

8mm: Lab & Field Tests

Format Report
Beta Is Cheaper:

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NOVEMBER 1984

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Supersonic Sound Systems *Upgrade Your VCR*

Confessions of a
Video Addict
A Strange Tale

Broadway
on Tape
Footlight Cassettes



BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEOTESTS
Kodak 8mm Camcorder System
Sony Auto-Focus Betamovie Camcorder
Pentax Portable VHS VCR and Tuner-Timer
Showtime Color Processor



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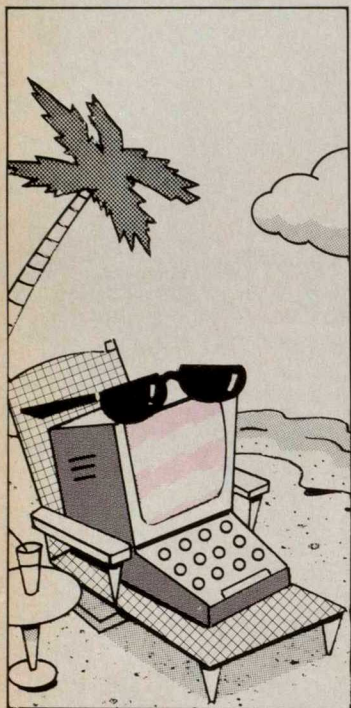
About the Cover. A beginner's look at how to put audio into an '80s video system. Cover photo by Vittorio Sartor.

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Random Access

Personal Computers, News, and Games



Digital Club Med

If you share the popular belief that Club Meds are godless bastions of hedonism where sexual opportunity and tanning reign supreme, and the effects of ugly civilization are banished—well, you're only partly right.

True, TVs, newspapers, and telephones are not a part of the Club Med existence—but the organization, which ranks as the world's second-largest non-American hotel operation, recognizes that its relaxing atmosphere enhances learning. Hence, in addition to such outdoor activities as windsurfing, sailing, archery, scuba, and aerobics, you may now get computer instruction at any one of several Club Meds in the American zone and around the world.

I decided to have a go at the Club Med Caravelle on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. The resident computer whiz there is named Aladdin (yes, real

name). He designed the curriculum to remove the mystery of the computer and make neophytes comfortable with the idea of interacting with intelligent machines. Class time at Caravelle was at 5:30 p.m., allowing a full complement of sun time, and the first hour session found eight initiates sitting before Atari 800s. (Next door another eight Ataris were commanded by bug-eyed game players who never seemed fixated during their stay.) While operating today's "friendly" computers may not require knowing BASIC or any other computer language, Aladdin reasoned that we should learn the elements anyway. It taught us that computers are helpless without people. So we dove into instructions like "RUN," "LIST," "PRINT," and the like.

By the next day, we applied programming principles to composition, and on the third session we constructed graphics. This class ended with a quick tour of Logo, the powerful language that was designed for very young kids.

Aladdin also taught us the basics of computer buying. "Yes, we are in a room full of Ataris, but I am not a computer salesman and I am not here to sell Ataris. The first thing you must know is to not trust your dealer. If you say to him, 'I have one thousand dollars to spend,' then he will say to you 'I have just the computer for you.' He will always be more interested in how much money you have to spend than in what you need." Club Med is *not* a front for an Atari dealership.

Computing at Club Med is included in the package price. Right now, a week at Club

Med Caravelle goes for \$550, Eleuthera is \$500, Punta Cana \$530, and Ixtapa, Mexico \$490. The Club also quotes rates that include round-trip air transportation from your closest international airport.

—John Robson

Home Security

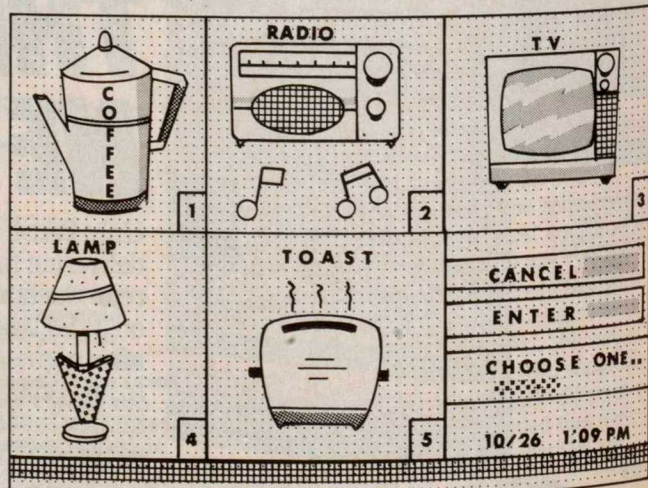
Back in the 1970s, before there was a personal-computer business, buffs who built their own machines from microprocessor kits busied themselves with the mundane tasks of getting them to turn on the TV set, or turn off the lights, or play primitive tunes. Now General Electric has decided to package the mundane and sell it as a consumer product. GE has just introduced its HomeMinder, and it should appeal to gadgeteers who don't have the time or inclination to use a computer to build their own central control network.

