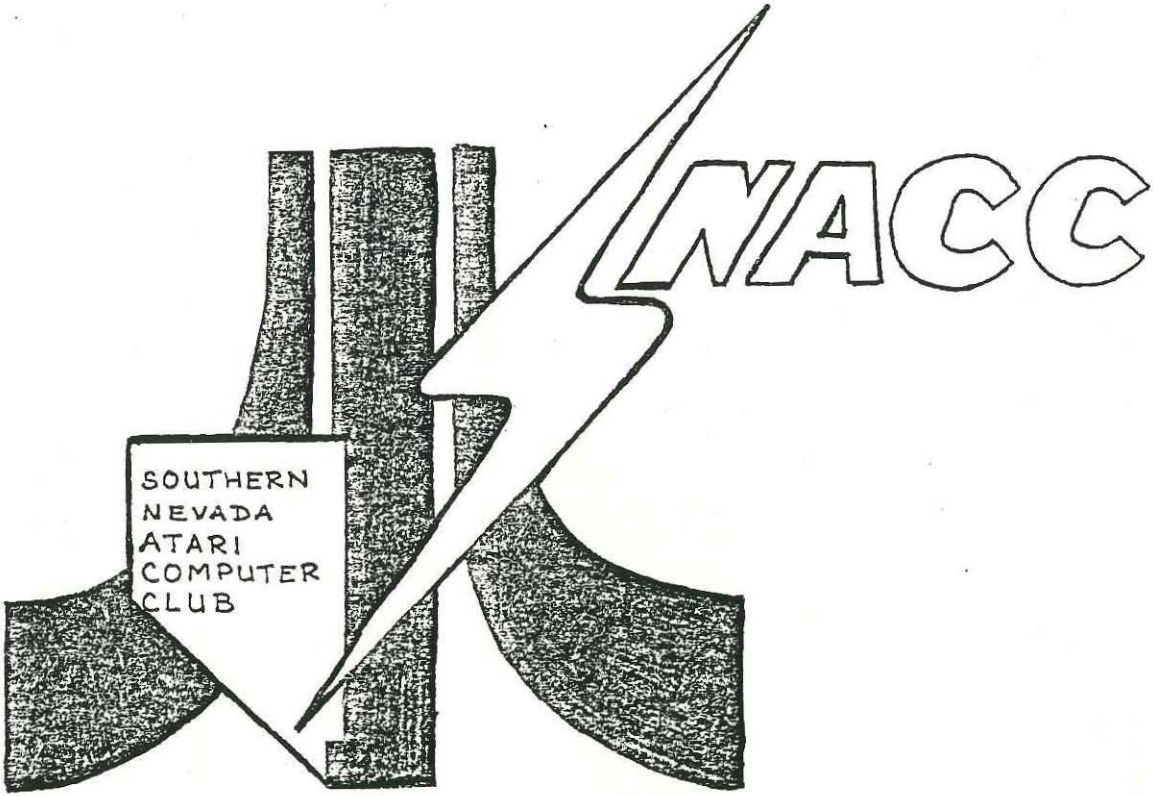

3-88

Vol.7 *** March 1988 *** No. 3

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8-Bit	David Scheller	641-8191
16-Bit	Pete Cahill	451-2617
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Southern Nevada Atari Computer Club BBS
8-MEGS ON LINE

ZMag-ZMagST News, 7 Msg-Bases,
Reviews, Library/Database, Hints,
Mods and Lot's of D/L's

BBS EXPRESS ** (702) 438-2208 ** 300/1200 BAUD

FROM THE SADDLE OF THE 8-BIT V.P.

Howdy, gang. This month, during the SNACC meeting, we'll demo the income tax template for the Syn-Calc program. This template is provided by Antic Magazine each year about this time. It will allow you to file correctly your 1987 tax return.

After the demo I'll stick around for questions, and if you bring the needed documents, I could figure your tax for you. By the way, I'm getting $600.00 back this year. I itemized.

