Saint Paul ATARI Computer Enthusiasts

SPACE

An independent computer user group

ZNET

MAST Minnesota Atari ST

SPACE / MAST Newsletter

September 1989

Now including Z•Net

SPACE meetings coming up:

Friday, September 8th
Friday, October 13th
Friday, November 10th

MAST meetings coming up:

Friday, September 15th -- All about TOS 1.4
Friday, October 20th
Friday, November 17th

SPACE / MAST regular meetings are at the Falcon Heights Community Center, 2077 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul. Meetings start at 7:30 pm.

MAST+ Programmers / MIDI meeting (First Minnesota Bank building on Lexington Avenue near Larpenteur Avenue. Meeting starts at 7:30 pm):

Tuesday, September 24th

FROM THE EDITOR

September has come upon us rather quickly! The newsletter is being put together over the first weekend, since the SPACE meeting is actually a mere 8 days into the month. In addition, I am getting ready for my own wedding, which occurs the evening of the MAST meeting -- a mere 15 days into the month! And school is just around the corner...

This issue is also something of a departure. The SPACE officers have decided that they do not want to include the Z*Net articles. This is a shame, since they recently expanded 8-bit only articles to 2 pages (plus a full page ad from Innovative Concepts). There are rumblings of other methods of getting 8-bit Atari computer news to the members of SPACE ... you may want to show up at the September meeting to provide your own opinion on the matter.

Along with the Z*net articles this month, you'll also find the regular writings of David Cole and Jim Schulz. The only thing that's missing is an article from _you_, the reader. There are literally hundreds of software and hardware reviews waiting to be typed up -- and it's the usergroup member with experience who should pass along the message "I like this, because..." or "I don't like this, because..."

See you in October!

-- Dave Meile

News from the Pres. By Jim Schulz

Well, September is here and the end of a long summer has come to an end. MAST is still here and we welcome you all back from your long summer vacations. We have a number of great meetings planned for the months ahead so don't miss out. First up this month, comments on the BBS, then last month, this month, the future, member stuff and another visit to the envelope.

Steve Pauley has resigned as sysop of the MAST BBS. This was told to me the night before the MAST meeting and discussed at the MAST meeting the next night. With Steve resigning, MAST also loses the BBS equipment as well, since we were using Steve's PC and modem. Steve's IBM PC with mucho graphics options is currently up for sale. If you are interested, give Steve a call.

After much discussion, it was decided to take the offer of Tom Cook to be the next MAST BBS sysop. Tom has donated the use of his equipment, modem, and hard drive to the BBS. It was also decided that the new BBS software will be STadel as well. The decision to use STadel and Tom's ST has created quite a bit of activity on the current MAST BBS. A couple of points relative to the decision to accept Tom's offer need to be addressed.

First, MAST does not have the monetary resources to buy an ST, hard drive and modem. Yes, MAST does own an ST, but even if we use the club's ST, we still need to buy both a 2400 baud modem and a 20 to 30 meg hard drive. Second, Tom was the only volunteer that we had to both run the BBS and volunteer his equipment to the club. Even though MAST is quite big, we still are low on volunteerism. Tom was also the only volunteer to run the BBS, period.

Next the software. It was decided to use the STadel BBS software. It was decided that this software would give the user group the best opportunity to expand the BBS and give MAST members a larger plate of BBS options to choose from. The downside, which has been pointed out a number of times, is that STadel is not always the easiest BBS to understand. To that end, both Tom and I are in the process of rewriting the menus and working to make the BBS more user friendly. Also, we will be educating the members on the usage of the new commands and providing documentation to ease the transition.

Starting next month, we will having articles here on how to use the STadel commands and having demonstrations and question answering times at the meeting. We are very open to suggestions and we want this BBS to be as user friendly as possible. We are also hoping to make the transition to the new BBS a gradual one. Our hope is that both BBSs will be up for about two weeks together before formally bringing down the current MAST BBS. The new MAST BBS number will be announced at the MAST meeting. Please work with us to create the best MAST BBS yet!!!! Before I complete this, I think we all owe Steve our thanks for all of the years that he has supported the group through the BBS. Thanks Steve for all of your effort!!!!!

Last month, we had another round of MidiMaze. We didn't have as good of turnout as in the past, but all who played had a good time. We also had a demo of some new graphics software as well. I didn't get to hear most of the stuff relating to the demo, but what I saw of the demo looked quite impressive. We also had a goodly number of rather good DOMs this month as well. Attendance was again down, but it should pick up a bit now that summer is over.

Now on to this month..... This month, I will be bringing along my system with the new TOS 1.4 and showing off some of the features of the new operating system. I am also planning on putting together a handout listing the new features as well. Also bring along your favorite software and see how it works on 1.4 as well. Try before you buy. Generally, all commercial software which doesn't play tricks should run as well as some software that doesn't work on the Mega as well. In addition to this, I am planning a few surprises as well. Also we will have complete details on the new STE computers, and the new TT computers as well. All this and the latest news, rumors, and DOMs as well.

One member won't be at the meeting this month. MAST's VP and newsletter editor is getting married on the Friday night of the MAST meeting so I will have to go it alone. Good luck Dave!!!! Also we will be picking two members to head up a nominations committee for our annual elections in November. Yes, another full meeting at MAST!!!!!

The future..... Next month, we will look at the wonderful world of ST enhancers. Some of the programs to be shown include Turbo ST, Universal Item Selector, Neodesk, and more.... See how you can make your system better for the price of a program.

Coming in November, the translators are here.... Now that PC Ditto II is four to six weeks from shipping, it should be here by the then. I will also bring along the ST Xformer and show how the 8 bit looks on ST with an 8 bit drive as well. We will also have elections in November with formal nominations taken in October. Also either October or November, we will have another MAST swap meet for hardware and software. More details in the newsletter next month. As always, MAST keeps rolling along.....

Speaking of meetings, also don't forget the MAST+ programmers meeting and the new Midi meeting which is just starting. We had more Midi interest this last month so keep it coming. I had a call yesterday from a man in Mankato. He bought a copy of GFA V3.0 and can't figure out the Atari resource editor. I gave him directions for the programmers meeting. I hope one of our expert programmers can help him through his problems. That's what the programmers meeting is for. The Midi group is just getting started. If you are willing to help, please contact Eric Hopper or Dave Meile. We can use your help!!! Also don't forget the pizza afterwards.....

Member stuff.... First, the treasury... There have been a lot of questions lately about where all of the MAST money goes. Most of the money comes from memberships, DOM sales, and blank disk sales. Most of the money is spent on disks for DOMs, BBS download time, room rental, BBS support payments, and the newsletter. Starting next month, we will try to start a breakdown of how much MAST and SPACE really have and actually have. The difference here is the money from memberships should go for the newsletter. Not other expenses. When you take out the money from each group from membership,

each group is currently in the hole. Since there has been quite a bit of concern about whether the groups can afford to publish a newsletter, MAST is going to spend money based on the philosophy that membership money is newsletter money. What this means to the member is that if you pay your dues, you will get a newsletter for one year.

SPACE is about to decide to drop the newsletter all together to save money. I don't want MAST to get to that situation, ever, so I am taking these steps now. MAST is doing fairly well financially and the group should not be overly concerned. We have just survived another long summer of low attendance meetings and funds and attendance has always picked up in the fall.....

Second, newsletter. To help promote contributions to the newsletter, MAST will give any member writing an ST related article one FREE MAST DOM of their choice. This offer used to apply with both SPACE and TAIG in the past and we are again reinitiating it with MAST. Yes, any MAST disk for one newsletter article. It is our hope that this will bring new blood and ideas to the newsletter.

Elsewhere in this month's newsletter is this month's DOM article, a ST Xtra article on Midi Maze from our sister group in Fargo/Moorhead, a Z*Net update article, and a ST News article on the latest info on the STE, TOS 1.4 and more. Look for these elsewhere in this issue.

Third, secretary. Steve Pauley is officially the secretary of MAST, but Steve has had some problems getting to meetings lately and other business affairs have conflicted with the MAST meeting. What we need is someone to take minutes and write them up for the newsletter in Steve's absence. The minutes of the meeting are important because they give another perspective on each meeting and also will free me up from recapping the last meeting each month. If you are interested, please see me at the next meeting.

Fourth, blank disks.... We do still have blank disks. Blank double-sided disks are $0.80 each and we do guarantee them. If you find a disk that won't format, we will swap for a good one. Also we have 3.5" over-the-top labels as well for 100 for $2.00. Just one more service of MAST.

Fifth, Antic deal.... ANTIC has offered MAST $1.00 for every ST owner's name which we supply. ANTIC has guaranteed us that these name will only be used for one mailing on a START special offer and then destroyed. MAST has decided to send all MAST members names to ANTIC. If you do not want your name included, please see Allan or me at the next meeting.
Finally, the freebies started to roll in. MAST now owns a copy of Word Perfect as well as a VideoKey. We will be looking for people to do a review. If you are interested, please talk to Dave or myself. Also we have received the Sierra Online video and we will be showing it in October or November as well. We have also got the forms for our free BIX membership and those should be active in the next month as well. This will provide both the newsletter and the MAST BBS another source for news and the MAST DOMs a free source for public domain software.

Well, that's it for September. The envelope is a little down in the mouth this month and again look empty. But the future looks good so stay tuned next month..... So that's it!!! I hope to see you all at the TOS 1.4 demo and at the MAST SIGs on the following Tuesday and on the MAST BBS as well. Also congrats again to Dave and Ann on their forthcoming marriage.

