Pro Audio Spectrum & MPC Digest

Volume 2 - Number 2

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Published by Jim Rooney

Edited By Karen Goehner-Rooney

Dedicated to PAS and MPC Users

Publishers Corner

Welcome to Pro AudioSpectrum & MPC Digest. I don't usually make complaints about the computer industry in this column, but this month, I'm going to make an exception. The complaint deals with manuals... sometimes I wonder if some of these companies just pull someone off the street to write 'em. As I've mentioned numerous times before, I feel that the manual is the most important part of the product. After all, if you can't depend on the documentation, you're basically screwed! And that isn't the worst of it. I mean, if you're in a jam because the answer isn't in the manual, then you'll probably want to call tech support. After all, they're the experts. So you start thumbing through the darned thing looking for the phone number. It has to be in there.... RIGHT??? Well, it probably is, but you have no idea where. I have run into a few manuals that actually list technical support in the index... which is where I feel it should be. Now I suppose there is a case to be made that if a user has to go through the docs page by page, maybe he or she will find the answer to the problem before he or she gets to the phone number. Well, as far as I'm concerned, that's bunk! And about 80% of 'em do it that way. Even Media Vision doesn't list it in the index... but they do usually put it within the first few pages, so if you're starting at the beginning to look for it, it won't take long. It's the companies that stick it somewhere in the middle of a 500 pager that really gets my goat! What do they think??? That you'll just happen to run across it... SOME DAY?? What a crock! We actually have about 12 or 14 software and 2 or 3 hardware packages sitting on the shelf to this day because after looking for the number for tech support for what seemed like an hour, I just decided it wasn't worth it! Well, sure... I could call the PR or media contact person at the company and ask 'em to get someone to call me from tech support... but YOU can't do that. As we have mentioned before, the reviews in this magazine are for the most part recommendations. If a product doesn't meet up to the standards we set, it just doesn't get reviewed. One of those standards is the ability to find a phone number for help.

AND... while we're on the subject of tech support, I want to send out my compliments to Rick Clark and all the folks who have helped him create what is now one of the best tech support departments in the industry. They have installed a new phone system which will give you a choice of waiting for a tech or leaving a message... and have also installed a Knowledge base (kinda like a data base) to get you answers to your questions more quickly. Also, new support hours are M-F 6am to 8pm and Saturday 9-5. Good goin' Rick and staff. Keep up the GREAT work!

Now... On With The Show!!

Now, to get through all the legal gobbledygook...

REVIEWS

The reviews this month are as follows...

Games...
>   David Leadbetters Greens
>   Contraption Zack

Windows...
>   Corel Draw
>   Energizer Bunny Screen Saver

DOS...
>   No DOS Programs to Review this Month

Hardware...
>   CDPC Bass Enhancement System
>   TV-GRX

GAME REVIEWS

DAVID LEADBETTERS GREENS

"How many golf games can there possibly be out there" is a question you might be asking at this point. Well, there's a LOT of 'em. In the past we have reviewed Jack Nicklaus Golf, Jack Nicklaus Golf- Signature Edition, Links, Links 386 Pro and Microsoft Golf. I'm sure there are some others we haven't seen. This particular game from Micro Prose takes a little different angle (no pun intended) than the others. It is meant to be instructional... in other words, it can actually help you improve your real golf game... and the instruction is given by David Leadbetter... one of the most popular pro golf instructors in the world.

The game starts out in the clubhouse of the course you select. There are six courses supplied... Ballybrook, Buckland Heath, Donald Ross Memorial, Dunedin Country Club, Mountsummer Point and St. Augustine. All have different club houses but the options are the same... you can practice a hole, go to the driving range, practice putting, play golf with someone else by modem, play a round or exit the game.

Now, without getting into repetitive golf game material I will try to point out the unique aspects of this particular golf simulation.

First off, you are allowed a handicap so you won't get beat up by the computer players. A newly formed player will default to a handicap of 28, which should probably be changed if you have any experience at all with golf simulations. On the other hand, handicaps are automatically adjusted with each game played, so you really don't have to do anything. You will, however, probably "beat the pants" off the computer for the first few games.

You are also allowed to change the tee height. For instance, if you have a high back wind, raising the height will probably induce a longer drive. On the other hand, if you have a side wind and set the tee high, you might end up almost anywhere, including just a few feet in front of you. The height is usually set just above the center of whichever club you are teeing off with.

