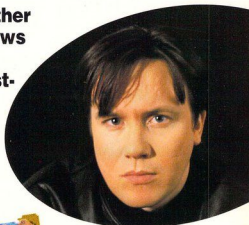


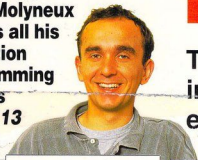
ST FORMAT

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Eric Matthews
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A better Desktop

Desktop is dead, long live the Desktop. Andy Hutchinson checks out a gem of a GEM replacement and a collection of simply super utilities

DC Desktop

MACHINE: ALL STs

PRICE: £19.95

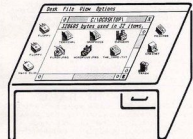
FROM: SOFTVILLE COMPUTER SUPPLIES

CONTACT: 0705 266509

GEM Desktop is fine if all you do with your ST is play games, but if you enjoy using other kinds of software and even format the odd disk, then its quirks soon become very apparent. Double Click Software have picked up on those problems and released their own improved version of Desktop, one which they claim is a major improvement on the standard Desktop.

DC Desktop comes on one disk, and it needs installing before you can use the program. You first enter your name and address, then move the actual program files to your boot disk or hard drive. This is simply a case of copying whole folders across, then placing a boot program in the AUTO folder. Once this has been done, you can reboot and your ST auto-runs the new Desktop.

The display has been redesigned to look much more attractive than the standard GEM Desktop. The icons representing the drives and the trash look three-dimensional, but operate in exactly the same way as the old ones. What's

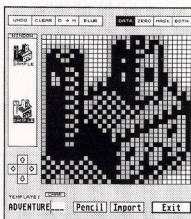


■ The attractive DC Desktop is a clear improvement over the old GEM version

more, files and folders can be given unique icons, enabling you to find the one you want extremely quickly. These icons can be installed actually on the Desktop itself, so you can run programs straight after boot-up, without having to rummage through any drives.

The icon installer is very comprehensive. Besides placing icons directly onto the Desktop, this sub-program can also be used to chain one program to another, and to load and save Desktops and cabinets (more about these shortly).

Icons themselves can be edited using the Icon Edit resource program. Existing icons can be modified and new ones can be designed or imported from other Desktop programs like Neodesk. The design screen incorporates all the standard drawing facilities, such as line,



■ Creating or modifying Desktop icons is simple, though detail is necessarily limited

circle, fill and rotate, with a blowup of the icon for ease of editing. Thus icons can be quickly designed and assigned to specific programs.

A notable addition to the usual display is a device called the Cabinet. This is a virtual disk drive which enables you to locate your most frequently used programs. You simply drag the programs onto the Cabinet icon – the programs themselves aren't actually placed in the Cabinet, merely information on where they can be found, creating an instant index system.

The Trash can has been given one particularly useful new function: data is recoverable. When you drag a file to the Trash, it is actually moved into a folder labelled Trash. Later on, programs can be recovered or properly deleted. The Trash folder can also be configured as a

RAMdisk, meaning STs without a hard drive needn't spend too much time swapping disks.

Other functions, such as "show text," are accessed from separate program modules. These are called when you invoke a show, spool, icon install or terminal. The show command has three functions: show text, show picture and show archive. The show text command is flexible, enabling you to move through text and perform searches on it. The show picture can show 17 different picture types and show archive can list programs squashed in ARC format. The spooler enables you to keep an eye on the printer, stopping file dumps and changing the order of files. A huge improvement! **stf**

FORMAT RATINGS

**DC Desktop/£19.95/Software
Computer Supplies/0705 266509**

Features 74%
Loads of great Desktop updates & improvements

Speed 73%
Does slow down on screen updates if your ST doesn't have a better chip

Ease of Use 65%
Icon installation & initial setting-up are protracted

Results 68%
Some extremely useful features. Makes the Desktop fun again!

FORMAT VALUE 71%
Very cheap, comprehensive & easily updated

The Competition

Gribnit Software's Neodesk (£39.95 from Electric Distribution # 0480 496666) is far better but twice the price. Gemini in the Public Domain looks as good as DC Desktop but lacks the features

DC Utilities

MACHINE: ALL STs

PRICE: £19.95

FROM: SOFTVILLE COMPUTER SUPPLIES

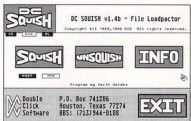
CONTACT: 0705 266509

Up to now, most decent utility software has been Public Domain. Double Click Software decided that they'd produce commercial, professional looking versions of what are usually fickle programs. The result is DC Utilities, a collection of nine programs.

The emphasis of the collection is on compaction and extraction of files – invaluable for saving memory. DC Xtract Plus combines both these elements in one program. ARC, LZH, ZOO and ZIP files can be created, tested or extracted from a main menu. DC Squish enables you to create self-running compacted files, while with DC SEA you can create self-extracting archives of numerous programs.

DC Freeze Frame is a memory-resident picture saver. You run the program to install it and then press <Alt> and HELP together to save the picture on screen to disk. Ramit is a RAMdisk which you can format to any size, just like a floppy disk. Finally, Deskey is an advanced macro utility which can run either from Desktop or within a program.

STF Rating – 85%



■ The DC Utilities all boast easy-to-use, self-explanatory menu screens like this