

ISSUE 38

Vol. 9, i

# Midnite Software Gazette

The First Independent U.S. Magazine for users of Commodore brand computers.

Includes The PAPER

## Books

*BASIC TRAINING GUIDE* standard-good overview  
*OUT OF THE INNER CIRCLE* light..enjoyable

## Educational

*NIC'S FOUNDRY* excellent value [for] multiple users  
*FISH-ED* friendly, simple...nicely done

## Wordprocessors

*PAPERCLIP II* strong features...telecom  
*FONTMASTER 128* good program, but wait 'til the bugs are fixed.  
*PAGESETTER* full-featured page layout.  
*POCKET WRITER II* supports 1351 and 17x0.

## Games

*ULTIMA III* a must for Ultima and role-playing fanatics  
*MacBEITH* ...the graphics are well done.  
*subLOGIC SCENERY DISKS* ...flatland  
*AMERICA'S CUP* timely release...includes all the elements

## Disk Utilities

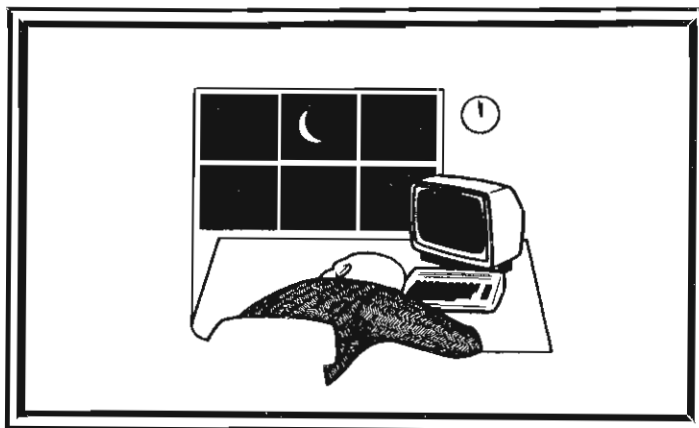
*SUPERKIT 2.0* vast improvement...works with 2 drives  
*TIME-DOS* date/time file stamping  
*DISK LIBRARIAN* shareware catalog utility

## Hardware

*HOTSHOT* standard CBM/Centronics interface  
*DOUBLE QUICK BROWN BOX* battery backed up RAM cartridge  
*MSD INFORMATION EXCHANGE* excerpts from the newsletter

## Hints and Tips

*TAPE TO DISK COPIER* ml routine  
*DALSY WHEEL CHANGE* inelegant, but it works!  
*COMMODORE ROM UPGRADES* from the desk of Fred Bowen.



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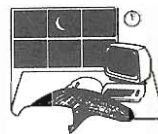
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converting the Earth's atmosphere to one more hospitable to them (and since they find Los Angeles' air too pure for consumption...you KNOW we're in trouble!)

Your tank is right out of the 21st century. The view through the tank's screen gives a creditable view of the terrain in fairly good perspective... due to the difference in graphics between the two machines, it is of course much more spectacular on the Amiga version.

A wide variety of weapons and defense mechanisms are available...and you'll need them. The aliens have impressive weapons, radar stations, and radar jamming devices. All these and, of course, the Air Converters must be destroyed as you make your way to the Main Fort.

On screen instrumentation includes a speedometer, gunsight, damage indicator, warning lights, oxygen percentage, a compass, and weapon inventory. There is also a bird's eye Radar View and Aft view.

The graphics and sound are impressive on both the Amiga and C64, but reactions of the tank are agonizingly slow. You almost get the feeling you are moving in slow motion. Having never driven a real tank, I can't say how this compares to real life...but it makes playing the game a bit of a chore. RECOMMENDED for hard core arcade players. -Art Lewis Kimball

**HARDBALL:** \$18.95 baseball arcade game on disk for the C64 by Bob Whitehead, from Accolade. DOS protected, 90 day media warranty, joystick required.

**HARDBALL** is a must for all armchair managers. There isn't anything like the real thing, but this comes close.

With **HARDBALL**, you can substitute players, change pitchers, steal bases, choose pitches, and change players.

If the previous paragraph piqued your interest, the sound and graphics will sell you on this game. **HARDBALL** is not an easy game to play, but it is the best of its kind that I have tried. With time and patience you may learn to play it well, but I doubt that it can be mastered.

The copy protection is very sophisticated, so don't count on being able to make a backup. You can buy a backup from Accolade for \$10.