Incidentally, I've been noticing everyone selling their out-dated equipment as they progress through the ranks. One case in point, when one upgrades from cassette to disk, they tend to sell off the 410 or 1010 programmer as quickly as possible. This could be a mistake, many a time, the trusty 1010 recorder has saved my bacon after a power surge has knocked off the disk drive. As you may have discovered, during a power surge or brief interruption of power the computer will remain active while the disk drive goes off to never never land and can't be reached by the computer. This is when I power up the 1010 recorder [no handshake required] and save my document or program to the tape. Then after rebooting the computer, I can transfer the data off the cassette tape to the disk drive. Try it, you might like it.

Cowboy

ANALOG IS ALIVE!!!!!

The following message was posted on the Analog forum of Delphi In early January.

ANALOG is in the process of being bought out by a very large publishing company based in Los Angeles, California. The publishing company will provide printing, distribution and subscription services for ANALOG and ST/Log Magazines. For the most part, the editorial content will still be lead by Lee Pappas, Clayton Walnum and the assortment of contributing editors currently adding their prose to the magazine.

The first issue of ANALOG and ST/Log that will be published under the new company will be the March, '88 issues. These issues will be on the newsstands in late January, '88. After the re-introduction, ANALOG and ST/Log magazines will be published monthly with approximately the same coverage and substance as was previously made available.

Subscribers will continue to receive their issues as normal under this new arrangement. ANALOG will be installing an answering machine on their Worcester, Massachusetts phone number sometime this week. The machine will give more precise details regarding the publication dates and subscriber information.

Reported by Bruce Kennedy of Rhode Island ACE

DISK DRIVES FOR YOUR ATARI

Fm: Bill Wilkinson [OSS] 73177,2714

Bill offers the following summary of drives available for Atari computers and is based on a question on Compuserve.

Here's Bill's fabulous knowledge of Atari at it's best, and I'll bet most of it is off the top of his head! "I will give you all I remember, even though I will duplicate ones given by others:

Percom:
3 models, SSSD, SSDD, DSDD. I don't remember all the model numbers.

Indus:
Just the GT (SSDD), though they did have a couple of versions of the ROMs. Almost forgot, Indus GT has an optional add-on 64KB memory board. With it, you can run CP/M inside Indus in same manner as SWP). Now sold by Future Systems.

Trak:
Two models, as I recall. Same drives (SSDD) but either 1 or 2 in a cabinet. (Oh, yes...Percom offered a two-drive system for a short while..in any case, Percoms had a controller that could handle a total of up to 4 drives...you could add your own industry standard drives.)

Amdek:
Perhaps the best Atari-compatible controller ever done (able to read just about anything, including off- speed disks), it came with one or two 3-inch, NOT current 3.5" standard drives. You could hook up 4 drives, any mix, 3-inch, 5.25", 8".

SWP's ATR8000:
This was/is considered the elite of controllers. It runs CP/M, or, with add-on board, MS-DOS! The Atari computer functions as a terminal to the controller. It could/can take virtually any kind of drives, since it is only a controller. Many early Atari users put 8" CP/M drives on their machines this way...and the 8" drives had capacities up to 1 MB.

Astra:
1620, a dual-drive, SSDD machine. "The One"--DSDD. A dual drive version of "the one" I don't remember model number.

Concorde:
Went bankrupt (owing us money, sigh) before ever got into full production. Heard about a few people who found this drive at surplus sales. SSDD, similar to Indus, with DSDD planned.

Rana:
Model 1000. SSDD, similar to Indus. Designed by same people, I think.

There was a company in CA (Sacramento, CA, I think) that had an early SSDD drive that competed with Percom. California Peripherals? I forget. But they did sell a few. Saw a question about one up here recently.

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Atari 810:
SSSD only, though a company in Southern Calif made a board to turn it into SSDD.

Atari 1050:
SSED (Enhanced Density, a kludge.) Happy and ICD both make add-ons to turn this into true SSDD instead. Buy one!! The ICD US Doubler is most popular (price is fantastic!!). The Happy is favored by pirates and others who want to copy protected disks.

Atari 815:
Almost forgot this ghost. Never produced in quantity. A few (100??) floating around.

Atari XF551:
Newly released double-sided, double-density almost 3 times faster then the 1050.

Definitions

SSSD - 40 tracks, 18 sectors, 128 bytes per sector.

