, a second copy of Schedule F, Schedule 2 (Form 1040A), and Forms 4952, 8283, 8808, and 8814. An automatic interview function asks you appropriate questions to determine which forms you'll need.

The program will print IRS-approved forms, including the 1040, on dot-matrix and laser printers. It also prints out all worksheets and schedules.

The *TurboTax Personal/1040* sells for \$75, while updates are half off the current year's price. Each state

version retails for \$40, and individual state updates are \$25.

ChipSoft, 5045 Shoreham Pl., San Diego, CA 92122-3954

Circle Reader Service Number 202.

Pigskins, Pits, and Playoffs

Electronic Arts has extended its sports offerings for the IBM PC and compatibles with *John Madden Football*, *Ferrari Formula One*, and *Lakers vs. Celtics and the NBA Playoffs*.

John Madden Football was previously released for the Apple II series and features three levels of difficulty to ease you into the fray. QuickPlay, with a reduced playbook, gets the game going within a minute of booting. The Standard Game can be played in Strategy or in Action mode. The strategic game runs the plays you call as you watch the action from the sidelines. The action game lets you make the coaching decisions and run the plays by controlling the key player.

The game retails for \$49.95 on the IBM PC and compatibles and the Apple II.



Race your way to first place and become driving champion in *Ferrari Formula One*.

With *Ferrari Formula One*, you can live out your fantasy of racing a Ferrari F1/88. This detailed driving simulation puts you behind the wheel on famous racecourses such as Monaco, Detroit, Monza, and Brands Hatch. You can race on a favorite course at any time or take on the challenge of recreating an entire Formula One season. The IBM PC and compatibles version has a retail price of

\$39.95. A previously released Amiga version sells for \$49.95.

Lakers vs. Celtics features the classic rivalry between two of the NBA's most successful franchises. This NBA-licensed, five-on-five game also features six other 1989 playoff teams along with the 1989 East and West All-Star teams. The teams' statistics are taken from the 1989 season. You can choose any two teams to play a scrimmage game, or you can select one team to enter the playoffs and try to win the World Championship.

Players are faithfully modeled after real-life NBA stars. The game incorporates true-to-life rules including ten-second backcourt, three-second lane, and five-second inbounds violations; team-penalty situations; and five-minute overtimes. *Lakers vs. Celtics* retails for \$49.95.

Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Dr., San Mateo, CA 94404

Circle Reader Service Number 203.

Accolade Assumes New Role

With the release of *The Third Courier*, Accolade enters the role-player game segment of the market. The game takes you to the city of Berlin, where you'll assume the role of Moondancer, the free world's best secret agent. Your assignment is to recover NATO's stolen nuclear defense plans and their components from an elusive courier before they are delivered into the hands of the Eastern Bloc.

In this realtime role-playing game, you can tailor Moondancer's background and character traits. You also have at your disposal several high-tech devices. All of the action takes place on a first-person-perspective view screen surrounded by onscreen informational files you can access at any time. A status box briefs you on your current location and explains to you through icons what kind of establishments are on your path such as hotels, bars, shops, and cash machines.

The IBM PC and compatibles version is hard disk-installable and has a suggested retail price of \$49.95. An Apple IIGS version will be available soon and will retail for \$49.95 as well. Accolade also plans to release a clue book.

Accolade, 550 S. Winchester Blvd., Suite 200, San Jose, CA 95128

Circle Reader Service Number 204.

Laptop Light

The Tandy 1100 FD laptop weighs in at less than 6½ pounds and features the *DeskMate* graphical user interface and MS-DOS 3.3 built in. *DeskMate*

includes *DeskMate Desktop*, *DeskMate's Text* application, and *DeskMate's 90,000-word spelling checker* in ROM. The computer comes equipped with one 3½-inch 720K disk drive.

Also included with the computer is a removable, rechargeable battery that lasts for more than five hours and an AC adapter/recharger. Other features include an 80 × 25 high-contrast liquid-crystal display with 640 × 200 resolution, an NEC V-20 micro-processor with a clock speed of 8 MHz, 640K of available memory, a full-size 84-key keyboard with enhanced keypad emulation, a low-battery indicator, a battery-saving standby mode, a built-in realtime clock, a parallel printer port, a serial communications port, and one dedicated internal modem slot.

