

**FOCUS**

The magazine for members of

*The* **ARM**  
*Club*



**Reports from  
the Shows**

**New Discounts  
Scheme**

**Video Editing**

**SCSI Cards**

**Pretty Good Privacy**

**Issue 27 — Autumn 1998**

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# The Rising Sun

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The magazine has a colour picture of Phoebe on the cover with the headline *Acorn's Phoebe: Rising Sun?*

If you have seen all the Acorn magazines but missed this, don't be surprised. The magazine concerned is the digital edition of *Photon*, which is read by professional photographers rather than computer enthusiasts. This is the magazine which, we reported in our Spring issue, now has a regular page on using the Risc PC for photographic work.

As well as this, the current issue has two more Acorn articles. There is a separate report on the Phoebe's debut at Wakefield and some of the new software on view there and an additional two-page illustrated article by photographer Dave Hyett on how he is using a StrongARM Risc PC in his move from darkroom colour printing to digital work.

Photon's Digital Edition Editor, Richard Kilpatrick, who reported on the Wakefield Show, says he has been

amazed by the attention his Acorn articles have attracted.

In this instance, Acorn appears to be on the ball and has responded with a full page, full colour, advertisement for the forthcoming Acorn World Show, where photographers who have found the articles interesting may be tempted to go to find out more.

Eureka of course strongly features the debut of Phoebe and Peanut with a full report and assessment by David Ruck in this issue. There are also separate reports on Wakefield and other recent shows and the new software to be seen at them. Almost everyone reading Eureka is already an Acorn enthusiast, needing no convincing on the potential that Phoebe offers. Magazines, such as Photon, with its well-informed Editor, are the finest advocates to bring Phoebe's powers to the attention of those unaware of the advantages it offers.

**Peter Jennings**

*All opinions expressed in Eureka are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Club or its Committee members and officers.*

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**Purpose:** Match Wine to Food

**Expert:** Rebecca L. Shalfield

**Rule #0:** ""

IF Main Course=Red Meat

THEN *Wine Served* =Red CF: 100% Priority: 0

**Rule #1:** ""

IF Main Course=Poultry

AND Variety of Poultry=Turkey

THEN *Wine Served* =Red CF: 100% Priority: 0

**Rule #2:** ""

IF Main Course=Poultry

AND Variety of Poultry NOT= Turkey

THEN *Wine Served* =White CF: 100% Priority: 0

**Rule #3:** ""

IF Main Course=Fish

THEN *Wine Served* =White CF: 100% Priority: 0

**Goal:** *Wine Served*

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# Phoebe And Peanut

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## Phoebe 2100

Since the Risc PC was launched four years ago there has been an enormous advance in processing power, and plummeting price of memory has led to vast amounts now being fitted to

possible after a few days, why a new case? Well there are several reasons why the Phoebe motherboard couldn't be made to fit in the old Risc PC case. First is physical space; the board wouldn't fit and there would be no place to fit the new PCI expansion

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*They sound like characters from an American strip cartoon rather than the stars of the Wakefield Show. David Ruck reports and assesses Phoebe and Peanut.*

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machines as standard. Thanks to Acorn's vision this one design has been able to grow, having gained a 7× speed increase thanks to the StrongARM processor, and mine has 8× more memory and 14× more hard disc storage added to it over the years. Now Acorn have launched the next generation of machine to replace it. Some people are going to say it's a shocking colour, some are going to say it has a silly name, but what has it got to convince me to replace my much loved Risc PC?

The first think you notice about the new machine is that it is yellow, but trying to get beyond that, and it is

cards. Secondly the faster speed signals on the new motherboard really require a metal case to prevent the signals leaking out and interfering with other equipment such as televisions and radios. And I suppose thirdly, Acorn wanted a radical new look for their flagship workstation.

The new case is very nice however. It is based on the new NLX tower standard which allows easy change of all components with the minimum of unscrewing and unplugging. The expandable sliced design of the Risc PC is much admired, but loses some of its charm when trying to hack out a 3.5" bay (especially on the first



generation slices), or having to take all the expansion cards out to fit more memory. Whilst the new case is larger than a 2 slice RISC PC (at 450×450×190mm) it offers more internal space allowing three 5.25" bays and one 3.5" bay on the front (one of each occupied by the standard CD ROM and floppy disc respectively) plus a further two 3.5" bays internally, one containing the standard 6.4GB hard disc. All these have sliding mountings making it very easy to add new components. Whilst the case can be opened with twist fittings, screw holes are present

allowing things to be made more secure if in an environment where things might be prone to wandering off. The entire motherboard can be changed (should an upgrade become available) by simply opening the bottom of the case and sliding it out, all connections including power are mounted along the rear edge of the circuit board so there's nothing to unplug apart from any modules and the backplane. It's just a shame we won't be forced to take advantage of this neat feature as much as PC users! Other nice touches on the case include the headphone and microphone

sockets on the front, and speaker sockets on the rear – and nowhere near the reset switch!

The main boost in performance comes from the vastly increased speed of the mother board, which now runs at 64MHz and uses SDRAM, which is faster development of DRAM. Although the StrongARM gave an incredible shot in the ARM (oops pun!) to the Risc PC, we have not seen what it is fully capable of, freed from the restrictions of the Risc PC's slow 16MHz bus. Even with the same 233MHz SA Phoebe will be between two and four times faster overall. Simple benchmarks will not show the full story, but real uses of the machine such as working with large images involving disc and memory access will really fly in comparison with our existing systems.

Whilst some people will be disappointed that the StrongARM is the same 233MHz as you can get in a J233, this is all Acorn can promise at the moment, as ARM Ltd want to be the first to announce any new processor developments. Following Intel's purchase of the chip fabrication plant from Digital (the

co-developers of the StrongARM), and their interest in developing the StrongARM architecture further, the chip plant is being uprated. This means it is almost certain that StrongARMs in the region of 400MHz will be available by the time of the Phoebe launch, or slightly after. As in the Risc PC the processor is on a separate card to allow easy upgrading. The card is smaller and contains far fewer components than the current StrongARM card so should be cheaper too. The other question everyone was asking is about hardware floating point, the answer from Acorn is a definite "not available", but who knows if Intel and ARM's plans may include this in the future.

Although details are sketchy at this stage, further performance gains might come from the multi-processor capability that has been designed into the system. It will be possible to use up to four StrongARMs in the machine. Initially only operating systems such as varieties of UNIX will be able to take advantage of this. It remains to be seen what use RISC OS or its successor will be able to make of this feature.

Phoebe retains the the ability to use existing Acorn DEBI or 'podule' expansion cards with a three slot back plane being provided. This being due more to physical constraints within the case rather than an electrical limitation. But one of the most exciting features of Phoebe is the new support of industry standard PCI expansion cards. That is the normal horrible phrase they use for PC only stuff, but PCI is used on PCs, Macs and UNIX workstations, hence there is a vast range of different cards available for it. This ranges from complicated specialist equipment such as video capture cards, to cheap off the shelf network and SCSI cards. The PCI expansion bus supports four cards and runs at 33MHz, offering much greater performance than the DEBI system, giving a theoretical maximum transfer rate of 132MB/s.

The benefit to the user is obvious, certain commodity items such as network cards for the Acorn have always been vastly more expensive than their PC alternatives due to the lower volume of the market. Now Acorn suppliers will be able to buy in a cheap PCI card and just supply a RISC OS driver for it. At the more

sophisticated end of the market, high specification cards too costly to develop in small numbers will now become available to us. Companies such as ANT, Cumana and Irlam are already working on PCI drivers for network cards, SCSI and Video systems. Irlam even had a PCI video capture card working on one of the first Phoebe prototypes only hours after receiving it, and were brave enough to demonstrate it at the Wakefield show.

Hopefully this won't see the end of the Acorn hardware manufacturers, those companies with podule cards providing unique features will be able to redesign them for PCI and open up new markets for themselves in the process. This would be good for them, but unlike porting software over to different platforms should not lead to the neglect of the Acorn market, as it is much easier to develop cards using drivers written for RISC OS than with the many confused PC systems (16bit/Win95/Win98/WinNT), making ours the ideal prototyping platform.

Video Phoebe's video system is evolutionary rather than



revolutionary, with a VIDC20 working at twice the speed of previous systems, coupled with 4MB of faster EDO VRAM soldered directly on to the motherboard. Whilst not as ambitious as Peter Bondar's vision of 3 VIDCs in parallel with up to 24MB of VRAM as mentioned at a prevision Acorn World show, this system should give us some very respectable screen resolutions. Such as up to 1280×1024 with 16M colours, and hopefully but subject to final specifications, 1600×1200 in 32K colours, all at higher refresh rates giving less flicker.

Much talk is being made on whether RISC OS could take advantage of 3D accelerated PCI graphics cards. Whilst integration into the desktop would require very clever coding, it certainly would be possible to write a driver for special full screen applications, such as 3D CAD or games.

The audio system has had even more of an enhancement. As well as the CD quality 16bit oversampled sound output that we have enjoyed on later Risc PCs, a Soundblaster™ compatible codec chip has been added. This will give the additional

features of sound sampling, a MIDI interface and software controlled mixing of the sound output from the 16bit sound system and CD audio. The internal speaker is still mono, but should never be necessary as a good quality pair of stereo speakers can be plugged in round the back and automatically switched off by inserting a pair of headphone in the socket on the front. The overall output volume can also be controlled by two purple buttons which form the eyes of the snowman pattern of ventilation holes on the front panel.

The hard disc controller is now fully EIDE/ATA compatible and supports up to four devices. A hard disc and CD-ROM are already provided as standard. UDMA, the latest buzz word in IDE interfaces is not supported, as with most things it turns out to be mostly aimed at improving headline benchmark figures of PCs rather than any practical benefit in real systems. Acorn have discovered that the performance of the alternative PIO mode 4 has proved just as fast, with a maximum sustained transfer rate of 16MB/s, which is a factor of four times better than the fastest system on a Risc PC.

A long called for feature is a second serial port, this is now as standard and is switchable between the usual socket and an IrDA interface. Both ports now support higher baud rates, possibly up to 460KBaud. A standard PC game port has been added giving the option of controlling games using dual joysticks. No network cards are provided as standard and the NIC slot has been deleted, but it is envisaged that existing module cards can be used or cheaper PCI alternatives.

### **PC capability**

Phoebe does not contain a socket for fitting a PC (or other foreign) processor on the motherboard as in the Risc PC. But the advantage of this has diminished greatly since the launch of the first PC cards, with the even best available being very slow in modern PC terms, and costing almost as much as cheap clone. For Phoebe it is envisaged that third party manufacturers would supply 'PC on a PCI card' devices as used on Macs and UNIX workstations. Whilst these have the disadvantage that they cannot share main memory, this is not so important with the low prices these days. It will still be able to access other peripherals such as discs and of

course other PCI cards. The advantages are that these cards are a standard item with a much greater range to choose from, with performance much closer to a real PC. For example a Pentium 200MMX based card can be bought for much less than an Acorn 586 card, and the range includes dual Pentium Pros and even the Pentium II although whether that monstrous brick would physically fit in the case remains to be seen.

All this talk of bus speeds and interface types is all very well, but the main reason people use Acorns is for the RISC OS environment, and Phoebe has a new version addressing several shortcomings in the existing OS and support for new hardware features. Before anyone asks it does not have pre-emptive multitasking or virtual memory which the techies continually whine about, these would introduce too many incompatibilities with few obvious benefits to most users. The aim for Ursula (the code name for RISC OS 4, coming from Phoebe's twin sister in Friends) is to cause far less problems with existing applications than the StrongARM upgrade while providing useful new features.

The main development since RISC OS 3.7 has been the nested window manager, and new toolbox objects that were introduced with Acorn's Web browser and Java projects. These have been incorporated into the OS. The window manager has been further enhanced to support automatic window scrolling whilst dragging selections, this will allow a consistent feel across all applications, and has been used in the new filer too.

One of the things that has made RISC OS difficult to use is its restriction of 10 characters for filenames on the default ADFS filing system and its limit of 77 files per directory. For people wanting to author web sites this has forced the use of third party tools which have often proved to be unreliable.

### **Long filenames**

This has been addressed allowing long filenames up to 255 characters and a maximum of over 80,000 files in each directory which should be more than adequate. The filer has also been altered to improve its display when long filenames might cause the display to look untidy, by truncating the name after a user specified width.

At the same time Acorn have made changes to the underlying disc format to make more efficient use of space on large discs, alleviating the need for partitioning and extending the maximum disc size to 128MB.

!Configure has been completely rewritten to allow additional modules to be added by third party hardware manufacturers. It now works in a much more consistent way and has new sections for adding programs to pre and post desktop parts of the boot sequence which has often been a source of confusion to users.

### **Help system**

The Help system has also been written, whilst requiring no change to any of your applications, help messages are now delivered in popup window near the pointer after it has been still for a configurable amount of time (similar to the third part bubble help utility). This makes it far easier to use as the help appears where you are looking rather than in a window that may be covered up down the bottom of the screen somewhere. The built-in help on window furniture can be turned off, so you only get help on things you don't know, and you

should be able to leave it running all the time without it being a hindrance.

The other system to get a complete work over is CDFS, which has better support for various CD formats including the new mixed audio and data tracks often found on CD singles these days. Filetypes should now be correctly interpreted without the need for !CDFix, however some non-standard PC CD-ROMs might still cause difficulty. Drivers should be easier to write for new CD drives and the performance of the whole system has been improved.

Pinboard has been enhanced to tidy up its behaviour for files dragged to it, and for iconised windows. These two types of objects can now be made to automatically arrange themselves neatly in different parts of the screen. Windows also have a new tool gadget to allow easier iconisation. The background picture can now be a JPEG as well as a sprite, and the background colour used around file and iconised window names can be changed from the default grey.

A fun feature is support for animated screensavers. Some will be provided

but many more will be written by third parties now that a consistent programming interface has been provided. The only limit being the imagination and I fully expect your Phoebe to look as impressive when you are not using it as when you are.

Most of the work that went into RISC OS 4 was behind the scenes as far as most users are concerned, with support for the new hardware such as PCI and dual serial ports, but enhancements to the kernel have given significant speed increases in areas such as task switching and screen updating.

### **Desktop make-over**

Lastly the beloved desktop has received a make-over with a new look based on much more detailed and subtly coloured icons. The window furniture remains the same, but new consistently designed file icons give a very professional and pleasing look.

To preserve this you can choose not to allow applications to overwrite the new filetype icons with some horrible old copy. Hopefully software authors will release new matching application icon sets that can be dropped over

existing programs so they fit in with the smooth new look.

**Conclusion** If you are using a machine that predates the Risc PC, and are thinking of upgrading the choice is clear if you want to carry on in modern Acorn computing – come on isn't it about time you dusted off your wallet, you can't expect Acorn to be around for ever if you don't buy something now and again! But what if you have a top of the range StrongARM Risc PC, what is the main reason you should consider getting a Phoebe?

### **Speed increase**

Going back to the launch of the Risc PC with ARM610 only offered about a 40% speed increase over an A5000, whereas the Phoebe 2100 promises to be 200% to 400% faster. But speed shouldn't be your only criteria, it won't enable you to do anything new.

The main selling point of the Risc PC was its enhanced graphics capability and expandability, giving freedom from restrictions such as memory size and processor speed. Now we have been treated to this concept we expect that Phoebe will be the same, and it is,

upping the limits for screen resolutions/colours, plus memory and disc sizes that should not be exhausted for a good number of years. The only area of expandability that is not as well catered for is the case, but as it is equivalent to a three or four slice Risc PC it should be adequate for all but the rocket ship owners amongst us.

### **PCI slots**

I think the main reason for upgrading will be the new PCI slots, these will open up so many new and exciting applications to the Acorn owner, as well as cheaper peripherals. A number of Acorn companies are working to have a range of cards available by the time Phoebe is on general sale at Acorn World in October. I expect this to give as greater boost to the platform as when the first batch of 24bit photorealistic painting packages came out for the Risc PC, it will only be a matter of time before you get a craving for something fast and yellow.

Phoebe will be on sale at Acorn World for £1500+VAT without monitor and with a range of deals including 14" and 17" monitors.

## Phoebe Features

### Hardware

- New NLX tower case design.
- 233 MHz Strong ARM processor. (initially)
- 64MHz 32bit wide system bus.
- Faster SDRAM 32MB standard, expandable to up to 512MB.
- Enhanced video system with 4MB of EDO VRAM.
- 16 bit sound with Soundblaster™ compatible codec and mixer.
- New support for PCI expansion cards plus Acorn DEBI cards .
- 6.4GB hard disc and 32× CD-ROM as standard, up to 4 E-IDE devices.
- Dual Serial ports and IrDA.

### Software

- Nested Window Manager.
- Long filenames and over 80,000 files per directory.
- Hard discs of up to 128MB and more efficient use of space.
- New configuration utility.
- New help system.
- New CDFS.
- Enhanced pinboard.
- Animated screensavers.
- Kernel speed increases.
- New look with 256 colour icons.

## The Peanut

**Psst... want a new  
RISC OS  
PORTABLE?**

**See it at  
Wakefield.**



Immediately after the first mysterious ‘peanut’ advert appeared in the Acorn User, the Acorn Internet newsgroups went wild with speculation on the nature of the new portable. Since the A4 went out of production, people have been crying out for a RISC OS portable, Acorn seem to have let us down, with one promising prototype after another failing to reach the market. Now along comes an unnamed third party offering a portable, but what type? Rumours where rife and I rashly said I’d buy anything from the size of a palm top to a luggable (as the first suitcase size portable Compaq PCs were nick-named) as long as it ran RISC OS.

