Let Your Mac Speak Out!

*A Review of **MicroPhone™** **b**y Daniel R. Arthur*

If you have just accquired a *modem*[1] or were just planning to upgrade the one you already have then take note! Many programs that let you use your Mac for telecommunications are available. Some are free like **MacTep**™ and shareware such as **MockTerminal**™, and **Red Ryder**™ but also the commercial programs for some of your money up front are available. Example are **InTouch**™, **MacTerminal**™, **MicroPhone**™ and **VersaTerm**™ amongst others.

This is a review of one of the leading programs, **MicroPhone™** , based on a review copy of the product provided to Club Mac Midwest by the publisher of the product.
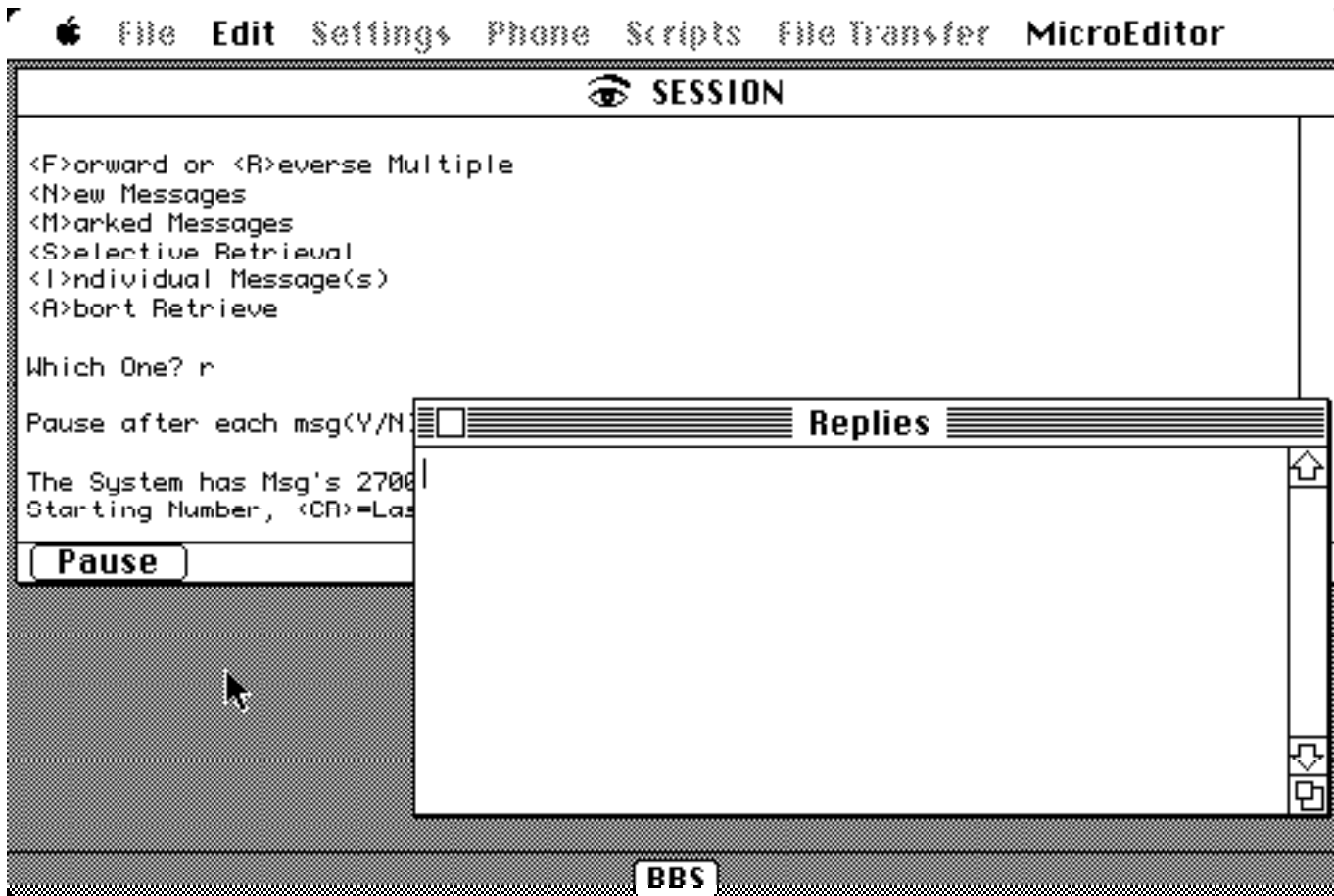
Some of the history behind **MicroPhone™** should be presented first.   Mac communication in general is rooted in **MacTep**™, a public domain program written by Dennis Brothers so Macintosh computers could link up to communications services such as *CompuServe's* [2] **MAUG** (Micronetworked Apple Users Group) and **BinHex**, a public domain program originally written for the Macintosh by Bill Davis (*Based on similar programs on other machines - Ed.)* for transfer of Macintosh files.   These beginnings in 1984 lead to the development of more sophisticated methods of making everything come together to connect the Macintosh user to the outside world. BinHex was crucial in that it was the watershed for the MacBinary file transfer protocol development used by most programs for file transfer. **MicroPhone™** was written by Dennis Brothers in 1985.