SSED - 40 tracks, 26 sectors, 128 bytes per sector.

SSDD - 40 tracks, 18 sectors, 256 bytes per sector.

DSDD - 2 sides of 40 tracks each, 18 sectors, 256 bytes per sector.

Other formats are possible with Amdek and ATR8000: e.g., DSQD == 2 sides, 80 tracks per side, 18 sectors, 256 bytes per sector.

Hard drives

MPP, later Supra:
5, 10, 20 MB. Only hooks up to 800XL or 130XE.

ICD:
MID, gives 256KB to 1MB of RamDisk plus printer port plus serial port plus hooks to most hard disks.

The one from our friends in Southern Cal is the lowest cost way to go. Definitely roll your own (don't think it even has a case).

Drives currently on market

All hard drives, Atari XF551, a few Atari 1050's still floating around, INDUS GT and Astra "the one". Buy a US Doubler or Happy Doubler _NOW_ if you have a 1050!!!
Best bargains in Atari market.

Posted by Bill Wilkinson, guru of the Atari DOS, and wizard of all Atarians want to know, look for his column in Compute! magazine.

↕ ↕ ↕

DUES FOR 1988 ARE NOW DUE

COME TO THE MEETING AND SEE RON FRED TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, ALSO DON'T FORGET THE CLUB DISK OF THE MONTH

SX212 HARDWARE REVIEW

by Bob Woolley
down loaded from Zmag $85

For those of you with no modem, or a SIO connect 8-bit modem, or a 300 baud modem (leave anybody out?), Atari has got a great new product for you - the SX212 1200 baud modem. It has a standard RS-232 interface for users with an 850, ST, or P:R Connection and an SIO connector for those 8-bitters who lack an RS-232 box. It's Hayes compatible and has a row of LEDs accross the front to keep you informed of its status (High Speed, AutoAnswer, Carrier Detect, Off Hook, Receive Data, Send Data, Terminal Ready, and Modem Ready).

The best thing about this guy is that it only costs $99.95 - List Price. A product of increasing integration, it is another level up the path to single chip, 1200 baud, modems - much like the 300 baud XM301 that preceded it.

I remember my first RS-232 modem. It was also Hayes compatible, which seems to mean that it had to have 6 million switches set before your computer would talk to it. Not the SX212. Absolutely nothing to set on this guy. Move it from your 8-bit to your 16-bit system ... works just fine with no switch juggling. Aren't any to mess with, anyway. My X-Ray Vision tells me that there are jumpers inside, but it isn't something the average guy is going to fool with. I tried the 212 on my ST with FLASH. Although I am not any kind of TP expert, the modem worked just fine. It seemed to be perfectly happy with XModem downloads and such. Even the operator trying to interrupt my call didn't bring down the modem. Lots of garbage, but carrier stayed up. This is exactly what the computer industry needs - an affordable product that you just pull from the box and run!

When it came to my 8-bit system, I hit a little snag. Since the modem would connect to the SIO port, it has to either emulate an 850 and the Hayes modem, or not emulate the 850 and not work on my 8-bit. Guess which one I got?? Works just fine on the P:R Connection as a Hayes (knew that since it worked on the ST). Didn't work at all as an 850. I tried a Status command to every address on the SIO buss and got no response from the SX. One thing for sure, no matter how it works, the modem requires a handler. Some devices load their own handler and some programs replace them with the handler that the program wants. So, without a handler, I had no chance to make the thing work. If the device didn't even talk to the CPU on the SIO buss, how could the handler talk to the modem?

The XM301 modem came with an excellent communications program and plenty of documentation on disk to fully describe the handler necessary or that device. I quickly learned that an SIO cable, for obvious reasons, is not included.

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You can't use the SIO feature without the handler. A version of EXPRESS will be available from Atari at some future date. I should hope so. Not requiring a P:R Connection or an 850 can save an 8-bit user as much as the cost of the modem itself. This is one of the greatest assets of this device, the ability to run without additional interfaces. Needless to say, this was most discouraging. Maybe a little hacking could help?

