ATARI

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THE EDITOR'S COLUMN

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Reviewed by Dr. Warren G. Lieuallen

CUSTOM BLEND
Reviewed by Charles Brown

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        LISTING FILES TO THE 1020
        ATARI PURSUES DEALERS SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS AT
COMDEX

Atari Aid
by Warren Lieuallen

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The Editor's Column
by Norman Knapp

The review of the Star Micronics SG-10 printer that was supposed to be in last month's issue should be in the current issue. If you want to see it in action come to SIG night. Warren Lieuallen has vounteered to demonstrate printer use at either the regular and/or SIG meeting as well as disk utilities, machine language programming, and Basic programming.

We can thank Dick Brudzynski for downloading Atari BB files from Compuserve. It looks like there is going to a lot of software available for the new Atari computers. This is in constrast with the situation which prevailed when Apple released the MacIntosh; there was no third party software available and you had to do MacIntosh programming on the Lisa. It certainly looks like Jack Tramiel will release the ST computers in a better environment than what the MacIntosh was thrown into. If Atari is to be successful with the new XE and ST computers, the new owners as well as software houses will have to have technical support from the start and not months down the road as was the case with Apple support of the MacIntosh. If 'Jack is really back' and intends to stay there, the support will have to be available.

The owners of existing Atari computers have not been neglected. We've seen demonstations of some excellent games at recent meetings. I've also heard that HomeTerm, one of three programs sold in the HomePak package by Batteries Included is one of the best terminal programs available. In a recent issue of the Atari Explorer, HomePak was reviewed and the versatility of HomeFind, a relational database, was extolled along with HomeText and HomeTerm. In a couple of months I'll review HomeFind. Perhaps someone else can review and/or demo HomeText and HomeTerm.

SOFTWARE REVIEW: CUSTOM BLEND by APX/ANTIC

        The graphic abilities of the Atari are nothing less than fabulous.
Each and every day people are finding out more things this machine can
do.   Each of the graphics modes on the Atari computer is very useful.
Just think what you could do if you could combine different graphic
modes on one screen. With the Atari and a lot of skill you can.   The
question is who has that skill? It would be nice if there is a program
that would combine the different modes for you.   Well folks, there is
now such a program.

        Custom Blend is a former APX program that is now released under
the Antic banner. It allows the user to set up a skeleton screen of
different modes selected by the user.   Once the user had that then
he/she can create almost anything they want.

        When you boot up the program you will be given the menu page.
This screen will give you instructions for using the program. When you
use this program you will be selecting the graphics modes using the
equivalent Antic numbers.   I don't know why they didn't use the
graphics mode numbers, but they didn't.   I will present here a chart
here comparing the Antic and Graphic modes.

        Antic   type   color   Basic
         2   tx   2   0
         3   tx   2   --
         4   tg   5   12(xL)
         5   tg   5   13(xL)
         6   tx   5   1
         7   tx   5   2
         8   gr   4   3
         9   gr   2   4
         A   gr   4   5
         B   gr   2   6
         C   gr   2   14(xL)
         D   gr   4   7
         E   gr   4   15(xL)
         F   gr   2   8

        tx=text   mode   tg=text   and   graphics   mode   gr=graphics
color=number of colors in that mode   Basic modes 12 and 15 are
available only on the xl machines (from Basic).

        When you hit the Start key you will enter the edit mode where you
will create your custom screen. On the right hand side of the screen
you will see the letter M; the number under it will tell you which
mode you are in.   The number under the B will tell you how many bytes
your screen will require. The number under the C will tell you how
many colors are in the mode that you have selected. There is a cursor
on the right hand side which shows the line you are on.   To use this
program a joystick needs to be plugged into the first port. When you
move the joystick right or left you will change the mode value. Moving
the joystick up or down moves the cursor accordingly.   When you have
the cursor at the correct position and have selected the mode, just
simply push the joystick button and the program will put a line of that