Another adjustment of importance here is the stance. I won't go into the specifics of this area as the manual does a very good job... and this IS a review, not a tutorial. I just wanted to mention it so you wouldn't think it has been left out.

The only other thing I would have to bring up here is the graphics of this game. I have not seen anything like it to date with a golf simulation. You are allowed to choose from seven different camera positions... reverse cut, swing cam, fixed pan, fixed swing, tracking, track 'n' pan and intelligent. The latter of these will use whichever of the other six will give you the best view. Now, keep in mind that these cameras keep track of the flight of the ball from the stroke to the landing... and the tracking is just as smooth or smoother than that of real camera tracking. It's something that has to be seen to be appreciated. Let's just say that MicroProse has gone to the greatest extents possible where camera work is concerned.

So, if you're looking for a decent golf simulation game, but also need some instruction, which comes both from the manual and from hints and tips during the game, this is certainly worth every cent.

PAS16 Support - average (SB emulation)
Graphics - OUTSTANDING
Interface - excellent
Originality - very good
Value - excellent
Playability - excellent
Digitizing - None
Animation - OUTSTANDING
Overall - excellent

CONTRAPTION ZACK

And what a contraption it is! If you're into puzzles as I am, this game will be a lot of fun and drive you totally nuts at the same time. It's addictive, pleasurable and challenges your brain better than most other puzzle games I have seen.

The story begins like this... it's Zack's first day on the job at Gadgetco, Inc... and what a job it is! His position is EMT or Electro Mechanical Technician. His responsibilities include Keeping all Machines & Operating systems running efficiently, resetting all plant Timing Mechanisms (TMs), Maintaining and operating all Transport and Access Devices (TADs), Repairing or replacing malfunctioning Components and Transistors and Getting the Master Machine working by the end of the day. Now... that's not too much to do... is it? Well, it wouldn't be all THAT difficult if you had your tools, but you were stupid enough to lend them out to all the other guys!

Now, just to give you a bit of an overview of the plant... it relies on six Primary operating systems that must be running efficiently to utilize the energy generated by the Primary Machines (PM) on each floor. For maximum efficiency the EMT must keep the operating systems and the primary machines running between MV7 and MV8 diode rates. This is especially true under higher kelitic bore rates. The primary machines below are responsible for driving the functions of the Master Machine.

OK.. OK... it's really a bunch of gobbledygook. And the manual goes on and on about these different machines and what they do. It's actually as entertaining as the game itself. Anyway, what you have to do is go through a bunch of screens and jump on the correct pads to lower the spike gates and turn this screw and wrench that screw. The catch is that everything has to be done in the correct sequence or you could find yourself stuck with no way out. For instance, if you happen to go across a conveyor and there isn't a way around that particular area and you can't shut off the

conveyor from that side, you'll have to start the area or level all over again. Most levels consist of around 10 areas. There are six levels. each one, naturally, gets a little bit more difficult. So, between jump switches, launch pads, electric and mechanical gates, conveyor belts, elevators and many other interesting things, this game is a winner in every respect if you like puzzles.

Requires 286/16 or higher, Hard disk, 600K free ram, 256 color VGA/MCGA monitor.

Supports Pro AudioSpectrum, SB, Adlib, and Roland LAPC-1/MT32.

PAS16 Support - good
Graphics - excellent
Interface - very good
Originality - OUTSTANDING
Value - excellent
Playability - excellent
Digitizing - very good (in intro only)
Animation - very good (in intro only)
Overall - very good (or excellent if you're a puzzle lover)

Windows Reviews

cOREL dRAW

If you're looking for a top notch draw and graphics program, you need not look any further. Corel Draw from Corel is the best I have seen and does just about anything you would need from a draw program. In fact, it's amazing that it can do so much. You probably noticed the new front page if you get the color or multimedia versions. Those are actually bitmapped graphics which we created in Corel Draw using the extrude function... and it couldn't have been easier. I just typed the text, picked a color, set the angle and depth and then selected extrude and all the work was done for me.

Now, Corel Draw isn't just a draw program. There are actually four programs in one... CorelDraw, CorelChart, CorelPaint and Corel Show.

