FormBase 1.1
Ventura Software

A few months ago, Xerox renamed the division that produces their microcomputer software, spun it off into a separate company, and *Voila*! Ventura Software was born. With the latest incarnation of *FormBase*, the "new" company steps squarely into the middle of the fray in database software, and if *Windows* becomes the corporate standard Microsoft would like it to be, *FormBase* should emerge head and shoulders above the pack. This one, folks, is amazing.
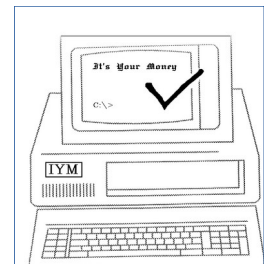
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Let's start out with the stuff that could hold *FormBase* back. Since it runs under *Windows*, there's a built in performance disadvantage compared to character based databases. If you're using *FoxBase* (or *dBase*, for that matter), and are working with data sets exceeding about five or six hundred records, get used to waiting around a little - but only for certain types of actions. For example, importing a six field database with 960 records takes about thirty seconds, versus ten seconds in *FoxPro*. In spite of the threefold performance detriment, the difference here is not that important. Yet, do a sort on two fields of the databases, and you'll see a real difference. *FoxPro* does the job in about four seconds, while *FormBase* takes over three minutes. Add the fact that there is no on-screen measurement of the status of the ongoing sort while *FormBase* is working, and you've got some uncomfortable moments in store. Remember, though, this deficiency is more attributable to the operating environment than the application.

Then there's marketing. Up to now, if you weren't sure whether *FormBase* was a database with forms capabilities or the other way around, you haven't been alone. Ventura must define themselves better and get the word out if they want this one to fly. Fact is, *FormBase* **is** both, but frankly, if you're looking for a forms package, there are many easier (to use and on your wallet) packages around. Some are *Windows* based, some not, but take our word for it, there are plenty of choices.

Finally, there's the way *FormBase* is used. Until now, most applications that use a mouse, be they graphical or text based, have pretty much relied on only one button. Remember the original "Cyclops" mouse that came with *MacIntosh* computers? It would have done fine. *FormBase* departs from this behavior; if you adopt it, you'll have to get used to using both buttons, and not just sporadically, either. This is truly mouse dependent (and reliant) software. Undaunted? Read on.

Computation Formula for 'TOTAL'

```
'QTY'*'UNIT PRICE'+'SHIPPING'
```

Catalog

- A:ORDER ENTRY FORM
- –C:NAME
- –D:ORDER DATE
- –E:SOLD TO:
- –A:Name
- –B:Street
- –C:City
- –D:State
- –E:Zip
- –F:Phone
- –G:Company
- –F:SHIP TO:
- –A:Name

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1	2	3	*	⟨	@	~	==
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☐ Clear Formula

☐ Discard Changes

[OK] [Cancel] [Help]

Functions

- abs
- ANSItoOEM
- average
- char
- choose
- clean
- compare
- cos
- date
- datevalue
- day
- daytimetext
- exact

Installing *FormBase* is a DOS based procedure that is documented as extensively as any we've ever seen. Unfortunately, that's due as much to necessity as thoroughness. Try installing *FormBase* by typing "install" at the A:> prompt, and although you'll get a working product in a few minutes, you're likely to wonder if you did things correctly. We made the mistake, and ended up trashing everything and starting over about two-thirds of the way through the procedure. Read the documentation, though (*Windows* novices, there's even plenty of help for **you** here), and besides an application occupying about 1 megabyte of disk space and comprised of just three program files in a single directory, you'll have an intelligently organized directory structure containing about fifty sample files for use in various sales, administrative, accounting, and personnel situations, fonts from Bitstream, and **no** extraneous garbage. The installation program even cleans up after itself, removing the files it copied to your hard disk to aid in its own operation. Your AUTOEXEC.BAT and WIN.INI configuration files are altered after first being backed up, and *FormBase* inserts a reference to the SHARE.EXE file-locking utility included with DOS, regardless of whether you're using *FormBase* on a network or a stand-alone workstation. One warning: if you choose to install *FormBase* in any drive/directory other than the default "C:\FORMBASE", certain aspects of the tutorial will not work correctly, and the documentation that explains that fact comes over one hundred pages after the first occurrence of the problem.

Learning *FormBase* is, in a word, easy. This is contributed to by the layout of *FormBase*'s menus, putting, for example, print functions on a print menu instead of in the place on the "file" menu that they are usually found. Follow the eight lessons presented in the tutorial book, and you'll have a working knowledge of every aspect of the program save integrating graphics files in your databases. That area is covered well in a chapter under twenty pages long found in the exhaustively complete reference manual. Total time needed is about six hours; plan on taking a few breaks. Read the release notes found on disk (mostly common sense information such as "create subsets of databases to get faster