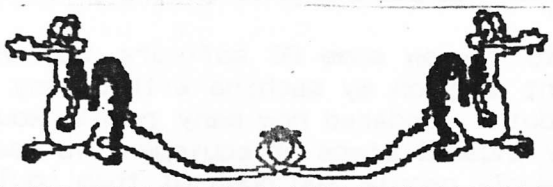
The Newsletter of the National Dragon User's Group

DRAGON UPDATE



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*ISSUE 115* *IS THERE ANYBODY STILL OUT THERE?* *OCTOBER 1997*

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## THE GAFFER'S BIT .....

I hate to have to agree with Our Revered Editor, but this time I have no choice at all ... as you'll see when you try reading the rest of this issue, we actually had sufficient material for about five pages, the rest is waffle and stuff from ancient archives!. NOT a good situation, so unless you want the December issue to be about the same size as those bits of paper you used to find in cheap Christmas crackers, someone somewhere had better start writing, fast!. Maybe we should institute a rota system ... work through the subscription list in alpha order and demand one page each from ten of you every issue!. Now let's-see, who would be in the first batch?. (No, you can't ALL change your names to Zaphod Zaccharias!).
OK, so suggestions like that make me about as popular as the bloke who phoned the Paris Ritz and asked if they had any scrap Mercedes bits they didn't want ... but I didn't know this job demanded popularity, so please don't make the mistake of imagining that I might be joking ... I'm not!.
So I'm in a nasty mood? ... certainly, and why shouldn't I be?. There's nothing interesting or even new happening on the computer scene, just the usual crop of useless gimmicks and hype designed to part the gullible from their hard-fiddled loot. Nothing happening in Sunny Worthing that's worthy of mention either, just the usual inane and insane rubbish that seems to be the norm almost everywhere now. Talking of insane rubbish, I hear that Tony (just call me Messiah) Blair is so anxious that none of the Faithful should miss a single word of his wonderful speeches at the Brighton meeting that he has requisitioned every screen at the biggest cinema in town for a week, so that those who cannot actually see him in person will be able to watch a continuous "instant replay" on screen!. How thoughtful!, how modest!, how bloody boring!. The way he and his mates are going on I wonder why they didn't phone the German Embassy and try to rent the old Nurenberg Stadium, like that other "New" Socialist Party did back in the thirties. They seem to have very similar ideas about most things. Wonder when he's going to invade Poland?.
OK, OK, I did warn you I wasn't in a good mood .... so don't complain, I might have been feeling REALLY peevish, which has been known to result in queues outside the local counselling services!. PG

## The Editor's Lot

.... Is not a happy one. An exceptionally slimline issue from my end this time, caused totally by the usual - a lack of material. Such is the dire emergency of the situation that next month's issue will only have TWO articles, which I suppose will save on paper. Neither Paul nor I will be madly keen on filling up the remaining ten pages with waffle (we've done enough of that in this issue) and I doubt whether our few surviving members will much enjoy reading such a dirge. But there's not really anything that we can do about it. If you want the Christmas issue to be one sheet of A4, then just sit tight. If you fancy writing a page for us all to enjoy, then this is your last chance. SW

