

D-ROM certainly seems to be the up-and-coming medium for software presentation. Now well-established in the Mac and PC worlds, it appears to be taking off for Acom users too, with more and better quality titles now appearing.

The main problem with CD-ROM is - apart from its being read-only - the slow speed of accessing data. Therefore, a drive which claims to be four times as fast as normal sounds very attractive. In addition to its high speed, the Pioneer DRM-604X also takes up to six CDs simultaneously in a cartridge.

THE DRIVE

The DRM-604X is a fairly hefty unit: 8x4x14 inches in size and quite weighty too. You can forget about fitting one of these inside a Risc PC! The front panel sports power, disc activity, quad-speed and audio disc indicators in addition to the power and magazine eject switches, a volume knob and a headphone socket (phono sockets are provided at the back). On pressing eject, the disc magazine pops out of the drive with a suddenness that reminded me of Arkwright's cash register in Open All Hours! The magazine itself contains six shelves which swivel out, so designed that you can only open one at once. I had anticipated the changing of discs to be a fiddly process, but not at all - it was barely more trouble than swapping discs in a single-disc drive with a motorised drawer.

IN USE

The drive is a SCSI device and requires CDFS 2.2. Unless you are using a Morley SCSI card, you will also need to load a device driver. In order to make full use of the drive, you must configure six individual CD drives on your icon bar (in other words, you can only use as many discs in the drive as you configure icons for, up to a maximum of six). This does rather clutter up the screen, but is unavoidable. Clicking on a CD icon causes the appropriate disc to be mounted, the drive swapping discs in around eight seconds. You can see which disc is currently mounted by looking at a window in the

Pioneer DRM-604X CD-ROM Changer

Richard Hallas evaluates the quadruple-speed 6-disc CD-ROM drive from Computer Concepts

magazine, but this is slightly confusing as the disc slots are numbered 1 to 6, whereas the drive icons are numbered 0 to 5. I wished that CDFS would display the name of each disc below its icon (as is done for hard drives) rather than just the CD number.

The Pioneer is indeed fast at accessing discs, although still slow by comparison with a decent hard disc, of course. It enabled me to play 25fps Replay films in mode 21 without jerkiness on my ageing A440/1 (fitted with ARM3 and a graphics card), which I can't do with my Cumana 300-series SLCD double-speed drive. I tested its speed against my Cumana by copying a 12Mb file from a CD to my hard disc: the Cumana drive took 66 seconds, whilst the Pioneer took 33; exactly twice the speed, just as claimed.

PRODUCT INFO

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| Product | Pioneer CD-ROM drives |
| Supplier | Computer Concepts Ltd, Gaddesden Place, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 6EX Tel. 0442 63933 Fax 0442 231632 |
| Price | £999 ex. VAT (DRM-604X) |

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubting that this is a splendid piece of hardware (it's supplied with a sheet of paper detailing seven