mode in the position. Each time you select a new mode you have used up
one unit. You are only allowed nine units on one screen. If you wish
you can have nine different graphics modes. You can have both text and
graphics or different types of text or different types of graphics.
If you wish to add more lines to the screen it is easy. Just move your
joystick to position the cursor where you want the line. Then move use
your joystick to move the cursor to where the down arrow appears under
the letter M, then push the fire button. It is just as easy to delete
a line. Just position the cursor above the line to be deleted, then
just push the fire button. Then change the mode selection where there
is an up arrow showing under the M, then push the fire button. Another
feature of this utility is the display list interupt. This allows you
to change the colors on the screen. Also to have more colors than
normally allowed, simply change the letters under the M until you see
the letter I. Where ever you have the cursor on the screen. The 'dli'
will occur.

        I do see one major drawback to this program. That is the part
about saving you custom screens. To save your screen first press the
option key to go to the menu. Put a formatted disk in drive #1. Then
simply push the letter D to save your screen to disk. The drawback is
that the program automatically has a filename to save your screen to
disk. It is called "D:myfile.lst". Each time you use this utility and
save a screen it will use that name. It should prompt you and give you
option to pick a nems for your screens. You have to be careful to
change the name ot your screens so you won't loose them. Either that
or this utility will write over your old screen with each new one. I
think that that this is a very studip way of doing things.

        When Custom Blend saves your screens to the disk, it actually
writes a Basic program. The Basic program will create the custom
screen that you designed. The Basic program is listed to the disk.
When you want to use your program you must use the enter command, such
as Enter "D:mylist. lst". It is very simple to add text or graphics to
your skeleton screen. All you do is use the command gosub unit(x). X
is the unit number that you are accessing. For example if you were
starting out you would use gosub unit(1) for your first one. Once you
have that typed in you would use your color position and print commands
for your text modes. If you are using the graphics modes, you would
use your color, plot and drawto commands. Each time you wish to go to
another section of the screen you would use your gosub unit(x) again.
X would be the number of your next unit(1-9). It is as simple as that.

        With this program you can easily setup any type of screen you
want. Adding your own text and/or graphics you can be very creative.
I have included a program that was created using Custom Blend. It will
provide you with a better idea of what Custom Blend can do.

REVIEWED by Charles Brown

HARDWARE REVIEW

by Dr. Warren G. Lieuallen
The Star Micronics SG-10

The Star SG-10 printer is one of the most recent
additions to the line of printers made be Star Micronics,
Inc., and apparently is a replacement for the popular Gemini
10X. Like the Gemini, the SG-10 is an inexpensive, serial
impact dot-matrix printer, which can use either friction-feed
(single shhets, or rolls) or tractor-feed paper. However,
numerous improvements and additions make the SG-10 even more
versitile than the familiar Gemini 10X.

The control panel has received a technological face-lift,
in that the controls for line-feed, form-feed and selecting
the on/off-line status are now "soft-touch" electronic
switches. Other improvements include a printing speed of 160
cps (vs. 120 cps on the Gemini), and a standard 2K buffer
(vs. a 0.816K buffer). Another change for the better is that
all the DIP switches are easily accessed through a small
cut-out door on the side of the printer.

As in all the Star printers, the ribbon requirements are
very practical--a standard 1/2 by 2 inch Underwood typewriter
ribbon is all that's needed.

All of the print pitches and styles are retained from the
Gemini 10X: pica, elite and condensed, and an expanded,
double-width version of all of these, are available in both
"normal" and italic fonts. In addition, a proportionally
spaced pitch is available, for a more nearly "typeset" look.
And finally, the SG-10 boasts of what is called a Near Letter
Quality type font, and the name is well taken! Although all
of the standard fonts are based on a 9 by 11 matrix (rather
than the usual 9 by 9), the NLQ mode uses a 17 by 11, and
acheives impressive results. Only very close scrutiny will
reveal the true dot matrix nature of the characters.

Also available are a variety of block graphic characters,
identical to those found in the Gemini. However, two
additional modes are added (IBM #1 and IBM #2), which add
different graphic characters, as well as a very complete
international character set. Both of these IBM modes are
completely independent of the "STAR" mode, and all three are
software selectable and interchangable.