# PEEKING THE DRAGON(71).MIKE STOTT

This month I am going to review some PC software that Paul has sent me to try out. I loaded it straight away on my machine without any fuss or bother and soon had it up and running, but I wondered how many people would be able to use it on their machines as a very unusual piece of equipment is needed within the PC.
At work I asked about twenty people and none of them could run it without adding this piece of equipment. Does it need to be fitted with an MMX board?. No. Does it need to be a superfast machine?. No, it should run on an XT. Does it need loads of memory?. No, it should run with the bare minimum of memory fitted. Does it need a special sound card, graphics card or CD ROM?. No, it will run without a sound card or CD ROM, and with any graphics card that you care to put in your PC. So what is this exotic item and how much will it cost to adapt your PC to run this software?. The answers are a 5 1/4" drive and probably about ten pounds.
So why is one of these drives needed for a brand new piece of software?
The software enables your PC to read a DragonDOS disk and then transfer most things to the PC. As all the routines are written by Graham Kinns you will realise that this disk is of the highest quality. THE GRAHAM KINNS SHAREWARE DISC can be downloaded from his Web site but is available from Paul at a minimum cost of two pounds and also contains the full Dragon 32 manual, Dragon 64 supplement, and DragonDOS manual in .TXT format so that anybody who has lost their copy will be able to put it up on screen or print it out for reference.
There is a README.TXT file on the disk to help with the running of all the programs on the disk. Incidentally, they can be run from the hard disk once you have copied them across or even run off the floppy that they are supplied on.
DDIR - shows the directory of a DragonDOS disk, including the file size and a MS-DOS compatible filename should you wish to copy any files across to your PC using DCOPY which is described next.
DCOPY - copies files from a DragonDOS disk to your PC including the ability to alter the filenames when they are moved across.
Both of these programs are really easy to use and you will be able to do this within ten or fifteen minutes of switching your computer on.
BAS2TXT - this converts tokenised BASIC files in DragonDOS .BAS format to plain text. In other words you can transport a BASIC Dragon program from a Dragon disk to your PC in text format. Without too much extra work you should be able to have that little useful routine that you wrote for a simple task many years ago up and running on your PC, using one of the many versions of BASIC available on these machines.
DRM2TXT - does the same as the previous program with Dream .DRM files for those people who have used this piece of Dragon software.
DUTILSRC.ZIP - is the source for all the utilities on the disk and will compile with both BORLAND C (v3.1 or v4.x) and DJGPP v2.0x for those who are interested in this aspect.
SCR2GIF - converts DragonDOS .BIN files or raw binary files to .GIF files.
It will convert the text screen and Semigraphics 24 screen 0,1 to non-interlaced .GIF files and PMODE3:SCREEN 1,1 to interlaced (progressive display) files.
SCRTOIMG and SCRTOPCX - similar to the previous piece of software but will convert the images to .IMG and .PCX files respectively.
These last three pieces of software are of particular interest to me as I am very interested in graphics on the PC and the manipulation of images from one standard to another, mainly using GRAPHICS WORKSHOP. Now I can take my old Dragon pictures (mainly obtained from Ray Smith at the Dragonart Graphics Library) and take them over to my PC and work on them to my heart's content before including them within some other program. All the items included on the disk are very useful and I am sure that all our readers will want to show their family, friends and colleagues how easily they can move Dragon software to the PC. Did I mention that all you need to do to obtain this disk is to send a cheque or postal order made out to NDUG for at least two pounds to Paul and you will soon have this really useful collection up and running on your PC. Even if you have to go out and buy a 5 1/4" drive to put in your PC it has still got to be worth it for the hours of fun you are going to get out of this disk.

# Letters To The Editor August 2004

Congratulations on NDUG's 20th birthday. I note your comments on the lack of input to the newsletter; I have spoken to the other 5 members, who have all promised to submit an article for the next issue.

I have been unable to type this letter on my Dragon, as usual, because now only the Z, X, Q, and J keys are working, it is very difficult to compose anything meaningful. Anyway, it gives me the opportunity to try out my new PC, with the latest Intel 986 processor, 10 Gigabytes of RAM, a 2 Terrabyte hard disk, and the new Windows '04 software. It is fitted with the latest direct cerebral input - I just plug the cable into the socket I have had fitted behind my right ear and all my thoughts are directly input into the computer, rendering keyboard and speech input obsolete.

I hear that the Prime Minister, Jeremy Beadle, has advised motorists to take at least a month's provisions of food and water with them when travelling on the M25, to reduce the incidents of starvation which there have been recently. Apparently the old age pension will cease at 70 with compulsory euthanasia thereafter. He has introduced new schemes to reduce the unemployment figures, which according to official sources now stand at 4; the opposition say that the true figure is 10,920,319.