But the nature of a portable computer really demands more thought should be given to the purchase than that. Because so much is crammed in a

small space, portables tend not to offer much in the way of upgradability, and often tend to cost more than even a better equipped desktop machine. The launch of Phoebe might also be competing for your money, so you need to consider carefully what use you will be making of the portable, and if its specifications meet your requirements.

The people behind the Peanut were revealed at Wakefield, to everyone's surprise, to be Innovative Media Solutions. Whilst better known for producing software rather than hardware, they have brought together a collaboration between Acorn and Interconnex UK Ltd to develop the portable. Although this will be the first RISC OS machine not made by Acorn, there is no need to worry that this design is not up to the high standard we are used to as official technical co-operation has been given.

The Peanut was revealed to be a sleek black machine based on a Twin Head PC portable case. Twin Head have a good reputation in the PC portable market where reliability is often a problem, but often due more to the PC

electronics as the case. It boasts a large clear 12.1" screen, which is based on the TFT technology which is far better than the cheaper dual scan ones. Having compared both types of screen on other portables I am very glad of this, it means a much larger visible angle, no losing the mouse pointer, and no nausea when moving or scrolling windows. The resolution of the screen is 800×600, currently 256 colours is supported on the prototype, but it should also support 32 thousand colours on the finished machine.

The mouse pointer is controlled by a glide point mouse pad, which works very well under RISC OS, I have disliked these in the past mainly due to how easy it is to move directories on the Windows filer accidentally, but RISC OS doesn't suffer from such bad design. There are only two mouse button under the glide point pad being used as select and adjust, with the menu button being supported on the keyboard by the 'Windows' menu button, which is very conveniently located just above the pad, to the right of the space bar. The glide point pad supports double clicking by tapping twice with your finger, and similarly

dragging by tap and drag – no having to hold down any keys as with other alternative mouse systems. With practice it is even possible to drag objects by more than one pad length by walking your fingers. I was very pleased with the feel of the pad and was comfortable with it after a few minutes. I may not even need to use an external mouse as other systems force you to, if you are doing more than a few minutes of serious work. The keyboard is full size with 88 keys, and feels very nice with a good degree of travel and a positive click.

The portable will contain a 1.6GB hard disc which should be more than adequate to store all your favourite RISC OS application and a shed full of data. Getting programs and data in and out is made easy by a built in floppy and 20× CD-ROM drive. These are fixed in the case so it is not possible to swap one for an additional battery for example, however battery life should be very good, it is quoted at 4 hours for the PC based portable. Although the ARM chip is far more energy efficient than a Pentium this is not as bigger factor, as most people think, as most of the power is consumed by the screen and the hard

disc. Because RISC OS does need to continually access the hard disc like certain other operating systems, at least six hours and maybe even up to eight hours of operation away from a plug will be possible.

Other forms of interfacing to the outside world are via serial and parallel ports. No decision has yet been made on the type of networking, whether it will be built into the motherboard, supplied via a PC card (formerly PCMCIA) or via a parallel port adaptor. The built in solution would add to the basic cost of the machine, the PC card needs support in RISC OS (expensive to write, but would be very useful as it opens the door to PC card modems and other devices), and the parallel port adaptors are very difficult to obtain (people are still after them for their A4s). IMS are being pressed to come up with a solution as networking to a desktop computer will be a priority for many people.

Sound is also well supported with stereo speakers built into the case, and a headphone socket for quiet usage or connection to speakers. A PS2 mouse can be plugged in, if you can't get to



grips with the glide point, and also an external monitor via standard VGA socket. Although it is not yet known if the LCD screen can be used at the same time, which is very useful for presentations so you can look at the audience and not the main screen behind you.

I have left one of the most important points until now, that of the processor the machine is based on. It will use an ARM7500FE as in the A7000+ and Acorn Network Station, it may even run at a slightly higher speed due to the RAM mounted on the main circuit board. Whilst the ARM7500FE is a very good processor running at Risc PC700 speeds despite the lack of VRAM, and sometimes even faster because of its built in floating point hardware, those of us used to the StrongARM will be a bit disappointed that the portable isn't based on it. It is understandable at this time, because a portable requires an integrated chip as there really isn't room for anything else, the only such StrongARM chip is the SA1100, and unfortunately its display capabilities are not based on the VIDC design and so isn't supported by RISC OS. Adding this support would be a large project and

would almost certainly lead to software incompatibilities. It is possible that a more suitable SA chip might be available in the future, but whether it would be viable to create another portable around it in such a small market is another matter.

Another compromise to expandability due to the constraints of the portable design, is the lack of SIMM sockets for memory, instead either 16MB or 32MB will be soldered directly onto the circuit board. This should be more than adequate for the majority of RISC OS applications, as it is unlikely that you would be using memory intensive applications such as very large image manipulation on a portable. The only worry being the memory hungry nature of JAVA applications, which will become more popular and more memory hungry during the lifetime of the machine.

Of course I haven't yet mentioned cost and availability. IMS, who are intending a short production run of about 50 machines, were refusing to take any advanced orders at Wakefield, preferring to concentrate on getting the design perfected before announcing a delivery date, however

it is hoped to be ready to order at Acorn World. The price will be around £1500+VAT which is very reasonable for a portable, being only a few hundred pounds more than the same Twin Head case containing the 166MHz Pentium based PC innards, which will always be cheaper due to far greater production quantities.

### Conclusion

My criteria for a portable computer is for something I can use to do roughly the same sort of work I use my desktop machine for, but when I'm in hotels, other offices, or just fancy a change of scenery and want to work in the garden. This counts out the smaller sub-note book computers, and the only other choice would have been for a PC based system which I would be loath to use. The Peanut is a very good design, reasonably priced, and will enable me to use all my existing RISC OS software on the move. It suffers from the expandability limitations common to all portables, the most serious in my opinion being the speed, not so much at the moment but in comparison to how quick the Phoebe will be when faster StrongARMs are available. I would also like a larger screen say

1024×768 although this would add several hundred pounds to the price, and I need more information on networking before I make my final decision. But all things considered I really want the Peanut and the freedom to work away from the same old four walls that it will bring.

### Peanut Features

- ARM7500FE processor.
- 12.1" TFT screen.
- 800×600 in 256 colours.
- 16 bit sound and CD Audio.
- 16MB or 32MB EDO memory.
- 1.6GB Harddisc.
- 20× CD-ROM drive.
- 3.5" floppy drive.
- 88 key full size keyboard.
- 2 button Glidepoint mouse pad.
- RISC OS 3.71.
- Battery management

### Software

- NiMH battery giving 4-8 hours.
- External mains transformer.
- Ports for parallel, serial, VGA, keyboard, mouse and headphones.
- Dimensions 297×236×47mm.
- Weight 3.5Kg.

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## Photodesk Plug-in 2

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This plug-in seems to have crept into the Acorn list of graphic programs with very few trumpets or bugle calls. Yet it is a very useful piece of software to add to what is already one of the best image manipulating packages anyway.

The Plug-in effects provided are:

Chrome  
Posterise  
Colour Contour  
Twirl  
Glaze

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*Christopher Jarman adds 10 more effects to his pictures with the latest Plug-in for Photodesk and finds it just the job for filling in a wet Tuesday afternoon.*

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Installation from the HD disc and the manual in HTML could not be clearer.

It is tempting just to copy out the manufacture's instructions verbatim for this review. The HTML pictures and explanation given are extremely helpful, and a model of how accompanying on-screen manuals for graphic software should be. For example, I have never known until seeing these examples, what most of the filters in this sort of program did!

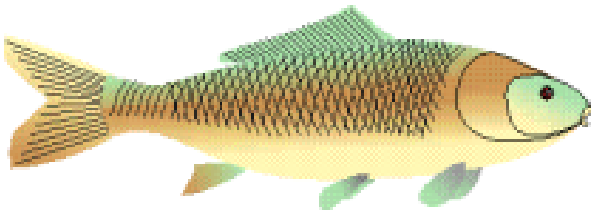
Even a Webster browser is provided for those punters who might have been down a pothole for the last five years!

Raindrops  
Dimple  
Channel Map  
Median Filter  
Crystallise

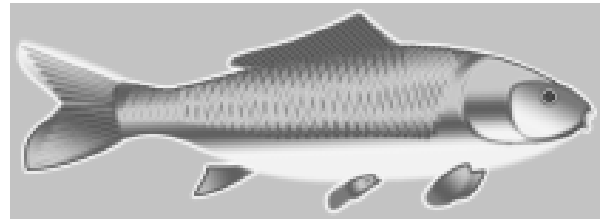
I will describe just one or two in detail:

### **Chrome**

This is self explanatory. It makes any picture look chromium plated. It sure does too, but I found that the default setting of 100% is far too strong for most effects. Once you have set everything lower, you start to see some great fun!



*Carp (original)*



*...and chromed*

This is one area where you really benefit from playing about on a wet Tuesday afternoon.

What do you mean, you have to work?

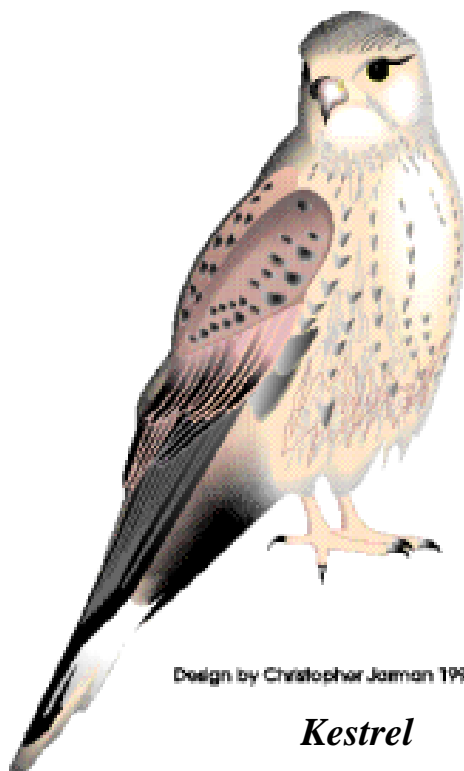
particularly valuable if you want to turn a sharply defined vector drawing into a soft and subtle bitmap. I chose to convert my Kestrel this way using maximum effect. This is particularly useful because Photodesk accepts Artworks files.

### **Posterise**

This effect will have to be tried out in many situations. What it does is to simplify colours to a certain extent, and soften the picture. It is

### **Twirl**

This gives a kind of whirlpool effect in any picture.



*Kestrel*



*...posterised*

### **Glaze**

I liked this one particularly as it makes a photo appear as if it was viewed through some old-fashioned hand-made glass.

Raindrops & Dimple are fairly self evident, but Channel Map is hard to describe because I don't understand what it does, except that it distorts the picture rather like a reflection in a polished surface.

### **Median Filter**

This is a way to filter out 'noise' from a graphic file. It is most easily demonstrated by spraying dots on a picture, then putting it through the filter to get rid of them. I have a digitiser which saves out pics from Video and TV with quite a bit of 'noise' so this will come in very useful.

### **Crystallise**

My favourite I have saved until last and it is worth the cost of the Plug-in on its own. If you have longed to be able to bask in the admiration of your family and friends. If you want to be able to send them a really artistic



### ***Raindrops***

greetings card seemingly painted by your own hand, then drop a pleasant, neat little photo of a landscape or a portrait into Photodesk, select Crystallise and you have a post-impressionist oil painting! It's good, it's very good, and it's yours for just under £20 from Spacotech.

---

#### **Photodesk Plug-in 2**

**Price: £19.95 inc VAT**

**Site licence:**

**Supplier: Spacotech**

**21 West Wools, Portland**

**Dorset DT5 2EA**

**Tel: 01305 822753**

**Fax: 01305 860483**

**Email:**

**rachelle@spacotech.co.uk**

**Web: www.spacotech.co.uk**

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# Boot File Favourites

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While I have noticed various !Boot applications in both magazines and PD libraries, I felt that there must be other users who are looking for a more simple-to-use arrangement and so decided to take the plunge and write to Eureka with my thoughts.

First we have:

**ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.!Boot**

ADFS::4.\$Utils.!Palette  
Iconsprites ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.Sprites  
Toolsprites ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.Tools

This loads the palette, sprites and tools of my choice.

---

*It's always interesting to see how other users set up their computers. Steven Palmer tells us the favourite programs in his Boot files which load up on his A5000.*

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I hope that the following details of my !Boot set up will be of use to all pre Risc PC users. I have briefly explained the various utilities which I find to be most useful on my A5000.

It would also be interesting to see which applications are used by other members. If they wish to write to me with details of their own files, I would be willing to collate them with a view to passing them onto Eureka. Perhaps if enough write in, The Arm Club could compile a 'best of' selection for possible inclusion on PD CD3? (hint, hint).

Next is:

**ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.!Run**

ADFS::4.\$Utils.WelcomeScr  
ADFS::4.\$Utils.!Noise  
ADFS::4.\$Utils.!Filer+Ptc  
Desktop-file ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.DeskBoot

**WelcomeScr** alters the start up screen to include my name and postcode.

**!Noise** produces a friendly "hello" spoken in a sampled voice.

**!Filer+Ptc** causes all icon dragging to be solid.

**Desktop -file** runs the DeskBoot file.

Then comes the main program:

**ADFS::4.\$.!Boot.DeskBoot**

WimpSlot -next 640K	Pin ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Today 1090 570
ChangeDynamicArea -FontSize 32K	Pin ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!AcornLogo. 0-2
ChangeDynamicArea -SpriteSize 32K	248
ChangeDynamicArea -RamFsSize 0K	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.Speed!
ColourTransLoadings &2 &4 &1	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!ArcFSr/w
Filer_OpenDir ADFS::Hard Dia.\$ 246	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!BabyBlues
918 768 380 -sn -li	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Memphis
Filer_boot ADFS::4.\$!ArcFSr/w	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Tim
Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Scrap	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!TreeMenu
Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!System	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Yass2.!Run
Filer_boot ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!AcornLogo	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!OhShit
WimpMode 27	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!AllChange
Set Draw\$Options "P4S Z1:3 MS"	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.Toggle
Set Paint\$Options "C+S"	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.ShrinkRMA
Set Edit\$Options f8 b0 l0 m12 h12 w12	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!BootPSLCD
r Set Alarm\$Options -timeout "10" -	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!SpeedyCD
weekwork 62 -	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Recycler
Format "%z12:%mi:%se%pm %zdy	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Memorizer
%st %mo %ce%yr"	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.AltClick
Run Resources:\$!Apps.!Alarm	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Blink
Alarms	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!EasiFiler
Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Hal	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!MacWheel
pinboard	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!StartUp
Backdrop -c ADFS::4.\$!Utils.bart+sonic	Filer_run ADFS::4.\$!Utils.IClear
Pin ADFS::4.\$!Utils.!Inoc3 1090 430	

**SpriteSize** increased to 32K for Memphis to use.

**Filer\_OpenDir** ADFS pins the root directory in the middle of the screen.

**AcornLogo** needs to be booted first, before running, to properly.

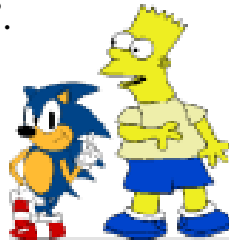
**Set** sets up Draw, Paint, Edit and Alarm with various options.



### *AcornLogo*

**!Hal** is a speech sample from ‘2001, A Space Odyssey’ — “I’m completely operational and all my circuits are functioning perfectly”.

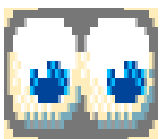
**Backdrop** loads a sprite of Bart Simpson with Sonic.



The three **Pins** stick the icons for Today, Inoculator 3 and the Acorn logo on the pinboard.

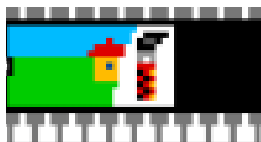
**!Speed** is the speed-up utility from Clares.

**!ArcFS** is the best compression system, in my opinion. It avoids the horrid looking duplication of icons on the icon bar which is a ‘feature’ of Computer Concepts’s Compression.



**!BabyBlues** has a pair of eyes following every move of your mouse.

**!Memphis** is a great improvement on the RamDisc — being resizeable at any time.



**!Tim** is a speaking clock.

**!TreeMenu** allows you to navigate your hard disc without opening and closing directories and applications.

**!Yass2** is a combined Free Ram display with screensaver.

**!OhShit** is an alternative to the standard error beep!

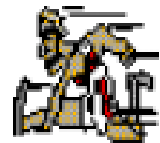
**!AllChange** displays a different background automatically.

**!Toggle** causes a MENU click at the bottom of the screen to toggle the icon bar to the front or back.

**!ShrinkRMA** shrinks the RMA to conserve memory.

**!BootPSLCD** boots my Cumana double-speed CD-ROM drive.

**!SpeedyCD** creates a cache to speed up access of CD-ROM files recently



seen (or something like that anyway!).



**!Recycler** is the demo of an excellent dustbin and file retrieval utility.

**!Memoriser** stores recently used directories and files for quick access.

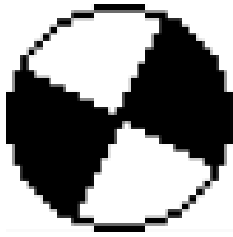
**!AltClick** allows any hard-to-get-at windows to be ALT clicked to the front.

