

THE MIDNITE SOFTWARE GAZETTE. Unprotected: requires no ROM & applies to any PET. Inexpensive. Useful to those who think about buying programs, or selling programs. Uneven quality: they reviewed VISICALC without mentioning what it does. Perhaps controversial: will there be 'rebuttal' reviews in future issues? Money-back guarantee. Well worth twice the price (free). Hopefully quarterly.--Jim Butterfield.

Welcome to MIDNITE#2, an off-the-wall publication of CIPUG. (Central Illinois PET User Group--PET is a trademark of Commodore Business Machines Inc.) This issue is going to those who sent in a stamped envelope. With copying it will be seen by several hundred PET owners.

Note your envelope. In the lower left is the issue number, & how many issues you've provided SASEs for. We suggest you send more envelopes when your envelope says 0 left. Sending 3 or 4 is a good idea. Sending more could create hassles when postage rates change etc.

Several readers sent donations. Thanks very much! Your generosity paid for this issue. We also received several guest reviews, & offers to do reviews of programs we send.

As some noticed, we aren't competent to review some categories of PET software, notably some education, & scientific applications. Programs in these areas may be reviewed by PET owners further away. Preference in doling out donated programs for review will be given to those who contribute reviews.

We really need reviews of business programs. So far, we've heard complaints about all but 1 of the available packages. Only 1 was praised, & it was bitterly berated by another user.

We don't review free programs--if worthless, so what? Some freebies are better than commercial versions. Pet User Groups often have exchange libraries. Look there first. Unless otherwise listed, disk programs reviewed here should work on Basic 3 & 4 & both keyboards. Non-disk programs should work on all PETs. Graphics programs over a few months old probably won't display correctly on 80 column PETs. We hope to test major programs on an 8032.

ABOUT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:

Some readers praised or panned specific companies. We remember bad software from 2 years ago--We'd assumed more recent offerings do run. Now we know better. But we don't do anonymous reviews. If a program is a rip off, get someone to review it openly.

On behalf of sellers, it's VERY difficult to write programs for all PETs. We have 3 ROMs, 2 character generators, 2 screen widths, 3 disk densities & 2 DOS's from Commodore, plus 2 other incompatible brands of disk drives, each of which comes in more than 1 variety, 2 printer ROMs & models of printer from Commodore, plus several brands of competing printers & printer interfaces. I can hardly wait for Basic 5...

Even so, companies should provide upgrades for new equipment. A usual policy is to provide fixes at no or low charge. (ATTENTION SUPERSORT CUSTOMERS: IF YOUR COPY IS EARLIER THAN DECEMBER '80, RETURN YOUR CASSETTE OR DISK FOR A FREE UPDATE-JS). Major improvements are available for the difference in price between the versions. The line between fix & upgrade is fuzzy. Most good programs can be improved, & are.

Some software houses refund money for returned programs. Others don't. This makes it essential to know whether a program will work for you. If you order sight unseen, say as much as possible about your

equipment. The company may warn you if the program won't work for you, or notify you if they discover a problem with your equipment. If you don't get good service, write again. Recently, I lost an order. The requested program is ready to mail, but I can't remember who gets it.

In this light, we received a complaint about a requested fee to upgrade ASM/TED. The complainer had good points, & so did Carl Moser, ASM/TED's author. I find Carl to be honest & helpful. If not, I wouldn't coordinate his ASM/TED user group. Given my bias, I won't judge this disagreement. However, it shows the need for both sellers & buyers to do what they can to achieve customer satisfaction.-JS

CORRECTIONS & UPDATES:

1) Programma's TALKING CALCULATOR doesn't do all math correctly, especially dividing or multiplying by 0. However, it is a great demo of non-hardware speech synthesis.-Gene Beal 2) The PROGRAMMER'S TOOLKIT ROM, TK40 is now available, for \$40 & up, or \$20 plus your old Toolkit chip. It fixes all known bugs, & adds a 'bye' command. This disables the Toolkit, so it can't interfere with another program. 'bye' also returns Basic to full speed. It is ONLY for Basic 4.-JS 3) DIAL A ROM no longer includes the on/off switch complained about in M#1.-JS

QUESTIONS:

1) 'What is the difference between Extramon & Supermon?' Extramon is a superset of Supermon. Supermon is by Jim Butterfield, who improved Bill Seiler's Extramon with goodies from Supermon. Those in CIPUG with both, prefer Extramon, because it has several commands not in Supermon. Both exist in versions for all PETs. Both are free from user groups, but Programma also plans to sell Extramon. 2) 'What is a dummy ROM?' A dummy ROM is 1 that is used by the program ONLY for protection against copying. For instance, KRAM, which is a dummy despite appearances, merely alters a register & returns. If not for protection, that could be done faster without the ROM.