The Tandy 1100 FD has a retail price of \$999.00. Options include an internal modem for \$199.95, a replacement battery for \$29.95, and a choice of carrying cases.

Tandy, 1700 One Tandy Center, Fort Worth, TX 76102

Circle Reader Service Number 205.

Tangled Up in Tales

Origin has released the IBM PC and compatibles version of *Tangled Tales*, a fantasy role-playing adventure. Subtitled *The Misadventures of a Wizard's Apprentice*, the game, which casts you in the role of the wizard's apprentice, offers a lighthearted, witty approach rather than the typical dark and heavy themes of role-playing adventures.

As the wizard's apprentice, you must complete three progressively difficult tasks as proof of your worthiness. On your quest, you'll visit haunted houses, medieval fortresses, and contemporary country farms. There are over 50 odd characters to meet including a medieval knight, a California surfer, and a Shakespeare-spouting elf maiden.

Tangled Tales features a menu-and-icon interface along with state-of-the-art graphics. The suggested retail price \$29.95.

Origin, 136 Harvey Rd., Bldg. B, Londonderry, NH 03053

Circle Reader Service Number 206.

Software to Sneeze At

Positech's *WellAware* traces food-allergy and -intolerance symptoms to the foods that trigger them. It analyzes what you eat to relate ingredients to symptom patterns and then identifies the foods and additives most likely to

cause the symptoms.

Designed for both home and professional health care, *WellAware* lets you conduct your own food-sensitivity studies. It provides a diary to record what was eaten and when and the severity of symptoms. The diary can be printed out for reference. The program's Food Sensitivity Report ranks suspected ingredients or food groups in order of probable cause. *WellAware* also provides an Ingredient/Diet Categorization Report that helps you plan meals by showing what foods you eat that involve the suspected ingredients or food groups.

The program contains a database of hundreds of meats, seafoods, fruits, vegetables, and grains and the ingredients and additives in over 3000 brand-name processed foods, popular fast foods, and commonly prepared dishes. You can also add your own recipes to the database. It sells for \$99. *Positech, 484B Washington St., Suite 350, Monterey, CA 93940*

Circle Reader Service Number 207.

Playtime

Brøderbund's *Playroom* is built around the theme of a child's playroom filled with games, toys, and surprises. It includes seven games that introduce children to early math, reading, telling time, beginning keyboarding, art and creativity, logical thinking, and spelling.

In the first game, called *The Playroom*, children can explore the room and select from more than 20 toys and objects. The first game teaches children to recognize or read key safety words. Six of the objects in the room lead to the other six games. The cuckoo-clock game teaches children how to tell time to the nearest hour while the computer focuses on reading readiness, spelling, and computer keyboarding skills. The mixed-up toy encourages creativity and helps develop analytical skills. The mousehole, a three-level counting game, introduces addition and subtraction. With the ABC book, children can learn some creativity and basic reading skills. The spinner toy can help teach kids how to count and recognize the numerals 1-12.

The Playroom has a retail price of \$44.95 for the IBM PC and compatibles, \$49.95 for the Macintosh, and \$39.95 for the Apple II. Included in each package is a small stuffed toy (Pepper the Mouse) and a Parent's Guide.

Broderbund, 17 Paul Dr., San Rafael, CA 94903-2101

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OFF LINE

D A N G O O K I N

The winter holidays are over. Garish paper lies spread upon the floor, and the eggnog stain on the carpet is but a memory and a faint ring. It's only January 5 and already the excitement provoked by those delightfully wrapped, heavy *dBase IV*-size boxes that once were nestled beneath the tannenbaum has given way to gloom and despair. They say it's the thought that counts, but whoever folded those floppy disks so that they'd fit in your stocking couldn't have been thinking very hard.

Every year, it boils down to the same thing. You hint, suggest, and beg. You hold aloft copies of your favorite computer journals and point frenetically at the ads. You drag your loved ones through Software-O-Rama and deliberately pick up software packages, nervously flip through books, and joyfully behold hardware add-ons that anyone with one good eye could see you wanted. But it does no good.