If you want a good baseball game that let's you control everything, this is it. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. W.H. Lambdin

**DRAG RACE ELIMINATOR:** \$... drag racing simulation game on disk for the Commodore 64, from Family Software

This game for the Commodore 64 offers a realistic simulation of several 1986 NHRA classes of professional drag racing competition with varying levels of game difficulty. Included are: TF/D Top Fuel Dragster, TF/FC Top Fuel Funny Car, TA/D Top Alky Dragster, TA/FC Top Alky Funny Car, and PRO/S Pro Stock classes.

Top Fuel cars have 2 speed transmissions, Top Alky cars have 3 speeds, and Pro Stock cars have 4 speeds. Although the Top Fuel dragsters are the fastest, cars with less horsepower must have high revving engines, numerically higher final drive ratios, and more gears in order to accelerate quickly. Therefore, the difficulty level is increased with a larger margin for driver error in the lower classes.

The game uses high resolution graphics with good sound effects, even though only one screen is actually used by the game for all levels of competition. The joystick is used for all controls. The firebutton is the accelerator, with engine speed indicated by the on-screen color coded tachometer bar graph. Pushing the joystick forward shifts gears into the next available gear. Rev'ing your engine too fast without shifting gears will blow your engine.

In each competition class there are several modes of play. A one player practice mode allows racing either of the two cars, depending on which joystick is used. In this mode, you race for time only. This is similar to actual practice runs, called time trials, that are used to hone a drivers skills and tune the car for



actual competition.

Two player competition is just like a real drag racing match. The computer records each player's wins, with a winner declared after winning 20 heats.

For single player competition, *Drag Race Eliminator* provides a highly skilled computer opponent. These Computer drivers are very quick and never blow an engine but, With practice, they can be beaten.

The play mode menu allows you to see the current class records or return to the main menu to change classes of competition. During play you can press the STOP key to return to the main menu.

At the end of each heat, *Drag Race Eliminator* displays your reaction time, elapsed time, and top speed. Your reaction time (RT) is measured between the "Christmas tree" amber light and the moment your car moves. The elapsed time (ET) is how long it takes you to cover the 1/4 mile distance between the start and finish line, measured in 1/1000 of a second. It's not unusual for a driver with a lower ET to lose due to a poor reaction time.

*Drag Race Eliminator* is a very informative and enjoyable game with good documentation. It is easy to play, but requires a good deal of practice to turn in a good performance. It seems to go over big with children, my 10 year old son keeps going back to it every few days. [RECOMMENDED? ed.] Robert Baker.

***LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE*** (update): \$19 game/simulation on disk for the C64. From Activision. DOS protected.

*Little Computer People* is a nice package for children (not that older people might not enjoy it as well). I would call it a simulation instead of a game. You must keep you little person healthy and happy, and that is not always easy. If he is bested in games, he will pout; if he doesn't get enough food or water, he will get sick.

All the graphics are spectacular - except for the dog which looks like a rat. The high-resolution animation is smooth

and realistic, a first class job.

There are a few drawbacks to *Little Computer People*: It is an ongoing simulation, continuing from one session to the next, so if you play with the original there is no way to restart from the beginning. Make a backup and put the original away before you load the program. The plot is poor: all there is to do is keep food, water, and dog food in the house. It gets old after a while. RECOMMENDED [??ed.] W.H. Lambdin

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## ***DISK UTILITIES***

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***SUPERKIT 2.0***: \$29.95 disk copy utility from the C64 and 1541. From Prism Software. DOS protected.

*Superkit 2.0* is a vast improvement over 1.1. It has the same utilities as found on 1.0 and 1.1, but they work faster, you can view the directory, and all utilities work with one or two drives.

The following is a table of the time, in seconds, it took to copy a disk with only 90 blocks free.

Dual Normal	44.5
Single Normal	65.1
Single Normal w/verify	93.2
Dual Nibbler	32.5
Single Nibbler	59.9
Single Nibbler w/verify	didn't work

Dual File Copier	72.7
Single File Copier	76.6

Super Nibbler	78.6
(both single and dual)	

The Disk Surgeon, both single and dual, copied *Little Computer People* in 88.5 seconds

With the directory options and the improvements in speed, version 2.0 is vastly superior to versions 1.0 and 1.1. Another nice touch is an autobooting feature for the C128. The only real bug is

with the Single Normal Copy with verify, which doesn't work. In spite of these weak points, I still give *Superkit 2.0* a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. W. H. Lambdin.

**TIME-DOS:** \$.? disk file date and time stamping utility on disk for the C64, C128 (both modes), and 1541 and 1571 disk drives. From Family Software.