COMMODORE NEWS

Commodore's problem isn't Japan. It's keeping employees. Rarely can I call the same employee twice. They've left! I especially miss Bill Seiler, who was around from PET's start til recently. He wrote BASIC AID, EXTRAMON, & the BRANDING IRON program, (reviewed below).

The VIC20, a \$300 mini-PET, is selling in Japan. It uses your TV, has 4+k memory, color, sound, & a subset of PET Basic. Hope it reads PET tapes. New disks coming are the 8061 & 8062; vertical 8" disks, with 1.6MB & 3.2MB respectively. Cost is \$2,500 & \$3,500. A 2031 has also been announced. It's a 5" single disk, with 130k for \$595. (2 similar disks, announced 1 & 2 years ago, never appeared.) The 8096 PET is an 8032 with 96k+ memory. The 8024 printer was announced in England, for 1160 pounds sterling. It has 132 character lines, bidirectional printing & a 9X7 dot matrix. A \$300 full Pascal is labeled IN STOCK in Chicago. Uses 32k plus disk. Maximum object code length is 22k. Two other new CBM programs are--OZZ, a machine-language database manager, & Wordsmith, another word processor.

Anyone seen Issue 11 of the Commodore PET User Group Newsletter? Its editor told me last June that it was finished & had been sent to Pennsylvania for printing. If not, consider this a negative review.-JS.

HINT: Wondering why you can't send monitor listings to the printer with Basic 4? You're probably calling it with 'open4,4:cmd4:sys1024'. The fix is to type 'open4,4:cmd4:sys54386'.

FINALLY, THE REVIEWS!

In this issue, we feature the work of two software producers: Baker Enterprises & California Software Associates. Both sent several programs for evaluation. Their addresses are:

Baker Enterprises
15 Windsor Drive
Atco, N.J. 08004

California Software Associates
P. O. Box 969
Laguna Beach, CA. 92652

COMMENT ON BAKER. I was able to run most of these programs strictly from the prompts, which indicates an excellent job by Bob Baker in being end-user oriented. His prices are quite reasonable for utility programs, unless you are willing to work for far below the minimum wage in creating equivalent programs.-RS

Price Note for Baker, unless disk price is listed, add \$2 per order for a disk, holding any number of programs.-JS

DISK MASTER, \$10 from Baker. Needs disk. Printer optional. The best disk library program for PET now available. It automatically reads disk directories into disk files. It stores 140 alphabetized directories per diskette. Each needs a distinctive ID number. If not unique, you'll be warned. This allows you to update the directory after changing a disk. Able to find which disk contains a particular program, even if you don't remember the program's full name. Also prints a list of IDs in use, to help avoid duplicates. Everything is speedy except the search routine, which takes several minutes.-JS

DATA DISK WITH SEARCH, \$7.50 from Baker. Manual entry inventory program for disk contents. No way to abort search feature without punching the stop key, which then leaves the disk drive active. Too slow when you are looking for something, unless you have used the printer option to make hard copy for future reference.-RS

XREF, \$7.50 from Baker. For Basic 3. A simple & very handy little machine language program that upon a sys command will display all variables used in a BASIC program. It won't interrupt your program and is a nice touch I'd like to have in ROM. Since you don't have to run your program first, as you must with PAIC's TOOLKIT, it's easier to use.-JO

HOUSE INVENTORY, \$5 from Baker. Program is input bomb-proof. Memorization of prompts not required---displayed at all times. Fails to return character set to original at end. This is an excellent purchase, & if used, with a copy of data in a safe place, takes a large step in home protection.-RS

BLACK FRIDAY, \$10 from Baker. Needs 8K. A stock market simulation for 1-4 players. More realistic than most such games. Very easy to play. You start with \$5000 & try to have the most money after 10 years (turns). Stocks split & dividends are paid after each session. A good stock market game. Worth the price.-JO

DISK/TAPE-COPY, \$2 from Baker. 2 programs. Copy data files to tape & conversely. Can't copy programs. Takes about 16 seconds/disk block. Each program is less than 1k long. A single menu-driven program would have been better. Included with Assembler (below).-RS

ASSEMBLER, \$10 tape, \$15 disk from Baker. Needs Commodore disk. Includes an editor, assembler, loader, & copier (above), all in Basic with no ROM-dependent peeks or pokes. Will allow use with future ROMs. Syntax error detection excellent. Requires memorization of syntax which may not be consistent with some assemblers. Good place to start, but if you are into large assembly programs, this package is too slow.-RS