Last Nite by Dave Cole

Well, another month gone, 3 to go! Time flies whenever it wants to. I won't be VP of SPACE after November, I know that many of you will be glad, I know why.

Anyway, there are some NEW games for the XE game system. Commando is one of them. It's certainly looking into, but when the ST Game System comes out, this may be the death of the 8-bit (which I love the Atari 8-bit very much, I'm serious.)

I'm working on 2 new letters which I'm going to send to certain people. 1 is going to ATARI,and the other to the magazine "Atari Explorer". Both will deal with "controversial issues" about the 8-bit, so once - or if - I get a reply, anyone interested will be able to see the reply to what I wrote to them (and a copy of what I had written to them.)

I loved last month's meeting, didn't you? I really loved it when I took over as President for 5 seconds! I thank Mr. Nathan Block for taking over Mr. Howell's position. And I must say that Nathan was pretty good at the position of President, too! And there I was, as nervous as a newt! Oh well, at least nobody had a nervous breakdown!

The latest question about SPACE is this: Will the Newsletter be put on a disk? I think it's a good idea as it will undoubtedly cost less to produce, and you can skip some articles like mine for instance! Well, all-in-all, a disk version would be pretty nice.

Well, see you at the next meeting!

Nomination committees should be forming up this month -- think about running for office or volunteering your time....

SPACE 8 BIT SOFTWARE LIBRARY NEWS
September 1989
by Joe Danko, Disk Librarian

There is a Disk of the Month in September. The DOM went on a little vacation last month due to the lack of suitable software and the effort required to properly organize the 6 disk PRINT SHOP compendium and get out the 4 sides required for DETERM 1.59 which is now my chosen modem program. It's close but it even beats BOBTERM.

SEPTEMBER 1989 DOM:
```
>SPACE_DOM< 000
>09_89___1< 000
DOS     SYS 037
DUP     SYS 042
AUTORUN SYS 001
MENU        035
LIFE    COM 249
KALEIDO LIF 007
KALEIDO2LIF 007
EXPLODESLIF 007
GLIDRGUNLIF 007
CONSTELLLIF 007
GLIDER2 LIF 007
BILLIARDLIF 007
LIFEDOCSTXT 119
DET     BAS 046
DET     DOC 012
DOS2    FIX 001
DOS2FIX DOC 007
DTABIN  BAS 078
DTABIN  DOC 014
```

LIFE.COM
LIFEDOCS.TXT
Most of SIDE 1 is occupied by what has to be the ultimate GAME OF LIFE for the ATARI 8 bit. The files with 'LIF' extenders are saved starting patterns. Yes, you can save and reload your patterns. The user interface is very up to date with windows and dropdown menus and the graphics are outstanding. The game has many options and executes very quickly. The author is Anthony Ramos, a new power in 8 bit public domain/shareware programming.

DET.BAS
DET.DOC
A BASIC program to convert decimal numbers to English.

DTABIN.BAS
DTABIN.DOC
BASIC program that will BINARY SAVE a machine language program with optional RUN and INIT vectors. This is especially useful with SPARTADOS and SPARTADOS X.

DOS2.FIX
DOS2FIX.DOC
A short patch to fix the DOS to DOS XE file conversion utility, DOS2SYS.COM, included

with DOS XE. The version on the DOS XE that I tried didn't work.

SIDE 2:
This side of the DOM is a massive collection of DEMO programs called:
DISC-SCAPE
Another Anthony Ramos masterpiece, this series of linked BASIC programs cleverly shows a lot of your ATARI's capabilities and takes over 15 minutes to run. Here are the only non-menu instructions:
During Phase screen
>SELECT<:next phase
>OPTION<:menu
Other new offerings for September:
DOS XE
Since this new DOS is a bit mysterious to most of us and I have heard that the DOS software itself is in the public domain, SPACE LIBRARY will offer copies for a small price so users can try it out. So far there is no software released that uses it and I have seen no enhancements or utilities. Included with DOS XE and utilities will be the DOS2SYS fix files. If you need to know how to make maximum use of DOS XE you will have to purchase the ATARI copyright package for $10 or so as the manual IS NOT public domain for sure.
DVC COMPILER
A shareware 'C' compiler system complete with libraries, linker, compiler and editor along with examples of source and compiled programs. It is a demonstration version and the author wants money for the actual working release which is a much larger set of files and a large manual. This single- sided disk offers a way to take 'C' for a test-ride.
ACTION! P.D. RUNTIME LIBRARY
For ATARI users with the ACTION! cartridge, this 2 sided disk allows you to generate free-standing executable files to run on systems without an ACTION! cartridge.
ANALOG #76
The ANALOG Disk of the Month for September. If you get ANALOG magazine, you need this disk. We need increased interest in this disk or SPACE may have to drop our subscription. As things stand, ANALOG is going back to a combined 8-bit/ST single monthly issue in November. Our subscription expires with the December issue and we need to sell disks to help support the cost of our renewal. We offer the current 12 months DOM's for $4 and previous years for $3. We don't require proof that the buyer actually has the issue of ANALOG.

Starting next month the LIBRARY will be offering BEST-OF disks from the early years of SPACE for those that don't have a collection of the disks going back to 1982. There will be BEST GAMES, BEST UTILITIES, etc.

If you have an ATARI 8-bit machine and you need software, THE SPACE LIBRARY HAS IT.

Z*Net Update
by Jim Schulz

This month, we will again look at this month's Z*Net. This month, I will first look at the SPACE/MAST and Z*Net status and then let you know where you can get hold of some of the public domain programs listed in this month's "Public Domain Report" column.

First off, the Z*Net Status. Last month, we published the costs of adding Z*Net to the newsletter. From second-hand comments, I heard last month that SPACE decided to remove Z*Net from the newsletter because of non-payment of funds by Z*Net and lack of 8 bit material. Let's address these two issues.

First off, Dave has received in the last few weeks from Z*Net complete payment details. Z*Net now will only pay the user groups after they have accrued $50.00 in payments. Dave had previously submitted for payment for the first issue and was waiting for more information before submitting for the second month. Under these new rules, we will get paid every two to three months for Z*Net publication. Also Z*Net has provided forms for better submissions for payment as well.

Second, Z*Net is trying to address the issue of 8 bit material. In this month's issue, there are two full page 8 bit articles as well as one full page 8 bit ad. Z*Net is also hearing from other groups as well about the lack of 8 bit material. So our complaints are not alone and are being heard. In closing, Z*Net is a new venture for the support of user group. It is having its growing pains just like any other new publication and venture. Since we jumped in in the beginning, we will have to live with some of the problems as they get them worked out. Both SPACE and MAST are continuing to evaluate our Z*Net involvement and we will keep you informed.

Now onto the "Public Domain Report"..... HDCHEK12 from MAST's own Bill LeDuc is found on MAST DOM #406 from August, the second utility disk from last month. LGSELECT and PACKER 2.0 are found on MAST DOM #405 from August, the first utility disk from last month. PA_CAL11 was first found on MAST DOM #396 from July, the applications disk for July. Several updates have been made over the two months to this program so an updated version will again appear on this month's applications disk. The other utilities, DCFMT302, BLRUT14, CACHEV3, FLAME_J and STOPDRV will appear on this month's utility disk(s). The BLRUT12 is a rather large collection of utilities and might not appear this month because of space limitations. The ADARDEMO will not appear on the MAST DOM. I do have a copy and I have tried it. Since the demo only plays itself and doesn't give the user anything to try or use, I will not be published. My general theory for demos is that if the demos doesn't give the user something beyond the demo of the software, it is very limited in its usefulness and also rather expensive. If there is interest, I will post the demo to the MAST BBS.

Well, that's it. I hope you enjoy reading this month's edition of Z*Net. Also check with Allan and Joe at the meetings for this month's selection of public domain software. Happy Z*Net reading.....

MAST Disks of the Month
By Jim Schulz

Well, it's DOM time again. This month, I will start with a run down last month's lineup of MAST DOMs, followed by some MAST disk news, and finally what's in store for the month of August. This again may be a little fast as it is my last article after six hours of writing all night long. So here goes....

For the month of August, we had five normal DOMS, four special disks, and two ST magazine disks.

#405 - MAST DOM #1 (Aug. Utilities Disk #1)
#406 - MAST DOM #2 (Aug. Utilities Disk #2)
#407 - MAST DOM #3 (Aug. Applications Disk)
#408 - MAST DOM #4 (Aug. Games Disk #1)
#409 - MAST DOM #5 (Aug. Games Disk #2 and Communications)
#410 - Demo Disk #36 (Full running demos of Neodesk and Turbo ST)
#411 - Demo Disk #37 (Full running demo of Bloodwych-Dungeonmaster-like)
#412 - ANALOG Disk #30 (Programs from ST -Log Issue #35)
#413 - ANALOG Disk #31 (Programs from ST -Log Issue #35)
#1 - ST Reports from the month of August
#2 - ST ZMAGs from the month of August

So that's a wrapup of last month, the MAST utilities disks and applications disk, the two demo disks and the first ANALOG disk #30 sold the best this last month. The first games disk also picked up after I started showing the excellent version of Pacman on the disk as well.

Now the news..... First up, Microemacs. Microemacs was again bumped last month when I started to put the disks together and found no documentation or macros. Chuck rebuilt me a new set of disks as well as adding some new patches as well. This will be included this month. Next up...surprises.... I am working on a number of new things for the DOMs, some promised and some not. So as not to disappoint anyone, you will have to come to the meeting to see what's in store. Finally....ST Xpress... ST Xpress now allows their disks to be included in user groups libraries. Is anyone interested??????