The Health Service minister has announced the closure of the last NHS hospital in London. Anybody in London needing medical treatment will have to travel to Birmingham or Southampton.

Last month's National Dragon User Show, which was held in Paul's back bedroom, may be the final one. Only 4 people turned up, and that included the man who came to read the gas meter and the next door neighbour who just popped round to borrow some sugar.

EMAIL is fantastic. I now do all my correspondence this way. I even argue with my wife by EMAIL - last night, for instance, when I got home from a drink with the lads and I e-mailed her "where's my dinner?", she e-mailed me back "in the dog". Brilliant! No more aggro or raised voices. Mind you, my EMAIL provider dropped a b*ll*ck the other day; I sent an EMAIL order to my local Chinese takeaway, and ended up with a blind date with a transvestite named George and a year's subscription to the Reader's Digest!

I must be getting old, my memory is not as good as it used to be - now what did I switch this machine on for? - Oh yes! The NDUG article. Mind you, none of us are getting any younger. Michael Jackson has had so much plastic surgery that when he went to his birthday party the other day, even his parents didn't recognise him.

Talking about age, I see ITV are showing that James Bond film, "Doctor No" again - I've seen it so often that I know the script better than the actors themselves!

I don't seem to have the energy that I once had; I get tired very easily.

Clive Scott.

## DIY Tamagotchi. S.W.

Tamagotchi? Yes, you know, those ghastly little keyring things that have inexplicably become flavour of the moment, even managing to draw "The Sun" into running a "How long can you keep your Tamagotchi alive for" style sweepstake competition.

The pitch? Well, you lob out a tenner for one of these electronic things, choosing from a dog, cat, rabbit, or even a dinosaur (?), and then you have to keep it alive by pressing a variety of buttons to, for example, feed it, take it for walks (dinosaur?), cuddle it, etc etc. They bleep at you when they need attention at irregular intervals, and depending on which buttons you press, it stays alive for a few more minutes. But, instead of parting with hard-earned cash, simply set your alarm clock to go off every, say, fifteen minutes, and then you can give it all the care and attention and rude words it needs as you scramble for the OFF button at three in the morning. Cool, eh?. S.W.

## Space Filling Garbage. S.W.

It would be easy to look back wistfully over the last thirteen (count them) years of NDUG and wonder at the good times. It would also be exceedingly painful and not particularly productive, as the crisis which beckons at the moment is the one of an impending conclusion to the months and years of toil by all concerned, as the membership moves on and the articles submitted for publication dry up.
Wistful, indeed, for the warning on the front page is not simply an engineered piece of scaremongering, but rather a statement of fact. If you'd like to read Update into the new year, you know the address.
The shrinking user base is, of course, understandable, but the lack of software, support, and outside involvement has not stopped the Dragon becoming something of a cult over the years. Which is rather worrying, really - I get the odd nightmare where I can envisage a situation featuring Update Reunion Weekends, something akin to the badly-organised Conventions which seem to plague so many TV sci-fi series. You know the sort - hordes of anoraks converge on a decrepit hotel in the middle of nowhere in the middle of winter to be tucked away in a back room with someone who was once an extra for two seconds in one of the early episodes. The Update equivalent, of course, would be a panel of Paul, Mike, and I, plus maybe some of our most prolific writers, cheerfully debating which instalment of Update was our particular favourite, how articles came to be selected in the first place, and above all, how we're all really great mates who never have any disagreements.
A chilling prospect, I think you'll agree, particularly when the BBC turn up and start filming the proceedings for an "Update Out-takes" video, a bargain at 14.99 for 42 minutes of action (or, to be more precise, 1 minute of action and 41 of padding).
However, this is the dark future to which we can look forward, now that Update is in it's final throes. To appropriate a quote from one of those Cult sci-shows, "I had hoped for a more inspiring epitaph". SW