HomeMinder is the pinnacle of remote control. The system relies on a black-box microprocessor that sits on the TV set. Once hooked up to the tube, it uses your home's existing wiring to adjust the thermostat, turn the lights on and off, control appliances (stereos, coffee

maker, *et al.*), and even store messages that remind you of appointments or anniversaries. To control your house, you use a remote-control unit that commands a dazzling icon-graphics menu that appears on your TV (little boxes labeled "master," "kids," "family," "kitchen," and so on). Once you jump into a room, you deal with important questions like, "What do you want to turn on?" You can even control certain aspects of the system via touch-tone telephone (though you cannot program it from a remote location). The system comes either embedded in a 25-inch component TV or in an add-on box, the latter expected to retail for around \$500 or less. GE quietly admits the box will work with any TV, but of course it prefers to sell you the whole set.

HomeMinder has obvious household security uses. Program the system to turn off the dining room lights at 8 p.m., then turn on the bedroom lights, then turn those off at 11 p.m.—and from all outward appearances, a potential intruder might be led to believe you're home, guarding the fort.

—Doug Garr



Commodore SX-64

Commodore has a new portable computer out now, the SX-64. I've had mine for about nine months and I love it. At about 26 pounds it isn't something you'd carry around all day, but consider what items comprise that weight: built-in 5-1/4-inch color monitor, disk drive, and cable-connected detachable full typewriter keyboard—plus virtually all of the standard niceties of the regular stay-at-home C-64 except the datasette port. This is hardly missed, since the SX-64 has its own built-in floppy drive.

The unit's design is efficient. The keyboard doubles as the lid for the top of the computer when in transit, and the carrying handle has click-lock positions which allow positioning the computer at various angles when using it. A suede-like zippered pouch lets you carry cables and any accessories. The pouch has Velcro tape for fastening to the carrying handle. There's room for storage above the built-in disk drive, though Commodore advises against storing disks here because of the magnetic fields (I've always used this space for disks, and I've never lost any data or crashed disks—maybe I'm just lucky).

The keyboard offers a sure, light touch that I prefer to the standard C-64. A red LED on the shift-lock key reminds you that you're in caps mode.

The machine includes all of the 39K plus of user RAM in the original C-64, and it runs virtually all the same software as its stay-at-home brother (except cassette media). The screen colors on the monitor have been changed to the cyan/white/blue combination formerly used on the VIC-20, supposedly to increase visibility on the small monitor. Surprisingly, I had no difficulty reading text on this monitor, but found it only adequate for game-play.

By using an RF modulator, you can use your home TV for display. But it's not supplied, however, and no mention of this capability is in the manual. Of course, composite audio/video signals can be routed to a color or

monochrome monitor from the A/V port as well.

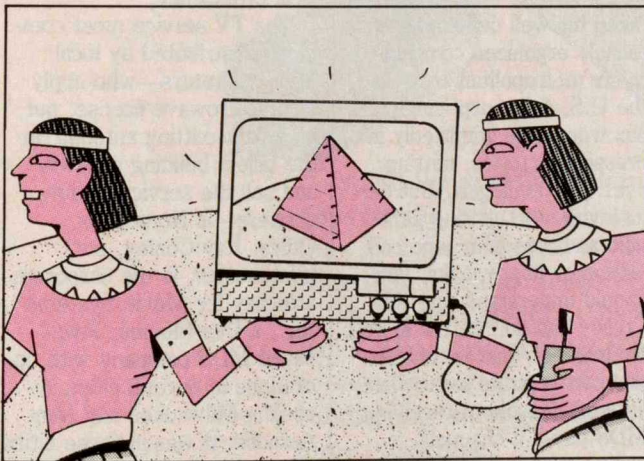
The SX-64 travels well. I've taken mine to Las Vegas, Chicago, and numerous other locales without any trouble. Disk drives are usually somewhat frail and don't take jostling well, but SX-64's engineering is excellent and I haven't had any problems with the computer (my car should be as reliable).

