

# THE QL REPORT

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As we head into autumn, we start this issue with some newsworthy items. Freddy Vacha of Digital Precision has informed us that, "Eidersoft are kaput( the Atari ST did it, NOT the QL) and their QL business will either be taken over by Transform or ourselves." All of Eidersoft's QL products are still readily available, including their Mouse which we have in stock.

## NEW PRODUCTS COMING

Sandy is advertising a 256k battery backed static ram card complete with software which we will review in an upcoming issue. Miracle systems is also advertising a QL Quadraprint peripheral which allows 4 QL's to be connected to one printer. It uses British "plugs" for the serial connections which are not standard db-9 like U.S. QL's have so you would have to make a modified cable.

For those of you who like Lattice C as a programming language, QUANTH, the superb users group in the UK is now offering a Lattice C library to members. For more information contact :

**LATTICE C  
SUPPORT**

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## COMMANDS WITHOUT NUMBERS

By Marshall Stiles

The QL has several ways of accepting SuperBASIC commands. The most often thought of method is a program with the characteristic line number followed by a command (Example: 100 print "hello!"). The other method is more or less taken for granted. The immediate mode for entering code, loading programs (Example: PRINT "hello!" <ENTER>) is usually used for just that, and that's where it usually ends.

On the unexpanded QL I found that there was a unique use for the latter method of input. The difference was that the commands would be coming from a file instead of the keyboard. I had created a large number of documents on one microdrive using the QUILL word processor. This resulted in an out of memory error every time I attempted to load a document or get a directory. It was then that I realized that the boot program written in SuperBASIC was taking up valuable memory space. I used an editor to alter the program and saved it as "boot" in place of the old "boot" program.

re is the new listing:

```
WINDOW 512,256,0,0:CSIZE 2,1:CLS
AT 2,11:PRINT "LOADING QL-WP"
AT 4,13:PRINT "version ";2.1
AT 6,6:PRINT "copyright 1984 PSION LTD"
AT 8,12:PRINT "word processor"
EXEC_W MDW1_QLWP
```

## THERE'S BUGS IN MY SUPER PART TWO BASIC

This is the second and final part in a listing we received from Digital Precision that we started in last month's issue. We hope you find it useful.

DESCENDING

FOO

Serial transmission can become spasmodic if CPU-bound jobs are running.

Make the off-  
ending jobs  
suspend them-  
selves for  
short periods

CALL from a large(>32k) BASIC program can get the address to call wrong.

Don't use CALL, except fr. short bootstrap prgs.

More than 9 LOCats or parameters in one procedure can crash BASIC.

Don't use more than 9 LOCats.

Drawing a BLOCK of width 512 doesn't do anything.

Use CLS, or two smaller BLOCKS.

Very long lines given to INPUT may cause 'buffer full' error.

Don't try to input more than 128 characters.

Attempting to EDIT after a procedure has aborted or been stopped may not be spotted. The msg. 'not implemented' is given and the wrong line presented for editing. Actually editing this line can corrupt the BASIC prg.

Type "break" if 'not implemented' is given in response to EDIT. Then retry the edit.

For a complete listing of all the "bugs" on Digital Precision's list, send a SASE and we'll be glad to xerox it for you.

★★★★

Notice the lack of line numbers. Each line is executed as before. The difference is that the QL discards the command after execution instead of holding it in memory. "LOAD mdw1\_boot" becomes the same as "LRUN mdw1\_boot". You cannot list the program with the LIST command.

There are two catches to this method. First, all commands must be executable as stand alone, typed in commands (no line number references). Second, if you call other programs or command files (like this one) and execution of the file is aborted prematurely, the file can be left in an open state with no apparent way to access it again but to reboot the computer. I suggest that this method be used for one time operations like a simple boot program, but it may have some other useful purposes.

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In last month's issue, line 110 of Marshall's program SPINNING RINGS, has an error which we want to correct. The last part of the line SHOULD have been printed, "ecc1 = 0" and not "ecc=0". We apologise for the error.

## DESKTOP PUBLISHER VS FRONT PAGE EXTRA

By Rich Bezen

One of the biggest growth areas in microcomputer applications today is DESKTOP PUBLISHING. A key requirement of such programs is the effective combination of text and graphics on a multi-page basis. Several commercial programs of this type, such as Ventura Publishing and Pagenaker, are available for the Macintosh, IBM, Atari ST, and Amiga line of computers. These programs range from \$150 to \$800.

The Sinclair QL is not to be overlooked in this area. Two commercial programs, The FRONT PAGE EXTRA from Gap Software and DESKTOP PUBLISHER from Digital Precision provide many of the features of these programs at a fraction of the price.

This review will highlight the main features provided by each of these programs showing once again that the QL with its 68000 processor and expansion capabilities can provide 'real' creative power. Typical uses for these programs could be the generation of sales flyers, catalogs, price lists for small companies, a club newsletter, greeting cards, business cards, the possibilities are almost endless with a little perseverance in mastering the capabilities provided.