**!Blink** changes the Switcher icon into a more friendly looking one.



**!Easifiler** loads your most useful applications into the Apps icon.





**!MacWheel** alters the standard hourglass icon. Borrowed from something called an Apple Mac?

**!StartUp** runs a random sound sample on start up — current favourites are Uvavu, OhGod and Buzz3 from Shooting Stars, Black Adder and Toy Story respectively.

**IClear** allows you to double click in a save box, clearing the default name immediately.

Finally, the desktop publishing programs:

**ADFS::4.\$.DTP.DTP**

**Fontsize** is altered to 256K due to the extra fonts being used and to assist screen redraw time.

**Wimpmode** 28 allows 256 colours.

**Filer\_CloseDir** closes the root directory.

Scrap, Fonts, Printers and TextEase are run.

The **Pins** are my most frequently used applications, directories and TextEase templates.

```
ChangeDynamicArea -FontSize 256K
wimpmode 28
Filer_CloseDir ADFS::4.$
ADFS::4.$.!Scrap
ADFS::4.$.!Fonts
ADFS::4.$.DTP.!Printers
ADFS::4.$.DTP.Textease.!textease
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Textease.!Texte
ase 230 950
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.!Printers 380 950
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.FontFX.!FontFX
530 950
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Pendown+.!Pen
Down+ 680 950
```

```
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Circle Fit.CircleF
it 830 950
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Kelly 230 800
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Sonia 380 800
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Steve 530 800
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Diana 680 800
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.ClipArt 830 800
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Steve.Letter 230
650
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Portrait 380 650
Pin ADFS::4.$.DTP.Landscape 530 650
```

***If you have any Boot files to send to the author he can be contacted at:  
Steven Palmer 7 Penton Place Stoke-on-Trent ST3 3DQ  
Home telephone 01782 343451 Work telephone 01782 232643***

## ***Jargon Buster***

New to the Internet and confused by all those acronyms people use? Tom Hughes explains some of them in the third of our series of Jargon Busters.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Question(s).

HTML: HyperText Markup Language.

RTFM: Read The F..... Manual.

HTTP: HyperText Transfer Protocol (a means of transferring HTML pages across the internet).

IMHO: In My Humble Opinion.

AFAIK: As Far As I Know.

FTP: File Transfer Protocol (a means of transferring files across the internet).

HTH: Hope That Helps.

ROTFL: Rolling On The Floor Laughing.

NNTP: Network News Transfer Protocol (the main means by which news is transferred on the the internet).

URL: Uniform Resource Locator (an abstract means of identifying a resource on the internet).

SMTP: Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (the main means by which mail is transferred on the internet).

RFD: Request For Discussion (usually regarding a possible new newsgroup).

POP3: Post Office Protocol 3 (a means of fetching mail from a remote computer).

CFV: Call For Votes (usually regarding a possible new newsgroup).

RFC: Request For Comments (a document describing some sort of internet protocol or standard).

IMAP : Interactive Mail Access Protocol (a means of accessing mail on a remote computer).

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# Organizer

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**O**rganised at Last! I have been using Schedule on the Pocket Book 2 for a few years and recently upgraded to the Psion 5 and so changed to Agenda. The only thing that I would like is the ability for integrating what's on the Psion to a

this as its idea was good but it was let down by the non-intuitive interface to the desktop. It had its followers but, having tried it out at a dealers for half a day, I found it difficult to use without reading the unfriendly manual. This was the first Acorn

---

*Ralph Sillett gets organised with a shareware program which will look after all your appointments until the year 4000 (note the date to remember to get an upgrade).*

---

program on my Risc PC. It still isn't available as yet although a few people are working towards the integration. This is where (dare I say it?) that the PC scores with programs such as Lotus Organiser and Microsoft's Outlook. Both these applications merge easily using PsiWin 2.1 as supplied with the Series 5.

Until a few months ago there hadn't been a decent, easy to use and friendly Diary program for the Acorn machines since the very unfriendly Almanac from Stallion Software. This company has recently re-emerged and is supposed to be re-writing !Almanac. I would like to see

Diary to include such things as the state of your bank balance (or lack of it) as well as linking all sections.

Chris Morison originally launched !*Organiser* into the Public Domain on the Acorn scene and recently he has renamed the program to !*Organizer* and placed it as Shareware. Registration costs £5. When Chris gets around to it, which I hope is very soon, he will be releasing it as a commercial product and the registration fee will entitle you to a £10 discount.

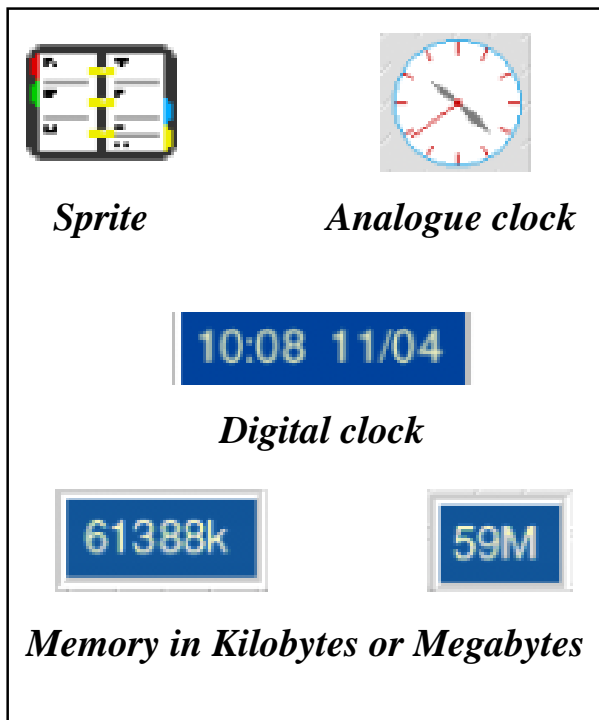
I use !Organizer as I would my Psion 5 Agenda and regularly update it from

my Psion by typing in relevant additions. Although this means typing into two different machines, there is, at the moment, no other way of effecting this task.

!Organizer is the computer version of the old Filofax which was very popular in the 80's and early 90's. In fact I used one extensively until the Pocket Book came along. This program is one of the best programs I have come across for some time. Simplicity always works best.

### Installation

The program installs to the right hand side of the icon bar as one of the following:

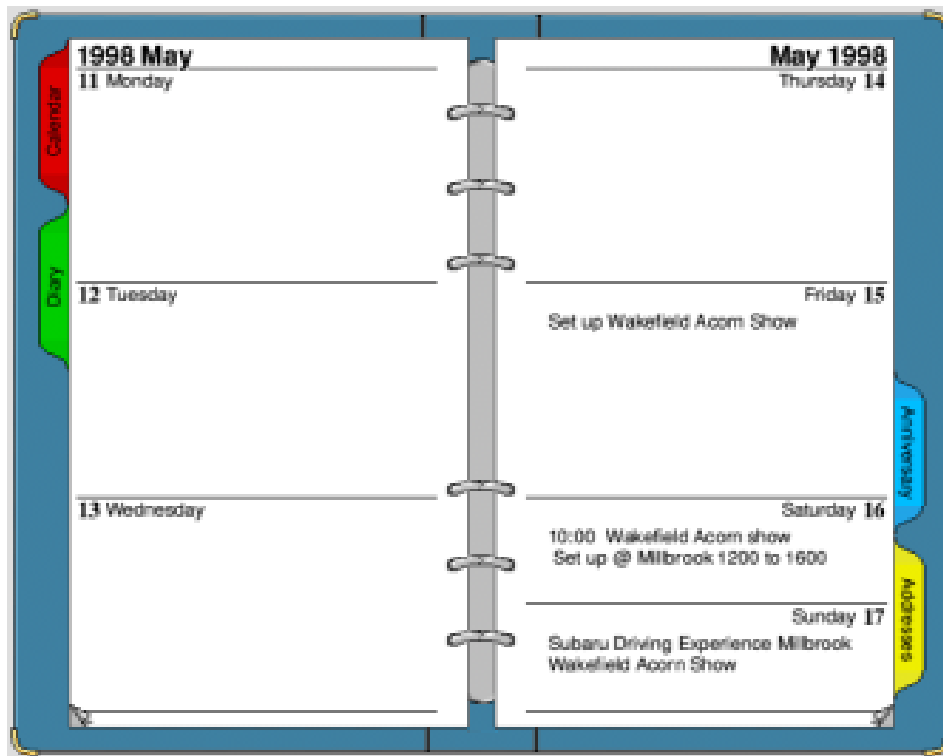


The colours of the clocks and the free memory displays can be changed along with the type of border and colour of text. Also the background of the Filofax style display can be changed.

### Diary

The Diary is the main part of the program and is displayed as a Filofax type, including the rings. The display can be either two days, one week or two weeks with control of the colour of the text, which can be altered to your preferences. Alarms can be set for all entries and even to automate certain tasks, such as backing up important files, and to run certain programs. Examples of this are given in the help file and include the automatic running of a virus protection program once a week to check the hard disc.

The help file can be read as either a text file, a StrongHelp file or as HTML pages. It proved useful to explain certain aspects, such as importing a CSV file to the Address section and automating tasks. Otherwise the program is very user friendly.



*The diary,  
designed in  
FiloFax style.*

### **Anniversary**

This section does what it says. Birthdays, Wedding anniversaries or any date you wish to remember every year. The choice is fairly extensive with the use of wildcards to tell you how old a person is or whether it's a ruby or diamond wedding anniversary. Entries are automatically shown in the Diary.

### **Address Book**

This section is a simply for names and addresses but it is very versatile in that it will accept CSV files from another database such as DataPower. Cut and paste can also be used from other programs or even other databases including DataPower again.

Importing a CSV file is very easy as long as you take the time to read the help file. It explains in detail how to control the way your file is read by !Organizer. If for instance your file has the name in the format "Fred Bloggs" you can ask !Organizer to separate that into First Name and Surname so that your file imports to the correct fields.

The email field if clicked on will bring up your email header to send mail as long as a mail reader, such as !Marcel, is loaded. The web field will do the same thing if your Web browser, such as !Fresco or !Webster, is loaded on the icon bar.

Data can be pasted to a word processor or DTP package by using the *Paste at cursor* option from the menu after clicking with the menu button over an address.

### **Calendar**

This section displays the current year and the day is highlighted as long as your computer is set correctly. You can go backwards or forwards in time by clicking the *page turn* icons at the bottom of the page. These icons are used throughout the program. The calendar will only go back as far as 1800 but I have been forward to the year 4000 with no problem. Who is going to be around by then anyway? The view can be either one or two pages and by clicking on a day this will place the diary to that date so that you can insert some text or an alarm.

### **Wish List**

At the moment the main item that is missing is the ability to print out the information contained in any of the sections. I know that Chris Morison is working on this and it will more than likely be available when he releases the commercial version of !Organizer. As well as the print function my other wish is for compatibility with the

Psion3/5 and Pocket Book I & II. Both of these would make this a truly great program.

### **Conclusion**

This program has made a great impression on me and I feel that it can only get better especially if the items in the wish list are implemented.

We have included a copy on the magazine disc or you can download the latest version from Chris Morison's web site.

Don't forget that it is shareware so please support Chris with future development by sending the registration fee of £5. Mine should be with him by the time you read this.

---

### **Organizer**

Shareware registration: £5

Supplier: Chris Morison

4 Arley Close

Macclesfield

Cheshire

SK11 8QP

Email: mme4cnm6@bham.ac.uk  
or chrismorison@btinternet.com

Web:

[www.arcsite.de/hp/chrismorison/](http://www.arcsite.de/hp/chrismorison/)

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# Pluto

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I have finally got round to reviewing this product. It has taken ages, as a kind of ennui kept coming over me every time I had to sit down and write about it. But let me get one thing straight. I like it, and it is a good piece of software.

Jonathan Duddington's Web page some months ago. I took one look at it then and decided it was far too complicated and erased it. For example, it has 20 help text files with it which alone shows that it is not an easy program to learn.

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*Christopher Jarman logs on to the Internet to try out an alternative news and email reader and writer for Voyager, ANT, Acornet and Termite.*

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Having got that out of the way; it seems to be one of those products that is a very good idea carried out by a single individual, which might have benefitted from the help of a committee. I never thought I would hear myself saying that as it goes against all my instincts!

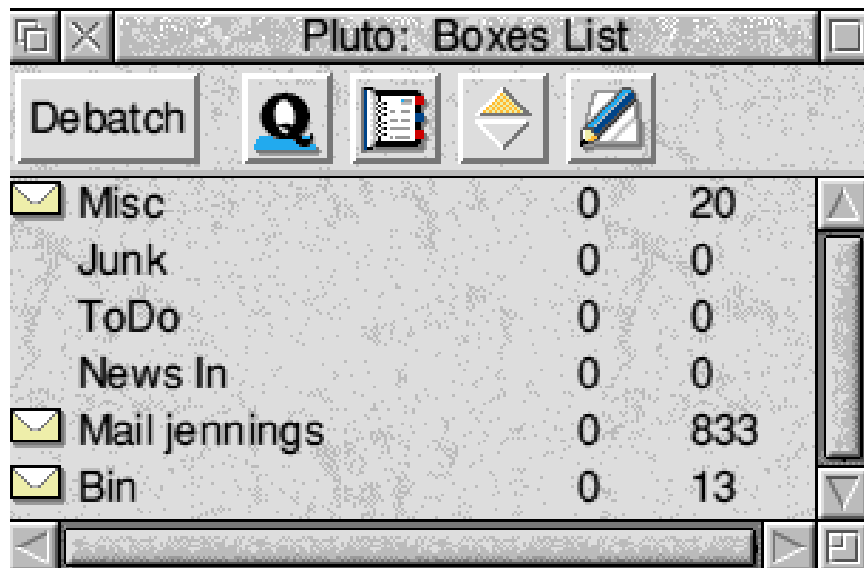
Technically Pluto works well. It does all you would want it to and much much more (actually that is one of my criticisms, it probably does too much).

I believe it was originally designed to replace the News and Mail provision in the Voyager suite only. I downloaded a beta version from

However, seeing it advertised in Archive, I downloaded a newer, time-limited version recently, and tried it again. It has been improved to the extent that it installed with Voyager almost automatically, which was a big plus. I strongly recommend that you download it and try it for yourself. This is an excellent and generous way to introduce customers to new programs by the author.

Once installed, the icon bar icon gives a menu with eight choices. These lead on to 22 more choices of activity, one of which (sorting) leads to 11 more windows to play with! You see what I mean by 'ennui'? Three minutes after

installation you feel as if you have been hit between the eyes by a large manure bag, and strong coffee is called for! In trying to puzzle out what all this stuff was for, I found I could have twenty-two windows



at the same time, all to do with Pluto. This is the ability to choose gone mad! It may also have something to do with the fact that I do not always understand the terms being used, debatching, PGP Keying, and so on.

Now I know Jonathan and respect his programming skills tremendously. His *Speak* module is legendary. I suspect that he is so clever that maybe he just doesn't know when to stop! He has, of course even put his *Speak* module into Pluto. I reckon that had he designed Doom or Quake (which I believe he could have done over a short weekend) they would both have been included too!

So what does Pluto do then? Well it collects, saves and sorts news and email faster than Voyager on its own.

(I have not tested it with the other internet suites, but I have every confidence that it will improve their performance too). It allows you to save your mail and news in various ordered ways, by author, by date by title, length, status (whatever that means!) etc. etc. It also sorts such items as addresses, quoted news, URLs and so on into different coloured text which is pretty and also useful. And finally, with the new Voyager Fresco Web Browser, it is now possible to click onto a web address(URL) that has been quoted in an email or news item, and be transported immediately to that site as long as you are connected. It is important to assert that it does do these things at a cracking speed, once you have worked out what it will do and how to set your options. It will



also read your news and your mail aloud and spellcheck them too if you download the separate spellchecker. Pluto allows you to colour code your email address book, you know, blue for friends, green for vegetarians etc. Mind you, it does this by little boxes of colours against the names, which is nothing like so good as the old Voyager way of colouring the whole name.

This leads me to my main reservations about the program. It is about Style. It just doesn't have any. Technically it works well, but it really needs to be placed in the hands of a designer who could lift it up by its bootstraps and sort it out visually and dare I say it, commercially? At the moment it is like a very complex piece of PD ware which ought to be given away free. To be worth the price which Jonathan obviously needs and deserves for all his effort, it has got to have a better front end and a much simpler interface. Like two or three windows rather than 22!

This is the perfect example of how Acorn programs are suffering from too many good people working independently and not enough money

being invested in the public face and sheer design acceptability of major software. Bill Gates's new Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.01 is freely downloadable from the Internet and from many cover discs. Believe me it is good. No Acorn Internet software can match up to it in any way. But I bet there were more than 100 people working on it.

How effective it would be if Duddington's Pluto was given a cosmetic interface treatment by, say, Sherston? Then I would be writing an even more positive review I am sure.