CorelDraw is where one would do most of the work with this program. You can manipulate text and graphics in most any way imaginable. From extrude to blend to fountain fills to pattern fills, it does it all.

CorelChart is a chart creation program with the ability to create pie, line and bar charts. All can be manipulated in whatever way you wish. From flat pie charts to 3 dimensional bar charts, this does it all.

CorelPaint is a very sophisticated painting program that even a beginner can use easily. It comes with about every tool you could possibly use... Text, spray can, gradient paint roller, contrast, blend, smear,

brighten, tint, smudge, etc. I really can't name them all. Be assured that you can do just about anything in the painting arena with this one.

CorelShow is a presentation program. You can take the items you made in Draw, Chart and Paint and make a slide show. Features include transitions, like screen wipes, between scenes, animation and more. The only drawback of this program is it is not interactive... in other words, you can not add buttons so a user can decide when to show the next slide like we use for the multimedia version of this magazine.

Now that you have an idea of what the program is comprised of, and what it can do, I have just one more thing to add... and this is probably the best part. CorelDraw comes with more fonts, clipart, symbols and flicks than you can imagine. It is all included on the free CD-ROM. As a matter of fact, there are over 12,000 clipart images and symbols, over 250 fonts and more than 130 animation "flics"... as a matter of fact, there is a reference book included which shows thumbnail views of all the clipart and symbols. There is also a foldout "map" style chart that shows all the fonts... kinda like a poster you can pin to your wall if you're so inclined. That's quite a library, wouldn't you say? The clipart and fonts alone are worth the price of the package. All and all, you might expect to pay around $1000 for this package, but street prices are around the $369.00 area. So, run down to your local software outlet and take a gander at the box and ask the sales person what he or she thinks of it. I'm sure you'll get a good response.

Requires a 386 or 486 with at least 4 meg or ram, hard drive, CD-ROM drive for the clipart and such VGA or better monitor and a mouse or tablet.

eNERGIZER bUNNY SCREEN SAVEr

I'm sure you have all seen the Energizer Bunny commercials for Energizer Batteries. Well, who ever thought a TV commercial would be so popular that a computer program would be made of it? Now you can have that same bunny as a screen saver... and this guy's got <u>some</u> attitude! But before you decide that this isn't for you because you don't want to give up Intermission or After Dark, read on.
The screen saver is only part of this package. It also includes a guest appearance mode, where every so often, the bunny will drum his way across your screen or he might even parachute down from the top... pounding his drum the whole time. You can even configure it to do the "it keeps going... and going... and going" part of the commercial. And... you also get a wallpaper changer that plasters your background with bunnies in different scenes... from a patriotic bunny to a snorkeling bunny, you'll find him in about every role he's played. The nice part about the wallpaper is that the scenes are in standard bitmap form... so if you wish, you can copy those files into your bitmap directory and let Curtain Call or any other wallpaper changer intermix the bunny with your other backgrounds. So, add a little fun to your Windows screen and get this bunny. He's waiting for you at most retail outlets or from PC Dynamics at 1-800-888-1741. Suggested retail price is $24.95. Requires Windows 3.X. Works best with a sound card, but then, if you're reading this, you most likely have one, eh?

The only problem I encountered with this product was when using it with WinTools, unless I was in the main window, the bunny wouldn't be visible. The sound still played, but the bunny appears only where the program is started. I don't know if this is a problem with other Windows shells, as I haven't tested it. I do know that the engineer of the Bunny project is going to try to set up a product swap with the makers of WinTools and take care of the problem... so if you're a WinTools fan, don't worry... it'll be fixed.
Here's an example of some of the wallpaper...

Energizer Bunny is a registered trademark of the Eveready Battery Company.

Hardware

CDPC Bass Enhancement System

Perhaps you read the review of the CDPC-XL last month... and perhaps you are aware that there is a bass enhancement system offered by Media Vision as an add on unit. As stated in the specs, the CDPC-XL runs 20 watts per side on the built in speakers and reserves 60 watts for the bass. As I said last month, the unit sounded excellent without the bass system attached, but once I put the BES on, there was no comparison. The resulting sound was so much fuller than that of just the CDPC. Guess it's kinda like the difference between a boom box and a home stereo. The bass even rivaled that of the "fancy" tuned port sub-woofers supplied with the Acoustic Research 622s and the Altec Lansing ACS-300s... and this is NOT a tuned port system. It is simply a 6" speaker in an enclosure that measures 9"wide by 7"deep by 17"high. It is painted black and comes with a nice looking cloth speaker cover. Now, how they achieved the resulting sound with that setup is beyond me... I just know that it works and works well. All I can say here is if you own a CDPC or CDPC-XL, this thing is worth the $90.00 price.