ZMAGAZINE'S

Z*NET

The International Atari Newsletter

September 1989 Vol. I No. 7

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Public Domain Shelf

The Future of AtariFests?

by John Nagy

Glendale Atarifest: CANCELLED. San Jose World of Atari: CANCELLED.

Atari owners are wondering what will happen next as charges are made of interference, failure to coor dinate, insensitivity to user groups, and unrealistic ex pectations of vendors. ZMagazine/Z*NET and ST-IN FORMER magazines hope to help user groups get back on track with their own shows.

The Southern California Atarifest tradition - the Glendale Atarifest - was cancelled this year by organ izer John King Tarpinian. This user group show set the pattern for successful fests nationwide in three previous years, but this year it was unable to generate enough vendor and developer support to make happen. Although a conflict in hall scheduling was perhaps the last straw, when John pulled the plug only a month before the scheduled show date, only four vendors of any kind had sent deposits confirming their participation. By that stage in prior years, over 20 had been in hand. What was wrong? The problem may have been that ST-WORLD magazine publisher and World Of Atari pro moter Rich Tsukiji had recently added a World of Atari show into his schedule for San Jose, two hundred miles up the coast near San Francisco, for only a week later. Some user group leaders called "foul", saying that this forced vendors to choose between the commercial and user show. While it might have seemed that 200 miles was plenty separation to avoid hitting many of the same likely attendees, a week between shows was much too little time for most vendors to attend both West coast shows. Worse yet, another show (WAACE in Washing ton D.C.) was the NEXT weekend. And with the World shows promising Atari backing, professional promotion budgets, and substantial discounts for vendors who at tend all of the WOA shows, those who don't have the staff and budget for a continuous road show simply had to choose... and Glendale was losing fast.

The conflict in California was not new, but was even worse than the MACE/Dearborn WOA conflict earlier this summer. In the case of Michigan, the World show (the second in the tour) was scheduled almost seven months in advance, and announced more than a month before the MACE user group of Detroit formally approved their show, to be held only miles from the WOA site and six weeks before it. That show brought a lot of pressure and attention to the professional show versus user group show issue. Fortunately, both Michigan shows were reasonably successful, and Tsukiji made commitments to only take future WOA shows where the user groups ASKED for them, places that would not otherwise have an Atarifest.

Next, World of Atari moved to Dallas, Texas for a mid August show, the third in the series. This was a site of successful locally produced multi-computer brand shows as well as several Atarifests in previous years, but the clubs in the area were not even contacted before the show was scheduled, let alone consulted. Attempts by Dallas groups to make suggestions or become involved went unanswered as ST-World and Tsukiji went phone-silent for two weeks in July, worrying even Atari officials who could not schedule their own involvement. The last word we heard from area representatives was that Dallas groups were puzzled at being left in the dark, getting more information from distant callers who assumed they would be involved than from ST World. Of three Dallas area user groups, the single one that Tsukiji identified as "involved", Atari Users of North Texas has no actual plans for any group involvement. Some of their members expect to volunteer to help the show now that a local dealer has passed them show fliers- only one week before the show. Club officers express concerns over the lack of local promotion, and say that the groups should have been given some options early in the planning. Tsukiji confirmed that there will be NO user groups having booths at the show. Press time has ar-

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ROVAC Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 59, Middlesex, NJ 08846

Publisher.....Ron Kovacs
Editor.....John Nagy
Layout & Distribution...Bruce Hansford
Secretary.....Lisa Kovacs

GEnie.....ZMAGAZINE
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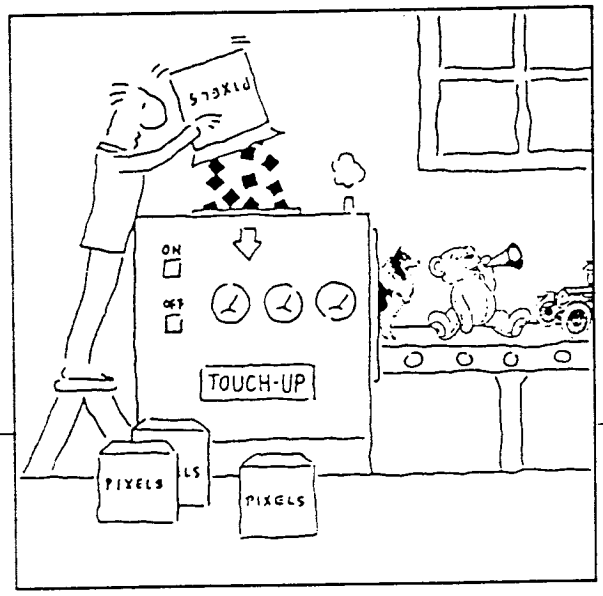

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Z*Net Newswire

☞ Atari finally announced their "TT" 68030 based system at a huge Atari specific show in Dusseldorf, West Germany. The Atari TT will run both Unix and TOS, but will be released with TOS first with Unix to be added in a few months. The TT will be available overseas almost immediately, with US distribution to start after FCC approval. Price? Under $2,000 - maybe. The Atari ST-Plus, a 68000 or 68020 system with 4,096 colors and stereo sound, will probably be introduced and shipped this fall or winter.

☞ Major advertising power CHIAT/DAY, the folks who introduced the MAC to the world with their "1984" ad campaign, are going to handle the planned fall blitz by Atari. There is plenty to tell the world about, as we all know. Meanwhile, Atari stock keeps a climb going, nearing $10 a share at press time.

☞ The $400 Atari Portfolio hand held computer is already in release in Europe and selling well. It is in the final stages of U.S. preparation for market and may appear at any moment. The STACY laptop ST is not progressing as quickly and may be another month or two before distribution. Conner Peripherals announced last week that Atari is buying a supply of their low-profile 20 and 40 meg 3.5 inch disk drives for the STACY.

☞ SOFTLOGIC, makers of PAGESTREAM desktop publishing software for the ST and Amiga, had a BOMB SCARE last month. A device was found and removed by police according to St. Louis newspapers. The bomb arrived in the mail, addressed to a SoftLogic employee who had been fired a few days earlier. It was believed that the former employee may have been involved in sending the bomb, and police were also seeking a third party who was thought to have built or supplied the bomb.

☞ What version of PAGESTREAM do YOU have? In what just could be a problem related to the employee disagreement, at least one copy of PageStream at a Southern California Atari Dealer was found to be version 1.58... odd, considering that 1.52 is the current commercial version. SoftLogic representatives claim that this is simply impossible. Version 1.58 is an internal BETA version, and is not even planned for release, as 1.60 is expected to be the next public update. You might check with your local dealers and help find how widespread the version leak might be.

☞ VIRUS ALERT: A mischief-variety virus was making the rounds in Public Domain disks at the Dearborn World of Atari show. It causes the mouse to mix up for down every fifth disk swap... watch for it, it is being found in Canada too, and may have migrated here from there originally. When cleaning up this virus, some libraries discovered that they also had a "key virus" on some disks, which has potential for considerable destruction. Take no chances, every time you trade disks or get anything but factory original unopened software, check and clear the disks of Viruses. There are several programs available in the public domain to do this, and probably the best known is called VKILLER.

☞ All signs point to the end of the 520ST. In July, Atari sold a large number of units to PRICE CLUB, a national super-discounter, in what has the earmarks of a factory close-out. Price Club is offering them at a mere $349 AND including a bundle of 20 (public domain) games, billing it as the "Super ST Game Machine". The deal has upset established Atari dealers who actually have to pay a dealer cost of over $400 for the same machine. Some price rebating arrangements have put out the fire, but many are still questioning the matter as a severe breach of dealer relation ethics.

☞ In Europe, if you buy a 520ST you will receive a free package of 18 popular commercial ST games; Outrun, Pacmania, Gauntlet, R-type, Super Hang-On, The Black Lamp, Bombuzal, and more. The Euro–ST comes with 720K drive, Omnicron Basic, ST Basic, and the 18 games for only $500. The software sold alone totals $750.00.

☞ Keith Ledbetter has shipped the first batch of EXPRESS! terminal cartridges. The stackable cart for the 8-bit Atari gives unparalleled power in an instant-load package. A disk drive is not even required for simple terminal use with any standard Hayes-compatible modem. It sports numerous batch transfer protocols at speeds up to 19,200 baud and will also work on Atari 1030, XM301, and SX212 direct connect modems. Featuring windows and dropdown menus (although NOT using a mouse), it is quite easy to use. $69.95, Orion Microsystems, 2211 Planters Row Drive, Midlothian, VA 23113.

☞ Atari's recently hired User Group Coordinator, Chris Roberts, was fired in late July. Problems grew from Chris's willingness to talk to almost anyone about things that were either sensitive internally or not ready for public release, as well as from his propensity for re-adjusting stories between conversations. ... As we go to press, we have received word that Robert Brodie, President of ACAOC (a Z*Net group) in Orange County, California, has been hired as Atari's new User Group Coordinator. Bob has been a regular contributor for Z*Net and STZ*Mag over the past year. We think he'll do a great job and we wish him success.

☞ Also gone in July is Atari VP of Marketing, Joe Mendolia, who reportedly resigned for personal reasons. Those of us who talked at length with Joe will miss his enthusiasm and realistic approach to presenting the Atari line. No replacement has been announced yet.

☞ Shows: WAACE is presenting an Atarifest October 7 and 8 at the Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Virginia. Washington DC area Atarifests have a good reputation for success and crowds. Also, the Kentuckiana Atari Fest is planned for Clarkesville, Indiana on October 28-29. A mile out of Louisville, Kentucky, the user group show will be at the Clarkesville Sheraton Lakeview. Atari is planning to send representatives to both shows.