*If you subscribe to the Pluto newsgroup you may already have seen this review on the Internet, where it was published without the author's consent.*

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#### Pluto

Price: £24 (no VAT or postage)  
with speech and spellcheck £29

with full !Speak application £39

Supplier: Jonathan Duddington

6a Old Mill Avenue

Coventry CV4 7DY

Email: jsd@argonet.co.uk

Web: [www.argonet.co.uk/users/jsd/](http://www.argonet.co.uk/users/jsd/)

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# SCSI Cards For The End User

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Having purchased my first SCSI card a few years back for the A3000, I have been an avid user of SCSI. My SCSI devices comprise Scanner, CD-ROM and numerous hard drives of various sizes from 540MB up to my current 3.2GB

Not being a programmer or that technically minded, although I can fit hard drives and whatever into the machine, I can't program. I plumped for the PowerTec card from Alsystems!! My main reason for this was due to the user interface for

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*A keen user of SCSI devices, Ralph Sillett goes shopping for a new card which doesn't need a programmer or techie to fit it.*

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Quantum. With the A3000 and later the A5000 I used the Oak card which was fine and was a very reliable interface, In fact the lady who purchased the A5000 from me is still using it to help with the writing of a local parish magazine.

setting up. The only problem was that the card still had a number of bugs and so crashed quite often. The card was used for a short time on the A5000 with which I had many problems and in fact re-installed the Oak card.

The Oak card's main criticism from me was that to partition a drive over 512MB in size it was necessary to be able to work your way around the command line and BASIC and this was out of my depth, hence the reason for changing. With the acquisition of a Risc PC 700 and the capacity for greater than 512MB capacity hard drive it was time to change my SCSI card.

When I took delivery of the Risc PC 700, a short time later, in went the PowerTec card and after many phone calls to Alsystems and one thrashed 1GB hard drive the card settled down. At the Acorn World Show 98 Alsystems were doing a service and modification to the cards for free so I duly accepted the offer. In the meantime I had purchased a 3.2GB

Quantum HDD from Dabs Direct. The drive was set up with two partitions of just over 1.5GB each. I had been having a lot of problems especially when trying to archive files but just put it down to program clashes.

On re-installing the card everything seemed to work fine for a short while until I started to copy large directories from one partition to the other to create an image to write to a CD-ROM. I was getting loads of problems but the last straw was when I couldn't access either of the partitions and had to reformat as a last resort. At one stage the icons for the partitions greyed out and when doing a *\*devices* at the command line the only item found was the SCSI card. It was no use trying to ring Alsystems because I had not paid for the Technical Help Service. I had backed up to a load of Zip discs which saved the day (week).

The last straw came when it thrashed another 1GB HDD, which, on sending to Alsystems for checking, was found to be unrecoverable so another HDD bit the dust and this was starting to get expensive. Each of the problems encountered were on a

system correctly set up with regards to termination. What were the alternatives? I had to look for another card.

### **The choice**

The choice is not vast in the Acorn market. In fact up to a few months ago there were only four with Cumana, Castle Technology and ACE from Germany being the others. At Acorn World 97 Eesox launched a new card which they had been working on for some time.

Eesox have been around for some time selling CD-ROMs and HDD to the Acorn market place and have an enviable reputation. I already have one of their SCSI CD-ROMs and above all else their service is very good. They have always returned any of my calls whether left on their answering machine out of office hours or left with whoever answered the phone. I purchased their SCSI card from them at The ARM Club's Open Day event at Merton Court School, Sidcup, in Kent on March 1st.

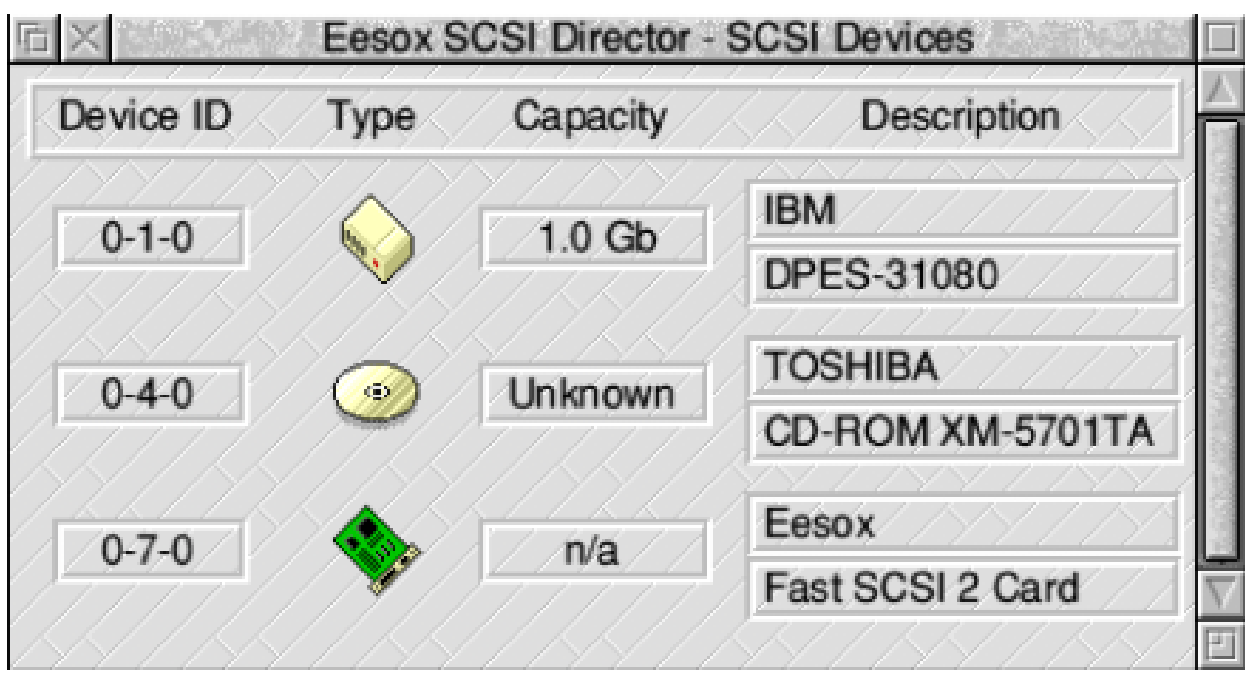
The card was installed a couple of days later. Neil Critchel, from Eesox, had warned me that the card may not recognise both partitions on the 3.2

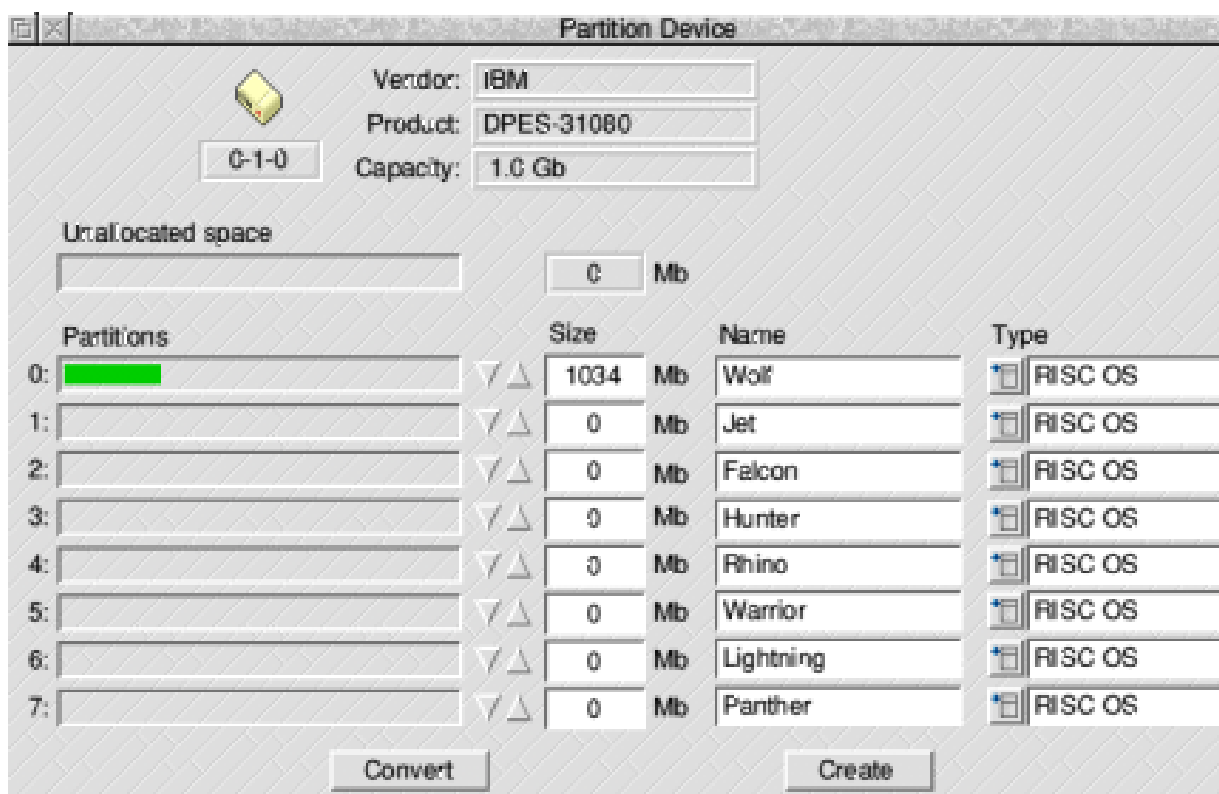
GB HDD which had been formatted by the Alsystems PowerTec card, and to make sure that important files etc were backed up —which I had. My backups where onto Zip discs. It was good of them to warn me. The interface is easy to install and automatically configures and, to coin a phrase by Bill Gates it is truly *plug and play* (if only PCs were).

I booted up and sure enough only one partition was recognised. The floppy disc supplied with the card has the front end program for setting up partitions called !SDirector. On loading the icon appears on the right hand side of the icon bar. A window appears with details of devices attached after clicking on the icon

(see below). !SDirector manages the SCSI devices and performs such operations as Formatting, Verifying, Partitioning and diagnostics testing. All of these operations can be carried out in the background so there's no need to go and make a cup of tea while formatting or verifying; you can still use the computer while these long operations take place.

It was an easy procedure to run convert partition and, you guessed, up pops the second partition, Phew what a relief. Since then I have moved large directories and files from one partition to the other to see if the same problems occurred but so far so good. I fact I have just finished compiling all programs and files on my main





hard drive into archives for backup onto a CD. Over 560MB in archives, all over one weekend. In fact the machine was on for more than 60 hours with only one reset over the period. Since all the files have been backed up to a CD-ROM I have removed the 3.2GB HDD and replaced it with a 1GB IBM drive. The 3.2GB has been installed into my 166 MMX PC (yuk). It needs the larger capacity more than the Acorn for running mostly games, eventually.

Eesox have a free technical support service so no extra costs should occur while I have this card. Alsyste

charge £23.50 (current prices as of 4th April 1998) for their help for a year, after the warranty period of 90 days. Expensive or what? In the PC world this would be seen as OK but not in the Acorn market. Eesox warranty is for 90 days but with free technical support for the life of the card.

### Happy

The Eesox card seems quite happy with the same installation. Only one of my favourite utilities has so far caused the card to crash and that was !MenuBar by Graham Crow, found by process of elimination which I had done with the PowerTec card.

By the time I finished this article I had had the card for two months without any major hiccups. It is nice to have a SCSI card that reminds me of the old OAK card in that you can just forget it's there. Even if you add another device to the system the card finds it without any fuss. I have had three different external hard drives, one each from Quantum, Seagate and an IBM, varying in size from 1GB to 4.3GB, a Canon IX4015 scanner and an Iomega SCSI Zip drive with no problems. At one time I had six devices and left the machine on over the weekend without any major crashes. That is the first time I have been able to do that.

### **Difference in speed**

Many reports on SCSI cards go on about the difference in speed for each card but, to be honest, I can't see any difference. In fact the review in Acorn User issue 189, Christmas 1997, by Stuart Bell stated that the PowerTec card was the fastest with the Eesox card second. To me the Eesox card seemed faster. Am I bothered about one or two MB faster? I don't think so! I would rather go for ease of use and reliability hence my reason for going for the Eesox card in the second instance.

Purchasing the Eesox card was a wise decision, I only wish that they had brought it out a lot earlier. Since I started this article, Eesox have sent me the latest EPROM upgrade which is just as easy as replacing the RISC OS roms in the Risc PC.

For the techno wizards out there, the Eesox card is a SCSI 2 card and supports the Fast SCSI 2 standard as well as being backwards compatible with the SCSI 1 devices and the SCSI 3 draft proposals. The interface features an external SCSI 2 connector, internal box header (50-way) connector, DMA and fast non DMA transfers, and active terminators. The software is upgradable.

The Eesox card supports the extended filecore which allows up to 4GB partitions and up to eight partitions for each device. How much are 32GB drives? The card can be used on any Acorn computers that have a 16 bit I/O slot, such as the Risc PC, A7000, A5000, A3000 (external slot), A400, A300 and the A540.

Anyone want to purchase a SCSI card; only one careful owner; never raced or rallied (but tried to)?

### SCSI cards

Prices (inc VAT but not delivery):

Eesox Fast SCSI £156.28

Castle Technology Storm SCSI II  
£148.05

Cumana SCSI II £175.08

PowerTec Fast SCSI II £158.62

PowerTec Ultra SCSI III £205.62

Technical Support £23.50 a year

Suppliers:

**ACE**, Baroper Bahnhof Str 55,  
44225 Dortmund, Germany.

Tel: 0049 231 7274260

Fax: 0049 231 7274261

Email: acesales@plaza\_project.de

**Alsystems**, 47 Winchester Road,  
Four Marks, Alton, Hants GU34 5HG  
Tel: 01420 561111 Fax: 01420 561100

Email: sales@alsystems.co.uk

### **Castle Technology**

Ore Trading Estate, Woodbridge Rd  
Framlingham, Suffolk, IP13 9LL.

Tel: 01728 621222 Fax: 01728621179

Email: sales@castle-technology.co.uk

**Cumana**, Whitegate, Dunmow Road  
Hatfield Heath, Bishop's Stortford,  
Hertfordshire, CM22 7ED

Tel: 01279 730800 Fax: 01279 730809

Email: sales@cumana.co.uk.

**Eesox**, Century House, Market St  
Swavesey, Cambs, CB4 5QG

Tel/Fax: 01954 208208

Email: sales@eesox.demon.co.uk

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Sidcup, Kent, DA14 4QU

Or telephone 0181 302 4078  
after 4.30 pm

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Ex Risc PC after upgrade  
£10 including postage.

gw0hq@claranet.co.uk

Peter 0370 882204

or John JRW@argonet.co.uk

### CONTACT WANTED

Do you program in Assembler?

One of our members in Switzerland  
would like to hear from you.

Please write to:

Niklaus Weiss

Sagistrasse 20

CH-6300 Zug

Switzerland

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# ShortCuts

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If you like Keyboard shortcuts then this is the program for you.

Using *Shortcuts* from R-Comp, you can set programs to run, directories to open, files to open and files or directories within applications to open, all at the press of an F-key.

key-presses, and SCDefine, for (surprise, surprise) defining your key-presses.

Like all computer things everything is E A S Y once you get the hang of it but I found ShortCuts a little confusing at first. This of course

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*Geoff Lane tries automating his desktop by setting up the F-keys to do almost everything, except perhaps making tea and toast and putting the cat out.*

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Using the F-key on its own or with a combination of Shift and/or Ctrl you can have more than enough options to satisfy anyone. Or is that too optimistic ?

As each key press can initiate, via a script file, any number of things to happen I am sure with a little imagination ShortCuts could make the tea, cook the toast and put the cat out.

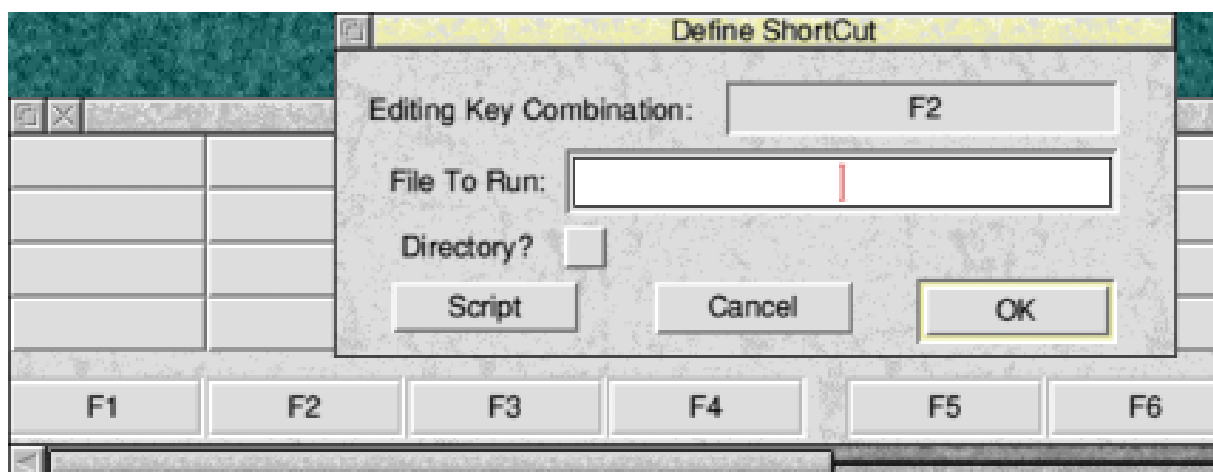
It comes on one floppy and really consists of three programs, ShortCuts, which is the main prog, SCView, for viewing your predefined

could be down to one of two things: the program is a little confusing or my brain gets easily confused.

Why did I get confused? Of the three programs only two are visible on the disc as SCView is inside the ShortCuts application and only two show an icon on the icon bar, the writers feeling that the main program, being ShortCuts, doesn't need to show.