Available from Media Vision sales at 1-800-845-5870.

TV-GRX

It seems rather ironic to me that most home use "computers" started out using a TV for a monitor and now there are several 3rd party cards that will allow you to receive TV on your computer monitor... but it makes sense... after all, if you want a good TV picture, you can either get a high definition TV set or get one of these cards and have the convenience of watching on what you already have.

The TV-GRX includes a 3/4 length PC Card, an analog VGA to TV-GRX cable and a set of small speakers. Also included is the necessary software to run it, which comes in both DOS and Windows versions. The connectors on the back of the card are for video out, (to your monitor), video in (from your VCR), VGA connection (from VGA adapter to TV-GRX), audio in and audio out. Now, this card does not include a tuner, so you must have a source of composite video or bass level video. This would be the video out RCA jack on a VCR or any other device that has such a connector. The audio in comes from the audio out RCA jacks on the VCR. What basically happens during use is that the TV-GRX interrupts your VGA output and sends the TV signal. When not in use, the TV-GRX simply passes your VGA adapter signal through.

Now that you know the basics, I only have one thing to say... the picture from this thing is incredible. Unlike a normal TV, you're using a high resolution monitor... so guess what??? You can't see the lines you normally see on your 19 inch color TV. I'm beginning to watch this thing more than my regular TV.

Both DOS and Windows programs give you full control over the audio and video including mute, hue, saturation, volume, brightness, contrast, etc. I liked the DOS version better, however because it made it easier to change things. For instance, if you hit the return key, a menu comes up with all the pre-mentioned options. Say you want to change the hue. You just scroll down the list to hue and hit enter again. Then,

the adjustment is performed with the cursor keys. In Windows, however, you can not see the picture as you adjust it, so you're basically guessing at the result. Plus, instead of just using the enter key to get the picture back, you have to do an ALT/T key combination, which seems rather clumsy to me.

There were a few things I didn't like about this card, however. First, you can't put the TV picture into a window in Windows. This would be a great enhancement for future versions of the card. Second, the cable supplied to hook the VGA adapter to the TV-GRX is simply too short. Unless you have the cards side by side, it just isn't long enough. All things considered, however, this is a decent product for watching TV on your computer.

Requires 286 or better with VGA or better.

Available from STB systems at 1-800-234-4334.

Suggested Retail Price - $295.00

UPGRADES AND FUTURE PRODUCTS

Media Vision...

March 17, 1993... Media Vision has today launched a new addition to its line of 16 bit add in sound cards for PC compatible computers. The Pro AudioStudio 16 sound system features an enhanced version of the PAS16 card as well as a variety of new software applications which make it easier to use and offer broadened functionality than other affordably priced add in sound cards.

The Pro AudioStudio16 is the first sound card to feature a full multimedia guided tour, easy installation software, voice recognition with 300 words (the highest accuracy rate in the industry), a MIDI sequencer for composition, audio editing tools, and an ergonomically designed computer mounted microphone.

April 8, 1993... Media Vision has today announced "Captain Crunch", a video compression technology which allows development of low cost, television quality video on personal computers. This new technology is expected to broaden the application of video in the business and entertainment computing environment.

Sierra On-Line...

April 28, 1993... Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist, the first ever comedy Western adventure for home computers began shipping today from Sierra for MS-DOS. From the dynamic duo of twisted humor, Al Lowe and Josh Mandel, this new addition to the Sierra stable features more puzzles, puns and pestles than any other computer game to date.

NOTE: Last month in the Write/ASCII version we inadvertantly labeled Sound Impression a shareware... fortunately, we found our mistake before the multimedia version came out. Our apologies to the makers of Sound Impression... and here is the phone number where you can get a copy of this great software...