WORD HUNT, \$5 from Baker Enterprises. Requests & hides 10 words in 10 X 10 letter matrix. For each word, you guess row/column or 1st letter & direction code. Points awarded for accuracy & speed (5 skill levels). Screen displays about all you need, but the matrix is tight & hard to look at. Good input channeling & error trapping. Entertaining, though I prefer Len Lindsay's 'Hidden Word' (published in Recreational Computing) for its unscrunched matrix, printer option, & answer key. Uses: puzzle fans or student (10 yrs+) Practice in word recognition.-BA

PET DISK UTILITY PACK, \$100 from CSA. Needs 2040 or 4040(DOS 2) disk. Printer optional. Programs also available separately; prices below. All have excellent instructions & prompts. All are reliable & recommended.-JS

RECOVER (\$30) Restores files or programs scratched or new/header-ed off a disk, so long as new programs haven't reused the space. It works quickly & reliably. Quite an accomplishment...

MESSAGE (\$60) Disk monitor, like the monitor in the PET. Allows any desired manipulation of the Disk. Seems reliable, & safe in use. Includes warnings, & descriptions of disk organization. For DOS 1, but works fine on DOS 2, except thinks there's a sector 19 on tracks 18 to 24, as in DOS 1. No problem. Files don't use those blocks, & Message considers them allocated.

EDIT (\$60) A simple way to alter sequential & usr files in place. Seldom needed, but very useful occasionally.

SNAPSHOT \$25, from CSA. Not for Basic 4. Copies screen memory to assigned RAM near Himem. Allows up to 9 pictures to be instantly saved & restored later. It is good for those without a printer, or those who must save quickly changing results. It also makes program editing a bit easier. Easily disabled, so can't interfere with other programs. Should work well with a modem to save a conversation.-JS

FET/RECOVER, \$65 from F.L.C Inc. 1407 Clinton Rd Jackson, MI 49292. Monitor for the 2040 disk. 'This program works well so far as I've

seen. It can be of great use, if you lose part of your index & need to reconstruct it.'-Fred Bruey

I understand FET has recently been revised. I watched the old version ruin a disk it was trying to restore.-JS

MICROPHYS PROGRAMS: #721-724, \$20 each from Microphys, 2048 Ford St. Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229. For senior highs. Common format gives random user code & questions keyed to that code. Displays 2/screen. User solves on paper. After 6-8 questions, displays answers. (optionally suppressed.) You correct the paper by changing a line, running from a different start, & giving user code & answers. Little program interrupt protection. No assistance, 'See Instructor for help'. Dull programs, too much code, too many dollars for so little payoff. Saves teacher time by random problem generation. Ditto sheets are cheaper.-Walter Sadler (Math Teacher)

PAPERMATE, \$30 from A.B. Computers, 115 E. Stump Rd. Montgomeryville, PA. 18936. An inexpensive word processor. Features machine-language for the PET to ASCII conversion routine. Fast, & could be faster, but for PET's garbage collection routine (Basic 4 cures this!) Word wrap-around, without awkward splits, optional hyphenation, formatting, headers, page numbers, commands for disk or cassette, linked files, form letters, & even options for various printers are built-in. Instructions are good & Mike Riley is steadily improving it. On disk or cassette.-Tom Owen.

BRANDING IRON, \$80 from AB. For all PETs, (Old PETs need an add-on 24 pin EPROM board.) Software by Bill Seiler (see Commodore news) & others. Hardware by Seiler & the St. Louis PET SET. Programs 2716 (2k) & 2532 (4k) EPROMs. Connects to user port & cassette#2 port. Easy commands, patches into Commodore's monitor. Handy LED shows programming in process. Nice screen display zips thru bytes being programmed or shows errors byte by byte. Can VERIFY results or COPY the EPROM into RAM. FAST, CHEAP, RELIABLE. Don't pass this up if you want to program your own ROMs.-BA (CALL BEFORE ORDERING-PRODUCTION JUST BEGINNING-JS)

COLUPAD, \$150 from Etcetera International Software, P.O. Box G Apex, North Carolina 27502 'I...have purchased COLUPAD, a program similar to Visicalc. It works very well & is well integrated to disk & printer. It, too, uses a worksheet formula, but is not as complicated as Visicalc & costs \$50 less.'-John Ellison

BANNER PLUS, \$10 from Programma International, 3400 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA. 90010. Prints large characters across paper's LENGTH. You choose message, letter size, & centering. Nice feature for creating new character or shape. Smallest character size (7x9) looks best. Fun to use, potentially useful.-BA