This necessitates quitting via the Task Manager if you want to shut it down for any reason.





***Drag onto the button to be defined or click on it for a definition window.***

Now to get going. First you need to define something to see it work so, guess what, we load SCDefine. A grey key-shaped icon with a query mark on it appears. Click on this and a W I D E window opens showing all F-keys and Print along four rows. It does not indicate that the lower row is the F-key, the next is Shift-F\_key, the third is Ctrl-F\_key with the upper one being Ctrl-Shift-F\_key but this *does* follow the keyboard layout.

Now drag your application, file or directory onto whichever key you want to use and its reference will appear on the key button. Or click on the button to open a definition window (*see above*). Do as many as you want, press *menu* over the window and save the ShortCuts text file inside the application directory. I feel this should

have had a default filepath for its destination but mine didn't.

Now run ShortCuts and press the F-keys to your heart's content and watch those progs load and files open. If you can't remember which keys you have defined then you need to load SCView. This is done by pressing the *Insert* key and now comes another criticism. While getting used to the program and not being familiar with the keys I ended up with *five* SCView icons on the icon bar.

As the program tells you that you can't have more than one SCDefine open why can't it tell you that you can't have more than one SCView open? Anyway, when it loads it is a grey key type icon similar to SCDefine but without the query mark.

When SCView is open, clicking the mouse on the relevant button runs the programs as though you had pressed the F-keys but defeats the object of the program though.

Back to the SCDefine for a moment; click on a blank F-key icon and a window opens showing the *Editing Key Combination* and other info. If you now click on *Script* a further window opens allowing you to define 10 tasks to one key press. Just drag 'em on. Is there enough lifetime left to define all these?

Once you've done that then click *OK* and save the resulting Script file. This appears to default to the required filepath. Click the next OK button and finally click *Menu* and save the resulting ShortCuts text file to within the ShortCuts application. Sometimes I found this defaulted to the correct location and other times I had to open the application and drag it there.

A little extra feature is that pressing *Shift-Insert* disables the F-keys completely but, and this is an important but, any open program will retain its own F-key utilities and override ShortCuts.

There are extras within the package including *MultiBoot* which provides a multiple Boot sequence for all Acorn machines and *AudiCD* which demonstrates some of ShortCuts features, I didn't have time to evaluate either of these.

### Summary

Easy to load, easy to use, good instructions. Default filepath for ShortCuts text file needs sorting and I *don't* want loads of SCViews on the icon bar just because I've accidentally pressed the *Insert* button.

Useful? If you would find it of use to press one key to initiate a number of things on your Acorn then it certainly would be.

---

### ShortCuts

Price: £15 inc postage. No VAT  
Site licence: £35 inclusive  
Supplier: R-Comp  
22 Robert Moffat, High Legh,  
Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6PS  
Tel: 01925 755043  
Fax: 01925 757377  
Email: [ajr@arsvcs.demon.co.uk](mailto:ajr@arsvcs.demon.co.uk)  
Web: [www.arsvcs.demon.co.uk](http://www.arsvcs.demon.co.uk)

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## Secret Lives: Chris Price

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Way back in the mists of time, when I was the Secretary of The ARM Club, I took on the responsibility of organising an ARM Club Open Day in the Southeast. I think I was prompted by a letter from Chris Price offering his services and

with ease. After a while you don't notice it, just Chris's large personality.

Chris and I spent hours on the phone in the next weeks arranging various aspects of the day so I got to know

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*A former secretary of The ARM Club, Geoff Stilwell, spills the beans on the current holder of the post, Ol' Four Wheels himself, Chris Price.*

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Merton Court School as a possible venue.

Steve Arnold and I went down to Sidcup one weekend to reconnoitre the venue and to meet Chris and his mum who run Merton Court School as a family concern. Mrs Price is the Principal and Chris teaches IT.

I was very surprised, when we met Chris, to discover that he practically lives in a wheelchair. I'm not even sure what keeps Chris there, we've never discussed it. He does everything he needs to without any fuss. Merton Court has ramps and lifts so that Chris can navigate the school

him quite well. Chris doesn't mince words, he speaks his mind and calls a spade a spade.

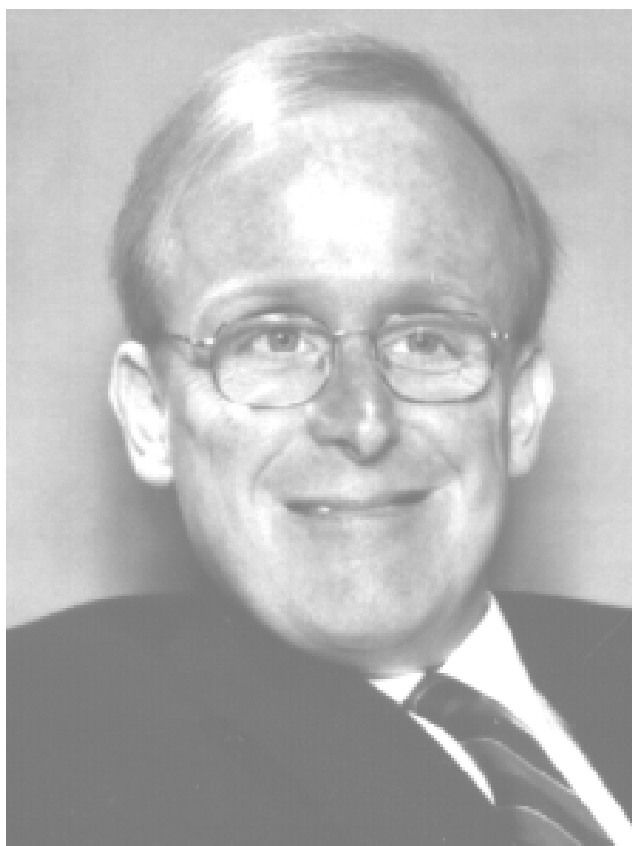
The ARM Club went on to use Merton Court School more regularly for Open Days. On another occasion, I went to a Kent Educational IT show near Maidstone. I stayed overnight at Merton Court where Chris and his mum showed me excellent hospitality.

Chris and I were up late that night discussing computers, education and religion, most of which we disagreed about, but that didn't stop us remaining friends.

I've seen Chris in action at the Open Days and at larger exhibitions, such as BETT, where he seems to know everyone. He wheels himself up to the front of a stand as an Acorn dealer, such as Mike Matson of 4Mation, is demonstrating his latest product. Chris is heard to say in a loud voice: "I wouldn't buy anything from this man. None of it's any good!" Of course Mike Matson and Chris are great friends so Mike retorts with something equally rude. The same scenario occurs at all the other stands where Chris knows someone. Of course Chris is only rude to those people that he likes.

Chris has been quite instrumental in the development of some Acorn educational software. As IT teacher at Merton Court he uses a wide range of Acorn software and often passes on comments from the children in his classes to the developers. I know the developers find this feedback very useful.

After a two-year stint as secretary I had to retire. Chris shortly afterwards took up the reins and The ARM Club has gone on to greater strength.



Chris seems to have taken over the 'education correspondent' role that I had, promoting Acorn in the classroom as forcefully as ever.

I think that it is Chris who looks after the main ARM Club Flextel *hot line*, so be considerate about making calls at odd times as he does have a 'day job'.

Hopefully there will always be a welcome at Merton Court School for Acorn enthusiasts while Chris Price is involved with The ARM Club.

# The ARM Club Discounts Scheme

The ARM Club is pleased to announce the relaunch of our members' discount scheme with new and improved benefits offered by a wider range of companies.

## ***How do I get a discount?***

You choose the company you want from the list opposite of those offering discounts, complete the official order form and send it to the company with your payment.

This form is the *only* way to make purchases by post or fax through the discounts scheme. It can be photocopied from page 46 and loose copies will continue to be supplied with Eureka. More can be obtained at any time from The ARM Club's FREEPOST address or collected from the Club stand at Acorn shows.

The ARM Club does not have the facilities to accept payment by credit card so this section does not apply when ordering goods from the Club.

## ***What about buying at Acorn shows?***

You may complete the discounts form or show your membership

card to get the appropriate discount. Note that the discounts are on the *normal* retail price, *not* any show special offers, unless the company gives an additional concession.

## ***What if the Company I want is not in the scheme?***

Let us know and we will contact the company and see what we can arrange.

More companies now offer The ARM Club discount than in the past and negotiations are going on with others. All those who join the scheme will be added to the printed list and notified in Eureka.

## ***What happens if I have a problem?***

For any problems or queries contact:

Matthew Cook  
discounts@armclub.org.uk  
Tel: 0973 285342

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Email : [discounts@armclub.org.uk](mailto:discounts@armclub.org.uk)

Tel : 0973 285 342

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# The Acorn Spring Show

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I always look forward to the Wakefield Show. It seems to have its own special atmosphere and, being the first show of the summer, it is always more pleasant travelling across the country with the sun shining. However it was more than

sounded good), had its own special presentation area at the very back of the hall. Entry was restricted to Clan members, as Acorn wanted to keep this as a preview to a selected audience rather than an official launch, but as Clan membership was

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*David Ruck joined the crowds for their first glimpses of Phoebe and Peanut at the Wakefield Show then found there were lots more to see and discover there.*

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just the pleasant weather that most visitors had on their mind as they headed towards the now familiar venue of Thornes Park Athletics Stadium, specifically the unveiling of the next generation of Acorn workstation and the mysterious *Peanut* portable. The most significant events in the Acorn market since the Risc PC was launched four years ago, at the Spring Show's previous location of Harrogate.

The new computer which we can now reveal is to be called the *Phoebe 2100* (yes after the character in the American sitcom *Friends*, and 2100 after, well they probably thought it

available on the spot for all at the seemingly ridiculous price of £15 for life, no true Acorn enthusiast wanting to see the new machine will have missed out.

Once past the queues into the deliberately darkened preview area, visitors were quite unprepared for the shock of half a dozen blinding bright yellow Phoebes staring back at them. And they do stare thanks to the ventilation holes on the striking yellow facia area in the design of a snowman complete with purple eyes, which are really the volume controls! The power switch and floppy eject buttons are also purple. No one can

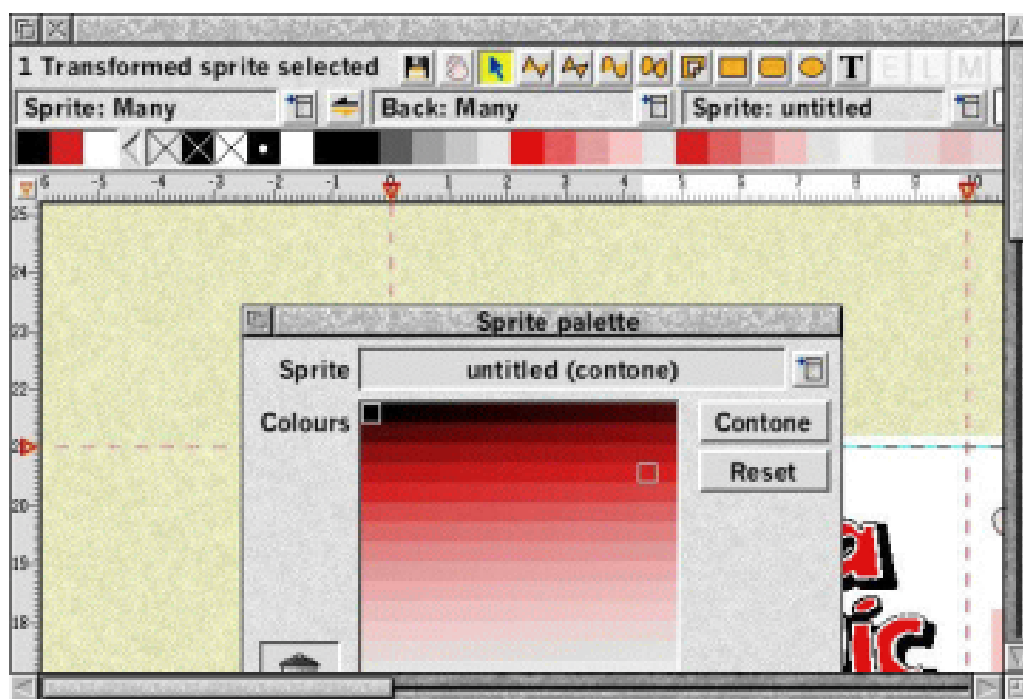


complain about this being a boring beige box —quite the opposite —a lot of people thought that it was too distinctive, to put it mildly. Having spent two days getting used to it I have got over my initial horror and now think it does exactly what Chris Cox of Acorn wanted: to grab the attention and make sure no one can mistake it for other tower cases containing inferior PC parts. Those wanting the full details of the new case, and not forgetting the actual hardware and software specifications, should turn to the article at the beginning of this issue.

On tearing yourself away, or running in terror, from the Phobes (after putting one on order of course!), the next challenge was to find the new Acorn Portable. Thanks to one amazingly cunning advert in Acorn User showing a picture of a peanut and the words *Psst... want a new RISC OS Portable? See it at Wakefield*, and the best kept secret since the Normandy landings, everyone knew about the portable but didn't have a clue who was behind it, or whether it was still April 1st. The other large gathering of people clustered round an imitation stone column bearing the

Peanut logo (Portable Nut – Acorn), gave the game away. The company behind it being Innovative Media Solutions, which came as a surprise to everyone as IMS are better known for their multimedia and internet software and Psion/Geofox palm top connectivity solutions rather than a hardware design firm.

The Peanut was only an early prototype but already showing great promise with RISC OS up and running on its large extremely clear screen, and the easy to use glidepoint touch sensitive pad as an alternative to the mouse. My confidence in the company and the Peanut design was further boosted on finding that Jon Cashen, a well known former Acorn employee was now working on the project. My only problem was no amount of pressing gold cards or wads of cash into the IMS representatives' hands would get me an advanced order. They are determined that the portable will be developed further until it is the best machine it can be and so they don't want the pressure from taking deposits at this stage rushing the development process. *The full report on Peanut begins on page 13.*



### *A preview glimpse of a development version of Avante*

With all this excitement on the hardware front it would have been all too easy to gloss over the fact that the equally important software scene has been far too quiet for the past six months or more. However this too has received a shot in the ARM, with several new and exiting major packages released or on preview, as well as significant updates to many popular applications.

The most exciting new product for me is project Avante from Astute Graphics. They have gone one better than their addons for Artworks and have come up with a completely new vector graphics package. It

incorporates full postscript import and export, very advanced colour control and the answer to everyone's question; yes transparency! A pre-release version was being demonstrated and looked very good but further work is being done to get the user interface just right and a release is planned at Acorn World with a price tag of around £150. This comes as good news for all ArtWorks users who have been feeling very disheartened since Xara Studio was released for the PC and Acorn development work ceased at Computer Concepts. It is planned that Avante will be able to work with Ovation Pro as well as Artworks and

Impression do, so there will be little reason to stay with the CC products. I did mention this at CC's tiny stand, but the impression (no pun) I got was that they are not bothered by this and would prefer to be freed from even the burden of support.

The other big gun in the creative arsenal is photo retouching and painting, Spacetech were taking orders for Photodesk version three which will give us the long awaited layers capability, enabling different images to be blended together but remain fully editable. As well as the visual arts the world of sound is being addressed with the Sound Venture extension to the Textease multimedia document processor. This comprises a CD containing a library of sounds which can be edited by Textease and incorporated into documents in many different ways. The music notation editor Rhapsody has now reached version four and Clares have also been busy enhancing WimpBasic and promoting it with presentations in the show theatre as the easy way of creating RISC OS applications.

The Internet continues to be a driving force in the software industry with its

ever evolving standards and to allow the Acorn community to produce content for this exciting medium, new enhanced versions of WWW authoring programs, Webspider from Dalriada and HTML Edit from R-Comp were hot off the presses. R-Comp were also selling the only Javascript enabled browser for RISC OS, Webster XL, which should help open up the few remaining sites not accessible to Acorn surfers.

Iota's DataPower database gains relational features with version two, which for the first time will allow it to be considered for serious applications, which would otherwise require heavyweight programs on other platforms. Personal Accounts 4 has been released to help you keep better track of your money but hopefully won't stop you blowing your last few quid on something fun. Temptations in this category included games such as Eternal Destiny, the Doom Trilogy and Arc Quake. Some of these are now classics on other platforms and it's great to see them on the Acorn and as in the case of Doom looking better than the original.

Other things to spot at the Show were

the new StrongARM based Caltech board running Risc BSD, which for those interested in UNIX has similar performance to Phoebe but is considerably cheaper. Eagle eyed visitors may also have spotted another similar tower case on the Irlam stand, but this was a genuine Phoebe minus its yellow front panel that had been lent to them literally days before and they already had written a driver for a PCI video capture card. Great things are on the way in this area.

In the centre of the hall were the giant Acorn and Xemplar stands, demonstrating a range of Acorn technologies. Network Computers were demonstrating their great flexibility, allowing one box to browse the Internet, run RISC OS programs and deliver applications running on Windows and UNIX servers, all at a very reasonable cost to both schools and the individual user. Showing that Acorn are not the only ones with dubious styling taste, another brightly coloured box in yellow and blue called the Thinko was on the stand. A joint development with the Korean firm Samsung for the early learning market, it is about the same size as an eMate and opens up to

reveal a story book and as you turn the pages additional sound and pictures are viewed on a television set. The device is actually based on an ARM7500FE, as used in network computers or the A7000+, and is one of a range of products based on Acorn's new *TV centric technology*.

