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OUR READERS PICK

THE WINNERS!

THE BEST BUY AWARDS OF 1989

APPLE'S MACINTOSH PORTABLE

Overdue • Overweight • OverPriced?

KAYPRO'S NEW

THE ST'S THIRD-PARTY PARTY, PART 2

by D.F. Scott

We pick up where we left off last month in our coverage of developments at the World of Atari national tour last August 19-20 in Dallas, co-sponsored by Atari Corp. and the American *ST World* magazine.

False STart?

MichTron's Vice President George Miller is a tough veteran of the computer trade show. Miller gave two seminars, shook hundreds

MiGraph's Hand Scanner.

of hands, and demonstrated dozens of products at World of Atari in Dallas, some of them—including the ProText word processor—only two days old. Despite delays in getting

I have over here, and what the reviews in the magazines say. They've got four icons on the side of the screen; well, I've got seven icons, [along with] numerous changes to the menu structure.

"A guy came from Anaheim and interviewed me, and stood behind me while I showed a very early beta version of the product. I kept telling him, 'This is a beta version; this is not how the final version will look.' I gave him a copy of 2.0, he went home, ran 2.0, and got *STart* to pay him for doing a review, and wrote down that he was reviewing 3.0. I called *STart*, said the guy never had 3.0. Nobody has 3.0. If you find somebody with 3.0, let me know

that the magazines are jumping the gun to get the first review off," Miller said.

We generally talk about real products, and one of them is MichTron's ProText, which was barely ready in time for the show. ProText is what can be described as a "classic" word processor of the WordStar genre, which deals with text only and ignores graphics altogether.

Miller describes ProText: "I like the fact that the IBM and the ST version are identical. Unless you see the Atari logo on the monitor, you forget which machine you're working with. The Amiga version, I think, is the best one of the three. The Amiga has pull-down menus; the ST doesn't and the PC doesn't. It has some other features I like better on the Amiga than I do on the PC or the ST. But all three versions are so close to the same that there are no problems switching between the two.

"I don't go through brain lag when I switch computers, trying to figure out which key does what. For me, that's important, because I work on three computers all the time. Now I've got one word processor on three machines that actually gives me compatible file formats. So it saves me a hell of a lot of work. There's nothing like porting in from WordPerfect [from a PC] and watching as it tells me it's translating my file—no! There go my tabs! How
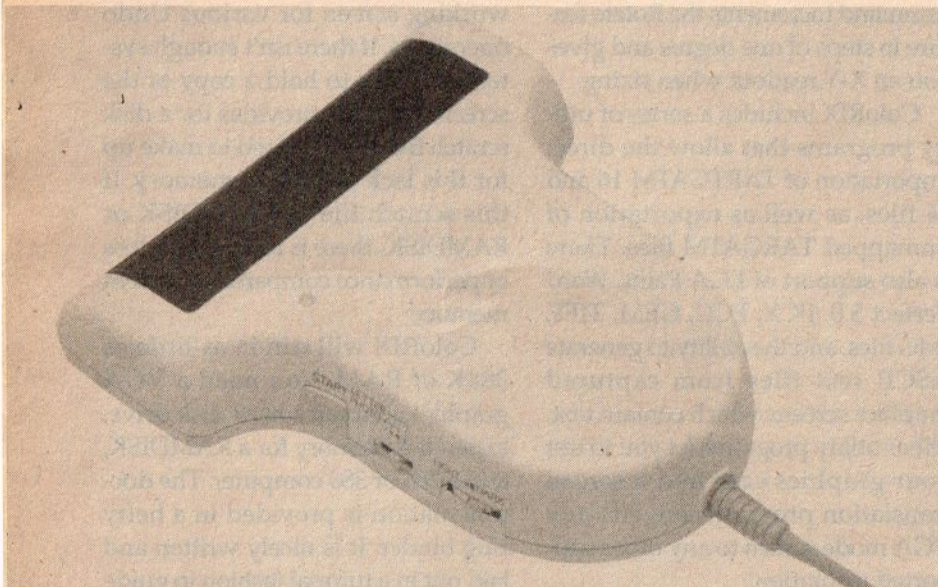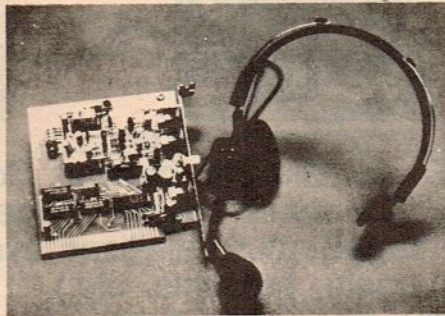
For most people, the hard disk drive is standard equipment for a computer; many PC buyers are misled by retailers into believing the hard drive is memory. So for some ST users, the concept of an external hard drive is inadequate, even repulsive—as if its external-ness somehow affects its performance. ICD's solution to this dilemma is less architectural than psychological: its hard disk drives are console units, which can sit atop the Mega and double as a monitor stand. The trouble with this design has been that a console hard drive has a fairly large footprint, and contains quite a lot of empty space.

