



# Uptime

The newsletter for:  
RS-DOS, OS9, OSK,  
CoCos, and 68xxx's.

Volume 2, Issue 5

January 1994

## Editorial

Happy New Year! I usually find myself writing something about the "new products in the new year" and "how new developments will continue throughout the new year," so I decided that we could probably all take that for granted in the new year, but I can't resist highlighting some of the more significant advances. One is more development in the OSK machine arena. Although the MM1's production rights have been transferred to Blackhawk Enterprises, I have heard of no new developments on their end. Delmar's System V is continuing production as far as we know, and Frank Hogg has some new developments on the horizon for his 68K line.

Another new advance for the computer industry in general is the introduction of the IBM/Motorola PowerPC 601 chip, which is shipping in some new IBM computers and will appear in the newest line of Macintoshes sometime this spring. This chip is completely different from the 80x86 and 680x0 chips that drive their respective computers- it is a RISC architecture which should enable the chip manufacturer to get more speed out of the chip than previous designs

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had allowed. Rumor has it that Microware will do a port of OS-9 to the PowerPC, and they would be putting themselves in a bad position if they didn't—the way it looks right now, the PowerPC chip may become the most popular chip used in home, business, and educational markets in the future. Will your next OS-9 machine be run by the PowerPC?

In other news, we have confirmations on the status of the two upcoming 'Fests. The Mid Iowa and Country CoCo Fest is probably not going to come together this year. Terry Simons cited a lack of dealer attendance and the timing of the MI&CC Fest and the Chicago Fest as contributing to a smaller than anticipated turnout. The Chicago Fest has been set for the weekend of the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in May. This Fest is put on by the Glenside CoCo Club and has had good attendance in the past. Be sure to mark the dates down on your calendar. We'll have more information about the Chicago Fest next month.

*Jordan Tsvetkoff*

## Letters

To the point of your [last] letter, I'd like to re-express what must by now be either a ho-hum for many or just a niggling point that everybody else already figured out. In part, I'm rebounding from a thought-provoking letter to the editor by Ed Gresick printed in *The World of 68' Micros*, Vol 1 #2, which you may have already seen.

The heart of my argument is not so much whether Tandy is or is not a small company or even a company capable of good engineering. I remain favorably impressed by the tidiness of the 1000 family's engineering and their successors, regardless of the mediocre speed ratings Tandy almost always seems to garner in the establishment press. At the core, what I feel goes a lot deeper and concerns the subjective relationship that the

# UpTime

Editor: Jordan Tsvetkoff

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hapless consumer enters into with his or her "computer company".

There's little doubt that the Tandy holiday ads have gone a long way to correcting the "Trash-80" image. Indeed, despite the national magazines, Tandy could reasonable claim there is "no better value in small computers," if by that we mean a mass marketed commodity for which one can be reasonable assured of readily accessible service. Could Packard Bell, or even Apple, make such a claim stick? I'm really talking to an idea akin to the social compact we know from Government 101. If you can't trust Tandy, who can you trust?

Personally, I've never bought a Tandy MS-DOS machine, though I'll admit to being tempted. I have, however, bought three CoCos and peripherals. I suppose I always felt that someday the bullyboys with their pinstriped suits in #1 Tandy Tower might just decide to pull the plug on MS-DOS altogether— and then where would you be? I never dreamed they would decide to dump computer production completely (especially since their deal with DEC has been touted by virtually every store manager I know in this area). If by "main production unit" you mean that Tandy's electronic toys or gadgets produce more revenue per floor space than computers or peripherals, I suspect you would be right. Surprisingly, I recall a fairly recent statistic (about 1985) that Tandy led all other retailers in software sales, since Radio Shack books and publications were also lumped into this category. Times are clearly a-changin'.

I certainly think that Dell Corp has built a lasting reputation for quality and competitiveness. To a lesser extent, so has Gateway 2000, and perhaps Zeos. As you point out, increasing R&D demands may well marginalize many of the small clone builders— and one gets a sense of this from some of the reviews of off the shelf boxes which are not really optimized systems, built by poorly capitalized companies. The failure out here of Fast Micro is a good example of both problems. I do not know if IMS suffered similar problems.

