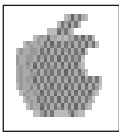# Files for a Rainy Day

Computer Concepts MacFS brings
Macintosh files under the Acorn umbrella;
Alan Wrigley investigates

Ever since RISC OS 3 appeared, Acorn machines have had a built-in ability to read and write DOS-format discs (and even before that there were programs available to enable you to do the job). It was only natural that developers should seek to provide the same facility for the other major system prevalent in the outside world - the Apple Macintosh. Despite rumours for several years of commercial Mac disc readers about to surface (there is already one in the public domain), only now has *MacFS* seen the light of day, courtesy of CC.

The problem with accessing Mac discs in the past was the complicated drive system on the Mac itself - the speed at which the drive rotated was not constant but depended on the position of the track being accessed. Newer *Macs have now been* fitted with more conventional constant-speed drives, and this has opened the way for utilities such as MacFS.

This does mean, however, that only computers with a high-density drive (i.e. A5000 and later) can use MacFS, since the new format discs hold 1.44Mb.

MacFS IN USE

MacFS is delightfully simple to use. It consists essentially of a module which when installed adds a new filing system to those already in your machine. Once this is done, the Mac system works in exactly the same way as RISC OS 3 s built-in DOS filing system. To read a Mac disc, just put it into the drive and click on the drive icon on the icon bar; MacFS will recognise it as a Mac disc and open a directory viewer. The contents of the disc can be read or written just as if it was an ADFS or DOS disc. To format a Mac disc, go to the Other formats submenu and you will find that *Mac 1.44M* has been added to the list of possible formats.

Before you can use MacFS in a real environment, however, you will almost certainly need to do a little work. This is to ensure that filetypes common to both systems (text, TIFF, EPS etc.) are mapped from one system to the other. For example, if you are working with TIFF files and want to transfer them from Acorn to Apple or vice versa, then both computers need to recognise the files as TIFF. This is quite simple to do by including a line in the !Run file for MacFS. This effectively says when you see a file of type xxx on one computer, treat it as type yyy on the other . The documentation with MacFS provides guidance on how to do this, but you may find that you need to experiment until everything works correctly, particularly since Mac filetypes include details of the application which created the file. So for example EPS files created by Illustrator will appear to be different from those created by XPress.

Once you have set up the system to suit your own requirements, using it is very simple. You can output EPS files from ArtWorks, save them on a Mac disc and import them directly into Illustrator as easily as it took me to type this sentence. Going the other way is just as easy - your Illustrator EPS file from the Mac will appear in the Acorn directory viewer as a PostScript file, and you can just drop it into ArtWorks. The same ease of transfer applies to text, TIFF, JPEG and any other filetypes that are recognised by applications on both systems.

In the case of unknown filetypes coming from the Mac, these simply appear on the Acorn side as a *MacForks* filetype (so called because most Mac files have two components - the data fork and the resource fork). This filetype acts like a directory - double-clicking on it opens a further viewer containing the two components as raw data files. Going the other way may cause more problems since unmapped Acorn types are passed to the Mac as &FFFAcrn . It is most unlikely that any Mac application will recognise this, so careful mapping of all filetypes that you use is