Backups Go Into Fast-Forward

This year, ICD's FA-ST drives can be equipped with something to fill this space. It is a tape backup drive, and a blindingly fast one at that.

According to ICD's Tom Harker, "We didn't design the mechanism. We looked at a lot of mechanisms, and we found the one that was the most reliable, highest speed, that would adapt and fit in with the profile of the ST's performance. You've got to match [the performance] real closely with what you can get out of the DMA bus and the software."

The mechanism ICD chose uses what appears to be a standard audio cassette, but actually contains a very high-density metal tape. ICD sells the 155Mb-capacity cassette for

◆ ATARI'S PARTY

modules written for Interlink are transportable to Masterlink, though one particular new module has Rigby excited. "Instant Graphics makes direct calls to GEM VDI, so that all your GEM functions—cir-

Double-Click Software exhibit. The people who made their name known in the ST community with a shareware disk formatter are introducing a serial port multiplexer called DC-Port, which uses RJ12
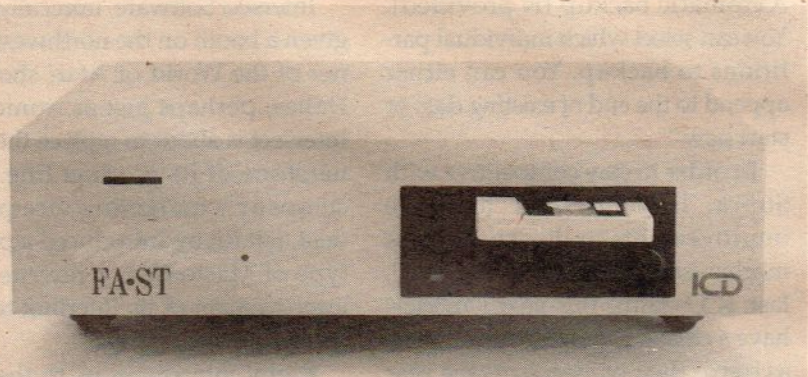
ICD's FA-ST Drive tape back-up drive.

cles, ellipses, squares, lines, dots, fill patterns, different text sizes, outlines, italics—are supported. We released a C-protocol cap to build transfer and emulation protocols for Interlink. A couple of guys out there wrote one, an emulation, for Interlink. It's available now. [It will also work] for IBM systems running under GEM.

"You can do pie charts. You've seen LDW Power? The graphs in those were done using GEM; all of those could be done using this emulation. Games could be written using this emulation."

Serial Decisions

Could a text-only TOS program run in the background of Masterlink and have its text output redirected through the serial port? Jeff Rigby: "We had to make a decision when we did remote answer: either we could allow it to run in the background, or it could be foreground-only mode. If it was foreground-only, we could run TOS programs. One or the other. We might make an option configurable, as a suggestion.