Aside from the character-based graphics, the SG-10
supports user-definable graphics modes, as do many other
printers, but the SG-10 can range from 60 to 240 dots per
inch, with four intermediate densities (72, 80, 90 and 120
dots/inch). Additionally, the vertical spacing can be varied
by as little as 1/216th of an inch, rather than 1/144th, as
on the Gemini 10X.

The ability to create custom, "download" characters is
supported, and up to 240 characters may be redefined (which
is the largest number of definables I've ever heard of.).

All of the characters have an associated "width-factor", so that proportional spacing continues to be available. The range of possibilities is nearly endless.

For all of these functions, the printer control codes are identical with those shared with the Gemini 10X, so any printer-drivers made for the Gemini will support the new SG-10. The added functions which the Gemini does not possess have been given "unused" control codes, and these must be added to the driver. Any programs which are compatible with the Gemini will work with the SG-10, and may be modified to use the additional features of this printer. Examples of compatible programs include: the utilities on ACEC DOM #30 (all the fonts, and the custom font printer!), and SCRNPRNT.BAS on DOM #17, which allows a printer dump of any screen, and text printing in any screen graphics mode!

The unquestionably best feature of the SG-10 printer is its price, which is very reasonable, even for a printer lacking some of the features found on the SG-10. Under $270.00, it is only a few dollars more than the Gemini 10X, and certainly less than many other popular printers. At this price, I feel certain that the SG-10 will soon become a very successful printer.

The following is a print sample of the SG-10, to placate any "doubting Thomases"!

This, of course, is the standard draft quality printing.

And this is the italic printing font.

This is the proportionally spaced printing mode.

And this is expanded printing.

This is printed in the elite pitch, which is 12 cpi.

And this is in the condensed pitch, combined with the subscript mode, forming very small printing!

And finally, this is the Near Letter Quality printing mode.

Except for the last line of NLQ, all of the above was printed using the draft quality print. By combining one of more of the availabe pitches and fonts, even better results can be obtained.

As if it weren't apparent enough, I highly recommend the Star SG-10 printer (which comes with a full one year warranty, by the way.)!

ST WOWS 'EM AT HANOVER

MAY '85 ANTIC SPECIAL BULLETIN by NAT FRIEDLAND, Antic Editor

4/30/85 - To bring you the latest news, Antic contacted Atari top management on the first day they returned to Sunnyvale from the world's largest annual Electronics Fair in Hanover, West Germany.

The Hanover Fair is nearly five times as big as the huge CES. Atari had an exhibit there as large as their massive showing at Las Vegas in January. The ST was just as big a hit as it was during its CES debut. Atari was all over the European TV news throughout the fair.

Interestingly, because not too many Atari engineers or executives speak fluent German, the display was largely manned by enthusiastic volunteers from Atari Users Groups in Germany.

The impact of the ST in Europe may be even greater than in the US. That's because although Europeans have been greatly interested in the Macintosh, few machines have been sold due to the strong dollar. There's a pent-up Macintosh hunger that may well be filled by the much more affordable ST.

JUNE CES FUROR

It's fascinating that when the Wall Street Journal broke the story that Atari had pulled out of the June CES, they didn't mention that the reason none of the usual Atari spokesmen were around was because they were all in Hanover.

Also, neither the Journal or any of the other papers that picked up the Atari CES story mentioned that the 130XE is already in stores and that working 520ST prototypes are in the hands of software developers.

Although in hindsight it proved to be a public relations problem for Atari to drop out of the June CES -- actually it was a sound business decision.

There was no real need for Atari to blow at least $500,000 simply to put a team on the CES floor in June. They unveiled the XE and ST at the January CES and all their efforts since then have been directed towards the crucial task of bringing the goods to market on time.

Antic's contacts said that Atari has every intention of taking hotel space in Chicago during the show to meet privately with dealers and display the latest software developments.

Antic was also told that with the coming of the ST, Atari plans to take part in shows that are specifically for computer stores.

"Unfortunately, it's too late to put anything together for the Atlanta
Comdex show in May," said one insider. "But don't be surprised to see
Atari back in Chicago for the National Computer Conference in July."