*TIME-DOS* wedges itself into the normal operating system where it provides 10 new direct mode commands for one or two floppy disk drives. Drives with device numbers 8 or 9 are referenced as 'A' or 'B' prefixes to all *TIME-DOS* commands.

Mode settings allow program files to be date and time stamped automatically when created, accessed, or both. In addition, all file types can be stamped manually in direct mode or under program control. A real-time calendar clock (with auto-leap year) is accurate up to the year 2000. Also, a convenient JUMP table is built-in for programmers who wish to access the *TIME-DOS* routines from their own programs.

The utility is RAM resident and transparent to most Basic or other programs that do not use the same RAM. The C64 version uses locations \$C000-\$C980; the C128 version uses free RAM at \$1300-\$1BE0 and is functional with the built-in monitor. Both versions use the Time of Day clock contained in the 6526 CIA #2 for accurate time keeping.

There is no special disk formatting procedure necessary in order to use *TIME-DOS*. The time and date stamps do not consume any user disk space or directory blocks. The information is placed in the four unused bytes following the byte reserved for the relative file record length found in every directory entry. Also, any *TIME-DOS* stamped disk may be used normally since the data is invisible to the standard DOS routines.

The C128 version is auto-booting on power-up or reset, and works on both 40 and 80 column displays. The C64 version requires a simple load and run sequence to get started. When first started, you're

prompted for the current date and time. Thereafter, *TIME-DOS* is activated and the current automatic stamping modes will be displayed.

*TIME-DOS* includes a new directory command that displays the usual directory with the added time and date information for those files that have been stamped. If desired, *TIME-DOS* can be disabled with a simple command without having to reset the system. A special SYS command can later reactivate *TIME-DOS*.

The program works exactly as claimed, with no problems encountered and it is extremely easy to use. Documentation is good and covers everything needed. JUMP table information will be extremely interesting to those wishing to incorporate *TIME-DOS* with their applications. The ability to automatically stamp files is extremely handy for many applications and greatly enhances the normal directory information.

A demo program is also included on the normal *TIME-DOS* distribution disk. If interested, a copy of the demo program is available for downloading from the CIN New Products Information on QuantumLink. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Robert Baker

**SUPER DISK LIBRARIAN:** \$29.95 disk catalog utility on disk for the C128. From Free Spirit Software and <BSD> Software.

*Super Disk Librarian (SDL)* is a full featured disk cataloging and library system for the C128, running in 80 column 128 mode only, with a 1571 disk drive. The program reads and catalogs disk directories and prints disk labels. It will catalog up to 1,000 disks and 14,400 program names. It will also read heavily protected and CP/M diskettes. It also supports a second disk drive defined as device nine. This drive can be a 1541 or a 1571 drive, but at least one 1571 drive is required.

*SDL* operates in the FAST mode, giving extremely fast response to queries. The program is self prompting with menu selections made with the numeric keypad

for extra convenience, speed and simplicity. Any operation can be aborted with the ESCape key.

Each disk to be cataloged must be assigned within one of seven categories: Productivity, Telecommunication, Games, Utilities, Archives, Education, or CP/M. You cannot add, delete or change these categories used by the program. They're preset and fixed as they come.

Each *SDL* data disk is can catalog only 1000 disks. You must define how many disks can be cataloged within each category, up to 350 within any one category. The total of all disks allocated for each category cannot exceed the 1,000.

The entire data file can hold 15,400 filenames. Any given disk category cannot hold more than 2,200 filenames. Most of these limits are fine for the average user, but *SDL* has one major drawback - it cannot enter more than 25 filenames for any single disk! You're told in the manual to group similar files and manually catalog them under one name for compactness. But there are times when this just cannot be done.

Cataloging disks is straight forward, but not entirely simple. The program reads the data from the disk directory and displays a list of filenames found. You then have to manually tell the program which filenames to enter in the catalog. This can be as simple as a single keystroke to enter all filenames, or repeated keystrokes for each and every file to be entered, besides picking the disk category as well.

The program does allow manually entering a disk or file name. You also can use a different name to catalog any disk or file for special circumstances. When cataloging a disk that was previously cataloged, you can Overwrite the existing data, or keep the old data and Add the new data for archival purposes.

There are four ways to recall information to the screen. You can select any given category of disks and display all the disks cataloged within that category. You can then select any given disk within that category and view the

directory information for that disk.

Another way to view data is via an alpha-numerically sorted list of every filename in a selected disk category. Disk locator numbers are used to indicate which disk each file can be found on. The sort will take less than 3.5 minutes for a category with 2,200 filenames.