The Show was graced by celebrity presence with an appearance by Johnny Ball, who was signing CDs containing photographs of himself and visitors on the Eesox stand. Most people now know him as Zoë Ball's dad, but there are some of us that can remember his excellent maths and science programs on children's TV during the '80s, that no doubt helped get a few of us interested in computers.

Of course The ARM Club were there with our usual range of products, and only too willing to help out any members with their technical enquires, or just to have a chat. Not on sale however were our specially featured desktop backdrop and CD soundtrack by the band The Corrs, we have to refer you to your local music store for that one!

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# Sherlock

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Many moons ago, when the BBC B was still the machine to have and the Risc PC hadn't even been thought of, one of the programs the BBC produced was called *Tray*. It was described as a language development program and was

Now I know I do have a tendency to bang on about packaging but that's only because I feel that it's important! I've lost count of the times that I've torn open a software package that I've been waiting impatiently for, only to find that the box it came in was too

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*In a look at the first of two word guessing programs, teacher Chris Price gets nostalgic about the BBC B as he tries out the 1990 successor to a 1980s favourite.*

---

designed to help with such matters as punctuation and spelling. As I recall, it was quite successful and was one of the programs that allowed 'the school computer' to come out of the science teacher's closet and go into general circulation. *Sherlock* is *Tray* for the 1990s. (Indeed the writer of the manual pays homage to the effect that *Tray* had on both teachers and pupils in the 80s.)

The package consists of two HD discs (or three DD discs), an example worksheet, a good, stout, A5 manual and some general information on new releases of the product. The whole is contained in a solid plastic A5 binder.

flimsy to withstand the treatment that it was given at my local sorting office.

If you want speech, the manual advises that you load up the module on the Speech disc first. You can then insert the other disc and load up the main program. Here I encountered my first disappointment. The program loaded fine and presented me with a picture of Sherlock Holmes in a suitably pensive mood but then a very tinny voice invited me to load up the Sherlock files. Given the advanced state of voice technology today, I found this very disappointing. The voice was very obviously computer-generated and quite off-putting.

Frankly it sounded like a Dalek with a head cold! (Don't know what a Dalek is? Ask Dad or Mum!)

Bearing this disappointment as well as I could, I proceeded to load up the module *Sherfiles*.

This presented me with a blank screen. At this point there are only three options available: *Exit*, *About* (the Info icon) and *Load*, which is obviously the one you want.

I have to say, at this point — and this is because I was trying to write the article while I examined the program — that the window that Sherlock puts up is fixed and cannot be altered in shape or size and this I found very irritating.

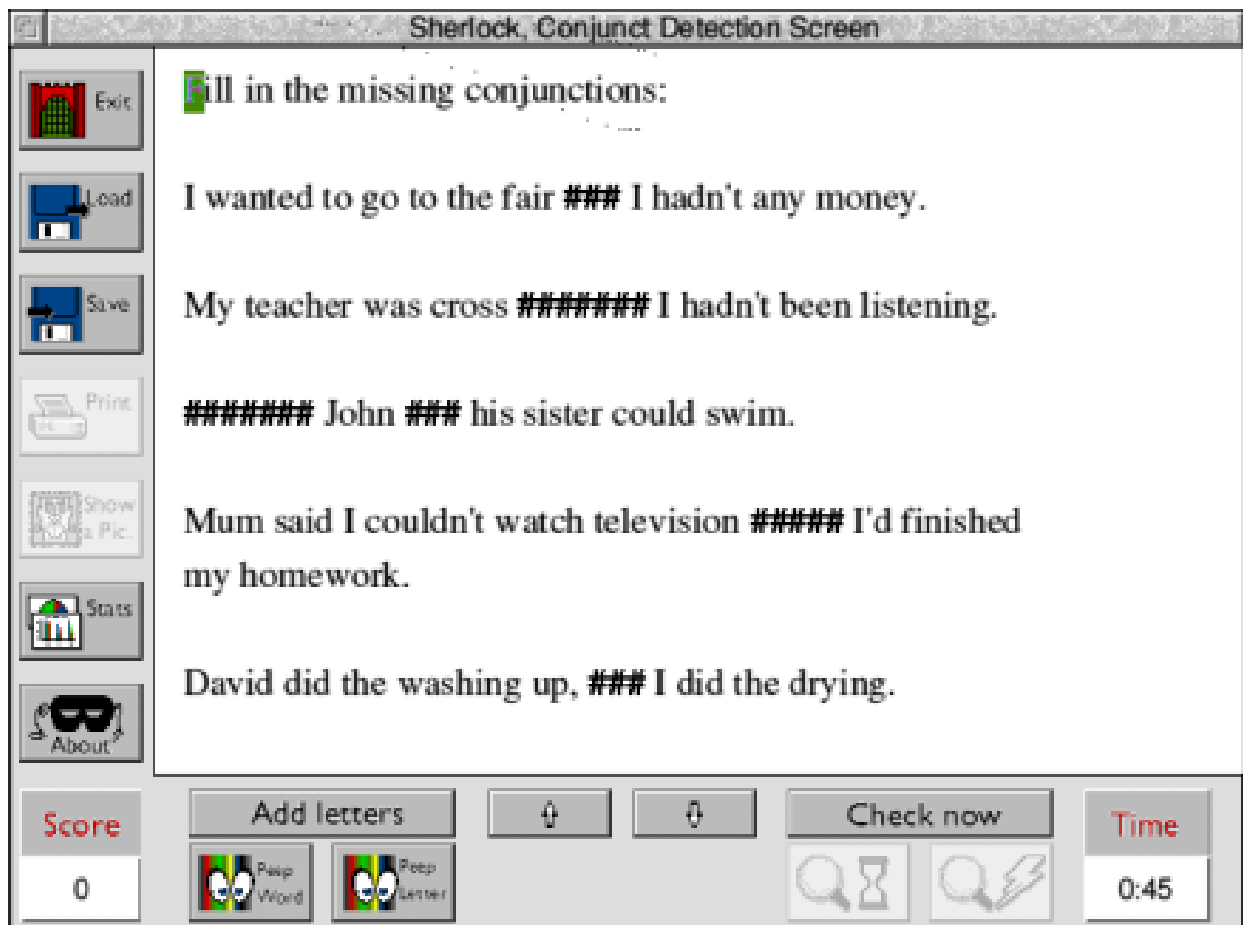
Clicking on the *Load* icon brought up a smaller screen of pre-set modules that could be used with the program and the option to load a module or go back to a previous screen. There is also a window that is blank, which I presumed was where I should enter one of the names of the preset



modules. Clicking experimentally on this while it was blank simply made it flash so I entered the name of one of the modules and Bingo! I was away.

The screen that I was presented with had a number of icons around the edge including one which allowed you to print the screen and another one *Stats* which gave the frequency of each letter in the text.

You have the ability to peep at letters and whole words (though, as a teacher, I can't quite see the point of being allowed to peep at whole words!) and for the computer to say whole words or single letters (same criticism applies here). There is an option to check as you go along and an option to check once you have



### *The Detection Screen with an exercise to find conjunctions*

finished the entire piece, both of which seem to work well.

In essence you are presented with a screen where a number of letters and pieces of punctuation have been replaced by a character such as: # = % or @. Input the correct letters (by tapping on the appropriate key) and the character will be replaced by the correct letter. If you've got it wrong then the letter you've typed simply turns back into the character. There is

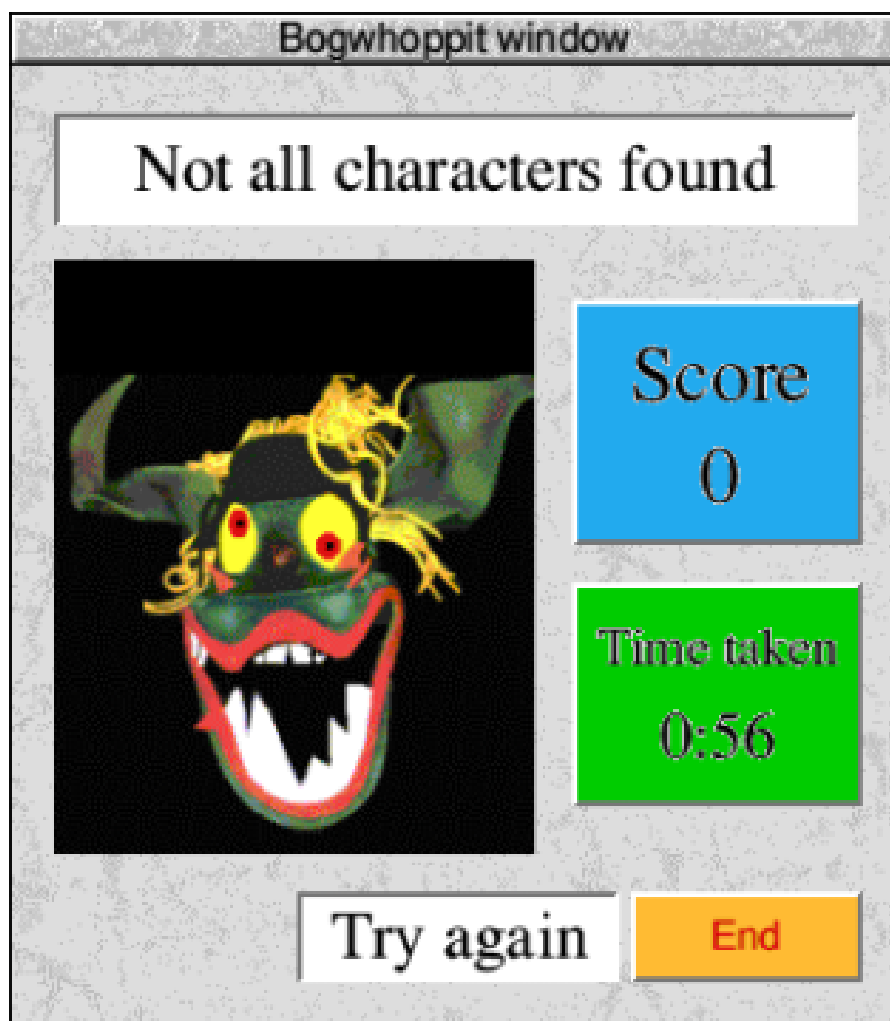
also an option to configure the screen the way you want it (for instance, to turn off the points scoring) and the option to create your own texts; which is easy once you've configured the screen as you want it, as the options screen provides the choice of what you can (and cannot hide).

In this regard it is interesting to note that the screen that you may well load first — simply called '1' is a short piece about the Evil Bogwhoppit

having hidden some of the text and how you can win loads more points! This may work well with some juniors and infants but I can think of some seriously hip Year Sevens and Eights that I know who would be very offput by this approach!

At the end of the exercise you can ask the computer to speak the text but, frankly, the speech is so robotic and awful that it really isn't worth the candle. It is also worth noting that, every time that I used Sherlock it screwed up my comms software and the machine had to be re-booted. This may be something that is at fault with the comms package I use (Argo) but it is, all the same, worth watching out for.

To sum up this is a useful piece of software which has some irritating niggles which need to be addressed.



*The Bogwhoppit score window*

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Sherlock

Price: £35 +VAT

Site licence: £70 +VAT

Supplier: Topologika

Waterside House, Falmouth Road

Penryn, Cornwall TR10 8BE

Tel: 01326 377771

Fax: 01326 376755

Email:

[info@topolgka.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@topolgka.demon.co.uk)

[Web: www.topolgka.demon.co.uk](http://www.topolgka.demon.co.uk)

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# Fun With Texts

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Fun with texts; that is a daunting thought. Can one really have fun with texts? One of the many hard tasks faced by teachers is to make learning fun. If it's not fun, learning does not happen as quickly.

banner ready for an activity to be loaded.

Daunted by the fact that I could not remember much of my GCSE French, and I knew no Spanish, I opted for an

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*Student teacher Matthew Cook finds that English, French and Spanish can be fun with a program of word exercises, puzzles and games.*

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I received Fun With Texts in a more than adequate wallet containing a manual, floppy and registration card. I have to commend all companies that ship their products like this.

English example. It was as easy as dropping the Fun With Texts file into the window, where I was presented with the exercise to retype and a set of four options:

What is the point of shipping a product in a huge packet for a CD-ROM and manual or even a couple of floppies? Well done!

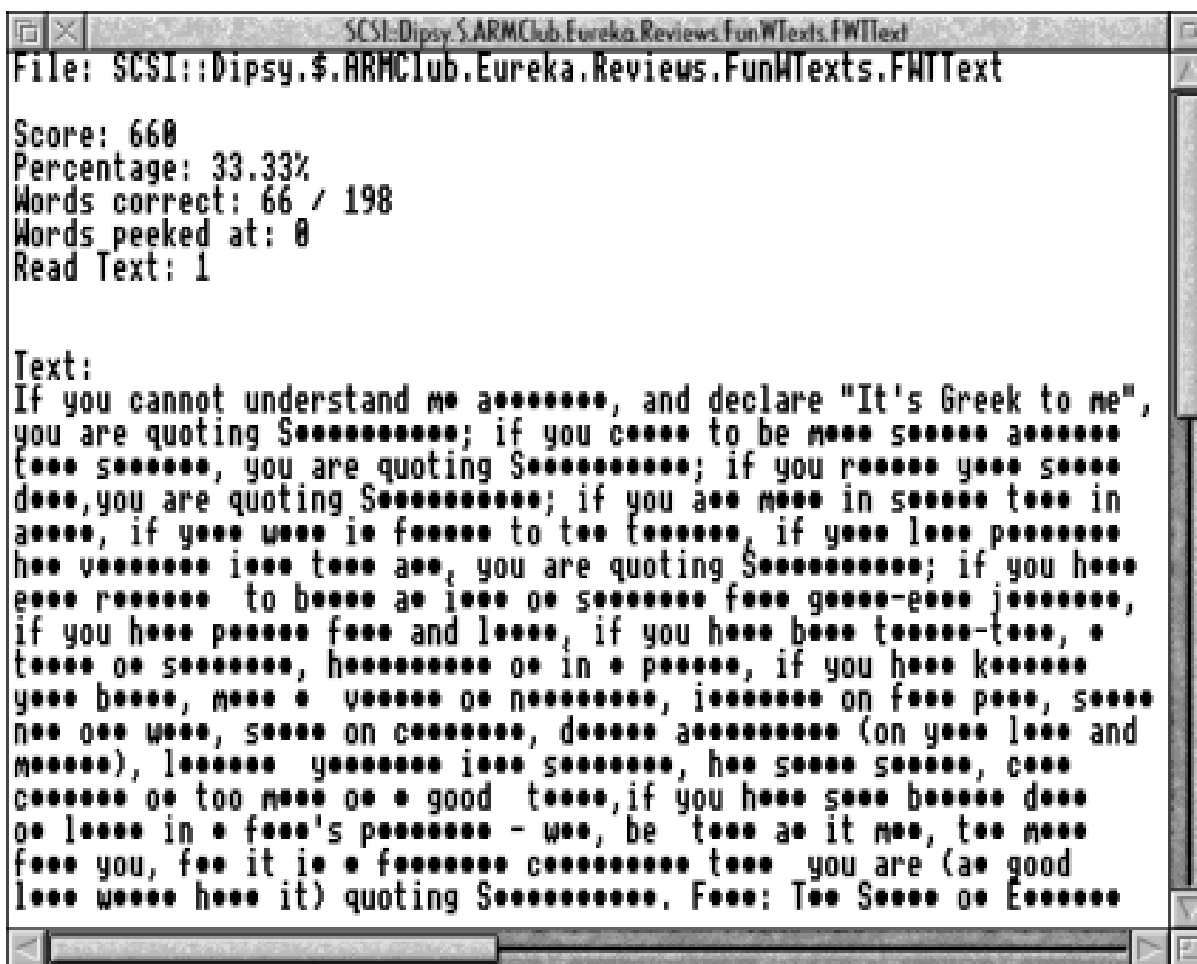
- See the text for as long as you like.
- See the text for 10 seconds.
- See the text for 30 seconds.
- Do not see the text at all.

I installed the application with the usual ease associated with RISC OS applications. I created a folder on my hard disc and copied the contents of the floppy across.

After you have chosen the time limit you have to reconstruct the text by typing guessed words from the text into the window.

I ran the main application !*FunWTexts* and was presented with the opening

When you have typed as many as you can, you have several options: give up, peek at a word or peek at a letter,



### *A report on the success rate for a partially completed cloze exercise.*

hopefully to jog your memory and complete the exercise. A report is then given in textfile format to show your success rate. This is handy so that teachers can see which students need to seek consolidation exercises.

Although with the student having all the options available, I can see a lot of problems therefore arising from students doing different activities, having different time limits, opening and editing reports.

The options available are comprehensive.

### **Word Exercises**

**ClozeWrite:** This allows the student to carry out a Cloze Procedure exercise with the text. A number of words are missed out of the text and the student has to guess them.

**Copywrite:** This allows the student to copy the text with only the first letter of the word as an aid. A harder version

is available, where the student does not have any help.

Prediction: The text is re-constructed by the student guessing the next word in the text.

### Puzzles

Enigma: The text is scrambled and coded and the student has to break the code.

Scrambler: The text has the letters of the words mixed and jumbled up. They have to be re-ordered to read the text.

TextSalad: The lines of the text are mixed up and the student has to sequence them.

The *!FunWTexts* has a supporting application named *!FWTeach* which enables the easy construction of extra exercises. This was easy to use and can configure a few variables that control the way Fun With Texts work.