I figure Tandy decided that if the company was to survive the next shake-out, its strategy should better be to focus its energies on what it does best—*merchandising*; moving boxes out the front door, be they boxes of amplifiers, antennas, or anything that ameliorates accountants' anxieties. If anybody, even those who had bonded with their local Radio Shack for their computer needs— if anybody felt dissatisfied with this arrangement, well let them eat dust. Of course, this approach totally undercuts the poor schlemiels on the floor selling the latest pastel CD-ROM sensation. All we know for sure is that AST will make, and Tandy *may* continue to sell, the same computers. Score another hit for commoditization.

At the very least, I feel confirmed in my wariness of buying any vanilla (or pastel) Tandy MS-DOS compatible (games programmers dispute just how compatible Tandy graphics really are). Does this tell us how fickle *any* manufacturer may be or become, in order to survive?

Looking to the future, I find it hard to believe that OS-9, OSK, or OS-9000 may actually get ported over to the emerging PowerPC family, primarily because of a closing window of opportunity, alluded to by Mr. Gresick. But miracles happen—and there are some genuine talents in the extended CoCo/OS-9 community. Obviously I would love to see it happen—and I would find a way to pay for both machine and software. Perhaps the System V anticipates tomorrow's Machine.

*Henry Harwell, Phoenix, AZ*

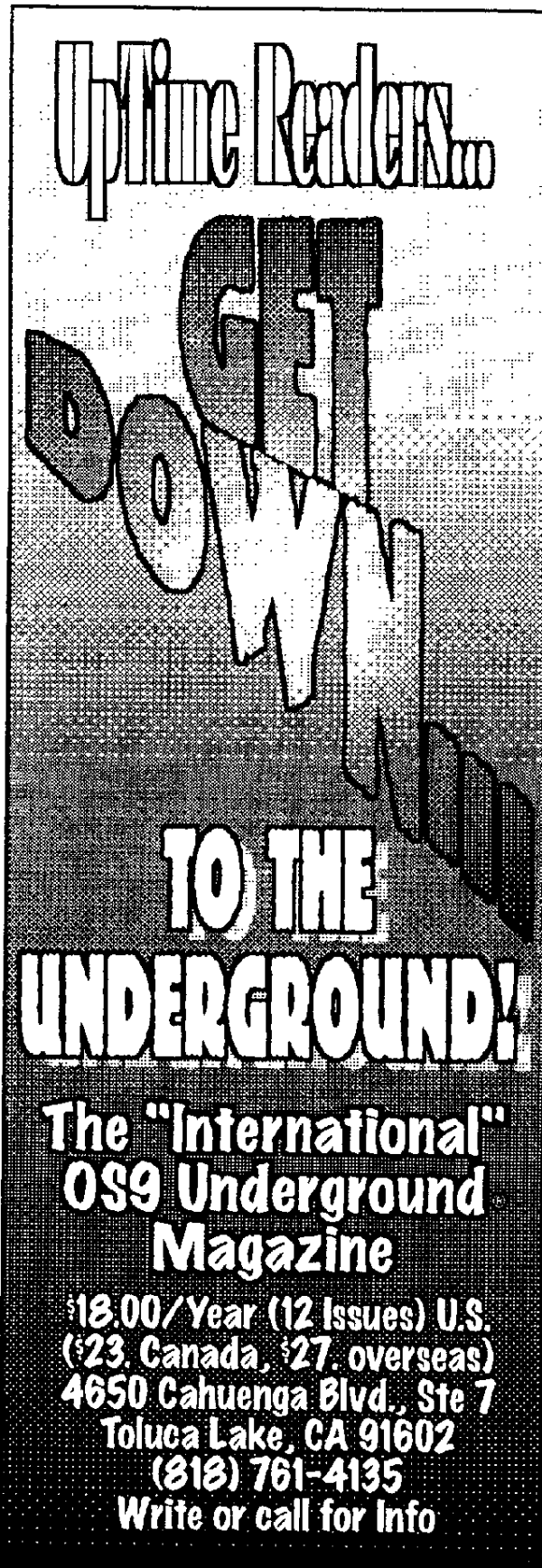
*[Ed: At the basis of the Tandy debate, I think that we must realize that Tandy is a business like any other, and they try to do what is in the best interest of the company profit-wise. Whether their motives for dropping any line is due to slacking sales or inter-line competition remains uncertain to us- we can only form an opinion. I too hope that OS-9 and OSK enthusiasts will continue to work with the operating systems, although I also feel that at least at this time, both OS-9 and OSK are leaning toward hacker oriented systems, as the average user who knows nothing about computers would probably not choose OS-9 and OSK as their first operating system. However, as with just about any application these days the easier the system is to use, the less powerful it is. And a new user may not need much power- just open my file edit it, print it, and quit the application. Although this is easy to do in OS-9 and OSK, the installation required for the system itself may seem daunting to new users. In summary, these systems are incredibly powerful, but you must be willing to put in the time to learn how to manage that power. More applications in the OS-9/OSK arena will help immeasurably.]*

\*\*\*

I enjoyed Sheldon Parson's review of CoCo Accountant III from Federal Hill Software. I am ready to buy this program—just what I need! But I could not find an address anywhere, even in my own papers, for the company. Can you furnish it or get that company to send me a catalog please?