The third data display option provides a method to search for a disk or program based on the name or locator number you request. Wildcard searches can be conducted, but the output data will not indicate the full disk or program name. Using disk names is extremely fast since all data resides in memory. Program name searches take a short while (up to 1.25 minutes maximum) since the data disk must be accessed.

Finally, disk data can be edited or deleted from the library. You must view the data before it can be deleted. To edit data, the disk must be re-cataloged with the Replace option.

Printed reports allow printing a Full Index which shows disk names in each category, and all categories; a Master Program List gives every filename in all seven categories, by category, sorted alpha-numerically; a Category Program List gives every filename in the selected category; a Global Report - prints the entire data for every disk, in every category; a Category Report - prints the entire disk data for all disks in a selected category; Individual disk data; or Disk Labels using standard mailing labels.

*SDL* supplies a number of standard disk utilities, plus a few unique ones. You can change the format on a 1571 disk to eliminate the pause while the drive looks for an autoboot record on reset. You can also write and COPY PROTECT a disk!

Major drawbacks of the program are the omission of filesizes and number of blocks free on disks when displaying disk directories, and omission of file types in many displays. Also, deleting any disk from the library can change the disk locator numbers for some or all of the remaining cataloged disks. This can



invalidate labels already on your disks.

Overall, a very nicely done program, but the limitation of only 25 files per disk and the inability to change disk categories are major deficiencies. [NOT RECOMMENDED? ed.] Robert Baker.

**DISK LIBRARIAN V2.2:** \$4 fairware disk cataloging utility on disk for the C64, from A.J. Kwitowski. Additional utilities available for \$2.50

This specialized data base provides automated entry and retrieval of data, reading directories from disks and storing records on a master library disk. It can handle up to 127 disks or 3500 files per library disk, with any number of files on any given disk.

You can call up the contents of a given disk, assign one of nine keys to each disk, and assign one of nine other keys to each file. Each key is user defined, and use of the keys is optional. Files that are used by a main calling program can also be linked to the main program.

After loading, you generally follow on-screen instructions. The F1 key will almost always abort non-menu screens. Help windows are available when data screens are visible by just hitting the space bar. One or two disk drives can be used along with an optional ASCII or Commodore 1525 (or compatible) printer. The default settings assume 1 disk drive and a 1525 printer, but can easily be changed if needed.

When entering disks, simply follow the prompts to enter the desired disk and the directory is rapidly read while various information is flashed on the screen. If previously cataloged, you can allow replacing the existing data to update the master index, or you can make a duplicate entry with the same disk name and id.

The disk read routines are designed to ignore copy protection schemes involving alteration of the disk's directory. A word of caution is in order: Disks that may have a protected directory should be cataloged first so you won't lose

previously entered directories if the protection causes the read to fail.

The display option allows you to view what disk directories are recorded on a library disk. You can then display or print the individual directory for any selected disk, plus change keys or file links. The main menu delete option must be used to delete disk directories from the library disk.

The two print options allow printing a copy of the four pages of instructions on how to use the program, or printing a list of all the files, etc. for all the disks stored on the library disk. The full library print out is very complete and nicely formatted, but rather slow to produce.

Registered users are entitled to program updates, usage hints, and utility programs at little or no cost. For example, a separate Disk Librarian Utilities disk is currently available to registered users for only \$2.50

The Disk Utility provides three options: sort/print all the files stored on a library disk, searching all the files for the occurrence of a given file name, or return to Basic.

The search utility allows you to identify the disk a given file is on without resorting to a manual search through printed data. When this option is selected, the library disk data is read into memory and the desired filename to be found is prompted for. Wildcard characters can be used the same as with the DOS Wedge. The search is then done in memory and is extremely fast.

As Fairware programs go, this is an extremely well done program with good documentation. It appears to be well worth the price and comparable in features to many commercial programs. Most functions are extremely fast and easy to use, with many options and features that are very handy. The accompanying utility disk is almost required and highly recommended.

Remember that this is a C64 program, and supports only the 1541 drive. [RECOMMENDED? ed.] Robert Baker

1541/1571 DRIVE ALIGNMENT: \$34.95 disk drive alignment utility on disk from Free Spirit Software and <BSD> Software.

This program uses video and audio prompts to report the alignment condition of the disk drive as you perform adjustments. The program works with the 1541 or 1571 (in either 1541 or 1571 mode) drives, on a C64 or C128 (in either 64 or 128 mode). The program will auto-boot to all modes. A second disk drive configured as device #9 can also be addressed. A calibration disk is provided on the second side of the program disk supplied in the package.

Complete disassembly instructions for either disk type is included with simple illustrations. There is even information on both types of 1571 drive motors.