Why? Because your friends and loved ones have no idea what you're talking about. Forget about the computer gibberish you spout every day; during the holidays it's about as intelligible to them as Sanskrit. Even though they have the best intentions, they always buy something that doesn't work with your equipment. And if they do figure out what you want, and they're willing to surprise you with it, the cost of the thing blows them away. *Four-hundred-eighty dollars for a memory chip! Why can't you raise finches like your brother?*

To educate potential gift-givers, it helps to remember all the many months of training you underwent before you could remember what size disk your PC likes to mangle. It pays to look back on how hard it was to memorize what type of three-letter-acronym graphics adapter you have in your machine. And remember how you used that valuable knowledge to

systematically drain your bank account?

My first high-tech holiday, I was really stupid. I thought: *They know I'm into computers. All I need to do is sit there and be surprised when I open up the complete C library and unwrap all the books I've ever wanted—and that 10-meg hard drive.* After all, Uncle Jack didn't have to ask for his hula-hoe, did he? Everyone knows he's into gardening—his nickname is *Ortho*.

All I did was set myself up for disappointment. Instead of the C compiler, I got a mug that said *I Pulled an All-nighter with Dave*. I didn't fair any better the next year, even though I had left magazine ads

The following year, I handed out a suggestion list. I knew by then that I wasn't going to get anything unless I asked for it. Then I discovered how little that noncomputer people know about computers. The phrase *C programming language* means something to me, but, to my relatives, it means something completely different, something possibly to do with the ocean.

Only one relative bothered to look at my suggestion list. She got me a real neat shoot-at-the-orange-blob game. At least I think it's neat. It didn't run on any computer I'd ever heard of.

Finally, last year, I told my Mom exactly what I wanted. I even told her how to get it mail-order. Well, I got what I wanted, but I sacrificed totally the element of surprise. I also sparked my mother's peculiar sense of sibling fairness. My brother and sister each got a semitrailer full of clothes and a trip to the Bahamas.

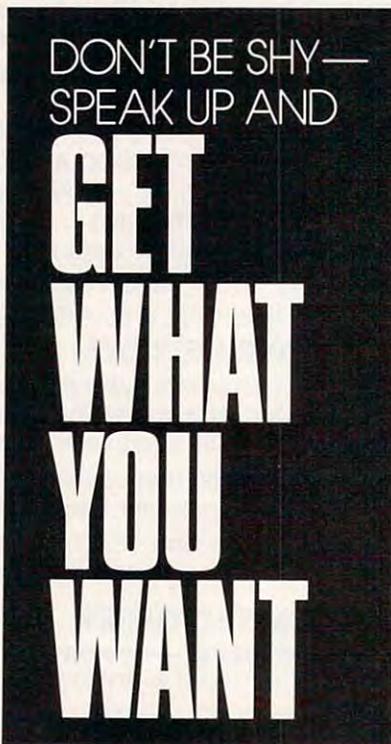
The moral of the story is this: To have a happy holiday, you have to be direct. Come right out and say what you want. I've even prepared a script.

Say, [name of loved one], I want [name of program]. It's a [type of program]. I need the [size of disks] disk format for my [name of your computer]. Buy it at [name of the computer store where you go all the time]. Tell them you're my [potential gift-giver's relationship to you].

Once you've delivered your speech, you need only worry about insignificant things like the ambulance and triage unit your loved ones will need when they see the price tag.

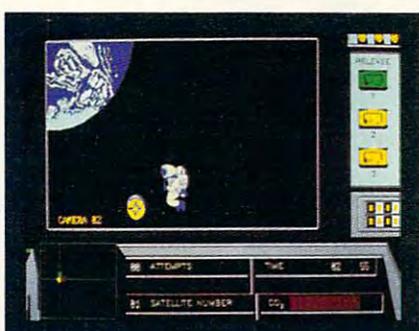
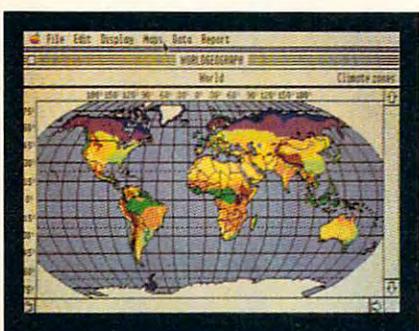
Finally, remember to feign surprise next year when it comes time to open your goodies. Face it, those Microsoft-size boxes are hard to conceal.