☞ ISD Marketing announced a new upgraded Calamus to be available this fall. Version 1.1 has many new features and is modular, allowing memory management in smaller machines by loading only what you need to use. Irregular text flow-around, rotation of graphics, condensed and expanded font control, and transportable clipboards highlight a long list of improvements. ISD also declared positively that Calamus will be released for the IBM and MAC platforms sometime next year. ISD Marketing, Markham, Ontario, L3R 2W5, (416) 479-1880. ●

Supporting Atari 8-Bit Users

RATTY'S RAP

by Matthew Ratcliff (Mat*Rat)

Here is my latest experience with the Action! programming language, the language I LOVE to HATE!

Take a look at this piece of code:

```
BYTE ARRAY StringThing = "This is stuff"
INCLUDE "D4:SYSALL.ACT"
```

Guess what happens when you compile that? You ALWAYS get error 170. Why? Because the Action! compiler looks on drive 1 for SYSALL.ACT instead of drive 4 as specified. Change it to:

```
BYTE ARRAY StringThing = "This is stuff"
BYTE FRED
;or other declarations that aren't initialized strings
INCLUDE "D4:SYSALL.ACT"
```

Voila! It works. Now, why doesn't THIS work?

```
TYPE MyRecord = [ CARD Points BYTE POINTER X, Y ]
```

I always get an error 6 on the BYTE POINTER? Can't a pointer be part of a record? What's the deal? A byte pointer is the same size as a CARD. So, I do this:

```
TYPE MyRecord = [ CARD Points, X, Y ]
```

Now, how do I use X and Y as pointers instead of cardinals?

Has anyone ever noticed how poorly organized the Action! documentation is? I'm going insane here. I finally took Craig's advice and put tabs at the beginning of every important section of the manual (except for the error section - I've GOT to remidy that). Now I find things more easily, but golly - where are the examples? I'm going berzerk here. I'm about this close [] to running my action cartridge through the garbage disposal and whipping out Mac65. However, the size of my current project is a bit daunting from a 6502 assembly language perspective.

HELLLLPPPP ????? Where are you action gurus? Where are examples? Why isn't there an ACTION! topic in the data libraries here? Arggggggggggggg..... ‹poof› (oops, my mind just went up in smoke)

... And so it was last week on GEnie, when I was going nuts trying to figure out how to load a large data file from disk and create an array of pointers to each record. As it turns out, CARDs can be treated as POINTERs any time you like. Action! doesn't much care. Craig S. Thom, of ICD, was very helpful in getting me up to speed in Action!, and I got my program running in just a few days.

Action! is a superb, terribly under-rated language. Why? First, the manual. I'm certain a lot of people purchased Action! with the intention of learning a new "high level" language, only to be intimidated and frustrated by the poorly organized and confusing documentation. There is no index. There is no ONE table of conents, but rather one for each section of the book. There is no alphabetical listing of all the functions and procedures for the language. I'm certain Action! becomes a rather harrowing experience for many newcommers. It drove me nuts, and I'm fluent in more programming languages than some software corporations!

The other problem is a runtime library. What's that?, you ask. Exactly. The manual doesn't make it very clear that your Action! programs aren't much good to you without the Action! cartridge installed. For an extra $30 or so you can acquire a "run time library" from ICD or download a public domain version from GEnie or CompuServe. When you "INCLUDE" this file, all of the system calls made to the Action! cartridge are replaced by calls to in line assembly code. The resultant program file is no longer dependant up on the cartridge for anything. These programs may be loaded and run from DOS, without the assistance of the Action! cartridge, and may be exchanged with friends.

Action! needs a new manual. Maybe I'll write one. I haven't decided, but something needs to be done. Action! is better than any disk based C or Pascal compiler for the 8bit Ataris (though I must admit to not having tested Kyan Pascal). If you learn Action! and pursue structured programming techniques and good coding style, you will have few problems moving up to a "real" high level language such as C or Pascal when you move on to an IBM, MacIntosh, or Atari ST and more sophisticated programming assignments in the future. I will be looking at Action! more in future installments of Ratty's Rap, and may provide a few tutorials along the way. Analog doesn't think very many people are interested in the language, and does not want a column on the subject. Well, I plan to get all you latent Action! gurus fired up, and change that! I suggest that we start a revolt and REFUSE to use the exclamation point after Action!, what is a punctuation character doing in the name anyway? It seems like the language is YELLING at you. Maybe that's why so many would be Action programmers are intimidated?

The September issue of Analog is out. You may have read the letter from the publisher Lee Pappas about merging Analog and ST-Log once again. He paints a pretty grim picture for both the 8bit and ST. Of course Mr. Pappas is also involved in the publication of Video Games & Computer Entertainment (VG&CE) and Laptop Computers magazines, both of which are selling like wild fire in comparison to their ROOTS magazines ST-Log and Analog. So, it's understandable that he is a bit pessemistic. I guess we won't really know for sure until the Christmas buying season begins.

Atari has promised a lot of pleasant surprises, but will they deliver? Will we see the Lynx (their portable game machine) by the end of September? Will the Portfolio see the light of day? Will Atari deliver SEVEN TIMES the ammount of US advertising that they did last year? (Did you ever notice how Atari always mentions MULTIPLES of their advertising dollars? Ever wonder why? Well, it SOUNDS great, and any number times zero is still zero. So, Atari makes good public relations and saves money too! OK, seriously, it probably isn't THAT bad. But, one popular inside joke is that the fastest way OUT Atari's revolving door is to say the word ADVERTISING with in the hallowed walls of Atari Sunnyvale!)

What about the long rumored (say about 4 years or more) TT, Atari's answer to Americas demand for an affordable workstation. Hewlett Packard has licensed a company in Japan to clone their popular workstation technology, for less than $5000 per copy. Can Atari's TT compete with that? (And we're talking a MEGAPIXEL, 1024x1024, resolution folks!) Atari makes a lot of noises at the shows, but consider this: If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, no sound is made. Is anyone listening to Atari any more? ●

*Mat*Rat, Ratware Softworks, 32 S. Hartnett Ave., St. Louis, MO 63135.*

PS. Keep those cards and letters coming. Please DON'T CALL, I seldom have time to chat on the phone, with a wife, 2 kids, a dog, a cat, college study, a full time job (with overtime lately), and a backlog of article work to the ceiling.

Action! - Mac/65, or Where Do I Go After 8-bit BASIC?

by Ed Bachman

So you are an 8-bit Atari BASIC programmer. Are most of your programs full of USR routines? Is there something you're just itching to do that can't be done in "good ol' BASIC"? You're most likely considering another programming language. The purpose of this article is to discuss the ins, outs, and whys of what I consider to be the two best choices in a programming language for the Atari 8-bit: Action! and MAC/65.

Using Action!

Action!, currently distributed by I.C.D. Inc., is a high level, compiled language. By contrast, Atari BASIC is a high level interpreted language, meaning it can run directly from the program list. Action! (like machine language) will add an extra step to your program development, the COMPILE. However, the improved performance is worth the effort.

First the good points: The most attractive feature of Action! is that it's a high level language. Ideas/functions can be easily expressed in just a few instructions, while at the same time Action! maintains a close tie to the machine level. That's important in order to get the best performance from your computer. Data can be manipulated an a wide variety of ways, and Action! supports complex math functions as well as logic level operations. This means you can handle numbers pretty much the way you did in BASIC with some "bitwise" operations that were unavailable in BASIC. A compiled Action! program will run up to 100 times faster than a basic program. Action! programs, using a "runtime library", can also be run without an Action! cartridge.

When using Action!, you must learn to "structure" your programs. Action! has no "GOTO" instruction. You must "think thru" your program and arrange it so it can be accomplished in subroutines. The subroutine, and the similar TURBO BASIC and BASIC XE "procedure" calls are very similar to the way one programs in Action!. It is also very easy to read an Action! program once you understand the language, a far cry from jumping through hundreds of GOTO's in a basic program.

On the down side.. Being a high level compiled language, you either need an Action! cart to run an Action! program or you must use a "runtime library" which you include in your program. This runtime library comes at extra cost (also from I.C.D.). The runtime library also increases the final size of your program. While there are many options available to the user during a compile, many of them are very poorly documented. Further, as your programs increase in size, you will need to make "adjustments" in the Action environment in order to handle more variable names and increased program size. While on the topic of size, after a point you MUST compile from disk, since Action! holds the compiled program resident in memory. Also, the upper practical limit of an action program is approximately 20K of compiled code. Beyond that, you must make even more "adjustments" to both your program and the Action environment. And finally, reasonable tutorials are only now becoming available.

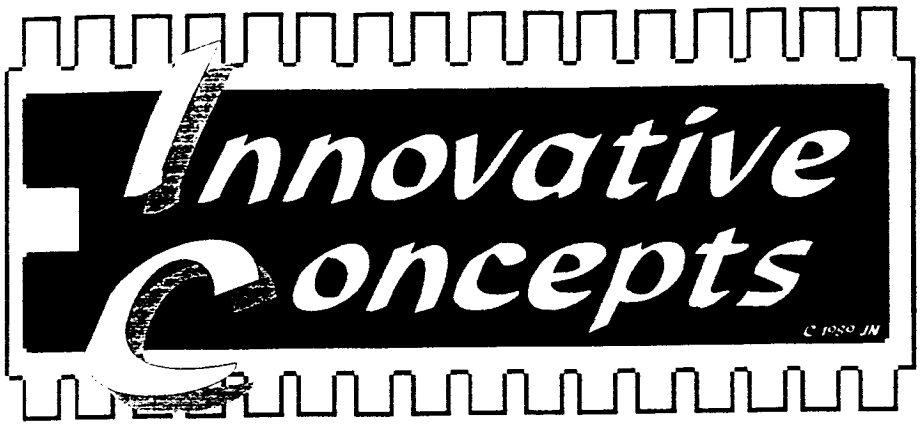
Using the Mac/65 I know this should be "machine language", however, I feel if you decide to go the M/L route, get a Mac/65, since there is no better assembler/debugger for the Atari 8-bit. Mac/65 is also sold by I.C.D. Inc. Machine language is a "low level" language with each instruction being an actual operation performed by the 6502 processor. One simple instruction may contain hundreds of these "low level" instructions.