Microphone's feature list is relatively long. Some of the more important aspects is support for almost all major communication "protocols" such as XMODEM, YMODEM, ASCII, XMODEM with 1K blocks, MacBinary (an extension of XMODEM), and MacTerminal 1.1 (compatible with Apple Computer's standard communication program, which used another modified version of XMODEM).
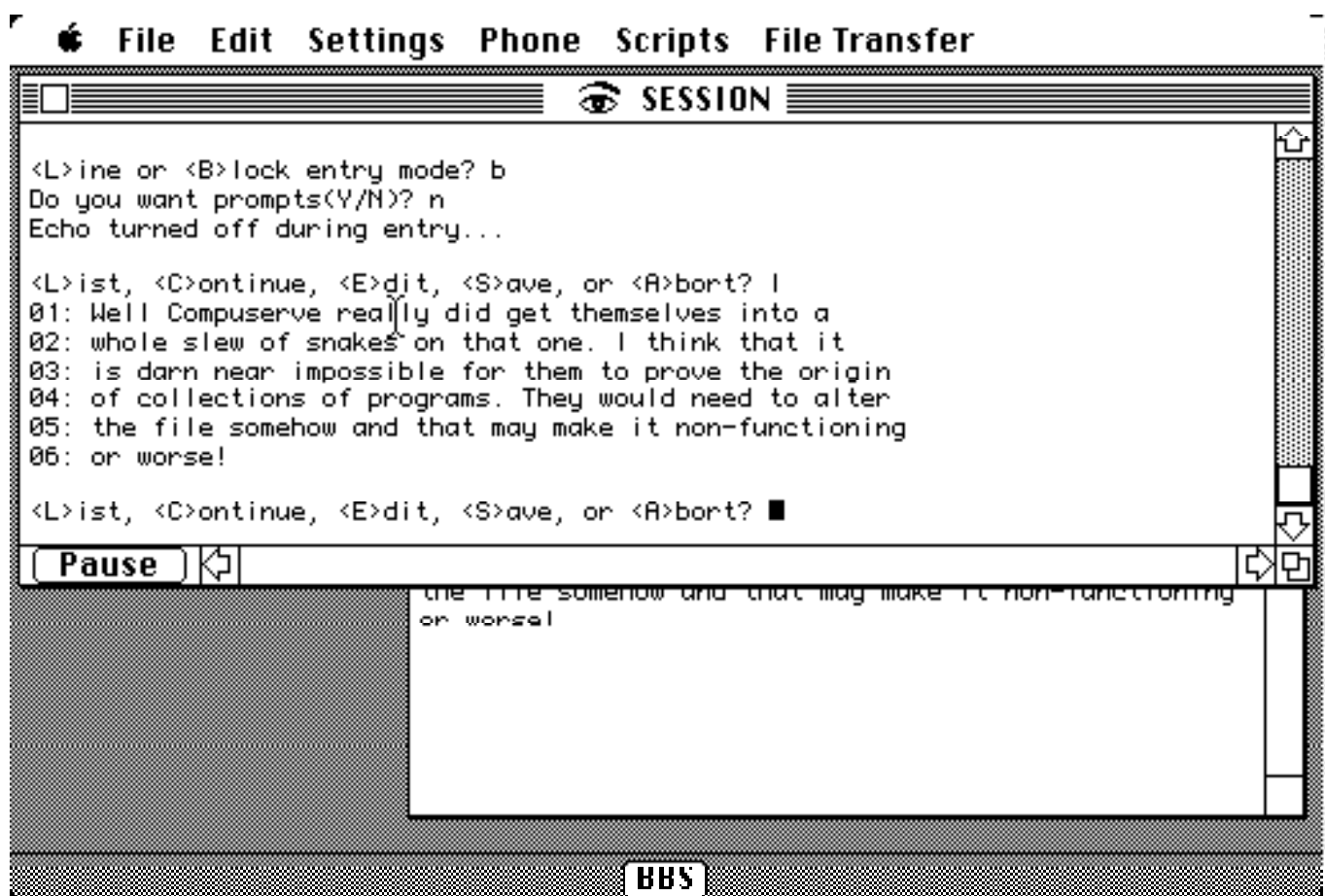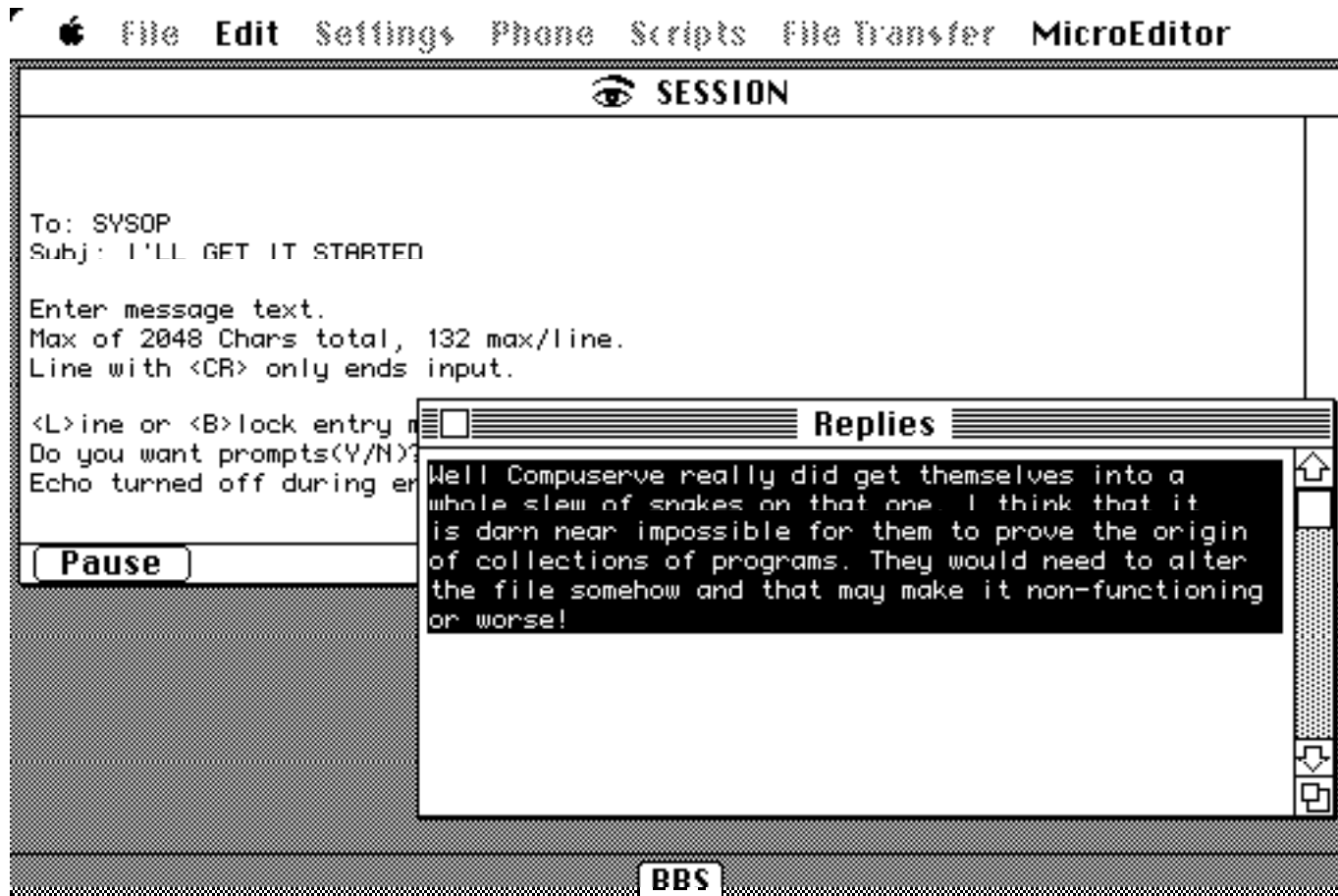
It also mimic several of the most popular computer terminals used for communications, TTY (aka T̲ele̲T̲Y̲pe) , VT100 and VT52. The one you are most likely to use will probably by TTY, although VT100 type terminals that are typically used with Digital Equipment Corporation computers used at many companies and universities. The VT100 emulation does not have the ease of use of **Red Ryder**™ or **MacTerminal**™ in those situations. (*Really?   I was under the impression that Microphone was based on MacTerminal, since Apple will sell software developer's the source code for it, and since I was informed that Microphone was developed this way......Ed.)*   TTY though is implemented quite nicely and is the most widespread standard.