On the whole Fun With Texts is excellent and I would not hesitate to use it in the classroom for teaching English. I can see many, many, uses coming from the new Literacy Project

and next time I am in school this is one of the programs I want to try out. I cannot comment on how useful it is for teaching a foreign language but the French exercises are much more interesting than the pages of many French text books.

I would have liked to have seen a version of Fun With Texts that had all the options in a *Config* file within the application and saved the Report files within itself as well. You could set up the application with an exercise and run the class through it, look at the reports and *voila!*

The application is a good buy to liven up classrooms and would be a *must* if the software house implemented the suggestions above. A Godsend for any teacher looking to liven up English.

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### Fun With Texts

Price: £35

Site licence: £75 (10 users)

Supplier: Camsoft

10 Wheatfield Close

Maidenhead, Berks SL6 3PS

Tel/Fax: 01628 825206

Email: [mike@msmith.demon.co.uk](mailto:mike@msmith.demon.co.uk)

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# Observess Expert System Shell

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Expert System Shell? “What on Earth is that?” I hear you say. It’s a computer system designed to run, organise and create systems that possess some form of knowledge. In

recognising coinage, or other smaller areas. In the course of whatever work you do or hobbies you have, you’ll probably class as an expert on many small areas.

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*Toby Smith, BSc Artificial Intelligence & Computer Science, flexes his credentials over the latest version of Cherisha Software’s Expert System Shell.*

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theory at least, such a system can be given the ‘expert’ knowledge on a subject matter so that it can, by use of simple questions, provide an expert opinion on a subject matter just like a human expert.

In practice, this is actually a lot simpler than it sounds. Any expert system can be looked at as a series of questions, in the form of a flow chart maybe, the answers to which lead to a specific result, categorisation, inference, etc. The subject matters too are often a lot less expert than the phrase initially indicates. While there are some academic research projects in complex areas such as medical diagnosis, almost anyone is expert enough to create a system on

Observess provides a way of encoding this expert decision making system into a computer form, so that others can use this encoded expertise. There are lots of tricks available to make things work better and the possibility for the introduction of varying degrees of certainty in the answers, which allows not only for arenas with less than clear cut rules, but also the creation of a much more complex, intertwined decision hierarchy.

In use, Observess has two main parts: the part that you use to input the rules and the part you use to ‘run’ the Knowledge Base and work out an answer. The Input section allows you to enter rules producing conclusions

dependant on the values of a series of variables (about which the user will be asked at runtime). Such rules can be prioritised, given confidence values and so on.

At this point, however, something must be said about the user interface. I don't know what the best form of user interface for an ES tool would be, but I know it's not this. The windows are very clunky, with a violent over-use of 3D icons, too much window furniture that's not needed (scroll bars on dialogue boxes) and not the ones you want (I can't recount the number of times I struggled to get rid of a close-icon-less window I didn't want).

The systems is also very flat, only allowing real inspection of the rules one at a time, rather than all together (and similar for variables) which makes it incredibly hard to see where you're going unless you're maintaining a paper or mental copy yourself. Admittedly a really useful (probably very graphical) user interface would take a lot of time and effort to develop but at the moment I'm afraid you're going to have to be very dedicated to put the information

in. lots of the options are very hard to find, or get lost in the abject clutter of greyscale. The icons in the tool bar all quickly look the same. OK, so it's hard to iconise such concepts but there's got to be a better method.

Similar can be said for the manual. In A4 two-column format, it too is somewhat ruined by huge thick black lines round boxes and between columns and with irritatingly small Sassoon text. Sassoon is a very irritating font to read small, and also very childlike (it was originally designed, I believe, as a font to assist learning to read). This isn't simple stuff, and the tiny (eight or 10pt) text hidden in the pages really doesn't make it easy to read. It is often the case that feature-rich applications are let down by their manual, meaning that those features go unused. I've got the feeling that this is the case here. I'm sure there are lots of bits in the program I didn't find but I'm turned off reading through the manual to find them.

Again, user interface also lets down the Observess Run Time system. It simply asks for values to be selected from lists typed in. There's no way of

‘Englishising’ the questions, nor is there any way for providing discrete value answers and all value picks must be done from pop-up menus, where a window with ‘radio’ buttons (one of many) would have been much nicer. OK — I can see the programming point that dynamically creating the menu each time is a lot easier than the work needed to create a special new template for each different question and so on, but it would have been a much better interface.

I’m also a little confused as to who the target audience is. Observess has a lot of complicated features that wouldn’t be necessary at any educational level and the interface would make it more of an exercise in using the program and rather obscure the point of what one was trying to teach. The tone of the manual is not aimed at people who know what they’re on about either. Aside from the somewhat simplistic tone often used, the attempts to introduce Artificial Intelligence and Knowledge Engineering seem a little misplaced for a knowledgeable audience — partly because they’ll already know, and partly because they’ll probably disagree with some

of the points (don’t you just love academia). I’ve even got an overpowering feeling of talking to myself as I write this article; there just doesn’t seem to be a niche of people who really want a competent Expert System and are likely to have Acorns anyway.

In conclusion, there’s a large number of features within Observess, and the engine, and inner workings are quite impressive. However, it’s very severely let down by both the interface and the manual, which unfortunately destroys it from being a useful tool.

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### Observess

Price: £60 (No VAT)

Site licence: £180

Free upgrade from v2.34+ to 2.81

Supplier: Cherisha Software

16 Woodside Drive, Wilmington,  
Dartford, Kent DA2 7NG

Tel: 01322 553953

Fax: 01322 400883

Email: [cherisha@katech.zynet.co.uk](mailto:cherisha@katech.zynet.co.uk)

Web:

[www.zynet.co.uk/gold/katech/welcome.html](http://www.zynet.co.uk/gold/katech/welcome.html)

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# Tried And Trusted Tips

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Some members may be having trouble with keeping BJC600s and other InkJet printers going.

New print heads are expensive; around £80 to replace. I picked up one

I have also used ink cartridge flush from PC World (also obtainable from other dealers) to clean the ink path.

The trouble seems to stem from using ink refill in old cartridges so be warned.

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*Some useful hints for printer users and for those struggling with a PC card, tried, trusted and now recommended by two of our members.*

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useful tip on the Internet, from the comp.sys.acorn.misc news group (Alf Chamings and Dr Alan Gray) suggesting that a blocked printer head may be cleaned by immersing the bottom seven millimetres in near boiling water or in absolute alcohol.

I tried the the boiled water by putting about 7mm in a saucer straight from a boiling kettle and agitating the head in it for a short time and carefully drying it on kitchen paper.

The head must be removed and handled without touching the electrical contacts and I suggest that it is kept upright all the time. A marked improvement resulted.

## **Waterproof posters**

I have been using Ian Copestake's *Placard* to produce A1 Posters using a colour inkjet printer. This works fine but the rain washes out the colour. The best solution to this I have found so far is to wipe the print over thoroughly with wax silicone polish obtainable from any self respecting supermarket. A water repellent spray used for re-proofing tents and clothing is also effective.

## **PC card problems**

I use a Risc PC and I have just had it upgraded to StrongARM from RPC600. Fitted to it is a DX100 PC card and I use !PCpro. I used to be able to run !PCEm at the same time as

!PCPro and amaze myself by being able to have three different word processors on the screen on three different computers at the same time. !PCEm no longer works so I thought that I would try a variation on the theme. I have Windows95 upgraded from Win 3.11 Using !PC on the PC Card but at times I would like to use Win 3.11 and have found a solution.

### **Method**

Format a Zip100 disc as Acorn Format Run !PCconfig Create a new PC drive\_c partition of up to about 90 MB on the Zip Disc and save it. Insert a DOS 1st install disc in the floppy slot Start !PC and allow it to Boot. Check that you are not in your original drive\_c by Typing C: dir <return>. If you do not get C Use Fdisk from drive A:. Type A: <return> and Format the new C: drive and install DOS and WINDOWS in the usual way. To get back to your original drive\_c, run !PCconfig and drag the old drive(s) onto it and Save again. It should be possible to have a number of PC partitions in discrete Folders on any disc in the machine. If they are all drive\_d any could be selected as drive D: using !PCconfig.

**Paul Goldsmith**

### **Email attachments**

Since my Internet connection is made via the PC second processor card and Windows 95, the first time I came across an attachment (rather than a separate ZIP file) I found some problems trying to extract it.

However, having been 'pointed in the right direction', the procedure is really quite straightforward. First, using the *File>Save As* option from my Windows email software the email is saved to an appropriate place within the PC partition. Secondly, the whole file is then transferred to the Acorn RISC OS side. Thirdly, the file is dragged to the *SparkFS* icon (on the icon bar (I have a full read/write version)). This then automatically creates a separate Archive file of just the email attachment which can then be opened using SparkFS and the contents dragged to the appropriate directory filer window.

**Rob Brown**

*Hints and tips at all levels, from the simple to the specialised, are always welcome. Email yours to the Editor [eureka@armclub.org.uk](mailto:eureka@armclub.org.uk) or post to FREEPOST 'The ARM Club'.*



## Pretty Good Privacy

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While nifty little utilities are to be encouraged, especially PD or shareware, a commercial program that claims file security is worthy of serious scrutiny. So, just how secure is Illicit? What sort of algorithm is used? How many computer hours

stood the test of time but the test of a large number of hackers (this word is used in the serious sense), an attempt by the US government to prosecute its author and full scale assaults by many computers working together across the net. And yet, the author makes no

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*Martin Tillman suggests a free alternative encryption program to the the very low-cost Illicit software reviewed in our last issue.*

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would be needed to crack its encrypted files? Has it got a back door? These questions and more need answering before entrusting any data to Illicit and the review did nothing to address these issues. A false sense of security is far worse than no security at all.

I have no knowledge of Illicit other than that included in the review. Also, I do recognise that the price asked for Illicit hardly covers the real cost of posting the disk in a fully commercial environment.

However, there is already at least one security program that has not only

claim that data encoded with his program is uncrackable; just very, very difficult to crack if the program is used correctly, and, furthermore, he makes no charge at all.

This program, written by Phil Zimmermann, is called PGP (Pretty Good Privacy). It is also multi-platform, a not insignificant point for those who need real security.

In comparison with PGP, Illicit' s resultant file sizes and the time taken to produce the file are ridiculous. PGP actually manages to reduce the size of files after encryption in most cases and as regards time taken for

encryption, well, it's pretty much insignificant compared to the time taken to enter one's pass-phrase or recipient's name. For instance, a 500K text file takes less than two seconds to encrypt on my StrongARM Risc PC, and the resultant file is 254K long.

A worthwhile security-type program could be a front end for PGP, as in its Acorn port form it is entirely command line driven. However, as two of the major Internet mail and news readers (Messenger and Pluto) have quite comprehensive PGP support built in and a third, Marcel, has third party support for PGP, even this sector of the market is quite well catered for. Perhaps a better suggestion would be encrypted hard disk partitions (though do steer well clear of image filing systems — they're far too fragile for this sort of use).

PGP for the Acorn can be downloaded from the Internet (*address at end*). Be warned that there is a lot of documentation, though only a couple of the generic PGP files are essential reading (and these are rather heavy going for non-cryptologists, as befits an application of such wide-ranging

importance and implications), but installation is succinctly taken care of in an Acorn-specific text file written by the porter. If anyone has difficulty installing or using PGP, I'm sure there would be help forthcoming from the authors of any of the Acorn applications, or on the Acorn newsgroups, or by email from me or, if you're not on the net, send me your query on floppy disk (*addresses below*).

Finally, it is interesting to note that another new "encryption" program received an extremely severe and sometimes vitriolic pasting on the Acorn newsgroups recently from people far better versed in cryptology than I am.

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## PGP

Price: Free

Supplied by email:

[web.bham.ac.uk/N.M.Queen/pgp/acorn.html](http://web.bham.ac.uk/N.M.Queen/pgp/acorn.html)

Help offered by: Martin Tillman

Email: [mtillman@argonet.co.uk](mailto:mtillman@argonet.co.uk)

or send on a floppy disc to him at:  
63 Bradvue Crescent, Bradville,  
Milton Keynes MK13 7AH

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# Getting Into Video Editing: Part 1

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When I joined The ARM Club not so long ago I was pleased to be asked to identify my particular interests. This was surely a good sign of Editorial interest in the balance of the articles published in Eureka. I was looking forward to being educated in

editing is a very time-consuming process. Making small changes can take almost as long as fairly major restructuring, especially if one has only minimal equipment. Additionally, editing requires successive copies to be made of

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*In the first of a new series on computer-based video editing, Mike Sherwood explains how he got started and details the hardware and software he needed.*

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a wide range of subjects and hoping, in particular, to learn something about non-linear (computer-based) video editing. I was therefore horrified to receive a letter inviting me to contribute an article on the subject on which I had just about zero experience, but here I am doing just that!

Over the last couple of years I have produced a few short videos for home consumption and for a few friends by means of tape-to-tape (linear) editing via a commercial editor. While these efforts were relatively well received by the 'customers' the production process was not trivial. Tape-to-tape

sections of the original video film and tape-to-tape copying results in inevitable reduction in quality of the finished article from one generation to another. Use of the computer lessens a lot of these problems.

Last November, I took a deep breath and ordered Videodesk from Irlam and duly received a very busy-looking podule and Version 1.05a software. My experience of video editing by computer was about to begin.

## **Hardware Requirements**

The would-be video producer/editor can easily spend a lot of money on

equipment. The video camera will often be used to play the tapes but then one needs a video recorder to produce the end product. Preferably this will be an editing type permitting audio dub and insert edit functions. Most domestic video recorders are VHS standard but if the camera can produce higher definition (such as Hi8) then an S-VHS machine may be desirable to produce higher quality tape masters. A second video machine may be useful to replace the camera in playing the original (8mm) tapes. It will be better suited to rapid winding and may be more durable.

Also necessary is a video monitor: a TV with AV inputs or a stand-alone video card within the computer, such as Irlam's RiscTV. This equipment will be needed in any form of video editing. A video processor to correct the colour balance of the original material is also well worth considering. (Brightness, contrast, saturation and audio gain can be adjusted by Videodesk software.)

The tape-to-tape route also invites consideration of video and/or audio mixers, effects processors and titling machines. The computer ideally

permits these latter functions without the need for additional hardware so this needs to be taken into account when assessing the cost of your editing system.

### **Large capacity hard disc**

Computer editing clearly requires a large capacity hard disc for file storage, the first requirement for your hardware upgrade. In my case, a telephone call to Irlam prior to my order resulted in friendly advice on the minimum computer specification and hard drive requirements. Reasonable video quality requires record and playback rates to and from the hard disc in the order 1500K/second which will require the disc to have a read/write access time less than 10 milliseconds and a rotational speed at least 7200 rpm.. How often do you read the adverts on hard drives and only see, or take notice of, capacity alone?

This also calls into question the speed of the computer filesystem interface, such as IDE or SCSI, SCSI II, SCSI-III, and possible compatibility problems. In the Acorn world the latter seems to present much less of a potential minefield than we see in

readers' letters about video editing problems in PC magazines (fingers crossed).

My equipment list is as follows :

- StrongARM RISC PC ACB75 (2-slice), 42MB with Iiyama Pro 17 Monitor
- 850MB IDE internal hard disc
- Alsystems Ultra SCSI-III Power-tec interface, V3.01, V1.76 software
- Irlam RiscTV (V2) podule
- IBM 4.2GB OEM DCHS04Z SCSI-II 7200 rpm internal drive.
- Irlam Videodesk2 podule, V1.05a software, recently upgraded to V1.06a.

Additional equipment I use includes a multi-channel audio mixer connected on the input side of Videodesk. This enables me to sample audio tapes and CDs. I also use a Video Tech Designs VCC 3010 Processor in the input video line for colour correction etc. Sony Hi8 and Panasonic SVHS machines complete the list.

Videodesk comes with connectors of various types, by request to suit the installation; in my case with SVHS video plugs and phono audio

connectors. SCART connections are another possibility. Videodesk plugs into one of the two lower DMA slots and the Alsystems SCSI card plugs into the other one. Irlam's RiscTV was an earlier acquisition, incidentally ideal for Videodesk use, already installed in the upper slice.

### **Getting Started**

When I received Videodesk I was without StrongARM —Acorn had a supply shortfall and were favouring new computers. My new fast disc drive had also not arrived so I first tried out Videodesk with a relatively small and 'slow' (5400 rpm) hard disc.

My first job was to RTFM. If you telephone the manufacturer with a query soon after purchase their first question is "Have you read . . . ? !". Well, I did read the manual. Unlike the latest 150-page edition there was no tutorial section to help with the little pitfalls that add to initial frustration. A call to Irlam, however, produced an exceptionally helpful response, talking me through some initial setting up and I was immediately in business, recording my first video clips at about

1200K/second. Any attempt to go faster produced the dreaded *buffer underrun* message, terminating the recording, but still leaving me free to try again at a compatible rate. I was able to assemble a short video and blend in some dissolves between clips from the built-in *Effects* menu, something I had not been able to do at all previously as it would have required an expensive video mixer/processor. Also, starting from scratch, I was able to produce a sequence of video clips timed to match the beats of a sound track downloaded from an external CD player.