The good points... Machine language (ML) is also a compiled language. It is even faster than Action!, and another advantage is its relatively small size. If there is something specific you desire the Atari to do, there's no better way to do it than in the computers native tongue. Using ML allows you access to ANY level of the Atari, even places where BASIC, and sometimes Action!, won't work. Further, the 6502 (your Atari's processor) has in my opinion one of the easiest to understand instruction sets of any processor. There is no limit to the final size of your program, and unlike Action, it can be tailored to exactly meet a very specific function. By using the MACRO feature of the MAC/65, it is also possible to create a "pseudo-high level" environment, defining a series of ML instructions to a label, which then can be used like a high level command. An ML program can be used by anyone, with or without cartridges. Further, there are fewer operating restrictions on an ML program than a compiled Action! program with runtime library. Summed up, if you want your computer to "jump thru the hoop" then ML is the way to make it do exactly what you want.

The other side of the coin... ML, being a low level language, often requires dozens of instructions to accomplish even a simple operation. ML source code listings are also more difficult to read, since each programmer may choose to perform a task in a differing manner. Since ML operates at the "machine level" or "system level", it is more difficult to debug. It's much easier to get an undesired result, since a typo often looks fine to the compiler. ML therefore adds yet another step to program development, the "debug" process (not that this isn't true with ALL program development, it's just more necessary, even a discrete step, with ML). The Mac/65 also has a few drawbacks of its own, the most notable, not being able to compile from a SpartaDOS formatted disk. Further, there is only addition/subtraction and bitwise logic available to the ML programmer, no high level math operations are supported. You must write the routine to do it if you need it, although you can use the floating point routines in the Atari ROM.

In closing...

If you're a BASIC programmer looking for more power and speed but not willing to skimp on mathematic and string features, then perhaps Action! would be best suited to your needs. If, however, you desire to get into system level functions, or need the ultimate in speed or the smallest size, then you would have no recourse but to choose ML, and preferably MAC/65.



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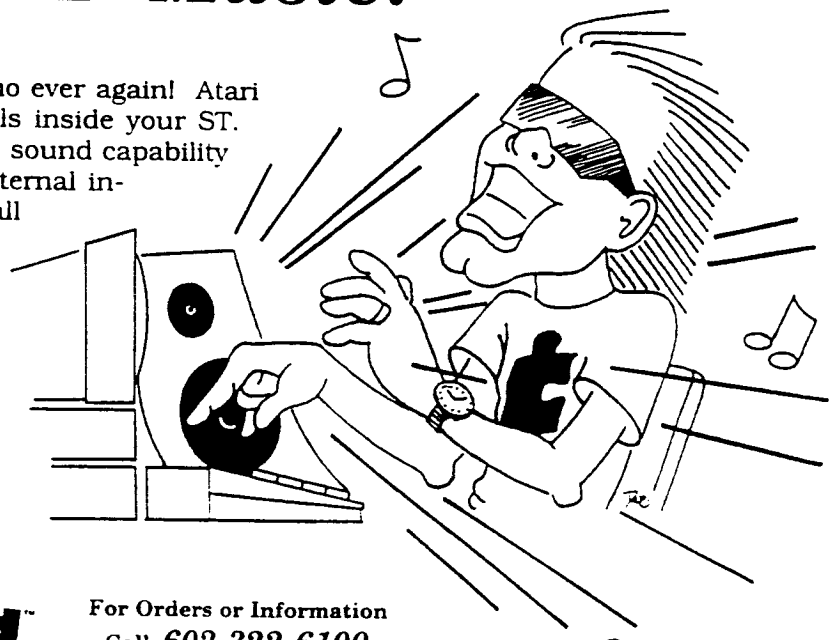

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FUTURE... continued from page 1

rived before the Texas show date, so we can't tell you yet how that show worked out.

In California, the Glendale show was well publicised before any San Jose plans were solidified. In fact, early this year, Glendale manager Tarpinian even had discussions with Tsukiji about Glendale's September date, and how, if at all, the first WOA show in Anaheim last April might affect it. Don't worry, said Richard, it's a long time between April and September, you have nothing to worry about. But by July, the San Jose date was announced, and the damage was done.

Under pressure of user group concerns, Atari appears to have asked Tsukiji to cancel his San Jose show in an attempt to make peace with the Glendale people, if not to try to save that show. It seems that the Glendale show was near and dear to the Atari Corporate heart, and the likelihood of losing it was more than Atari wanted to permit. Tsukiji did cancel his show, but it came too late to help Glendale for this fall. Some discussions are underway to see if a date later in the year could be arranged, but Tarpinian is wisely cautious, unwilling to jeopardize other committed shows.

Throughout the fray, Atari remains on the side of HAVING shows, no matter who puts them on. They have committed to appearing at any show that is sufficiently organized and publicised. WAACE is presenting an Atarifest October 7 and 8 at the Fairfax High School in Fairfax, Virginia. Washington DC area Atarifests have a good reputation for success and crowds. Also, the Kentuckiana Atari Fest is planned for Clarkesville, Indiana on October 28-29. A mile out of Louisville, Kentucky, the user group show will be at the Clarkesville Sheraton Lakeview. Atari is planning to send representatives to both shows.

There may simply be too many Atari shows being scheduled nationally, with little or no consideration for the vendors. Several developers have expressed to us that they can do three, perhaps four shows a year without seriously cutting into the time they need to run their businesses at home.

Rumors also abound of discontented dealers and distributors who complain that developers at Atari shows have been badly undercutting the dealer pricing to sell to users directly. While the users love it, some vendors say it unfairly depresses their market before, during, and long after any show. Proposals to remedy this include asking developers NOT to sell, or to offer discounts to local vendors so as to allow their prices to remain competitive. Richard says not a single complaint has come to his attention directly, and that he sees no need to address a problem that has not yet been directly expressed. Contrary to rumors and even to statements attributed to him by several sources, Richard now states that there will continue to be World of Atari shows, with at least three more already planned. Dates are not available at this writing.

ST-INFORMER and ZMAG/Z*Net would like to see user group shows succeed, and to that end, we are offering to help any group that is planning a show of their own. We can provide references, contacts at Atari and developers, and advise in the coordination of dates. We can also help with publicity and reporting before and at the shows. With cooperation and communication, user shows and commercial shows can co-exist without conflict or agonizing decisions for vendors and developers. If your group is considering holding an Atarifest, contact our offices. ST-INFORMER: (503) 476-0071; ZMAG/Z*NET: (201) 968-8148. ●

The Club Room – How to Give a User Group Talk

by Dave Yearke (BOAST Buffalo Region Atari Group for ST)

*[Does your club do something that others can learn from? Some common problem that you have solved? Share it by sending it to Z*Net!]*

Participating in a user group can be a very re warding experience. One of the most exciting ways to do this is to give a talk or demonstration at a meeting. Having done this a few times myself, I would like to of fer some advice to avoid "stage fright" and to make your talk a successful one.

The first and most obvious, bit of advice is: be prepared! This is crucial to the success of your talk. If you are spending more time trying to boot your pro gram or read the instruction book than you are talking, you will lose credibility. I've been unprepared more times then I care to think about, and always regretted it.

Start by considering the topic of your talk. How can you make it appealing to the widest range of people? We have a very diverse group, and while it's al most certain that not everyone will be interested in your talk, you can try to make it as wide-ranging as possi ble. Is your topic of interest to most of the group, 8-bit or ST? A discussion of low-level packet drivers for the OSI data communications model can be interesting to some people, but I suspect your average Atari user would be more interested in how to build an RS232 serial ca ble, or how the XMOdem protocol is used to provide error-free downloads from GEnie or CompuServe.

Once you have your topic set you can begin or ganizing your ideas. Make sure your subtopics flow in a logical manner. If you digress too much, go off on too many tangents, or present a group of jumbled thoughts without structure or cohesiveness, you are sure to con fuse and lose the interest of your audience. Make your self an outline or some cue cards, but don't rely totally on them, either; most people can read for themselves and have low tolerance for someone reading to them. Balance your use of written text with memorized or im provised speech.

Next, make yourself a checklist. Does your program require a joystick or other external device? Does it run in color or monochrome? Do you need MIDI cables? You can count on a one meg ST with a double sided drive, an 8-bit system, and a color monitor at most user group meetings, but anything else you might have to provide yourself. Ask your President if you are not sure. When you prepare your demonstra tion disk, turn off your entire system and boot from that disk. Does everything run, or did you depend on some thing from your hard drive or floppy to make it work correctly?

Try to keep the talk brief, informative, and to the point. We generally allow fifteen minutes to a half-hour for a talk, again ask your President what your spe cific group will allow. The content of the talk of course will decide the length of time required. Don't use too much time or your audience will lose interest. Also, please watch the clock and don't run over your allotted time slot, or you will be cheating the next person out of time for their demo.

If you are showing a product, please give the publisher, price (list price as well as selling price, which are quite different), and information on where others can purchase it. Other points of interest include: what hard ware configuration does it require; is it copy-protected; what interest group does the product cater to; are there other programs similar to it and, if so, how do they compare; and a statement of price versus quality (is it worth the money?)