Thanks. I love your two magazines, UpTime and NineTimes—I shall renew when the time comes. Thank for all your effort!

*L. Boulton, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*



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[Ed: Our address for Federal Hill began to bounce mail about two months ago. I have not received any word of a new address— perhaps one of our readers may have a lead.]

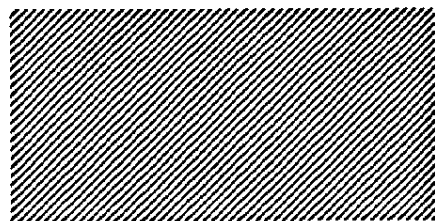
\*\*\*

I enjoyed reading your report on the Atlanta Fest, especially the part about Ken-Ton and Joe Scinta. I have one of Mr. Scinta's hard drive systems. Although I had difficulty with the first drive Mr. Scinta sent me, he replaced it with no cost to me, except for a few telephone calls and some shipping charges. It has more than enough space for RSDOS files, containing the equivalent of 255 single sided floppy drives and considerable space for OS-9 files to boot. The enthusiasm of Mr. Huffman for the Ken-Ton hard drive system is well justified.

On another note, is *The Rocket* CPU replacement project by Burke & Burke really dead? It seems a shame that such a worthy project could not be completed for lack of support. It's too bad it wasn't started earlier when there could have been more support for it.

Robert L. Sullivan, Sr., Branch, MI

[Ed: Burke & Burke has announced that there was not enough advance orders to go ahead with the project. We'll print any contrary information that we receive.]



## Basic09 in ?? Easy Steps

Since it seems to be very hard for today's editors to get good Basic09 articles for their magazines, I have been asked to fill some of the gap. Among the issues that popped up were conversion of DECB and MS-DOS basic programs into Basic09. This is a wide field that could cover a number of articles by itself. However, I didn't think it is wise to jump into the subject without providing at least some background information on the differences between the languages. Starting up Basic09 from scratch will also be discussed.

I will start with DECB as most people are at least somewhat familiar with it. If you want to do a program conversion, you have to understand that DECB is not just a Basic language. The code also functions as editor, operating system, and graphics interface.

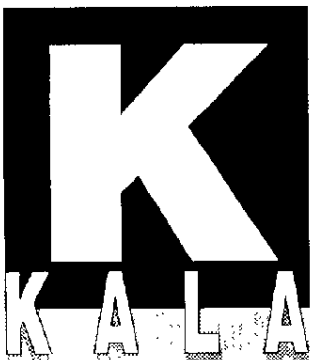
Basic09, on the other hand, is just a programming language. Commands that are part of the operating system's functions are dealt with by OS-9. Since it also had to be portable to computers with different graphic capabilities, the graphics interface is contained in separate modules. On the CoCo, these modules are called *gfx* (for low/medium resolution screens) and *gfx2* (for high resolution screens).

If you run into a function that you cannot perform under Basic09 because it is part of OS-9's territory, you can issue a request to OS-9 using a utility called *SysCall*. This utility, along with the *gfx* modules, can be accessed from Basic09 by simple RUN statements.

If you think there is more to it than that—you are right. You will have to contend with parameter passing, program optimization, etc. We will get to those things later on. For now, all you have to keep in mind is that this is the basic triangle from which you build your Basic09 programs.

As for the structure of MS-DOS basic—it looks a lot like DECB. Presumably this is because both were developed by Microsoft. The reason they got away with this is that at a certain level, the hardware of all PC compatibles looks very much alike. This allows for across the board use of the same graphics modes, etc. Unfortunately for PC users, this backward (in more ways than one) compatibility comes at a price: the computer's performance.