Gap Software was the first manufacturer to produce a desktop publishing package. Their first attempt, FRONT PAGE, provided many of the basic functions but was rather slow and limited in its formatting capabilities. The program was the first to use Liberation Software's OLIBERATOR to compile Superbasic code in which the native program was written. Recently GAP introduced an updated version of FRONT PAGE, once again compiled using OLIBERATOR, but with improved functionality. A key goal expressed by this manufacturer was to develop a program which would run in an unexpanded 128k machine. GAP has maintained this philosophy even with the current version of FRONT PAGE, but was wise enough to realize that many QL users now have expanded memory and would like to see programs which can utilize it to provide extended capabilities. This led to FRONT PAGE EXTRA which requires at least 256k of additional memory.

A recent entry into the market, Digital Precision's DESKTOP PUBLISHER (DTP) costs approximately twice as much as FRONT PAGE EXTRA (FPX) but is rich in many innovative features especially in the graphics area that the former lacks. Compiled using TURBO, it too requires at least 256k of expansion memory. Both programs can be used purely on their own but their real power are realized when combined with a dedicated word processor and graphics packages.

The features provided by both programs are too numerous to elaborate upon fully. I will, therefore, limit my review to the major differentiating features provided by both along with areas which could stand some improvements.

Both programs allow for the user to enter text either thru manual keyboard entry or via a file into a user definable window. FPX allows for files read-in to come from Quill, DP's the Editor, or even from Superbasic. It

strips out any control codes present. DTP can also accept files but does not properly strip out the control codes from Quill making manual editing necessary. (See August QLR for way to overcome this. ED.) In both programs manual entry from keyboard is limited to simple insertion and deletion and movement within the defined window only. FPX allows the user to chose from among 6 fonts on a character by character basis, while DTP only allows for this to be made on the entire contents of the window. This means many more windows would need to be opened in DTP making it slightly more awkward to use. When input is coming from a file, DTP will only display input into which fits the defined-window (which cannot exceed the 400 pixel by 200 pixel viewport displayed). If the file length exceeds this the user must scroll to display the proper portion and open another window after scrolling to form large columns. This is limiting in composition of applications requiring multiple columns such as newsletters, etc. FPX shines in this area with an in-built facility to format information read from a file into 2,3, or 4 columns across the page. The user can interrupt entry at any time to position to a different column, position within a column, or even page. (FPX provides 2 simultaneous pages with 256k extra, while DTP provides this with 512k added).

Justification is also available in both programs to make output look very professional. In DTP the user selects No, Left, Right (really flush justification to both right and left ends of column) or centre. FPX provides essentially only full justification (flush to left and right columns). This microjustification (done on a pixel by pixel rather than character basis to minimize 'white space'), is done as input is read and is quite interesting to watch!

Gap states that they realize their program is very limited in graphics (freehand line drawing only and ODB's) and they assume users will import and manipulate graphics using external dedicated graphic packages such as EYE-Q or GRAPHIQL. This is the area in which DTP excels. The program has several modes of operation including the above-mentioned text mode in which QL "9 by 5"-pixel-limited fonts are employed. Another mode allows for higher resolution text on a 16 by 16 pixel basis. This text can be scaled up in either "x" or "y" directions to produce large characters without significant loss of definition for headlines or large graphic characters. To this end approximately a dozen fonts are supplied, two of which are graphical.

The capabilities provided in this mode are numerous. They include variable line spacing, bold, italics (with right, left, or no slant), upside down, reversed, mirrored and rotated characters on all fonts. Graphic manipulations allow for merging of characters with numerous patterns via an exclusive function. This leads to many interesting effects such as shadow writing, mirror writing, and generation of elaborate patterns suitable for framing text. DTP also allows for importation of graphics in both compressed or un-compressed modes, inversion, mirroring and full cut and paste operation.

DTP allows for a built-in multitasker which allows the user to leave the program and switch to another via CTRL-C. FPX is run as an exec\_m job and requires a program such as Taskmaster to allow switching of jobs.

DTP provides for a total work area of 960 x 800 pixels and has a print driver allowing for the page(s)

to be printed upright or sideways. FPX provides for a 800 x 800 pixels area and also contains a specialized print driver.

This review can not possibly expect to comprehensively include all the features provided by these excellent programs. FPX is ideal if your applications are primarily textual and multi-column oriented while DTP while more than adequate for those uses excels where graphics are a key element of the total page composition.

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## NEW VERSION ANNOUNCED

Digital Precision has just recently released DESKTOP PUBLISHER SPECIAL EDITION version 2.0. This new version requires a minimum of 512k RAM and the use of at least a single disk drive. Some of the advanced features of this special version include the following. You can have windows larger than the visible screen which can be up to the size of the whole page. There are now 21 integral QL character sets instead of 12 and you can now change to a different character from inside the text mode. You can use any or all the 21 sets in one piece of text. User-selectable word wrap on text is now available. One is able to underline individual words, inverse individual words and have right justification to word or character.