—Tom Benford

Infidel Macintosh

As your disk drive grinds away, the windswept sea of desert sand surrounds you. You awaken from a drugged sleep and your parched lips crack and bleed. Your throat burns from lack of water. Your head swims with the drugged nausea your companions left you to die with. As you raise your weakened frame, you enter the world of *Infidel*, first in Infocom's "Tales of Adventure" text series.

The colorful folder accompanying the disk contains just enough information to get our wrecked hero out of his cot. In this game you



will likely stumble upon a vellum map, a partial hieroglyphic translation, some letters, and an instruction book. Ready yourself for an assault on the hidden pyramid, you discover the difference between the last interactive game you played and Infocom's Interlogic program. The vocabulary is extensive. Commands are easily accepted. You never need to "word guess." The game responds as an adversary, then as a comrade. It warns you of the Nile alligators and

then leads you into the desert to die. It laughs and eggs you on toward the pyramid, dropping hints and clues—and it's entertaining.

It is not, however, a forgiving game. Our parched hero spends a lot of time (and many lives) dragging his heels in the hot sand. After all, finding a hidden pyramid is not an easy matter. There is a way around all this plodding, though some may be inclined to call it cheating. For a nominal fee Infocom will supply the impatient adven-

BEST SELLERS/ HOME

1. **Flight Simulator II.** C64, AP. Sublogic.
2. **Summer Games.** AP, C64, AT. Epyx.
3. **Millionaire.** MAC, AP, C64, IBM, AT. Bluechip.
4. **Flight Simulator.** IBM. Microsoft.
5. **Seastalker.** MAC, C64, IBM, AP, AT. Infocom.
6. **Sorcerer.** C64, MAC, AT, IBM, AP, TRS. Infocom.
7. **Sargon III.** AP, C64, IBM. Hayden.
8. **Ultima III.** AP, AT, IBM, C64. Origin Systems.
9. **Beyond Castle Wolfenstein.** C64, APc. Muse.
10. **Zaxxon.** AT, AP, APc. Dassoft.

BEST SELLERS/ RECREATION

1. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, IBM, C64, AT, APc. Broderbund.
2. **Print Shop.** AP. Broderbund.
3. **Mac the Knife.** MAC. Miles Computing.
4. **Clickart.** MAC. T/Maker.
5. **Dollars & Sense.** IBM, AP, APc. Tronix/Monogram.
6. **Home Acct.** TIP, EPS, AT, C64, IBM, TRS, AP, APc. Continental.
7. **Paperclip Word Processor.** C64. Batteries Included.
8. **Homeword.** C64, AP, AT. Sierra On-Line.
9. **S.A.M.** AP, AT, C64. Tronix/Monogram.
10. **Micro Cookbook.** APc, IBM, AP, APc. Virtual Combinatics.

Legend: AP-Apple, APc-Apple IIc, APe-Apple IIe, AT-Atari, C-64-Commodore 64, COM-Commodore, Pet/CBM, CP/M-5¼" and 8" formats, DEC-DEC Rainbow, EPS-Epson QX-10, IBM-IBM-PC, MAC-Apple Macintosh, PCjr-IBM, PCjr, TIP-Texas Instruments Professional, TRS-TRS-80, VIC-Commodore Vic-20, VTR-Victor 9000, WNG-Wang Personal Computer, ZEN-Zenith 100.

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turer with a hidden answer clue book. Using a special highlighter, the true path to the pyramid appears in this journal. Some things are sacred, however, and once you reach the pyramid, toss the crib sheet aside. The interior adventure is too exciting and the ending is too delightfully infuriating to merely read. Two hints: Don't let anything stand in your way. And keep a glass of water nearby.

—Robert Norden

Floppy Disks

The International Tape/Disc Association recently recommended that makers of floppy disks package their products with coded designations to avoid confusion. For example, a single-sided disk would be "1S," a double-sided one "2S," double-density "2D," and so on. We think this isn't such a good idea. Most floppies *already* are labeled in plain English. Why learn more letters and numbers?

—Doug Garr