**** Damn!. Now everyone knows the Group Long Term Plans!, and just when I was working on a new format newsletter too ... "Update, The Next Generation". P.G.*

## My Brain Hurts. Paul G.

There are many unsolved mysteries in the Universe, like what happens if you travel faster than light on a circular course and arrive back before you went and then decide not to go because you've already been, and how do people who make Australian "soaps" learn to act so badly, but an even greater mystery is the Great IT Paradox.
According to all the hype, the Net is now the repository of all knowledge ... all information on everything can be found there (except information on the sexual proclivities of current politicians, of course) ... data on every possible subject is only a phone call and an AOL subscription away from every PC owner, whether pre-school brat or graduate granny ... education for all on every monitor, knowledge dripping out of every disc drive, the Great Age of Universal Enlightenment Has Arrived .... everything you never wanted to know about anything you'd never even heard of is now available to everyone at the thump of a function key. Politicians are promising a computer for every brat in every school, BT offering to provide them all with free Net connection, almost every PC on the counter at Dixons labelled as "Internet Ready", Postman Patel staggers down the road weighed down with "50 hours free access" AOL and Compuserve CDs. Never before in the field of human gullibility has so much wonderful information been made available to so many for so great a phone bill!. Truly, a wonder of modern science and technology, and I am greatly impressed, except for one small point which even the vast resources of the Net seem unable to explain .... if all this information is so easily and freely available to everyone, WHY are there still so many totally ignorant prats about?!.

# Tips For The PC...Bob Smith

( ...and I don't mean those run by the local council.).

BATCH FILES for DOS are very useful for doing various jobs on the PC. There is one drawback, however, in that there is no easy way of giving them information underways. They can, however, react to an error message given by the program that follows wait for a key to be pressed and then give the ASCII value as an error code value. This can then be tested in the batch file, and your desired action carried out. From the DOS prompt go to the DOS directory by typing CD\DOS. Then, using a DOS editor e.g. EDLIN or EDIT, make a DOS file by typing in the code below exactly as written, including the blank line after INT 21. Save this file as READKEY.SCR in directory DOS. After this, and still in the DOS directory, type DEBUG <READKEY.SCR If everything is OK then DEBUG will make a program with the name READKEY.COM

```
A
SUB AH,AH
INT 16
OR AL,AL
JNZ 10E
MOV AL,AH
OR AL,80
JMP 0118
CMP AL,61
JB 0118
CMP AL,7A
JA 0118
SUB AL,20
MOV AH,4C
INT 21

N READKEY.COM
RCX
1C
W
Q
```

You can now make batch files - as simple or as sophisticated as you will - that can be controlled from the keyboard. A very simple example:

```
@ECHO OFF
:TRYAGAIN
CLS
ECHO Press key 1 or 2
ECHO.
ECHO 1 Do something with one
ECHO 2 Do something else with two
ECHO.
C:\DOS\READKEY
IF ERRORLEVEL 51 GOTO TRYAGAIN
IF ERRORLEVEL 50 GOTO ACTION2
IF ERRORLEVEL 49 GOTO ACTION1
GOTO TRY AGAIN
:ACTION1
ECHO One
GOTO FINITO
:ACTION2
ECHO Two
:FINITO
```

49 and 50 are the ASCII values of numbers 1 and 2 respectively. Any other keypress will cause the batch file to repeat the menu. If it doesn't work then it is either your or Stephen's nimble fingers that are a bit too nimble. *(**Lies!**)*

# Another Bow To Your String.
## Tony Shellard

We are all familiar with the use of string variables for messages. Many also use them to extract individual sectors from disc with SREAD. In these articles I will describe a novel way to employ them which I believe has not been explored before.
First, a recap of string storage.
Both numeric and string variables used in BASIC programs are referenced through a seven-byte entry in the variable table. Strings are stored as a two-byte variable name, with the most significant bit(b7) of the second byte set high, and a five byte string descriptor.
The sixteen bit address tells us where the first byte of the actual string is found and the length tells us how long it is. Suppose we have the BASIC commands:

```
10 INPUT A$
20 INPUT B$
30 A$=A$+B$
```