Don't be distracted too much by people leaving the room, or by an occasional muttering from the audi ence. Some people will not be interested in your talk through no fault of your own, some simply do not know when to stop talking. Don't get discouraged. If the au dience gets too rude, one of the group officers will say something. It is gracious of you to give your time to speak, they should be gracious enough to listen.

If you follow these few pointers, your talk should be a success. ●

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Beginning in October, Z*NET will be offering Public Domain disks. As we have been bringing you the latest public domain reviews in our feature "Public Domain Shelf" by Alice Amore, we will make the files we review available on disks.

The first in our series of disks will contain the first 30 issues of ST*ZMAGAZINE, our weekly ST online magazine, and recent issues of ZMAGAZINE, our 8-bit weekly online.

Each month in this spot we will include the information needed to purchase these disks. The files included on any of our disks may be used on your BBS system, club library, or general sharing, unless otherwise noted in a particular file. Some may be SHAREWARE, and we encourage you to abide by the wishes and requests of their authors. All revenues collected as a result of our sales will go towards providing a better and more varied disk service.

Our present library includes current PD SHELF material and VIDI-ST pictures from recent World of Atari shows and the demo disk we ran at the Dearborn show in June. We will also include our readers' VIDI pics and other programs offered from our participating user groups.

Watch for full details next month in Z*Net, ZMAG, and ST*ZMAG.

ZMAG BBS UPDATE

As some of you know, our regular weekly online magazines ST*ZMAGAZINE and ZMAGAZINE are offered on over 300 bulletin board systems around the country. There are even a few overseas.

In an effort to get an accurate account of all the systems, we need your help. Please send us a post card with the name of the BBS you read our magazines on. If the system carries both or just one, please make a note on the card. As we get the numbers, we will try to list them here occasionally and in the online publications at least once a month.

THE ARCHIVE BIT

1 YEAR AGO - SEPTEMBER 1988

* Diamond shown at the Glendale Show, marketed by Merrill Ward. * Oasis IV to be released * Team Software releases "A Day at The Races". * Word Perfect Offers User Groups Special. * ST Xformer uses Atari 810 and 1050 Disk Drives. * Appearance at MAGIC show cancelled by Atari.

2 YEARS AGO - SEPTEMBER 1987

* SLM804 Announced for September release, along with Mega ST-4 * Sandy Austin and Neil Harris appear at MAGIC Show. * Atari CDROM announced for fall shipment. * Atari SX212 and XEP80 first shipment arrives at Atari warehouse. * Whitehouse Computer files for bankruptcy. * Atari XE Game System on it's way to toy stores.

3 YEARS AGO - SEPTEMBER 1986 -> PRESENT

(September 18, 1986) * Atari announces public offering of Stock at $13.00, Atari net worth valued at 350 million dollars. (September 4, 1987) * Jack Tramiel states, "Atari is ready to become America's Consectronics Supplier", after announcement of plans to buy out the 67 store Federated Group retail electronics store. (May 31, 1989) * Atari reports 100 million dollar loss because of Federated and reports a net worth of 82 million dollars. ●

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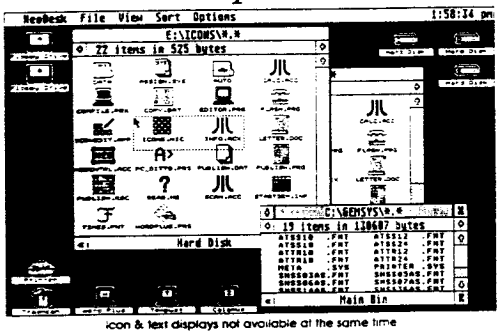

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Public Domain Shelf

by Alice Amore

DCFMT302 - Double Click Software has released DC FORMATTER, version 3.02. Long a favorite of many ST'ers, DC FORMATTER contains a variety of formatting options. You can set the number of sides, tracks, sectors, to skew or not to skew, executable boot, and step rate. Disks can also be copied. Perhaps the clearest advantage of DC FORMATTER is its ability to format disks for use with pc-DITTO and SPECTRE 128.

HDCHEK12 - Hard Disk Test and Analysis Routines, by Bill LeDuc, will inform you about the performance of your hard drive. Among the menu functions are: Boot sector info, Bad sector scan, Transfer test, Access test, Random read test, Identify devices, Update boot sector info, Set device and LUN, Set sector limits, Set drive, Print error log, Get sector, Scan files for bad sectors, and Toggle print. There is a help file within the program with explanations of all the functions. All operations are read-only.

PA_CAL11 - Personal Appointment Calendar lets you create a set of calendars that contain dates that are constant, year after year, such as birthdays, anniversaries, tax payments, health check-ups, etc. After your data has been entered, you can print out your calendar at the beginning of the month and have a full-page schedule of dates to remember. Each date block can contain up to 11 lines of 19 characters. PA-CAL was written in HiSoft BASIC by Larry Mears. The program is shareware, and source code is available for a fee.

LGSELECT - "The Little Green Selector" (LGSELECT) is an alternate GEM item selector. It has many of the features that should have been included from the start. LGSELECT is destined to become one of those shareware utilities that no one can do without. LGSELECT will install itself from an AUTO folder, or run as a program from the desktop. Since there are basic similarities between the ST's file selector and LGSELECT, learning to use most of LGSELECT's features will be instinctual. However, there are several new features, and new ways to access them. For instance, both mouse buttons are active, so the left button will give you different results than the right button.

LGSELECT is exceptional. It is shareware from Charles F. Johnson of CodeHead Software fame.

PACKER 2.0 - This could start a revolution. PACKER takes a .PRG, .TOS, or .TTP file, squeezes away about 30% of the size, then saves it to disk. The new file can be run just like the original. Most programs will PACK, and only a few won't run properly once PACKed. UNPACK, which returns the PACKed file to its original size, is included. (Editors Note: After testing the above file, I found that load times on most packed files were increased. Although file size is dramatically reduced on some PRG's, the speed you lose is noticable and annoying to me.)

BLRUT14 - This is a collection of 20 utilities written by Bud Rasmussen in 68000 assembly language using the Assempro Assembler from Abacus. All 20 utilities are interactive and work in any resolution. A sampling: a one-track-at-a-time sector copier, a file copier, a text lister/printer, a directory copier, another track-at-a-time sector copier which will copy from A: to B: without prior formatting, same as previous but will format while copying, a copier/renamer, a sector-comparer of any two D/S disks, a disk information displayer, free memory calculation, ASCII code and scan code for any key, sector modifier, delete all files in root directory of A: or B:, directory lister for any drive, list or print all directories sorted by name or not, list or print the ASCII/hex representation for any file, list/print any directory sorted by name or not, ASCII/hex any sector, list any text file forward, backward, by line, by page.

CACHEV3 - "Cold Hard Cache, version 3.2" is a disk caching program which works with hard drives or floppies. Disk caching is a method of storing the most-used disk sectors in RAM. This increases I/O speed quite a lot. CACHEV3 can be run from the desktop or as an accessory. You may choose the drives you wish to be cached and the size of the cache (128K should suffice). CACHEV3 is shareware from Robert E. Owens, III.

FLAME_J - "Flamethrower Utility" by Tom Moore is a strange melange of useful and fun things. Its functions include: calling of the Universal Item Selector II, showing amount of free memory, setting of screen colors, setting of system date and time, set-up of printer for Epson graphic mode (960 dots), running external programs, three moire pattern shows, and a "fish tank" circle pattern maker (either round or ovoid).

STOPDRV - Created by N. Weinress, STOPDRV eliminates the frustration on Mega systems of drives that won't stop whirring during warmboots or coldboots. This program goes into the AUTO folder. It will tell your Mega to check your floppy drives during bootup to make sure they stop whirring once the boot is complete.

ADARDEMO - This is a demo of the commercial program "A Day at the Races". Special praise should be bestowed upon Team Software for giving us a demo which truly is "self-running". An animated mouse pointer moves through the entire program from beginning to end, showing all features and how they're used. The program itself looks impressive. It simulates the racetrack environment complete with digitized sounds and real-time animated horse races. Features include 9 types of wagers, 4 race types, and 4 race lengths. The database tracks up to 500 horses, 50 jockeys, and 15 players. The program is GEM-based and entirely mouse-controlled. The demo runs in low res only.

NOTICE: *Last month Z*Net mentioned PRINTER DRIVERS for PRINTSHOP in this column. We were in error, and the drivers are NOT public Domain, but rather commercial products of Innovative Concepts of Warren, MI (phone 313-293-0730). Programmed by Jim Steinbrecher and selling for $14.95 each, they are a good value, but are NOT to be traded freely in the public domain. See Innovative Concepts' full page ad elsewhere in this issue of Z*Net.* ●

The New Hand Scanner

Reviewed by Dr. Paul Keith

MIGRAPH™ INC

Scanned art is no longer only a "canned" product for ST users. Although thousand-dollar flatbed scanners have been adapted for the Atari ST and MEGA, only now is a hand-held scanner available, and at a price that does not rule it out for serious home users. MIGRAPH has released a Hand Scanner complete with their TOUCH-UP .IMG editor software for under $500. Touch-Up itself is a $200 package, and current owners can buy the scanner "alone" (although upgraded software is included) for $300 direct from Migraph.

Images collected with a scanner can really improve the content and variety in reports, newsletters, magazines, anything you might make using desktop publishing on the ST. The pictures with this review were done with the Migraph unit, and edited and titled using Touch-Up.