I have a PC compatible with a 25 MHz 486SX processor in it. By all accounts, this machine should run circles around the CoCo. In fact, it will do so but not under the QBasic included in my version of MS-DOS. Programs that are mostly calculating jobs run about ten times as fast as in



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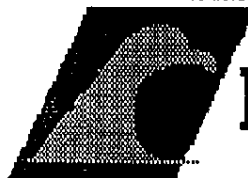
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Basic09, but for graphics programs, this slows down to a factor of five.

For all practical purposes, if you convert an MS-DOS basic program to Basic09, you can expect it to run about as fast as it would on an AT-class machine. There are a number of reasons for that, most of which I won't go into here. They deal with the specifics of the microprocessors themselves, the way the machines address their memory, etc.

There is one important software reason that I will go through in depth. MS-DOS basic, like DECB, is an interpreter type language while Basic09 is a compiler type language. What it boils down to is that interpreters translate a given program line by line. They translate the first line and execute it, translate the next line, execute it, etc.

A compiler like Basic09, on the other hand, first compiles the entire program into what is called intermediate code (I-code). Once it is done with that, it can start executing the program with much less overhead so the program executes faster. Another advantage of I-code is that it uses relatively little space in memory which means you can get a lot done even with limited memory available.

One disadvantage in that compiled programs can not be altered or alter themselves. If you want to make changes, you will have to do that in the source code and recompile it.

Fortunately Basic09 implements the various functions of a compiler in a user friendly way. All the user really has to do is remember the difference between SAVE and PACK.

For the more curious among us, here is roughly how Basic09 works. If you decide to enter some source code into Basic09, you must do so through its editor, the one part which could be more user friendly. You can enter the editor by typing 'e' or 'edit' plus a program name at the B: prompt. When you type in a line of code, Basic09 checks it for typing errors, misplaced operators, etc., and translates it into I-code.

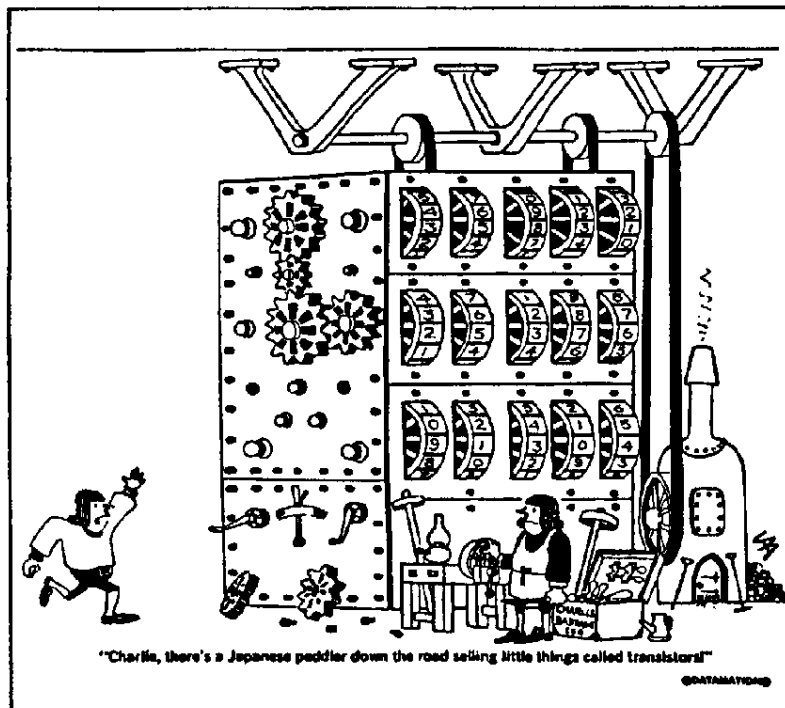
When you are done entering program code, you type 'q' at the editor's E: prompt. At this point Basic09 starts checking various aspects of the program. If there are problems with loop structures, complex data structures, or

variable typing, Basic09 will report those problems using a code number telling you what problem to look for as well as the address of the offending code.

Note that these addresses are the numbers shown in the leftmost column of Basic09 program listings. An explanation of the code numbers can be found in the Basic09 section of the OS-9 manual in appendix A.

Assuming you have resolved all the problems in your program, you can now run your program. You do this by typing RUN plus the name of the program. If you didn't get all errors out, Basic09 will display an error 51 message. This is labeled as a compiler line error and means there are still one or more lines in your program that have not passed the preliminary tests.