The invocation of A$ places the input string into the string storage area of memory, defined by a CLEAR statement, and points A$'S string descriptor to it. The second line adds B$ to the string storage area after the end of A$, found by the BASIC interpreter by adding the length of A$ to it's start position. It then adds B$'s name and descriptor to the variable table.
The third line has an interesting effect: it concatenates the two strings and stores the new A$ after B$ but amends the existing A$ descriptor to point to it, altering the length as well. This leaves the original copy of A$ unreferenced in the variable table and therefore inaccessible to the BASIC program. The build up of redundant copies of old strings would fill the string area and cause an ?OS error but for a garbage collection routine which deletes the unwanted data, making the space reusable.
There is an exception to this process.. Consider the lines:

```
10 A$="Hello"
20 REM important command
30 A$=A$+" world"
```

The characters which comprise the first A$ are stored as part of the BASIC program text when typed in, but the new version is put in the string storage area. It cannot replace the original because, being longer, it would corrupt the text. Damage to the structure of the BASIC representation would crash the interpreter and leave the program unrunable
Likewise, the original unreferenced A$ must remain untouched by the garbage collection or part of the program will be erased. This leaves us with a string of bytes buried in and unalterable by the program, barring PEEKs and POKEs.
The string "world" exists only as a literal. Since it is never assigned to a variable it is not referenced by a pointer at any time and remains inaccessible to all but a custom machine code search routine. With the aid of the VARPTR function we can use the discarded version of A$ for machine code storage and, within limits, even execute routines from inside it. More next time.

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# OK, where are you hiding?!

Since the last issue I have received EIGHT orders for the Graham Kinns disc, and I KNOW there are more than eight of you out there who own both a Dragon and a PC, so where are the rest of you hiding?. This is a set of routines that you really do NEED, so come out from under the table or where-ever and order a copy NOW!.

## Shop Talk. . .Tim Lees

Just to let you know that I've found a new (to me at least) Dragon software supplier.
I saw an advertisement in Micro Mart offering software for 8 bit computers, so I wrote asking if they had anything for the Dragon. In return I received a list of about 60 items for sale, from 1.00 to 5.00, both games and utilities. Some items are without instructions, but that's unimportant - someone else would know about the program if it proved to be too complex to work out.
the details are:

*ALAN CRESSWELL,*
*18, WEST STREET,*
*GEDDINGTON,*
*NORTHANTS.*
*NN14 1BD*

An SAE will bring you a list. He also appears to sell software for most other 8 bits. I can't recommend the place, not having bought anything yet, but the list was sent promptly with a polite note saying hopefully more Dragon software will be available. As suppliers are getting fewer and fewer, it's good to find a new one. Maybe he's sold some stuff to Dragon owners who know nothing about the Group?