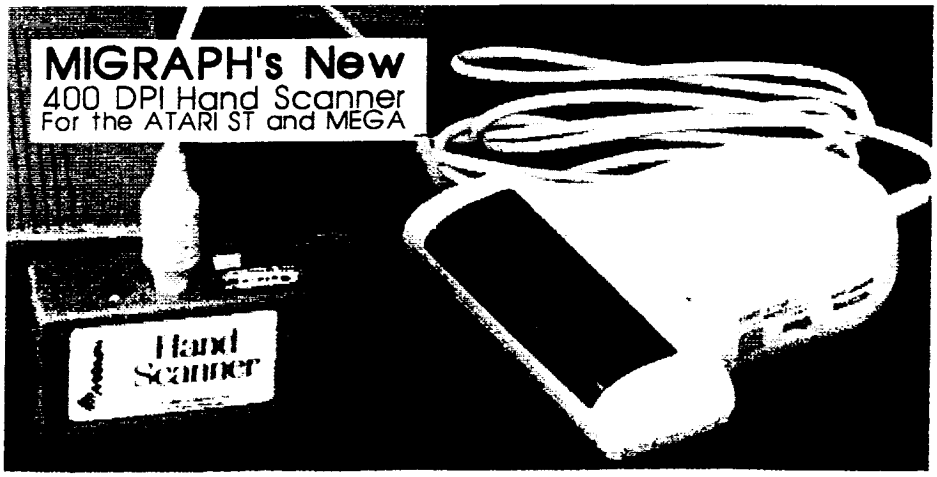
This scanner is larger than the "standard" Logitech scanner that you see in countless IBM/PC ads for around $200, and is a new design. It has switches for 100, 200, 300, 400 dots per inch, a lighter-darker control, a start button, and a selector for grey scales. You can select pure black and white, or three levels of "screen" density in your grey scales. At the other end of the cord is a connector that goes to a cart to plug into the ST. It also uses its own power supply, one of those transformer-on-the- plug units.

Using the scanner requires running Touch-Up, and that requires at least a MEG of RAM. A color monitor works fine, but a monochrome monitor is better. Also, larger memory means faster operation and larger possible images, although the files made in a 1040 can, at their largest, already be too large for manipulation in a desktop publishing system.

Performance is terrific and easy, and soon after plugging it in I was able to make great .IMG files out of almost anything I had laying around. A little green light warns you if you are scanning too fast as you manually move the unit across the picture. With its four inch wide path, most images can be captured in seconds. It should be possible to splice several swipes of a larger picture together within Touch-Up, to make a full page scan. The quality of the scans is outstanding, better than I have seen from hand scanners for the Intensely Boring Machine lines.

Touch-Up itself is also upgraded now, with bolding, rotations, and a number of other improvements. Even though I had Touch-Up for many months before I bought the scanner, I had never appreciated the editing power it holds. Since almost all the IMG files I had (til now) were all ready to use and had no real need to be edited, I didn't get much out of Touch-Up. Now, I use it a lot! It works great on a large screen monitor too, with tear-away menus. Full complements of editing and "painting" features are ideal for use on fresh scans. Some critics are also happy to see that the printer port hardware "dongle" is no longer used as a protection against piracy. It didn't help keep it from being cracked, anyway.

Although it seems very expensive to occasional hobbyists, the Migraph Hand Scanner has plenty of bang-per-buck for home DTP professionals and serious amateurs. IBM users will likely flock to this package once their version is made available this fall. A cheaper version for the ST (with Touch-Up scaled down to essentials) will be released later. Migraph, (800)223-3729 or (206)838-4677. ●



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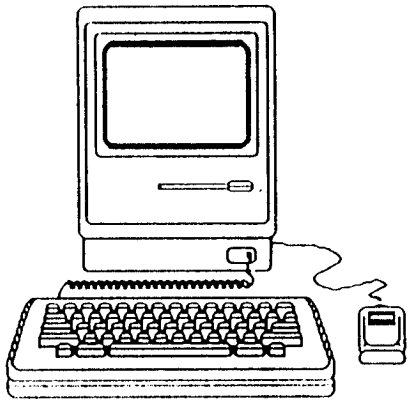

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Now on to this month's selection..... I thought last month's selections were great, but this month's selection are in some cases better. This month could almost be renamed update month with the number of new updates. Here is a quick rundown of some of the best new programs this month.

This month's updates start with the new MicroEmacs, then goes to a new version of BSTAT, the business statistics program. Then both public domain spreadsheets are new this month with new versions of Opus and Sheet with lots of support files for both. Next for the gamers, we have a major update to HACK, the character graphics dungeon game. This game is really getting good.

For other programs this month, we have a super animation program which is now shareware. The Aegis Animator program which was the first commercial animation program is now shareware and will be available this month. Also LZH, the alternative to ARC, is becoming more accepted and we have a new version of Arcshell that supports it as well as utilities to convert ARC files to LZH. And speaking of ARC, we also have a new version of ARC as well which fixes a couple of nasty bug which still exist. We also have a new formatter called Floormat which does just about everything a format program can do as well as unformat a disk and return it to its original state. And we have a new screen saver which displays fireworks while screen is inactive. For applications programs, we have a new picture conversion program which will convert DEGAS, NEO, Tiny and even Spectrum pictures to IMG format. There is also an IMG viewer as well. In addition to all of this, we also have a full disk telecommunication program with tons of options and the ANALOG and magazine disks as well.

Well, this is a sample of what's in store for this month. My hard drive is filling up early this month and I still have two more weeks to go. These DOMs should again be something special this month. Watch the MAST BBS for updates!!!!

If you can't make the meeting and would still like to get hold of the DOM or would like to get ahold of the DOC disk, my new address is
5900 65th Avenue North #204
Brooklyn Park, MN 55429

That's it for September. Again this month, the disks are special, especially when it comes to updates. I am sorry for being just a little short this month, but my fingers and brain are getting tired. I hope to see you all at the meeting and on the MAST BBS!!!!

Next issue out 6 October 1989.

ST News
Compiled by Jim Schulz

This rather infrequent article series is back with the latest ST news for the month. Since we now have Z*Net, special ST news articles are not always needed. But in the last few weeks, a number of new pieces of news have come forward that should be passed on to the members. Expect full coverage of these items at the next MAST meeting in September and in next month's Z*Net.

The August 25th announcement has come and gone. Very little information is out now, just about a week later, but it is starting to tickle out little by little. A number of things were announced at the Dusseldorf Atari Fair in Germany. The following information was culled from a recent online conference with Sam Tramiel, president of Atari Corporation and from ST Report #102 from August 25, 1989. The Dusseldorf fair had 35,000 in attendance and included 145 third party software and hardware suppliers. At the fair, the new STE and the TT030/2 were introduced as well as the new Lynx game machine was shown. The new 1040 STE, which will be replacing the 1040 ST, has a palette of 4096 colors, 8 bit PCM stereo sound, hardware fine screen scrolling, and support for light guns, paddles, and extra controllers. Genlock is also supported with no internal modifications. A 4 meg version is also mentioned. The STE will be available in Europe in September and in the US in October pending FCC approval. The TT, the long awaited 32 bit machine was also announced. I will not go into the full specifications here since they are quite long. The TT will ship in the 4th quarter of 1989. More on this at the meeting. On other products, the handheld PC, Portfolio, is currently shipping in the US. And the Stacy, the laptop ST, will be shipping in October as well. The Stacy is an ST with a 640x400 backlit LCD display with a built-in upside-down mouse aka Trakball. It also does not include a Blitter chip. Initial models will include 1 meg and a double-sided drive. Future models in the works will include a 20 meg hard drive and 1 meg and 40 meg hard drive and 4 meg. The Megafile 44, removable hard drive will also be available before 1990. This is the latest information so stay tuned for more at the meeting.

Now on to the continuing story of where is TOS 1.4..... Atari seems to think that 1.4 is available, but if it is, they had better tell those who deal with the dealers. Here are some of Atari comments: Sam Tramiel, President of Atari: "Incidentally, I'd just like to say that TOS 1.4 ROMs are now available to your dealers. If you would like the upgrade, go to your dealer and request it. If he doesn't have it in stock, he can get it from Atari. Cost for the upgrade is up to the dealer; suggested retail for parts is $100.

Ken Badertsher, Atari R&D System Software Engineer: (Referring to TOS 1.4) Available now at a dealer near you. And if it isn't, please WRITE A LETTER to Atari Corp. asking why Rainbow TOS isn't available at your dealer. So this is what Atari says. According to Wizard's Works as of today, TOS 1.4 is not available. They are talking to Atari and they say no. Is there a problem here of communications???? Atari is also planning on announcing alternate ways to receive TOS 1.4 later this week. Currently TOS 1.4 is only available as EPROMs, not ROMs, and only in 6 chip sets. All new ST need a 2 chip set and have to modified to run a 6 chip set. Either way, come this month to the MAST meeting and see TOS 1.4 in action.

Now to clutter this mess up even more.... This statement by Atari's former VP of sales, Mike Dendo was published in ST Report #101 in an interview with user groups in the Boston area. He said the following statement in reference to Atari support in the Boston area: "I know it's hard [because] we haven't done the things in the [Boston] marketplace like we've done in Houston or L.A. or, Minneapolis or Chicago or Miami or Washington, D.C. or New York City." Yes, Minneapolis???? Atari thinks that Minneapolis is one of their big areas in the country. All of the other cities do deserve mention from comments that I have heard from others, but Minneapolis??? But Mike is no longer with Atari anymore. Also Atari has fired Chris Roberts, the Atari user group coordinator. He didn't last too long. His new replacement is Bob Brodie. I wish him luck and a long life with Atari.