Of course, the fact that your



program runs doesn't mean that the code is bug free. The computer for one is happy if it can just run the code and couldn't care less whether its results make sense or not. It is also possible that there are array pointers that end up pointing outside the intended array (error 55), etc. Unfortunately, Basic09 cannot check for these things in advance, so you will have to test your program for such errors yourself.

Since Basic09 is what we call a multipass compiler, it is not quite finished with your program yet. At this point in the development stage, Basic09 holds all line numbers and comment

lines in memory as part of the program code. To save this code to disk, you must use the SAVE command. If you need the code to make changes to it later, you can load it back into Basic09 using the load command and edit it with the edit command.

However, if you are convinced your program is ready to run by itself, all the comments and line numbers become obsolete. You can purge them using the PACK command. PACK saves the program to disk in a form that cannot be disassembled by Basic09 and consequently can no longer be changed. On the upside, your program now runs

faster and takes up less space.

Just keep in mind that you must *always* keep a SAVED version of your program around in case you want to make changes to the code. You don't have to worry that PACK will overwrite the source code file. Basic09 uses the file attributes to prevent that. The other thing I want to mention here is that Basic09 looks for source code files in the data directory (CHD) and places PACKed files in the execution (CHX) directory. Next time, I will show you how to get Basic09 to run.

- Chris Debbes

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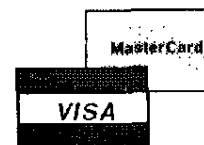
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Hundreds of Color Computer enthusiasts in the US, Canada, Europe, South America, and Australia love our affordable high-performance hard disk interfaces! Look at these features:

*NO HALT • 1 or 2 hard drives • 30% faster than SASI • Uses PC-type hard disk drives & MFM/RLL controllers • 5 Meg to 120 Meg per drive • Does not use interrupts • Multi-PAK recommended • Works with 12 Volt Y-cables • Includes EZGen boot file editor for easy installation*

Each interface includes a user manual and software for use with HYPER-I/O or OS-9. The CoCo XT hard disk interface is \$69.95. The CoCo XT-RTC model, \$99.95, adds a battery-powered real time clock / calendar for OS9 and BASIC.



## Native Mode for \$34.95!

Burke & Burke's \$34.95 PowerBoost kit replaces your CoCo's 6809 with a high-performance Hitachi HD63B09E microprocessor. PowerBoost comes with our exclusive "tuncup" program, which uses the HD63B09E's advanced instructions to speed up many OS9 operations by an average of 40%. PowerBoost now includes software to run the 63B09E microprocessor in Native Mode for a 10% average speed increase over previous versions. Our implementation of Native Mode updates only the REL, BOOT, OS9P1, OS9P2, and CC3DISK modules, other modules require no modification.

*POWERBOOST (INCLUDES HD63B09E MICROPROCESSOR) \$34.95. POWERBOOST (SOFTWARE ONLY) \$24.95*

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RSB - Complete CoCo BASIC, for OS-9 (requires DECB ROM)	\$39.95
<i>OS-9 is a trademark of Microware Systems Corp. and Motorola</i>	
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### "The 6309 Book", \$29.95

Learn about new 6309 instructions and address modes. Includes OS-9 assembler, disassembler, and debug patches.

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Use SCSI hard drives with 512-byte sectors. For DISTO 4-in-1 and HDISK, OS-9 only.

MC68B09E 2MHz uP	\$14.95
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## Word Processing in Brief

Fred Wilson (FL) wrote raving reviews about MAX-10, which prompted me to do a brief review on MAX-10 and other Word Processors.

I said long ago, if you don't find something real to do with your CoCo, you'll soon tire of it. Well, many have (grin) proved me wrong. It is a fun machine. But using practical application-type software like word processing will enhance the value as well as the fun of a CoCo in your home.

**MAX-10:** produced by the COCO MAX III people is the one true WYSIWYG word processor—that is, what you see on the screen is what you get and how you'll see it printed out. Very user friendly, with little need to read the documentation, although as always a glance at the documentation will enhance use. The one downside is that it gives you WYSIWYG by actually doing a screen dump. While this allows a nice variety of text and graphics if you like, it is very slow compared to a regular ASCII printout. That option is available without character variety. On the upside, you can do underline, bold, italic, and various character varieties only possible on more expensive printers.