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## One from the Archives

```
 1 CLEAR1000
 2 CLS:PRINT@6,"DRAGON DISC EXPLORER":PRINT:PRINT"M.....RETURN TO
   MENU":PRINT"UP ^...INCREASE TRACK NUMBER":PRINT"RT ^...INCREASE SECTOR
   NUMBER":PRINT"LF ^...DECREASE SECTOR NUMBER":PRINT"?.....PRINTX/Y$ AS
   ASCII"
 3 PRINT:INPUT"ENTER TRACK,SECTOR NUMBERS";TRACK,SECTOR
 4 IF TRACK<0 OR TRACK>39 OR SECTOR<1 OR SECTOR>18 THEN SOUND1,2:RUN
 5 CLS:GOTO15
 6 'MAIN CONTROL LOOP
 7 A$=INKEY$:IF A$="" THEN 7
 8 CLS
 9 IF A$="M" THEN 2
10 IF A$="^" THEN TRACK =TRACK+1:IF TRACK>39 THEN TRACK=0
11 IF A$=CHR$(10) THEN TRACK =TRACK-1:IF TRACK<0 THEN TRACK=39
12 IF A$=CHR$(9) THEN SECTOR=SECTOR+1:IF SECTOR >18 THEN SECTOR=1
13 IF A$=CHR$(8) THEN SECTOR =SECTOR-1:IF SECTOR<1 THEN SECTOR=18
14 IF A$="?" THEN 18
15 SREAD1,TRACK,SECTOR,X$,Y$
16 CLS:PRINT"TRACK";TRACK,"SECTOR";SECTOR:PRINT"X$:-":PRINTX$:PRINT:
   PRINT"Y$:-":PRINTY4
17 GOTO7
18 PRINT"X$:-":FORA=1 TO LEN(X$):PRINTMID$(X$,A,1);"(";ASC(MID$(X$,A,1));")";:
   NEXTA: PRINT:PRINT"Y$:-":FOR A=1 TO 128:PRINTMID$(Y$,A,1);
   "(";ASC(MID$(Y$,A,1));")";:NEXTA:PRINT
19 PRINT:PRINT"[ENTER] TO CONTINUE":PRINT" [?] TO REPEAT"
20 A$=INKEY$:IF A$="" THEN 20
21 IF A$="?" THEN 18
22 IF A$=CHR$(13) THEN15 :ELSE 20
23 ' P.WHITTAKER
24 GOTO24
```

# TAPES, BOOKS AND EVERYTHING...

Some people have asked if I would make a full list of the games tapes the Group has, so here it is:

BACKTRACK (Incentive Software);
GOLF (PSS);
INTERPLANATERY TRADER (Bamby);
SPACE INVADERS, SNAKES, LUNAR LANDER (all on one cassette, J.Morrison);
GRAND PRIX (Salamander);
STOCKMARKET,(Bamby);
MADNESS and the MINOTAUR (DD);
10 ASSORTED PROGRAMS on one tape released by Eurohard - they must have novelty value!

70 pence each,including postage or haggle for lots of more than 2.

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## UTILITY TAPES:

FILEMASTER (Microdeal);
FORTH (Dragon Data version)
DREAM (Dragon Data)
DRS (another tape has turned up, but no manual.)
Dragon 32 UTILITIES (Pegasus)
PERSONAL FINANCE,
COMPUTAVOICE (all DD releases)
GRAPHIC ANIMATOR; (Salamander);
ELECTRONIC AUTHOR;
DON'T DRAG-ON (Berlinsoftware - extra commands and routines added to Basic.)
SPANISH Language course
SELECTION 2,

(This reads like a magazine advert. from 1983 - but the prices have been adjusted, to allow for wear, depreciation - you don't appreciate them at all, do you? - and the fact they are old, but not quite antique.)

Eleven tapes:- 70 pence each, or any 3 for £1.75.

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## BOOKS:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Dragon Machine Code for the Absolute Beginner | John Vander Reyden |
| The Dragon Programmer | S.M.Gee |
| Dragon Programs | Nick Hampshire |
| 60 Programs for D32 | R.Erskine |
| Exploring Adventures on D32 | Peter Gerrard |
| Advanced Sound & Graphics | The Brain Twins |
| Brainteasers (!) for D32 | G.Ludinski |
| Progamming the D32 for Games and Graphics | Geoff Phillips |
| The Working Dragon 32 | David Lawrence |

50 pence each, or £1.25 each inc. postage.

The last book on the list (The Working Dragon 32) included some ambitious programs and sub-routines which didn't always measure up to the description. With a little work, however, they could all be made to run.

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Phone me on Worthing 207585 most evenings if you want any of these and we'll work out an arrangement on postage etc. Ken Grade.