     ST DELIVERY ??

     In order to make this week's CompuServe uploading deadline, Antic
was unable to wait for any latebreaking news about the actual shipping
date of the first production STs, or about any developments in the
proposed users group distribution.

     Naturally, on their first day back after two weeks in Europe, the
Atari team was sorting out the latest details themselves. As we wrote
during our coverage of the Antic Third Birthday Party, Sam Tramiel
announced there that the STs would ship at the end of April...or early
May.

LISTING FILES TO THE 1020

```
#: 104010 S3/Utilities/Applic.
   08-May-85  20:02:06
Sb: #103924-Magnificent Program!
Fm: Bernie Bildman 70045,665
To: SYSOP*R. Brudzynski 76703,2011 (X)
```

--R.-->

     Just get you teeth into it and I'm sure you will get a good bicuspid
plot.

     By the way I solved the 80 column problem for listing files to the
1020:

     I used the DOS E: to copy the following to the disk I use for pgm
development->

OPEN #3,8,0,"P:":PR. #3;"(Escape control S)":POKE 838,166:POKE 839,238

     I saved it to disk and then when I want a list to 1020 I "ENTER"
the file. Being in immediate mode it opens the printer, changes it to
80 columns and then changes output from S: to P: (the pokes are for an
800 -I have the XL Boss- use other ones for the XL XE machines). Now I
just LIST"P:", and the pgm listing comes out in 80 columns without
having to go to Hometext to dump.

     Also a RESET press will return output to S:.

     Hope this helps...you maybe already have used it. The only reason I
needed it is I have the 1020 at my office and I am doing my Computer
Science homework there. At home I use the Prowriter so no need there.

Bernie

(UA RE T) (D=delete):

Atari Pursues Dealers Software Developers at Comdex

(May 7)

Atari Corporation was in full force at Comdex this week, pursuing software developers and computer retailers with vigor.

In attendance at the Atlanta, Georgia-based computer show were Jack Tramiel, James Copland, Sig Hartmann and several other Atari employees, spreading the gospel of the new Atari, "Power Without The Price."

At a press conference, Atari officials answered numerous questions concerning both the XE and ST line of computers, future marketing plans, as well as current strategy.

James Copland, Vice President of Marketing, kicked off the press conference by explaining that "Atari decided only five days before the show to attend Comdex." Copland stressed that Comdex was a show in which Atari could court specific distributors, both hardware and software, software developers, and mass marketers. In that regard, it made more sense for Atari to attend Comdex than to compete with stereo manufacturers at CES.

After Copland's talk came Sig Hartmann, President of Software. Hartmann said that "around 230 companies" were developing software for both the 8-bit XE and the 16-bit ST computers. When quizzed about the number of packages available, Hartmann replied that he expects there to be "over 100 pieces of software" available for the STs by September. ST systems for software companies are now being shipped at list price, a substantial reduction from Atari's original (and unpopular) ST package price of around $5000.

As per earlier announcements, the first STs are to be shipped to Atari user groups for beta testing in a week or two. BASIC and Logo will be included, although we hear conflicting reports as to whether GEM will be on ROM or disk. The first STs for the general public are to be shipped in July.

Among the software being developed for both the XEs and STs are spreadsheets and other applications programs, from various manufacturers. VIP Technologies, of Goleta, CA has developed a package for the XE called VIP Professional. According to the company, VIP Professional combines all the features of Lotus 1-2-3 with some additional features, all for under $100. The program can be either mouse or keyboard-driven, and utilizes icons and "drop down" menus, similar to GEM on the ST. The program is slated for delivery in July.

For the ST, Haba Systems of Van Nuys, CA has two programs: Haba Works, with a series of applications, such as WORD, FILE, CALC, GRAPH, COM, and HIPPO C COMPILER. Haba Solutions comes with such files as How to Start Your Own Business, How to Create Your Own Legal Will, Business Letters, Business Forms, and the Haba Check Minder. The programs retail for $59.95 and $49.95 respectively.