TELEPHONE BOOK, \$7 from Programma. Create, change, & store (tape/disk) entries in electronic phone book. Find entry by name, city, state, zip, area code, or category. Works fine, but a hassle without disk. Would be more useful with options to sort & display all listings, especially on paper.-BA

DATA LOGGER, \$15 from Channel Data Systems, 5960 Mandarin Av. Goleta CA 93017. Enables creating/manipulating sorted list of data: insert,

delete, modify, find, output (printer or screen), or save. Find, modify, & output may operate on a specified field of a data record. Simple but effective. Uses 2K, so leaves much room for data.-BA

BIKE, \$10 from Softside Software, 305 Riverside Dr. New York, N.Y. 10025. An economic simulation of running a bike co. You must deal with the amount of workers, the price to sell your bikes, whether to invest in more machinery or an ad campaign. At times a worker will break a machine and you always have to contend with inflation. No graphics but written well and even if it does run with a random number generator, I still enjoy it. I forgot to mention that your sales will fluctuate with the seasons. A 1 player game.-JO

BULLS & BEARS, \$15 from Speakeasy Software, Box 1220 Kemptville, Ontario CANADA. (Must order thru a dealer.) A stock market game where you & up to 5 other people try to buy stock in 2-7 companies and take control of them. Invest in production and borrow to keep afloat and it makes for an interesting game. With \$50,000 you begin the game to make a fortune. NOTE: After many, many tries I finally accumulated 43 billion dollars. So much for the national debt.-JO

DOW JONES, \$8 from Instant Software Inc. Peterborough, N.H. 03458. Uses 8k. Simulates the stock market. 1-6 players...if less than 6 the computer plays for the remaining players. You choose the length of the game by determining how many days of trading you want. You buy & sell stock in 3 categories of industrials, transportation & utilities with 4 different companies in each. You must watch flashing bulletins & other players' transactions, (plus the high influence option) to become the richest at the end of the game. Stocks split & pay dividends. I recommend it.-JO

TREK-X, \$8 from ISI, Uses 8k. A different approach to Startrek. Klingons, Romulans, Orions are after you in all directions & real time. The top 3/4 ths of the screen is your window to space. After you set replot time (which determines approximately how far you've traveled in the universe) the screen clears & redraws the area. Commands include shields, torps, phasers, & warp or impulse drive. If you go too fast you burn. Let your shields get too low & you'll vaporize. You have a map to show your location. You MUST find a base as you destroy the 50 enemy vessels. Good graphics, sounds & real time action make it a good game for anyone just learning to be 'Captain Kirk'. (Changing a couple of variables makes it tougher.)-JO

SANTA PARAVIA & FIUMACCIO, \$10 from ISI. Needs 16k. The best 'Kingdom'-type game available for the PET to date. Up to 6 players can participate. With 4 difficulty levels, it's challenging. You decide how much to feed subjects, when to buy & sell land, what grain reserves to keep, what taxes to charge on income & sales, what to pay soldiers, & what justice to provide. You must build markets, mills, a castle & a church to become king. Only if you accumulate the wealth within an average of 20 years are you going to win. Graphics are very well done. Bad points: Plays too short a game. If you change the year to begin the game it could last all night.-JO

REAL TIME BASEBALL, \$8 from Softbrew, P. O. Box 50117A, Indianapolis, IN. 46250. Cassette only. Basic+Machine Language. Not for Basic 4.

Heavily protected. All action is on the screen, with 9 players represented as numbers & the entire baseball field shown, including outfield bleachers. You play the computer or a person or watch the computer play itself. You use the '5' and 's' keys to pitch or bat. When a ball is hit, the 4 & 6 keys move the outfielders. You must reach the outfield bleachers to get a hit, represented by 'S' 'D' 'T' & 'H', after each pitch. The innings, balls, strikes & outs are also displayed. You also have sacrifices, bases on balls and double plays. Simple to play. Graphics are excellent.-JO

CURSOR, \$27/year. Bimonthly, from the Code Works, P. O. Box 550 Goleta, CA. 93017. Cursor is a widely-praised tape magazine. I've subscribed almost from its beginning. However, I'm now due to renew my subscription, & wonder if one can have too much of a good thing. I don't like games much, & that's over half of Cursor's content. Recently, I went through 10 disks full of games to select those I am willing to play. Result, 1 mostly full diskette, with only 1 CURSOR game on it. On the other hand, at least twice a year, they include a utility program so good, I'd pay the annual cost for that alone. In short, I renewed. I wish utilities were included more often, but I still get my money's worth from Cursor. I'm sure you will too.-JS