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*You really are missing out on an investment opportunity, you know .... it HAS to be only a matter of time before some of this stuff turns up on the Antiques Roadshow, and then everyone will be rushing around offering thousands for an original Dragon Data tape ... a Genuine Relic from the Days of Early IT!. Paul.*

# Yet another from the Archives

Yes, I know there have been other menu type programs in Update, but this is the first time in print for this one, and it does work well, so why not type it in and give it a try for yourself?.
What do you mean "I want some really original material"? ... so do I!, but unless you write it you'll just have to put up with archive material or blank pages!.
Anyway, how long is it since you actually wrote a Basic program yourself? ... bet you can't even remember!.

```
 0 PCLEAR 4
 1 CLS
 2 CLEAR 5000,&H7E00
 3 P=1
 4 Z$=CHR$(128):W$(1)=CHR$(123):W$(2)=CHR$(125):U$=CHR$(143)
 5 DIM N$(26):C=0
 6 LL=3
 7 POKE236,20:POKE239,0:POKE238,&H7E
 8 FORK=LL TO 18
 9 GOSUB42
10 POKE237,K
11 EXEC49412
12 FOR I=&H7E00 TO &H7EE1 STEP 25
13 A=PEEK(I):IF (A AND 8) THEN I=&H7F00:NEXT:K=19:NEXT:GOTO 24
14 IF (A AND 1) OR (A AND 128) THEN 22
15 A$="":FOR J=I+1 TO I+11:A=PEEK(J):IF A=0 THEN A=32
16 A$=A$+CHR$(A)
17 NEXT:A$=LEFT$(A$,8)+"."+RIGHT$(A$,3)
18 IFRIGHT$(A$,3)="BAK" THEN22
19 IFRIGHT$(A$,3)="DAT"THEN22
20 C=C+1:IF C=27 THENC=C-1:GOTO24
21 N$(C)=A$
22 NEXT
23 NEXT
24 Z=INT(C/2+.6)
25 FOR I=1 TO Z:PRINTU$;CHR$(64+I);"-";N$(I):NEXT
26 FOR I=Z+1 TO C:PRINT@(I-Z-1)*32+15,U$;U$;CHR$(64+I);"-";N$(I);U$;:NEXT
27 PRINT@416,STRING$(64,32);
28 PRINT@416,Z$;"page";Z$;W$(1):POKE1447,48+P:PRINT@424,W$(2);
   STRING$(4,Z$);"select";Z$;"program";STRING$(5,Z$);
29 IFC<26THEN43
30 PRINT@453,"<SPACE> FOR NEXT PAGE";:A$=INKEY$:IFA$=CHR$(32)THEN41
31 IF A$<"A" OR A$>CHR$(64+C) THEN 30
32 O=ASC(A$)-64:PRINT@416,STRING$(64,32);:PRINT@416,N$(O):
   PRINT"ARE YOU SURE ? [Y/N]";
33 ON INT((INSTR(1,"YyNn",LEFT$(INKEY$+" ",1))+1)/2)+1 GOTO 33,34,27
34 PRINT" YES";:FOR I=1 TO 11:READ A$:POKE 3071+I,VAL("&H"+A$):NEXT
35 A=3083:FOR I=1 TO LEN(N$(O)):Z=ASC(MID$(N$(O),I,1)):
  IF Z<>32 THEN POKE A,Z:A=A+1
36 NEXT
37 POKE A,0
38 CLEAR200,32767
39 EXEC &HC00
40 DATA 8E,C,A,9F,A6,9D,A5,7E,D4,A2,22
41 CLS:P=P+1:C=0:GOTO7
42 LL=K:RETURN
43 PRINT@448,Z$;"last";Z$;"page";Z$;"space";Z$;"to";Z$;"start";Z$;"again";Z$;
44 A$=INKEY$:IFA$=" "THENRUN
45 IFA$<"A"OR A$>CHR$(64+C)THEN44 :ELSE32
```