In a joint announcement, Atari and Rising Star Industries, of North Hollywood, CA, intend to market Rising Star Software products for the ST. The products will be distributed through Atari's dealer/distributor network.

According to Rising Star president Gale Carr, the company is converting its Valdocs line of integrated applications, to be made available on Atari hardware both as a complete package and in individual software modules. Sig Hartmann stated that "We knew from the start that the price/performance advantage of our hardware would only be half the battle. The bottom line is the utility per dollar we're bringing to the buyer; that's why others have lacked in this market, and it's also why Rising Star's software tools are a valuable asset."

Rising Star's integrated color graphics modules, Valdraw and Valpaint -- using Atari's high-resolution color display -- are marked for availability with early shipments of the computer. The company's electronic spreadsheet and other applications are scheduled to follow shortly therafter.

The 520 ST keyboard may be configured to emulate the Valdocs HASCI format through programmable function keys, allowing single-key access to all Valdocs applications and primary system and file management functions.

In hardware news, one of the most amazing announcements concerned Atari's marketing plans for the 520 ST. Apparently, there will be two different versions of the ST: one for mass marketers and one for computer stores. Internally, the machines are to be identical -- only the cosmetics of the machine are to be altered. The mass market ST would be the original configuration, whereas the computer dealer version should have a different keyboard and case. Computer retailers will sell a package consisting of the modified ST, a monitor, and half-megabyte drive for $799.

As far as future projects are concerned, Atari is working on a CD (compact disc) ROM, able to store 512K of memory, for under $500. This CD ROM, as well as a new 3 and 1/2 inch drive, are being developed in conjunction with North American Philips, the Netherlands-based electronics giant. Atari owners may recall that Philips' name was tossed around early last summer as a possible buyer of Atari, before Jack Tramiel and crew took Atari's reins.

The subject of Atari's 32-bit computer was not ignored by the press, either. Atari's rumored "CAD/CAM" system was referred to as a "graphics workstation" by Jack Tramiel, who added that the machine should be released "late this year or possibly early 1986." This would make it just in time for the January Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The 32-bit machine will be sold only through computer stores.

At a private dinner for members of the press last March, Leonard Tramiel told ANALOG Computing publisher Lee Pappas and managing editor Jon Bell that "the 32-bit machine is a reality." While Tramiel would not confirm what CPU chip the machine would have (either the Motorola 68020 or the National Semiconductor 32032) he did have an interesting anecdote about the machine. Apparently, Atari's engineers had hoped to get several prototypes of the 32-bit machine working specifically on developing chip designs for Atari computers, including the STs.

Unfortunately, the engineers couldn't work on the 32-bit machine at the expense of working out any bugs on the ST. Instead, the engineers made use of a rather extensive amount of chip development and design equipment left over from the old Atari.

   And finally, Atari's decision not to have a display at the Consumer Electronics Show in June was met with negative publicity and rumors concerning the company's financial state. Jack Tramiel emphasized that Atari did not bow out of CES "simply to save $500,000", but that Atari would be represented by a private press conference in Chicago.   It should be pointed out that a number of hardware and software companies (Infocom, Electronic Arts) are also not attending the show, but are instead having private press showings and parties to promote their products.

   Additionally, Atari officials "lack of comment" over the decision not to have a display at CES was due to said officials attending the Hanover, West Germany Computer Fair. According to sources at the Fair, the showing of Atari's ST computers was "a smash." Overseas dealers and computer owners are reportedly ecstatic over the ST, citing its power, the GEM operating system, and most importantly, its cost.   Foreign buyers who have been looking at the Macintosh with envious eyes but can't afford its high price (especially considering the strength of the American dollar) are considering the Atari ST. Jack Tramiel said that he intends for fully half the ST market to be overseas.

   In conclusion, the message from Atari at Comdex was, "Today, the U.S. Tomorrow, the world!"

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                         ATARI AID

   Among the useful subroutines built into the Atari's ROM are the following, which may be used to restart the system either during, or after program execution.

        X=USR(58484) --> for a "warm" boot

        X=USR(58487) --> for a "cold" boot

           Submitted by Dr. Warren G. Lieuallen

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