515-342-2334

General Information & Tech Notes

We Have decided to date our tech notes because we realized there might be a little
confusion over what is new and what is not... we usually keep them in for 2-3
issues so those who have not yet received back issues will have access to, what
we believe, is the most important part of this magazine. We hope this helps.

April 1993... If you have purchased or plan to purchase a CDPC Bass Enhancement System, (and I highly recommend you do), be sure you do NOT use the red and black cable that goes between the CDPC and the BES that was shipped with some of these units. The plugs on that cable are the wrong size and will short out your CDPC. At the very least, you will blow a fuse... and you may possibly damage the CDPC requiring it's return for repair. Call Media Vision Tech Support for a replacement cable. 1-800-638-2807.

April 1993... SOME CDPC-XL units have a defective chip in them that results in a clicking noise after playing an 11 kHz WAV file. This chip is no longer being used. If you have such a problem, be sure to contact Tech Support for further instructions.

March 1993... If you are using an Adaptec 1542B SCSI controller, or any other bus mastering device in the same machine as a PAS 16, you need to add the following switches to your ASPI4DOS driver... /n11 /f5. This will improve the timing and save a lot of lockups and hassles.

February 1993... If you are getting an error message in a DOS box in Windows that
reads "the ADLIB is in use by another application" there is an easy fix. Edit your
SYSTEM.INI file and look for any lines that refer to VADLIBD.386 or VADLIB and
remove them.

February 1993... If you get an error message when trying to upgrade Windows

drivers or install a Media Vision product that reads "You must first install
multimedia extensions" then you need to look for a line in the boot section of
SYSTEM.INI that reads "DRIVERS=MMSYSTEM.DLL". If this line is not there, then
you need to add it or edit the DRIVERS line to read the proper way. Also, if there is
anything else on that line, you need to delete it as this may also cause this
problem.

February 1993... If you have downloaded the new MVPROAUD.DRV from the bbs but
haven't downloaded the WIN144.ZIP file, you will get an error message telling you
that you have an old version of VPASD.386. The fix is to get the WIN144.ZIP and
install it following the instructions TO THE LETTER!

Letters

Thank you for another enjoyable issue of the PAS & MPC Digest. I just wish that people would download it more from our little BBS here, because then I would be able to justify the cost of subscribing. Unfortunately, the previous issues have only been downloaded once. I will be keeping them on-line for awhile though, so that might change in the future!

Having read through issue 12, I would like to make a few comments:

a) Thought I have installed all the fonts that I did not already have (issue 7 was the basic package I believe, the rest were issue specific upgrades and I went through all of them), including the ones from volume 12, I had a hard time reading this issue. I downloaded it from Media Vision's bbs). It was pretty BAD in Write, and , though better in WinWord, there still were problems with undefined fonts (some sections had a non existent or NO font defined for some reason). I am not quite sure what might have happened, so if the issue works fine on your machines, it is probably something stupid I did.

b) Though I applaud your decision to at least review sound cards not made by Media Vision, I am surprised you didn't choose the Gravis Ultra Sound as the first card to review. The GUS is gaining a lot of support in Vancouver, with numerous and vocal users. Unfortunately their users are so vocal that if one reads Scorpia's RoundTable on GEnie (and most game companies do), you get the impression there are more GUS owners than PAS16 owners out there, with the potential result, I fear, of companies providing native support to GUS owners before they do to PAS 16 owners.

c) Related to b)... If a program does not support NATIVE PAS Support, it HAS NO PAS support in my opinion. I am tired of games that offer PAS16 support through SB emulation, or that offer PAS specific drivers but sound the same as with SB emulation. No more GOOD+ ratings if there is no native support, please. Otherwise we will never get it since the game companies think we are content.

From P. Alexander Vondijidis

OK... let's take a) first... we found last month that there was some bad formatting in the conversion from Word to Write and that is probably what caused the undefined fonts. Another problem that might be occurring, although only in Word, is having too many fonts installed. Word for Windows will totally screw up if you have more than 200 fonts installed in Windows... and although my neighbors at Microsoft are aware of the problem, they plan no fix until version 3.0. A good outcry from all you Word for Windows owners to MS would be nice on this one.

As far as the choice of sound cards to review is concerned, we simply reviewed the first one we got. We have contacted all of the sound card companies and are expecting to review 4 or 5 others in the next few months including the UltraSound. As far as game support is concerned for the GUS, there hasn't been any yet to my knowledge and it really isn't expected soon. There just aren't enough users at this point for the game companies to make that kind of effort.