"Our software is user-driven. If somebody comes up with a suggestion, if it's a good suggestion, we implement it. If you look at a copy of Interlink 1.0, and then 1.85, you can see the progression of the program from user suggestions. It's phenomenal."

It appears some of the suggestions from attendees might be implemented in the final version of Masterlink, to be released soon.

We return you now to the

modular phone plugs to put a three-way serial connection in a palm-sized package.

It comes with three cables that have an RJ12 phone jack on one end, and the modem plugs on the other. It's supported, among other programs, by MichTron BBS, which will allow three different people to call in and log onto the BBS independently of each other.

The DC-Port package comes with a driver that interfaces to the files directly, so if you want to do your own programming, it goes straight into the files with no additional programming required. With the BIOS, the serial port is device 2. This simply calls the same BIOS routines with device 80 or 81, so it's very simple access. RJ12 uses five pins: ground, lead, transmit/receive, DTR, and carrier-detect. It retails for $230, which includes the cables.

Apparently, there are enough requests for extension serial hardware that a second product is in the works. It is a Dual Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter, but Double-Click seems content to call it DC-Talk.

Double-Click Software/Hardware's Gilbert Callaghan brags, "It's capable of transmitting at 230 kilobaud, which is the speed that Apple-Talk runs at. What we will be doing is implementing this with Spectre GCR and Spectre 128 to actually communicate on the AppleTalk network. Dave Small is working with us to do that. This will heighten the marketability of both the Spectre and our hardware. At 230K, you

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could transmit a 23K file in one second—which is blindingly fast."

It's All Done with Mirrors

Perhaps the most anxiously awaited product in the Atari U.S. desktop publishing market has been a hand-scanner for instantly translating printed copy into manipulable computer images. MiGraph's scanner has been as much dreaded as it has been anticipated, solely because of its expense—projected into the $600 range. ST-specific publications instantly cited $250 scanners available in the MS-DOS market, and began panning MiGraph's product as a ripoff before they even knew what it was.

What it is, is the first unit to scan at 400 dots-per-inch of resolution ever to be sold in the U.S. for any computer. MiGraph's Kevin and Liz Mitchell were showing the scanner off non-stop, along with the recent update to MiGraph's TouchUp software updated to take advantage of the scanner.

Kevin Mitchell tries to straighten out the confusion. "All those on the IBM currently today, although they have the switch settings, read at 200 dpi—and they're the quasi-300, 400. [DFI] has just started running new ads that are selling this [true 400] model, but they're not shipping it yet. I believe they'll be shipping it in about seven weeks. They'll be the first ones over in the PC side."

DFI (Diamond Flower

rotate an area by 90-degree [increments]. In what we call our 'Lightning Mode,' [the menu bar] is disabled; we're basically taking over the whole screen at that point, we're just setting up buffers where we can just blit [make quicker block memory moves without worrying about the AES menu bar], and do things a lot quicker. Drawing mode is set up so that you can work in any zoom, including full page. You can draw a circle larger than the screen at one time. What a person can do is come in now after a scan, and get rid of a bunch of the junk. Just go into Lightning Mode, scroll around and erase it, and then step back to Zoom Full, and set the clip area so you can get it all in one shot, and then save it out."
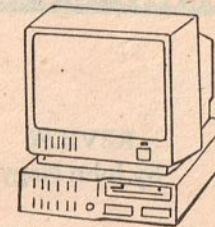
MiGraph's product is being called a true 400-dpi scanner; does this make all the previous products "false" 400-dpi scanners?

"To read 400 dots per inch, [the other models] need a different type of CCD array to read that many dots," explained Mitchell. "CCD is what basically reads the information. Instead of light-emitting, they're sensing. It's basically how many diodes they can pack into an inch. All the ones on the current scanners pack 200 in an inch. That's why they can only read 200; here what you have is a second bank in a longer area with a mirror, so they're able to sense 400." Older models use mathematical algorithms in soft-