There was (is?) a company called Advanced Interface Devices that made a simple RS-232 adapter for the Atari SIO buss. Since the SIO is already a serial buss that can be programmed to operate in almost any mode, they thought they could just write a handler and wire up a cable that would suffice for RS-232 operation. They produced the R-Verter and managed to do exactly what I described - run the SIO as an RS-232 serial interface. With this in mind, and a little more X-Ray Vision, it appeared that Atari was using the same method on the SX212. There is a two chip modem set, a couple of RS-232 receiver/driver chips, an audio amp, an LS logic chip, and some sort of clock generator inside this modem. It would be very unusual for a modem chip set to be able to talk to an Atari SIO buss directly (the XM301 uses a microprocessor to operate as a modem and to talk to the buss). So, I had to conclude that Atari used the R-Verter approach. Close inspection of the SIO pins indicate that the Command line (pin 7) is not even connected in the SX212. No way to do SIO without that pin. No SIO means an RS-232 emulator. The only one that I am aware of is the AID R-Verter.

So, I logged on to CompuServe and looked for an R-Verter handler in DL2. Luckily, I found exactly what I needed in a file called RVHAND.XMO. It is an R-Verter handler that has been re-compiled for use with HOMETERM. Following the RVHAND.DOC file, I created a copy of HOMETERM that would run on the R-Verter. Booted up on my SX212 and got the 850 status screen. Even though the modem is directly connected, the program thinks it is talking thru an 850. All the commands that I needed worked just fine on HOMETERM-downloads, disk directories, pauses, everything! Tom Neitzel has passed on the word that the same handler will allow the SX212 to run Amodem 7.4, a program that I am not familiar with, but is very popular. I have not tried to replace the handler in EXPRESS with the R-Verter code. I don't think that task will be as simple as re-compiling the code, since EXPRESS seems to use all available memory. None the less, those 8-bit users who own SIO connect 300 baud modems can upgrade to the SX212 and start tele-computing immediately with Amodem or HOMETERM.

The manual states that the modem cannot be used on an 800XL with a cassette recorder. The Motor line is fed into the modem and is grounded thru a 680 ohm resistor. This appears to upset the 800XL or the recorder or somebody.

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ZMAGAZINE NEWSWIRE
DATELINE: 1-27-88
GOOD NEWS FOR ATARI OWNERS!

ICD, Inc. and OSS, Inc. (Optimized Systems Software) have just signed an agreement which will "add new life to all Atari computers". Under this agreement, ICD will add the manufacture, marketing, and support of all current OSS software titles for Atari computers to ICD's already powerful Atari product line.

ICD's friendly, helpful staff is now trained in all aspects of support for the complete OSS product line including:

MAC/65
MAC/65 Toolkit
ACTION!
ACTION! Toolkit
BASIC XL
BASIC XL Toolkit
BASIC XE
Writer's Tool
DOS XL
Personal PASCAL for the Atari ST

Ordering and support for ICD/OSS products are available by calling 815/968-2228 from 8AM to 5PM CST Monday through Friday. Support is also available 24 hours a day 7 days a week on the following Electronic Bulletin Boards:

ICD/OSS BBS 815/968-2229, 300-9600 baud, CompuServe, GEnie, Delphi, and BIX. ICD's 24 hour FAX is connected to 815/968-6888.

The San Jose, CA numbers for OSS will no longer be providing support. Orders for OSS products may be placed now. All products will be shipping in quantities soon. For more information call any of our product support lines or write to:

ICD/OSS
1220 Rock Street
Rockford, IL 61101

(Continued from page 5)

I don't see any significant differences between the 800XL and the rest of the Atari line in this respect, so expect this restriction to apply to all 8-bit models.

A suggestion is made to place the modem on top of your disk drive and the phone on top of the modem. Some telephones have magnets in them - put it someplace else if you are not sure. Some disk drives generate considerable heat, while the SX212 seems very cool. I put my modem under my drive, leaving the vents on top of the drive clear for good cooling.

The bottom line on this modem is that it is a great value for the money, performs well and can be used on either 8 or 16 bit systems with a minimum of expertise. The 8-bit software is not yet available from Atari, but even that can be fixed for the time being. No modem offers you so much for so little. Don't overlook this bargain!!