There is now also full QUITL.lis and QUITL.doc compatibility. If you use control codes in QUITL such as BOLD or italics, DESKTOP will import these also. You can load text across any area up to the entire page in one go. You can load 16 by 16 fonts across any area up to the entire page in one go. The page can be mirrored, inverted and you can now specify different page sizes (A3, A4, A5, for example). You can "auto size" incoming text for the best possible fit.

Graphically, there are now line, arc, line, circle, and ellipse drawing routines. There is a full feature texture fill routine and over 7000 textures are included as standard. You may also define your own textures. You can even load in pages from, say, FRONT PAGE, and re-design them in DESKTOP.

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## QL WORLD TIDBITS

For those of you who would like more information on a comparison between the above two desktop programs for the QL, the August issue of QL WORLD also has an article on the similarities and differences between the two.

And, for any of you with a Prowriter 8056 printer, the August issue also contains a listing of a program to allow you to modify the GPRINT file from EASEL to dump to your printer.

The August issue also contains an excellent article by Simon Goodwin (of TURBO fame) on differences between the various QL ROMs which complements our "Bugs in my SuperBasic" listing featured earlier in this issue.

## PASCAL HINTS

I received the following letter from Carl Ruchte of Lewisville, NC:

"I was pleased to find the coverage of PASCAL in your July

QL REPORT. There has been little on languages other than SuperBASIC in any of the newsletters or magazines I receive. Those of us who program in other languages are always happy to find that we are not totally overlooked.

It might be well to point out to your readers that if the demonstration programs in the July QL are compiled with the Metacomco compiler that the extensions to ISO option must be invoked; that is, when the compiler asks, "Extensions to ISO standard [Y/N]?" you must type "y"<enter>.

The Metacomco compiler with the extensions to ISO option invoked permits a simpler means of sending data to the printer. Example:

```
Program Testprint(input,output,ptintfile);

var
  printfile:text;
Begin
  rewrite(printfile,'ser12');
  writeln(printfile,'This will also make the printer
work!')
End."
```

//

## THOR NOTES

Networking a Trump QL to THOR has proved to be a very nice combination. XCHANGE on THOR does not seem to contain the bug in ARCHIVE which limits you to 2300 some odd records. We were able to surpass the number on THOR which resulted in an "incomplete file transfer" error when we attempted to close the file on a QL. Unfortunately, we have been unable to transfer the "THOR" database over to the QL and successfully open it.

## BATTERY CLOCK SHIPPING

The battery clock should be readily available by the time you read this. We apologise for the delay and hope you feel the wait was worth it.

## TAX I QL UPDATE

For those of you who purchased TAX-I-QL, there will be a 1987 edition available which will print directly to IRS forms and the tax tables are built in. We will have more information on pricing and costs for an upgrade in the next issue.

## SIDEWINDER A review by Chuck Platt

Sidewinder is basically a screen dump program, with a difference. It is a set of utilities that not only allows you to dump a screen from any graphic program, but also gives you the facilities to alter your graphic, as in a drawing program. It also includes a utility to print labels from either a graphic source or from the built in text facility.

Sidewinder is a monochrome high-res mode 4 dump, which means that it only prints the black pixels of a color graphic screen, but don't let that throw you. It also gives you the option to convert a mode 8 screen to mode 4, and vice versa, although Sidewinder won't print out a mode 8 screen. Included is a RED/GREEN color conversion option that gives you the choice to make red or green either black or white, or a mostly white/black random dot pattern. The choices are between 1 & 9, 1 being mostly white, and 9 being mostly black. If you do not choose to recolor then red and green will be ignored.

The program is set up in a series of menus that are reached by single key entries which include the function keys and others. There is an internal help facility that covers all aspects of the program that can also be printed out as a Quill file.

When the program is first loaded you have the option to view/print the help files, load a screen, print labels, or print a rule. The rule is provided as an aid for judging how many spaces you want to use to center your graphic on your particular printer.

There is only one printer driver and that is for EPSON RX80 or compatible printers.

After you have chosen to and loaded a screen you can then either get a hard copy, save it to memory just in case you make a mistake, mirror, invert (change black to white), or edit. Once in the edit mode you can draw freehand or point by point. You can use black or white ink. In freehand mode you can change the cursor size for thick or thin lines. There is also a text editor that allows you to enter text using either the @ character set or a bold character set. Once you are satisfied with your screen you can make a hard copy. In this mode you are asked for the Y density, 1 to 3, which does a multiple pass. You are asked for the X density which includes all the possible Epson densities, and you are asked for the size of your dump which can be anywhere from your full size screen to postage stamp size. There is also a cut option which allows you to crop your screen down to a fraction of the original.

This is really the program I was looking for a year ago when I first tried printing out a screen from PEINTRE and wound up with an elongated distorted image. I like having editing facilities in a dump very much even though these are limited. Also the labeler is a nice touch. Overall I think Sidewinder is good value for your dollar. It's not EYE0, but it's very useful.

Three stars out of five !!!.

UNTIL NEXT MONTH.....

ENJOY YOUR OL !!

HERE ARE SOME OF THE  
DIFFERENT FONTS FROM  
DESKTOP PUBLISHER  
AND SOME OF THE  
DIFFERENT GRAPHIC  
FONTS..