A couple of update reports.... I finally got my PC Ditto II update announcement in the mail. For current Ditto owners, it is $150.00 plus shipping and allow four to six weeks delivery. Avant Garde said that the cards would not ship until the parts were all available and ready to go. So it is only a matter of time before we see the new PC Ditto II board. Second, it looks like another Turbo ST update is in the works. Version 1.6 is being widely praised for its performance, but according to the Atari distributors 1.61 is very close to release. So if you are planning on updating, you might want to wait for the latest update. In either case, get Turbo ST, it is really worth the price for the additional performance!!!!!

Magazines news..... Lately, Atari magazines are again on the move. First, ANALOG is merging with ST-Log to become ST-Log. Reasons given for the merger are no advertising for the 8 bit and minimal advertising for the ST. The change is to take effect with the November issue. A full page letter from the editor is in this month's ANALOG and ST-Log. Second, ST X-Press is now published by a new company. I don't know if it is was sold, but I get that impression. The result of the publisher change means new offices for the magazine, additional staff, and

a better magazine overall. They are currently doing two bimonthly issues and are returning to a monthly status in October. The last two issues are indeed an improvement and it again looks like they are back on their feet again. Third, ST World has abandoned their newspaper format for a magazine-like format. It seems like the last issue had more articles, but it also had fewer ads as well. I wish them good luck also with their new format change. Finally, ST Informer is offering a free issue of the newspaper just for writing. For a free sample issue, send a postcard mentioning ST*ZMAG to ST-INFORMER MAGAZINE/909 NW Starlite Place/Grants Pass, OR 97526/Attn: Free Sample Issue from ST*ZMAG. ST Informer is usually pretty good with free issues and you will likely get a smaller version of newspaper for a couple of months after the full issue as well. I will bring along a couple of extra issues of my own for free handouts for those who are interested in seeing the newspaper and subscribing.

Well, that's it for this month's news. Stay tuned for updates on the MAST BBS and at the September MAST meeting. I hope to see you there.....

ST Xtra
with comments by Jim Schulz

Each month SPACE and MAST exchange newsletters with other user groups around the state and the country. Last weekend, I got the September issue of the Fargo-Moorhead Newswire, the newsletter of the FMAIG (Fargo-Moorhead Atari Interest Group) and UFFDA (United Friendly Fanatic & Dedicated Atarians). Cory Johnson from Wizard's Works had mentioned to me the month before that the Fargo group was interested in playing Midi Maze with us to see who was the best in the state. Now this month in their newsletter, there is the following article entitled "Midi Maze Championship" also called "the I-94 series." I thought that I would just pass this on for the members. In closing, I would like to say that both the Fargo group and Duluth area group produce very quality newsletters for their areas and they should be quite proud.

Jim

P.S. Is there an "I-94 series" in our future in Alexandria or how about an "I-35 series" in Hinkley?" You never know.....

Midi Maze Championship
(probably by Curt Johnson)

Once upon a time in the state of Minnesota. ESPN is calling it "the I-94 series". MAST will travel 130 miles west on I-94. FMAIG will travel 100 miles east on I-94. The two interest groups will meet in the town of Alexandria, Minnesota to decide who has the best MIDI MAZE players in the State. ESPN is going to cover the competition live with reporter Bob Ley asking questions like: "what does it feel like to shoot a smiling face?" They will be analyzing each team and showing "super-slow motion replays of the "kills". They'll even have the latest Vegas odds, for states that allow betting. FMAIG players are heard saying: "they may be a larger group than us but its going to come down to who has the fastest trigger fingers." The MAST players are quietly confident they will have more "kills" at the end of the day. The ring is complete and both groups take a deep breath, you can hear a pin drop as the master machine clicks on YAH. The rest of the day all you hear is the clicking of joysticks and the shrieks of smiling faces and the day goes on and on... Could this happen? Hey, MIDI MAZE could be a major sporting event, someday. How about a demo sport at the Winter games? Let's get the letter writing campaign going?

FMAIG/UFFDA Editors Note: Our apologies to MAST and ESPN. I was told this was written on a HOT summer day. MAST is Minnesota Atari ST, a group based in Minneapolis/St. Paul. ESPN is the sport network based in Connecticut.

VideoKey - a preliminary review by Dave Meile

MAST recently received the first piece of hardware for review from Practical Solutions. About two months back, the company began offering their hardware to user groups for review. MAST decided to take them up on their offer, and our first choice was the VideoKey.

The VideoKey takes the Atari ST RGB monitor signal and translates it into both a composite television signal AND an RF-modulated signal (switch selectable for either channel 3 or 4). It has four output jacks -- one for an RGB monitor, one for composite video, one for audio out and the last for the RF-modulated signal.

I was fairly pleased with the VideoKey. Setting it up was simple and the only user-adjustment available wasn't necessary in my case (it requires a jeweler's screwdriver and about 5 seconds of time...) The unit was molded from the same plastic as Practical Solutions' other hardware offerings, and looked like it would last quite a long time.

I first asked myself "What uses could I find for the VideoKey?" The first thing that popped into my mind was that the VideoKey makes a good substitute for the purchase of an Atari RGB color monitor. If you already own a monochrome monitor, and want to play the occasional color game on your system, the VideoKey would be less expensive than to go to the trouble of purchasing a color monitor (I estimate it at about 1/3 the cost...) If you want medium resolution, I would choose the color monitor, though, as the VideoKey is purposefully geared toward lores color graphics (medium resolution works, mind you, but I doubt you'd want to stare at a television set in 80 column text mode for very long...).

The second use I would put the VideoKey to is as an inexpensive means to record Atari graphics. The composite video signal works quite nicely with a videocassette recorder. I spent an hour testing out various Cyber animation sequences I had, running them from the Atari ST attached via VideoKey to my VCR and color TV. It was very pleasing to see some of the animations on a 19" screen.

A few of the colors appeared a bit washed out on my TV screen, but since my tests were not really in-depth, it may have more to do with my VCR than with the VideoKey. We ARE looking for someone else to review the VideoKey in a future issue of the newsletter. Talk with Jim Schulz for more information...

One final thought came to mind while using the VideoKey -- it makes an excellent system for demonstrating color games and other color-related software!
I could envision, for example, some sharp player of OIDS or MIDIMAZE offering tips and techniques to win the game while actually demonstrating the moves on videotape. Perhaps in the future, some of the DOM software can be demoed in this manner. It would certainly be easier to see if a game were interesting enough to purchase if we could see a video of game play, along with "commercial". Something for the software companies (and Atari ST software stores) to think about...

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Full page - 10 1/4" vertically X 8" horizontally - $25/mo., $240/yr.
Club members classified - 50¢ per 40 characters, $2.50 minimum per ad.
Send to : SPACE/MAST, P.O. Box 12016, New Brighton, MN 55112

ST. PAUL ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS & MINNESOTA ATARI ST

SPACE and MAST are independent user groups of owners of ATARI Home Computers. It has been organized by local owners of ATARI computers for the purpose of mutual self assistance and sharing of information. It is open to all interested computer enthusiasts.

Benefits of memberships in the groups include monthly newsletter mailed to your home, BBS access, software demonstrations, group purchases, public domain disk(s) of the month software at low prices, reference book library, educational software library (8-bit only) with over 20 titles, personal contacts/learning, greater information and awareness on the world of ATARI, software at discounted prices from dealers, question and answer session, etc. Come to a meeting to find out more.

SPACE - 8Bit Group The SPACE meetings are devoted primarily to the 8-bit ATARI computers such as the 400, 800, 600XL, 800XL, 65XE and 130XE. There is other ATARI related news and some 16-bit news at the SPACE meetings, as well. The SPACE group meets on the second Friday of each month at the Falcon Heights Community Center, 2077 West Larpenteur Avenue, at 7:30pm. Doors open at about 7:10pm.

MAST - ST Group The MAST meetings are devoted primarily towards the ATARI 520ST, 1040ST & MEGA computers. There will be ATARI related news items covered, but not 8-bit news. The MAST group meets on the third Friday of each month at the Falcon Heights Community Center, 2077 West Larpenteur Avenue, at 7:30pm. Doors open at about 7:10pm.

MAST+ - Programming Language User Sig MAST also has a programmer's group meeting. This group has a more technical discussion regarding programming the ST computers in a variety of languages. The group meets on the Monday following the MAST meeting at the First Minnesota bank on Lexington Avenue near Larpenteur Avenue. Meeting time is 7:30, with doors opening at about 7:20pm. The entrance is in the back of the building and leads to a stairway to the second floor.

For more information, or to confirm a meeting time and location, call Greg Howell (SPACE) or Jim Schulz (MAST) 533-4193

SPACE/MAST Membership Application

Name_____ Date_____

Address_____

City_____State_____ Zip_____

Phone_____Equipment/System Used_____

Area of Interest

Check one or both: SPACE____ MAST____

Renewal?____ Address Change?____ Membership Card Given?____

Dues: $15.00 per year - Please enclose with Application.
Mail to: SPACE/MAST, P.O. Box 12016, New Brighton, MN 55112

S•P•A•C•E / M•A•S•T
P.O. BOX 12016
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Special!

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The prices in this ad reflect the users group discount Wizard's Work offers to members of SPACE and MAST. New products arrive continually. If you don't see what you're looking for, call! Wizard's Work is a full service Atari ST dealer.

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We would be happy to ship any merchandise UPS ground, blue, or red label. We accept money orders, personal checks, VISA, Master Card, and Discover. Please call for more information and shipping charges.

Wizard's Work

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All products subject to availability. Prices subject to change.