MCTERM, \$195 from Madison Computer, 1825 Monroe St. Madison, WI. 53711. 'Do you remember I told you I was impressed with a terminal program by Madison Computer - McTerm? It works great until you try to get hard copy (by saving it to the disk). While the program is saving to the disk & checking the error channel, it loses some of the incoming text. It's written in Basic & can probably be fixed.'-John Melissa

8050 DISK, \$1795 from Commodore. The long-awaited Megabyte disk. Looks like a 2040, but uses better disk drives, two 6502's & DOS 2.5. Two were ordered, & promptly delivered. One works great. The other had a drive so warped, that we couldn't even insert a diskette. To the good, a replacement came in 2 days. Amazing capacity. That's not always a blessing...Newing a disk takes 2 minutes, & backup 8 minutes. The unit to unit copy program works quickly & well to dump files from 2040 to 8050 & back. Unfortunately, Visicalc, is not available for the 8050, & can't be copied by Unit to Unit. Businesses need the 8050, & perhaps a 2040 too. For others, it may be overkill, as many programs need their own diskettes, & huge directories are hard to read. On the other hand, triple the storage for a third more is not to be sneezed at. Good documentation.-JS

CBM 8010 MODEM, \$395 from Commodore. Acoustic modem. Originate or answer, 300 baud. Full or half duplex. Apparently the same as the Star Modem, available from AB for \$265, or \$135 if your modem program simulates RS232. Work, but only if you have an IEEE modem program. Delivered without ANY instructions or programs! Took 2 days to get it working well enough to call anyone. I consider modems a luxury, unless you must use an outside computer. If you DO need a modem, a direct connect originate AND answer modem costs little more & works better. Network's \$300 IEEE modem (not reviewed) has been around for years, & even dials for you. Skip the 8010.-JS

THE SOURCE, \$100+variable fee/hour, from Source Telecommunications Corp. 11616 Anderson Road McLean VA. 22102. Unless you can call

toll-free, Source can cost \$10+/hour to use. Up to 5 minute wait between commands. Offers toll-free help number. Needed! It took 3 help calls & a password change to get in. The mailed sign-on instructions were almost totally wrong. We received a few pages of instructions, with a promise of a real manual later. Another user claims they've said that for months. Hard for PET owners to use as they don't offer a PET program like those for TRS-80 & Apple 2. Unless you have a great need for its databases, skip Source for now.-JS

MEMORY EXPANSION, \$50 interface+\$200/8k. From Skyles Electric Works, 231 E South Whisman Rd. Mountain View CA 94041. Expands PET to as much as 40k RAM. Available in (stackable) modules of 8 or 16K. 2 year guarantee, prompt delivery. Solid, compact, stacks & connects easily inside PET. Connector on cable allows later use of untapped RAM/ROM expansion (ie. other SEW products). Fast, thorough test program provided on cassette. Clear instructions for installation/testing. Nice map of memory expansion lines. So far (5 months), perfectly reliable, very useful & worth the price.-BA

COMPUTHINK COMMENT: (Makers of disk drives & added memory) 965 W. Maude Sunnyvale CA 94086. 'I've spoken quite regularly with Computhink people over the past year. I had 1 problem with the disk in the beginning. They paid (via Federal Express) to have it shipped down to them from Alaska, & returned it within 5 days, the same way. I like that attitude!!'--John Malone

PET BENELUX EXCHANGE, fl5,00. from Johan Smilde, COPYTRONICS, Burs. V. Suditelen Straatub FU13 XP Deventer, NETHERLANDS. An excellent Dutch Pet Users' Group Newsletter. 50 Glossy pages per issue. Amazingly good for a newsletter started by a single person less than a year ago. Includes ads for lots of products never seen here. Good articles, ie. 'Tips voor Commodore floppy gebruikers', not to mention an 8032 Demo program, & 'Commodore's Basic Cursus' (19 programs!). All right, so I'm part-Dutch; it's still neat!-JS

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LATE FLASH: PETS PROVEN USEFUL!

During the recent MGM Grand fire in Las Vegas, Commodore moved its entire COMDEX '80 booth downstairs to help track guests, rooms, etc. According to INFOWORLD, 7 PETS with QZZ databases were used for 2 straight days. Local police agreed they could not have kept track of the guests as well as the PETS did. Also, untrained operators quickly learned the system. In the crisis, PET was both powerful & useable.

THANK YOU COMMODORE!