We <u>always</u> downgrade the PAS16 Support category if it is SB emulation... and tell you exactly what kind of sound it is. We even went as far as to request that Accolade remove "Supports all major sound cards" from their labels until they DO support the PAS16. After all, we consider the PAS16 a major sound card.

We hope this answers all you questions. Thanks for the letter... and we hope

others will write us at the address below with any comments or suggestions. We are always open to new ideas. Let us know what you're thinking.

If you want to write to PAS & MPC Digest, here is the address:

PAS & MPC Digest
23217 NE 10th Pl.
Redmond, WA 98053-6520
Voice - 206-868-0950 - 9am to 9pm Pacific Time - NO CALLS AFTER 9!!
Fax - 206-868-2257 or if no answer - 206-556-1723

You may also upload your comments to:

The Neighborhood BBS

206-641-3908 - running PCBboard - 1200/9600
206-957-1112 - Node 2 - 2400/14.4
206-747-6095 - Node 3 - 2400/14.4
You can log on under the name P A S (be sure to use the spaces) and a password of MPC. This name and password will only allow you to upload files and download this monthly newsletter. If you become a subscriber to PAS & MPC Digest, you will also get full access to this bbs on all three nodes.

You can check for the digest using a Z ippy directory scan for PAS. That will list all issues.

To contact Media Vision:

Media Vision Inc.
3185 Laurelview CT.
Fremont, CA 94538
Technical Support - 800-638-2807
BBS - 510-770-0968 or 510-770-0527
FAX - 510-770-9592
Main Number - 510-770-8600

BBS Listings

The Neighborhood BBS - 206-641-3908 - 1200/9600 - PAS & MPC support bbs
The Neighborhood BBS - 206-957-1112 - 12/14.4 - Node 2
The Neighborhood BBS - 206-747-6095 - 12/14.4 - Node 3

   This is where you will find the latest edition of this magazine.

Media Vision BBS - 510-770-0968 - 1200 - 16.8bps - Manufacturer BBS
SysOp is Brett Stewart.

You can check here for upgrades that are not on Neighborhood bbs or leave technical questions for tech support. Be sure to address these tech questions to TECH SUPPORT or they will probably not be answered.

MidiMaze BBS - 615-896-2864 - 1200-14.4

VGER Control BBS - 714-371-6482 - 12/24/96/14.4   -SysOp - Bob Altenberger

The National PC & MIDI Databank - 708-593-8703 - 12/24/96 -
MIDI files - Sound Card files - Multimedia - SysOp is Duane Antor

Lighthouse BBS - 207-255-3700 - 12/24/96 - LOTS of .ROL and MIDI files

Ultimate BBS - 803-895-5836 - 12/24/96 - .ROL and MIDI files

National MIDI - 708-593-8724 - 12/24/96 - LOTS of MIDI files

If you want to add your bbs to this list, please write or call the bbs and supply the information. We will be happy to add it.

Looks like that's it for Pro AudioSpectrum & MPC Digest for this month. Hope you enjoyed it. If there is anything you would like to see included in future issues don't hesitate to write. Until next time... Have a good month!

PS... If you didn't already notice, there are 3 formats of the publication. You will get MUCH better results if you use one of these files for printing as I use a lot of different fonts to make it look better. Here are the formats...

PASWR#X.DOC - Printed in Windows Write format.

PASASC#X.DOC - Printed in straight ASCII format.

PASMMXX.ZIP - The multimedia version available from the support bbs.

Subscription Form

NAME:_____

Address:_____

City, State, ZIP:_____

Phone   Number:_____   BBS Password_____

Version - circle one   Write/ASCII   Multimedia

Media - circle one   3.5   5.25   hard copy

Mail this form with $22.00 for floppy or $30.00 for hard copy or $40.00 for multimedia version or $35.00 for color hard copy per year to:

Note... order two versions and get a 25% discount!!

      PAS & MPC Digest
      23217 NE 10th Pl.
      Redmond, WA 98053-6520

Thanks for your subscription and you can access the support bbs's second and third nodes with contributor access at 206-957-1112 and 206-747-6095 respectively.