It's too late for gift suggestions this year, but at least you now know why you didn't get all that you expected. So, put this column away till next Thanksgiving, when it can do you some good. But for right now, pick up all that paper, for crying out loud, and take out that tree before it rots. □



all over the place and bought a poster that pictured the software I wanted. Spare yourself a holiday depression: Noncomputer people don't read computer ads. They took one look at my poster and said, "Gee, Dan, I guess you're over your naked-lady stage."

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- 10. WillMaker**
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Nolo Press
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IBM, Macintosh
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Amiga, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh
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Apple II, Apple IIgs, IBM
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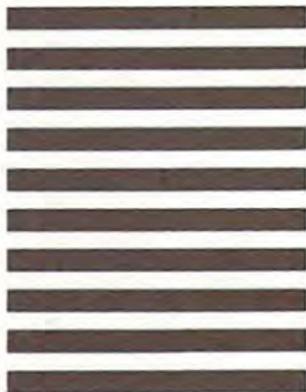
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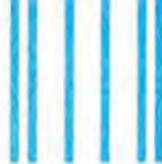
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269 270 271
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101	102	103	104	105	106
107	108	109	110	111	112
113	114	115	116	117	118
119	120	121	122	123	124
125	126	127	128	129	130
131	312	133	134	135	136
137	138	139	140	141	142
143	144	145	146	147	148
149	150	151	152	153	154
155	156	157	158	159	160
161	162	163	164	165	166
167	168	169	170	171	172
173	174	175	176	177	178
179	180	181	182	183	184
185	186	187	188	189	190
191	192	193	194	195	196
197	198	199	200	201	202
203	204	205	206	207	208
209	210	211	212	213	214
215	216	217	218	219	220
221	222	223	224	225	226
227	228	229	230	231	232
233	234	235	236	237	238
239	240	241	242	243	244
245	246	247	248	249	250
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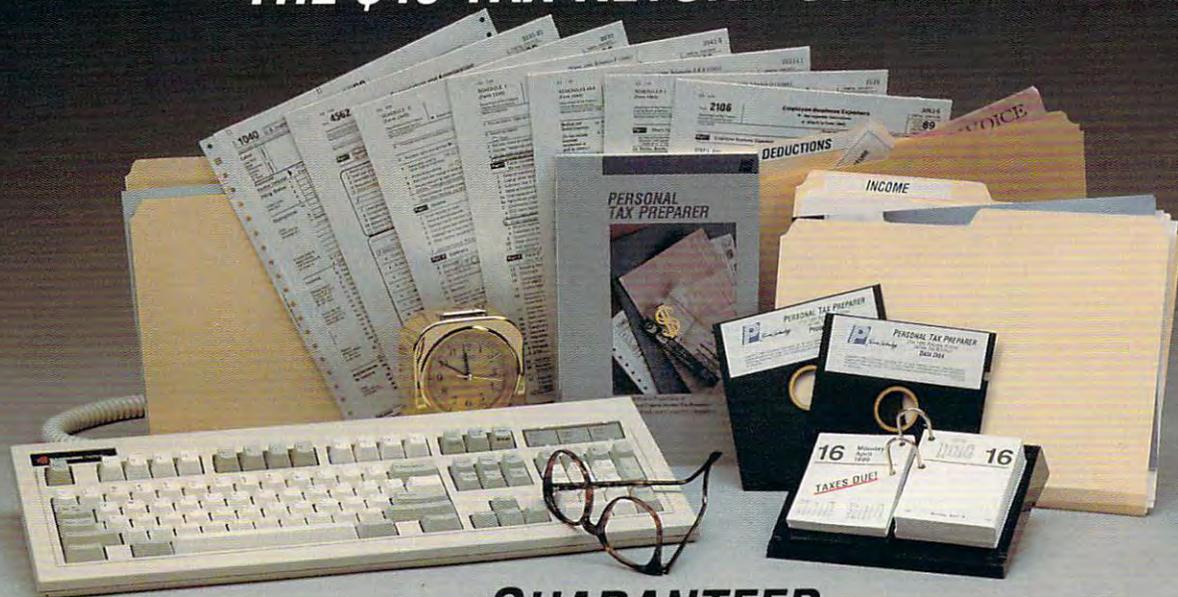
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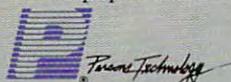
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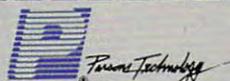
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