The MAX-10 spell checker I rate as the best on the CoCo. With a 35,000 word dictionary, it uses a routine that checks with a speed not found in the others. Note that this spell checker can be easily used with any word processor. Just read in the file as ASCII, spell check it, and save with the ASCII

option. And you have your file spelled right and ready for your regular word processor.

**VIP:** Evidently has a format similar to Radio Shack's Scriptsit, so it is preferred by users who started with Scriptsit.

**Telewriter 128:** Is the preferred word processor on the CoCo for two reasons. One, it was the first good processor (aside from Scriptsit) available. Understand that being good and first has little to do with best in this perspective. That is, being first and being good gave Cognetec a foothold hard to overcome by other programs as good or better that came later. Having said that, it is a full featured word processor preferred by many CoCo users. It is available in the MI&CC Library on disk A-6.

**Word Power:** a late comer containing a few features not found in TW-128, and I feel at the same time lacks many of the TW-128 features. It uses a format similar to a popular IBM compatible processor, and thus is preferred by some for that reason. Its producer has long since disappeared. Thus MI&CC offers Word Power 3.2 in the library on disk A-17. (If you have a later version, such as 3.3, please send it in.)

Important comment: Many have said "this or that word-

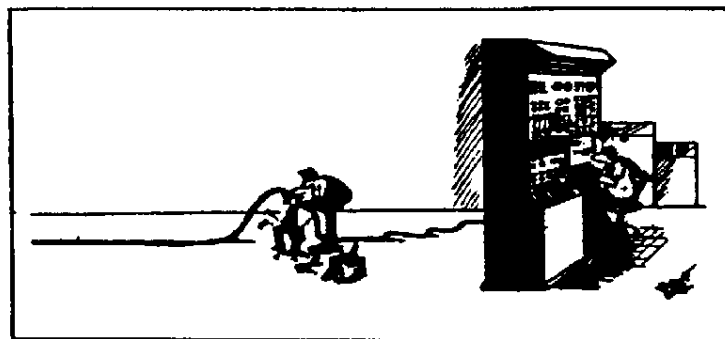
processor is better" than the rest. More often they are unknowingly expressing strong prejudice. More simply, once you've grown used to the command structure of one word-processor, another will naturally seem awkward to you'. I would rate all word processors in this review as "very good" except for Scriptsit, which was sold only as a "Text Editor".

The last, **Simply Better**, sold by Dave Myers (COCOPRO), has received rave reviews by many. My own review would have the prejudice of the above paragraph. I do know one user who, after using TW-128 for quite awhile, tried several OS-9 word processors but stays with "Simply Better". It is to be considered very good as well. And I'll say this for Simply Better—it is the *only* word processor presently supported with upgrades!

For those interested in a more full length word processor review, UPGRADE's #10 & #11 have a fairly complete word processor review.

- Terry Simons

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## CBASIC Editor/Compiler The ULTIMATE Color Computer Basic Compiler!!!

If you want to write fast machine language programs but you don't want to spend the next few years trying to write them in Assembly Language, then CBASIC is the answer!!!

CBASIC is the only fully integrated Basic Compiler and program editing system available for the Color Computer. It will allow you to take full advantage of all the capabilities available in your color computer without having to spend years trying to learn assembly language programming. CBASIC allows you to create, edit and convert programs from a language you are already familiar with Extended Disk Color Basic, into fast efficient machine language programs easily and quickly.

"The most complete Editor/Compiler I have seen for the CoCo..." -The RAINBOW March 1986

CBASIC is a powerful tool for the Beginner as well as the Advanced Basic or M.L. programmer. CBASIC features well over 150 compiled Basic Commands and Functions that fully support Disk Sequential and Direct access files, Tape, Printer and Screen I/O. CBASIC supports ALL the High and Low Resolution Graphics, Sound, Play and String Operations available in Enhanced Color Basic, including Graphics H/GET, H/PUT, PLAY and H/DRAW, all with 99% syntax compatibility.

Specify Coco 1, 2 or 3 Disk \$149.00

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- No lost data even at 2400 Baud on the Serial I/O port.
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- Built in Command Menu (Help) Display.

Supports: Modem-Pak & Deluxe Pak or Serial Port.  
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## EDT/ASM III

EDT/ASM III is a Disk based co-resident Text Editor & Assembler. It is designed to take advantage of the new features of the COCO 3. It has 8 Display formats from 32/40/64/80 columns. The disk also contains a free standing ML Debug Monitor.

EDT/ASM III has the most powerful, easy to use Text Editor available in and Editor/Assembler package for the Color Computer.