# The Late, Late Bit .....

I KNEW it was a mistake!. For the past couple of years my old Homebrew Special PC has been plugging along quite happily with a good if unfashionable VIP 486 board and a x586/133 AMD CPU .... rapid, reliable, and totally unfussy, and I had no intention at all of changing things unless I got a good price from a museum for it, but a couple of weeks ago I got one of those offers you should refuse but can't ... a nice new jumperless Abit SM5 board, guaranteed to run any processor up to a MMX233, complete with a Cyrix 686/P150+, all for fifty quid and a couple of (legal) favours!. With a Bios date less than a couple of months old everything just HAD to be State of the Thingy, surely?, so how could I possibly say no?.
Having read the manual, a hundred or so pages of pure Tiwanese Gibberish, I knew that all one had to do was fit the new board, connect up the power supply, drives, cards, etc, and switch on .... after all, this was the Ultimate in Idiot Technology, and being the ultimate idiot, I followed the instructions. Machine begins power-up sequence and grinds to a halt. Many bleeps, no go. Switch off and try again, but this time switch into CMOS setup, and learn that it has decided the CPU is an Intel P60 and I don't have any hard drives, which was quite a shock as there were a pair of them last time I looked. Spend an hour convincing the self-configuring auto-locating fully-p-n-p moron that the CPU is really an IBM/Cyrix PR150+, and that there are perfectly good 540 and 830 Meg hard drives, and even a CD attached to the IDE cables, and eventually it condescends to believe me and boots up. It then insists that my Cirrus 5446 2Meg video card is a 512K Tseng, and takes even longer to convince that it isn't!. By this time I am feeling rather less than impressed with the Wonders of Modern Technology, and by the time I have persuaded it that a Primax scanner isn't a printer, and that an Advance Logic sound card isn't an SB16, I am very seriously considering reconfiguring the beast with a large hammer. However, eventually all seems to operate more or less correctly, the CMOS settings stay as I want them, and I settle back to enjoy the Super Warp Speed computing power of Pentium Class Processors. So OK, all the benchmark and diagnostic programs I have (and that's quite a few) seem to agree that the thing achieves faster than light speeds, and that by comparison my old over-clocked 586/133 must have been running in wet cement, but strangely I have to admit that none of my software appears to be working any faster than it was before, even graphics stuff isn't noticeably faster, and in fact as the thing spends far too long suspiciously checking that I haven't added or subtracted or reset anything every time I power it up, I'm not at all sure what the advantages are supposed to be. Maybe it needs more RAM .... but surely 16 Meg should be enough?, or maybe it only makes a difference if one runs Win95? .... in which case it is going to be disappointed, because I've set the "virus detect" to "enabled" just in case someone tries to install '95 when I'm not looking!. Sure it has Many Strange and Wonderous Devices .... like a couple of USB ports for which I have no use at all, and a PS2 Rodent Port, which ain't a lot of use since I run my moose off COM1, and it can take DIMMs as well as SIMMs, but I can't afford any of those either. I'm sure I really should appreciate all these great advances ... but unfortunately I don't!. Am even less impressed to discover that thanks to the New Improved "Ultra I/O" chip and possibly the Award Bios, the FDD handling is positively peculiar .... sure, it can run anything from old single sided format up to 2.88 Meg and beyond, but any programs which call for it to read a disc one sector at a time causes total confusion ... I don't think it's heard of sectors at all, so it tends to get completely lost!. Something somewhere is going to have to be patched!. Maybe the old board/CPU was considered archaic by current PC standards, but at least once you set the jumpers it didn't argue, and it could understand things like sectors, tracks, bytes, etc quite well, and it was really more than fast enough for anything anyone could need to do on a computer. I'm very glad I didn't pay the usual retail price for this board/CPU, or there would be still more complaints about lack of NHS funds .... I understand that removing a Pentium board from where it would have been stuffed can be an exceptionally expensive operation!. Progress?. I ain't convinced!.

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