An SX-64 drive can also be aligned, but warnings indicate it is a very complicated and delicate operation. You should consult a trained technician if you are unfamiliar with electronic equipment.

This program has several good and bad points. It does check half track alignments as well as full track alignments. You can check the alignment for any given track (or half track) over the full range of the disk. However, on a 1571 disk, no checks appear to be made using the second drive read/write head to check alignment on the other side of the drive, regardless of what drive mode.

The track alignment is only indicated as Excellent, Satisfactory, or Needs Alignment. There is no information given as to how far the drive is out of alignment if a need for alignment is indicated. There also is no check of the drive speed, and this can also be out of adjustment as well. Other drive alignment programs, like *Physical Exam* from Cardinal Software, do give you additional tests and information over and above what this program provides. [NOT RECOMMENDED? ed.]  
Robert Baker

UPDATE: Disk speed cartridges

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I recently tried an interesting variation with *Mach 128* and *GT4* with the 1571 disk drive. The 1571 allows a disk to be used as two separate single sided disks by sending the command

U0>Hx

where x is 0, standard head, or 1, opposite head of the disk drive. This arrangement allows for 288 directory entries and 1328 blocks of available storage on a single disk, but sacrifices any 1571 mode speed advantage.

It seems that the disk speed cartridges work when head 1 (non-standard) head is used, but the benefits are not as great. Monopole, which takes about 13 seconds to load using the *Mach 5* or *GT4* with a standard 1541 or head 0 of the 1571, takes about 26 seconds to load using either *Mach 128* (in 64 mode = *Mach 5*) or the *GT4* cartridge. Tim

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**LETTERS**

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Dear Sirs:

I felt I should write a response [to] the letter from Joe Grossinger and his complaint of incompatibility with the Lt. Kernal Hard Disk System and his BBS...

I operate a BBS (Info-Net/Police-Net, Houston, TX, 713-873-0430) with a 20 megabyte system from Fiscal Information too. In fact, I was the first Lt. Kernal owner in the United States and used the drive on the BBS for about a year and a half (February 1985 to August 1986). During the 18 months that it was on-line, it ran 24 hours per day with no hardware OR software incompatibility! The only problems I had in the beginning were minor software adjustments to my program to accommodate the use of 10 logical units on one device #8. During those adjustments, Roy Southwick and Lloyd Sponenburg were always just a phone call away to help me



Comments on 1541  
Directory Expansions

By Robert W. Baker

Several users have been attempting to expand the directory of a normal 1541 diskette. Normally, a 1541 disk can only handle up to 144 files maximum. Since many users have a large number of short files, it would be desirable to allow more than the 144 limit.

Several individuals have been experimenting with expanding directories and reporting their results on various BBS systems. Most have thought it works with no problems, but I would like to point out a warning of possible disk corruption.

It appears that if you do expand the directory beyond track #18, the DOS can correctly find and load or read the added files. However, problems can occur when writing or saving any file to a disk with an expanded directory. Various areas of the directory stand to be corrupted without warning.

After some investigation, I came across the following situation:

When the directory is expanded, the DOS will correctly follow the chaining from directory block to directory block, reading additional blocks or tracks as required. If the file is simply being read or loaded, the correct information is left in the directory buffer area when needed following the filename search. The DOS can then correctly find and use any information required from the directory entry.

When writing or saving a NEW file, however, a different situation arises. The DOS first searches the ENTIRE directory to see if the file already exists on the disk. The DOS saves a pointer that indicates the first available slot where an entry could be added in the directory. This will normally be a previously deleted file or an unused area of the directory.

If the directory has been expanded beyond track #18, the DOS will continue reading sectors or tracks until the end of

the directory has been found. Again, checking for the existing copy of the same file. If the file is not found, the DOS proceeds to open the file by creating the directory entry WHERE THE SAVED POINTER indicates there was an available directory slot found during the directory search.

If the directory has been expanded and the available slot is back on track #18, then the pointer is still pointing to the slot in that directory sector but the actual directory data from that sector is no longer in the directory buffer memory. A new directory sector is now resident, since the DOS had to read the expanded directory blocks. Thus, the new file data is written in the wrong directory block!

It track #18 has been entirely filled with directory entries, the new file will be entered into the expanded directory block. The pointer indicates the correct data in buffer storage and everything will go in the correct place. So the directory expansion routines should work as long as files are never deleted, but are likely to corrupt a directory if there are empty directory slots on track #18.

Thus, I would strongly recommend staying away from expanding the directory of a normal 1541 disk unless you seriously know what you are doing. You stand to lose data if you slip up.