- \* Local and Global string search and/or replace.
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- \* Create and Edit files larger than memory.

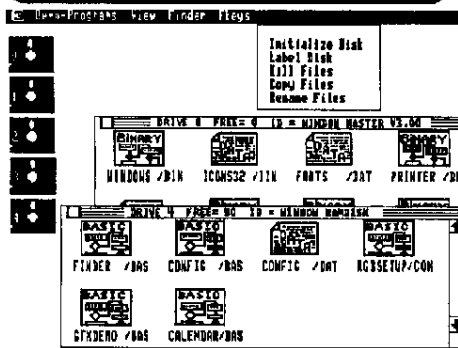
The Assembler features include:

- \* Conditional If/Then/Else assembly.
- \* Disk Library files up to 9 levels deep.
- \* Supports standard Motorola directives.
- \* Allows multiple values in FCB/FDB directives.
- \* Allows assembly from Buffer, Disk or both.

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## Window Master V3.0



The Ultimate User Friendly Point & Click operating System for your Coco 3. Simple enough even for children to use, just point and click to run programs, select files, do disk or file maintenance or almost any

**\$49.95**

task you currently do by typing commands. You also get things like a print spooler, Programmable Function Keys, a Buffered Keyboard,

Ramdisk, Serial I/O port and Deluxe Pak support along with Windows, Icons, Buttons, Pull Down Menus, Edit Fields and Mouse functions all in one program. It has multiple fonts in 54 possible sizes and styles, Enhanced Basic Editing and much much more. It add over 50 commands and Functions to Basic to fully support the Point & Click System without OS9.

"...it offers so many features that it is probably underpriced. I recommend this software to all CoCo3 owners." -The Rainbow February 1989

It is completely compatible with existing Basic programs and takes absolutely no memory away from basic. It requires 1 Disk Drive, R.S. hires interface & Joystick or Mouse.

Includes 128 & 512K  
Versions Only \$69.95

**LOOK!**

## "The Source"

The SOURCE will allow you to easily and quickly Disassemble machine language programs directly from disk and generate beautiful, Assembler Source Code. And "The Source" has all the features and functions you are looking for in a Disassembler.

- \* Automatic Label generation.
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## Deluxe Terminal V1.2

A New and Easy to use Terminal Program just for the Coco III.  
Now with Y-Modem Batch Support

With advanced features you would expect to find only in a Hi-Priced MS-Dos program. It has a 26 Entry Phone Directory with complete Configuration information for Communications and Automatic logon. Supports the Serial I/O Port up to 2400 baud, Deluxe & Modem Pak and the Disto Serial I/O board up to 9600 baud. It has a Full Screen Text Editor, X/Y Modem File transfers directly to or from disk, Split Screen Conference Mode, Macro Keys. Full Disk Support including Multifile Copy, Kill, Rename, Archive, Un-Archive and even Disk Initialize. Compatible with Ramdisks, RGB Dos and ADOS.  
Requires 128K, Disk & 80 col. display \$44.95

## CoCo III Tool Kit

**Disk Commands**      **File Commands**

Backup, Initialize, Archive, Copy, Kill,  
Directory, Verify, Rename, Erase, View,  
Compare, Search, Edit, Edit, Print, Compare,  
Erase, Speed Test, Step Salvage, Search, Verify,  
Rate Test, Gran Table Test Archive, Un-Archive,  
Analysis & Repair Xmodem Send/Rec.

**The Only Disk Utility & Repair Program your Coco will ever need!**

Coco Tools is a comprehensive disk utility program, providing the most complete set of functions available for the standard R.S. DOS disk system. Comparable in scope and functionality to that of the famous utility available for MS-DOS computers "PC-TOOLS"!

Coco Tools is also the most Comprehensive Disk Repair program available, it Automatically diagnosis and repairs file allocation errors, locates corrupt directory information and cross linked files. It provides fast and easy recovery of deleted files without the drudgery normally associated with killed file recovery.  
Requires 128K, Disk & 80 col. display \$49.95

## This Months Specials

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CBASIC for Coco III.....\$119.95  
Editor/Assembler.....\$49.95  
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*MM1 Extended System* (with I/O Board), 3 megabytes RAM, two floppy drives, keyboard, RGB monitor converter, and all disks and manuals, \$850 or best offer. With 52-meg SCSI Hard Disk preformatted and loaded with system files, \$950. Please write to Jordan

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