MTOS INTRODUCTION

by Tom Hunt
Downloaded from Zmag

MTOS (C) is a revolutionary new operating system shell for Atari 8-bit computers with 256k(+) of internal memory. MTOS allows multitasking of 2 basic user programs is compatable with Atari DOS 2.5 and supports graphics modes 0-8.

MTOS stands for M.ulti-T.asking O.perating S.ystem. Properly called a shell, as it works with your dos or the Atari O.S. ROM. It offers the Atari 8-bit owner a new dimension of computer enjoyment, including the ability to run more than one program at a time. MTOS was designed to place as few constraints as possible on programs written to run under MTOS control, however, there are a few. Your programs have to be "well behaved" they can't indescriminatly poke around in memory, since our CPU doesn't support protected modes. In other words, don't expect your boot games to run under M.T.O.S. and user programs are limited to 16k.

Features supported by the full-blown version of MTOS include:

Preemptive multitasking allows multitasking of 6 tasks (5 defined by the user).

Limited support of SPARTA DOS-command processor batch files.

Binary load from the executor supports interaixed binary and basic programs

Localized custom character sets

Localized screen color variables

The ability to change task priority from the exec level

Extensive documentation that allows the MTOS programmer access to system variables

Priority scheduling, Sample basic programs.

PAGE 6, memory up for grabs by user programs.

Hierarchical file system (allows for simultaneous file access) 100% machine language

Minimal system overhead, PAGES 0-5 of memory available to M.L. programmers for each task.

There is also a support BBS for registered MTOS owners. Where upgrades, patches, and end user application programs will be made available and technical questions from registered users will be answered within 48 hours. We intend to enhance MTOS and support it's users.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

PROJECTED ENHANCEMENTS TO MTOS

Toolkit for MTOS application.

Programming intertask communication (with tasks appearing as files to each other).

MTOS file server support of hi res graphic modes.

Support for the 128k 130XE.

MTOS version 1.1 is now avalable for a special introductory price of $15.00 which is current until March 1988. MTOS ver.1.1 can be ordered by sending $15.00 in check or money order to:

NEW PRODUCTS

A switcher that allows 3 virtual computer systems to reside in memory at one time (256k+). Each can be configured for a different dos, as a "SNAPSHOT" of system memory configuration,

Instantanly switchable with a shift-control key combination.

DATABUE
3308 PARK AVE. W.
P.O.BOX 134
ONTARIO, OH 44862

From TOM and the Editor

Since many of our members are a bit timid and or unsure of what to write about I though that I would give them some ideas to work from.

Anything you may have discovered about your computer, good or bad. Have you done any modifications or made (built) something you find useful and would like to share with your fellow Atarians. Have you played a new game, tried out a new program, or maybe written a program your proud of, or even not so proud of. Sometimes the duds may be the seed someone else is looking for.

Any or all of these could be your insperation for an article. Its not like you would have to use up any pencils or paper. We all have at our disposal the instrument to save our thoughts or ideas to paper or disk. The machine that is the reason behind this club is sitting there just waiting to be put into play just as soon as you finish that last game of PAC-MAN.

Remember this is your newsletter and it can only be as good as the information you contribute to it.

SNACC MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Individual membership, $20.00 annually plus one time initiation fee of $10.00.
Family membership, $30.00 annually plus one time initiation fee of $10.00.
Members have full use of the club BBS, disk and printed Libraries and receive a monthly newsletter.
Associated membership is available to those living outside Clark County, Nevada for an annual fee of $12.00.
Direct all membership applications and fees to Ron Fred at the monthly meeting or mail to:

SNACC
P.O. Box 43628
Las Vegas, Nevada 89116

SNACC MEETING

When: Sunday, March 6, 1988
4:00 to 6:00 pm

Where: Peter Pipers Pizza
Boulder Highway and Nellis
across from SAMS TOWN

Program:

DEMO of 1987 Income tax
template for Syn-Calc

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S.N.A.C.C.

SOUTHERN NEVADA ATARI COMPUTER CLUB
P.O. BOX 43628
LAS VEGAS, NV 89116