This took me about two hours, and without exaggeration, when I had done this previously in tape-to-tape editing, it took me two weeks of evenings to get the same result! Small timing changes between audio and video tracks can be produced on the computer in seconds whereas beforehand the whole sequence had to be assembled and downloaded to tape each time a change was made. By Christmas, therefore, I was already convinced that the computer route to video editing was *a very good thing indeed!*

Early in January I received both StrongARM and my fast hard drive so I now had the capacity to produce a half-hour video, recorded at 1500K/sec. (You will calculate I have 45 minutes' capacity on the 4GB drive but you need a margin for the bits you edit out.)

With Irlam's advice, filesystem buffers were configured to zero to avoid possible problems with large drive partitions. The latest software takes care of this for you. For convenience I use 2GB partitions which are surprisingly easy to fill up quickly with video clips.

***In Part 2, in our next issue, Mike Sherwood explains more about the use of Videodesk and looks at video quality.***

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#### Videodesk

Price: £995 +VAT

With RiscTV £1144 +VAT

Supplier: Irlam Instruments Ltd  
Brunel University, Kingston Lane  
Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH

Tel/Fax: 01895 811401

Email: [info@irlam.co.uk](mailto:info@irlam.co.uk)

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## Pocket Book Corner

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In an amusing repeat of the year before last, this year's Holland trip team sported a brash of no fewer than five Psions (four Series5s and a PB2). We can report that they work fine on the continent, can even cope with

along the route, and it calculates the best roads for you to use. This information is then presented as both a textual table, and a graphical map, which can be displayed on the Psion's screen (in Map, Table or Both mode).

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*Despite holidays and travel, Toby Smith gets his regular report through in a practical demonstration of mobile computing and even gets home using new software.*

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obscure expenses spreadsheets dealing in five currencies, and can happily transfer files by IR from front to back seat of a modestly speeding car half way through Belgium. In fact, reinstalling software by IR in Belgian restaurants is perfectly OK, but does tend to provoke some very strange looks.

On review in this issue's Pocket Book Corner is EnRoute for the Series 5 from Palmtop BV of the Netherlands. EnRoute is a road journey planner, very similar to Microsoft's popular AutoRoute software for the PC. You give it a starting point (town, village, city etc) and an end point (ditto), and up to four optional places to stop

EnRoute comes on a CD-ROM, with map information for the UK and all of Western Europe in separate maps, of about five varying levels of detail, allowing you to install which bits you want, at what detail you want, depending on where you travel, and how much space on the Psion you've got. There is a PC based installation program that can be used but instructions are provided on where to put what for those not using a PC (such as PsiRisc users). I've got the application and highest level UK maps only installed, in the space of a little under three meg, which is very good going —not that much for complete, high detail UK road planning.

In use, EnRoute is very intuitive, with exceedingly good use of the touch screen. There's a lot of nice configuration detail you can change, such as average speeds on the differing types of road, preferences for how the text instructions should be displayed and so on. The mapping is incredibly clear, with scale (aka zoom), numbers of roads, numbers of city/village names displayed on screen all controllable with sliding bars on the toolbox. Getting the level of detail you want is always possible and even the lack of a colour display doesn't seem to hinder the clarity.

Search times are very good, considering the complexity of the job with an (utterly unrepresentative 100 mile) Birmingham to Cambridge journey calculation taking a mere 20 seconds to work out and plot.

As with any such system, it doesn't always come out with a route you know with brilliant accuracy but your route may be based on the level of local knowledge that a computer program can't have and, after all, the point of such a tool is to give you unfamiliar routes that are easy to follow. Locating your start and end

points is very easy: just type in and EnRoute usually makes a correct guess as to where you mean. Failing that, there's an alphabetically sorted list to find things on. Larger cities are often divided into districts (Birmingham has a good 60 specific regions, important motor way junctions, train stations and the like included in the highest detail Level 5 maps) and locating where you want as starting and end points can also easily be done on high level zoom of the relevant area, with all districts/roads/village names included.

My Verdict? I'd definitely recommend EnRoute as an ideal add-on for almost any traveller, however irregular. It's been fantastic help not only in planning routes, which you can do with a paper map, but also on calculating how long that journey is going to take and what the distance is precisely (for mileage claims). I've even found myself using this to calculate rough distance between cities and it's definitely a good demonstration of the power of the Psion over other simpler palmtops.

*More details can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.palmtop.nl/>*



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# Site Seeing

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Welcome to Site Seeing. I will be, for lack of a better word, reviewing three or four different sites which will (hopefully) be of interest to you, the reader. Don't stop reading already —they won't all be sites on the finer details of writing ARM code!

running for three to four years since he started it up on a server in America as a UFO site. This site is marked by its peculiar markings, to say nothing of the content which rivals even my own site! Space is not a word associated with this site —I've seen a

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*Luke Stutters introduces some interesting Web sites in the first of a new regular column on the information and amusements that can be found on the Internet.*

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I aim to have a variety of sites which will cover many topics of interest, and those of you who are lucky enough to have your own Web page can take a look at the skills the authors have used in putting their site together. Before I start, I will make one pledge: no pro-Wintel sites!

## **Paul Vigay's Homepage**

Our first stop on this mystery tour of the Internet is at the homepages of one Mr Paul Vigay. Paul has been on the Acorn scene since 1982 and his quite massive site, spread over two Internet accounts illustrates that. In fact, Paul has had his site

can of sardines with more room! However, the site in question was set up in a serious nature so among the clouds of crop circles, alien spaceships and pictures of balding programmers from Southsea, there is some excellent and unique free/shareware which is of use to nearly everyone who uses Acorn machines. There is also a page full of Psion software by Paul which may be of interest to people who possess one. Thankfully, that yellow/pink font hasn't spread on the Internet (and he

YOU'VE STUMBLED ACROSS

*Paul Vigay's Homepage*

complains about the Phoebe 2100 colours!). Another of the site's main features is Paul's anti-Wintel page.



### **WWW Snooker**

Hopping over to a more terrestrial part of the Internet, the University of Oslo, we land at the World Wide Web Snooker Site. I wasn't sure what to expect from a site which refers to snooker as both *the noble game* and *billiards on the big tables* but I was soon impressed. This is an extremely well-structured site which, although it is run on a purely voluntary basis, is undoubtedly at the forefront of all snooker sites.

The graphics are tasteful and well used, with a pleasant lack of animated GIFs. The site is completely up-to-date; all tournaments and matches are covered. I particularly liked this site because it is aimed at all aspects of the game. There is a guide to playing and enjoying the game, a *snooker clinic* for those who are more advanced, the complete rules of the game and a page where Richard Fountain spouts forth (cringe!) on various players' recent performances. There is also a

comprehensive biography of all the major professionals and links to other snooker sites. Needless to say, there are about six Web awards shown on this page. Overall, this is an enjoyable site for both those who know the game and snooker newbies.

### **HTML Guide**

The last site in this issue's column is one in Worcester, Massachusetts (or as they call it, *Mass*). The site was put together by a professor at a college in Mass and a professional web designer. Titled *How to make top-notch Web sites and home pages*, the site is aimed at those who are fresh onto the Internet, who have little or no experience in Web site design. The navigation options on this site are excellent. There is a neat graphic at the top of the home page which you can use, an embedded menu which is more comprehensive or you can go through the site in order, starting with the home page. The overall layout is spacious and simple, with a few

graphics here and there. There are some quite amusing road signs, with captions like *code construction ahead* but the great thing about this site is the superb content. This is probably the best online tutorial I have read on site creation for beginners. It manages to keep everything very simple and illustrates code clearly and precisely, which is more than can be said for some books on the subject. Unfortunately, the site was created on a Mac and is PC/Mac oriented. However, since HTML is a universal language, this is only noticeable when software is recommended for Web site design (you can get the equivalents from the Acorn Cybervillage).

The tutorial itself is brief and informative, making the user learn from manipulating site templates rather than from scratch. There are links to image resources on the Internet and you can use the provided templates to design your own site. However, these templates are Mac-formatted and contain the wrong sort of newline character, so I advise you use Edit (or whatever) to search for char \0D and replace with \0A. There is a page of Dos and Don'ts to aid

your site designing, as well as HTML 'secrets'. Once you have completed the tutorial given, there are links to sites which provide a more detailed and technical guide to HTML. The site creators even invite you to email them if you have any problems with your site design and provide a form for doing so. I would recommend this site to anyone who was thinking of setting up a Web page, and would advise them to go here before buying any books on HTML. It taught me a few things and I've been designing sites for quite a while now.

If you know of any sites of interest or you have an outstanding site, please contact me about it. I can't maintain this column without feedback.

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### Contacts

Luke Stutters: [lukestuts@mcmail.com](mailto:lukestuts@mcmail.com)

Penguin BBS: 01705 254244 ringback

Paul Vigay's Homepage:

<http://www.matrix.clara.net/>

WWW Snooker:

<http://www.stud.ifi.uio.no/~hermunda/Snooker/>

HTML Tutorial:

<http://www.splusnet.com/~evilcow/tutorial/>

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# Acorn Expo98

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Yet again the Dutch Big Ben Club's annual show was a resounding success.

The show, again held at the Hotel Mercure, in Nieuwegein, Utrecht, was very well attended by visitors and exhibitors alike.

used if ordering a particular brand of red cider in their local Banks' Pub!

As before, the Continentals were augmented by a select bunch of UK companies rapidly becoming regulars at the show, including R-Comp, selling their Internet software and

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*Acorns still draw the crowds at the annual Big Ben Show in Holland, where Toby Smith saw the interest in Phoebe and StrongARM Pint glasses.*

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A four-strong team from Acorn did a similar showing of the new Phoebe 2100 for the Dutch market and several other exhibitors were showing new and interesting things to do with Acorns, including a complete auto-prompt system for large presentations and TV shows, based around a rebadged A7000, which we will be reporting on in the next issue.

The regional German and Dutch dealers did stirring business selling general Acorn paraphernalia, software and peripherals, along with StrongARM Pint glasses, which English readers may already have

recent game conversions; Paul Beverley of Archive and Chris Evans of CJE attempting to undercut everybody on RAM prices; Icon Technology with their ever popular EasiWriter and Techwriter family of stunning Word Processors and of course your intrepid team from The ARM Club.

The Dutch market appears considerably more buoyant than the UK one at the moment, with Show attendance at similar figures to previous years, unlike the falling attendances at the UK shows. Many people expressed quite an interest in

purchasing a Phoebe or Peanut; the only problem being the strength of the pound increasing prices.

In fact the prospect of a new portable Acorn machine did produce quite a lot of interest, mainly centring around the traditional A4 on our stand. It is quite a pity that IMS couldn't make the trip but, without a product to sell yet, it wouldn't have been viable.

Acorn are quite keen to keep the overseas markets where they have already got significant coverage (The Netherlands and Germany in Europe and Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong in the Pacific) and are expecting similar interest in the new machine and associated products from all their overseas supporters.

See you all next year!

***Note: While The ARM Club does arrange special prices in Guilders, Belgian Francs and DM for this trip, (which get converted back courtesy of the intense duty free shopping habits of your Committee!) it should be remembered that we normally accept only UK Sterling.***

# Revelation

The official Acorn demo party will be taking place at Acorn World '98

The Revelation party will be a chance to meet the demo crews, talk coding and design and check out all the latest releases running on everything from A3010s to StrongARM Risc PCs.

The highlight of the party will be the competition to discover the best demo of 1998, taking place in the show theatre on 17th October at 2.30pm. The top prize is a Phoebe computer system kindly donated by Acorn with other prizes for runners up.

There's something for everyone to get their teeth into!

Full details are available on the Revelation web site at:  
<http://www.argonet.co.uk/acornshow/rev/>

If you haven't got access to the Internet, phone 01707 390410

Organiser: John Stonier

## **Membership Joining Fee**

The existing membership price of £12 per annum has been around for over five years and, inflation aside, is becoming less and less like the actual physical cost of membership. In fact, membership has been subsidised quite noticeably by the sales of the Club Software products and the PD CDs for many years. Recent calculations worked out that the £12 fee didn't cover even the cost of the magazine, disc and other mailing sent to each member, let alone the other costs of the organisation (telephone lines, web site and email hosting, show hall hire, bank charges etc).

Therefore we've had to raise the cost of *joining* the club by £3 (to £15 UK, £19 Europe and £22 Rest Of World). The cost of *renewing* an existing membership will remain at the current prices of £12, £16 and £19 respectively. This difference is to reflect the cost of the joining pack, new Club Card, and other associated items.

This cost change will come into action with the publication of the next issue of Eureka and hence will apply to new members from then.

*As an existing member of the club, this shouldn't affect you, as the renewal cost remains unchanged.*

If you forget to renew when your renewal notice comes round, then renewals can be backdated, as long as you've still got your original membership card (the new black plastic variety which most of you will have by now) at the renewals price, otherwise the £3 'joining fee' will unfortunately have to apply.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that the Club is a non profit making organisation and all of the Club funds are spent directly on Club activities and to make membership better for you.

Profits from the 'commercial' successes such as Game On! and StrongGuard! and our very popular PD CDs have all been funnelled straight back into things like funding local shows, improving our contactability, subsidising the membership fee and so on.

**Toby Smith**  
**Membership Secretary**

## Training Days

*Are you interested in getting the most out of your computer? Would you like to learn new skills or enhance them? Can you pass on your expertise to others?*

It's important to get the best from your computer and this can be difficult if you don't have the resources to enhance your knowledge. The ARM Club has many members who would benefit from a Training Day. Areas of interest might include:

- **Internet:** Using search engines, Creating web pages, Understanding IRC, Using Bulletin Boards, Looking at software

- **DTP:** Learn to lay out pages, Incorporating graphics, Creating a newsletter, Understanding jargon, Looking at software.

- **Graphics:** Basic drawing skills, Vector/bitmap graphics, Understand colour mixing, Image manipulation, Looking at software.

- Programming
- Text processing
- Scanning/Imaging
- Databases
- Networking
- Hardware

- CAD
- RISC OS
- Games
- Spreadsheets
- Finance
- Printing
- Music
- Video
- PC card

We are also interested in training people to use a particular software package.

Club members with skills in any computer subjects are always welcome to offer their services

A Training Day would consist of various talks, demonstrations, practical assignments and a time for question and answers. The cost will be around £25 for a day's training, which would include refreshments.

We need feedback from you in order to make a decision about what areas we want to cater for.

If you're interested in any of the above topics or some not covered, or have any comments to make about a Training Day, please contact me.

For more information contact John Stonier on 01707 390410 or [jstonier@argonet.co.uk](mailto:jstonier@argonet.co.uk)

## On the Eureka Disc

Please note that the files listed in Boot File Favourites, which are included on the disc, are not intended to be run as supplied as they will not be effective unless you have all the applications included in them. They can be loaded into !Edit, or a similar program, to be examined. The disc was still being compiled at the time the magazine went to the printers.

*The ARM Club can now offer a Hard Disc backup service to its members. For £25 the Club will back up your hard disc onto a GOLD CD. We can accept ZIP discs, 135 Syquests, 105 Syquests and also IDE or SCSI hard discs.*

*For more details contact Matthew Cook.*

*Email: [matt@armclub.org.uk](mailto:matt@armclub.org.uk) or write to: FREEPOST 'The ARM Club'.*

### SHOWS DIARY

Acorn World '98  
Friday-Sunday 16-18 October  
London Docklands Arena.

The Scottish Acorn Show  
Sunday 8 November, 10.00-17.00  
The Glasgow Marriott Hotel,  
Argyle Street, Glasgow.

Midlands Acorn Show  
Saturday 28 November, 10.00-1600  
The National Motorcycle Museum,  
Birmingham.

### Graham Crow

We were very sorry to hear of the death of our member Graham Crow in June. Graham was best known for his Ancestry program, which he had been rewriting, and his *Tiger* cataloguer which he had just extended into a *DeskTop Suite* with the addition of *MenuBar* and *WorkTop* programs (which we will be reviewing in our next issue).

These programs are now all available from APDL.



## ***Coming in Eureka 28***

*In our Winter issue we learn how to write and edit music, without MIDI, there are the latest instalments of our series on Video Editing, Using the Toolbox from BASIC and Site Seeing, reviews of Sleuth 3, MenuBar & Desktop and Exodus, more Tried and Trusted Tips and the rest of our regular series.*

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### **Club contacts**

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Members' technical help	support@armclub.org.uk
Product sales	sales@armclub.org.uk
Magazine	eureka@armclub.org.uk

***Telephone (higher rates):***

General queries (Flextel ) 07010 709849  
Technical help line (Orange) 0973 891330

***Fax:*** 07020 954018

***Mail:***

FREEPOST 'The ARM Club'

***Web site:***

<http://www.armclub.org.uk/>

***Alternative telephone (subject to delays):***

General queries. Also fax for technical help only 0181 302 2316

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# Benefits of membership

*The national club for all users of 32 bit  
Acorn computers and Pocket Books*



- The Club's magazine, 'Eureka', written by members, is published and sent free of charge four times a year.
- 1.6MB disc of quality software accompanies each issue of Eureka and 800K discs are available for those who have older machines.
- Free Technical Help Service. We will do our best to solve any problems which you may have, by email, letter, telephone or fax.
- Special discounts for Club members from well-known companies.
- Regional open days and shows are regularly organised by the Club. Other events can be arranged on request
- Special offers at shows and open days
- Regional contact lists of other members, available on request.
- Opportunities to get involved in the running of the Club itself.
- School and Affiliate Membership available on request.
- Joining pack includes an extra copy of recent magazine and disc.

*Annual membership only £12*

*Europe £16 and rest of the world £19*

**FREEPOST 'The ARM Club'**

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