Microphone supports transmission rates from 50 to 57,600 bits per second, limited to the type of modem or connection you are using, of course.   **Hayes™** or compatible modems like the **Apple Personnel Modem™** are recommended however for support of the more advanced features.

Scripts are another advanced feature of Microphone - a sort of "communications programming language" that allows you to preprogram a "script" (hence the name) of any of the functions which **MicroPhone™** is capable of with full conditional logic. The only exception is that you must use **MicroPhone™** to edit the scripts since they are not text files that one could edit with any text editor or word processor (such as Red Ryder uses). This lessens the appeal somewhat of using them , but you do use a very nice scroll bar type of selection for different commands.   Dennis Brothers provides a feature called **WatchMe™** as seen in one of the accompanying screen shots. The eye in the window's title bar indicates that it is tracking your actions to *automatically* create a script!   Red Ryder also has this feature.

👁 **SESSION**

```
<F>orward or <R>everse Multiple
<N>ew Messages
<M>arked Messages
<S>elective Retrieval
<I>ndividual Message(s)
<A>bort Retrieve

Which One? r

Pause after each msg(Y/N)

The System has Msg's 2700
Starting Number, <CR>=Las
```

Replies

[**Pause**]

BBS

You might also notice a button is at the bottom of the screen. You can set up buttons that start a script when you click on them. The other ways scripts may be selected is via the command key and pull-down menu selections. The window in front is part of MicroEditor™ a little bonus licensed from Dreams of the Phoenix™. It provides simple text editing and is a desk accessory built into **MicroPhone™**. It is very handy for composing replies to electronic mail. You write up the reply and usually set the message system to a block transfer and select your text for a cut and paste operation. This little gem will save valuable time while on commercial services or even just make local accesses more efficient. See the illustration of a real action transfer.   The author of Red Ryder, Scott Watson is distributing Donald Brown's excellent MockWrite™ text editor desk accessory under the pseudonym "RedWriter" for similar uses.

SESSION

```
To: SYSOP
Subj: I'LL GET IT STARTED

Enter message text.
Max of 2048 Chars total, 132 max/line.
Line with <CR> only ends input.

<L>ine or <B>lock entry
Do you want prompts(Y/N)?
Echo turned off during er
```

[Pause]

Replies

```
Well Compuserve really did get themselves into a
whole slew of snakes on that one. I think that it
is darn near impossible for them to prove the origin
of collections of programs. They would need to alter
the file somehow and that may make it non-functioning
or worse!
```

BBS

File   Edit   Settings   Phone   Scripts   File Transfer

SESSION

```
<L>ine or <B>lock entry mode? b
Do you want prompts(Y/N)? n
Echo turned off during entry...

<L>ist, <C>ontinue, <E>dit, <S>ave, or <A>bort? l
01: Well Compuserve really did get themselves into a
02: whole slew of snakes on that one. I think that it
03: is darn near impossible for them to prove the origin
04: of collections of programs. They would need to alter
05: the file somehow and that may make it non-functioning
06: or worse!

<L>ist, <C>ontinue, <E>dit, <S>ave, or <A>bort? ▮
```

[Pause]

```
the file somehow and that may make it non-functioning
or worse!
```

BBS

Although this is just one of the many finishing touches **MicroPhone™** , it demonstrates the completeness of it. *Switcher*[3] and a *CompuServes'*[2] account is included to round the goodie list. Sample scripts to access several services and link Macintoshes to each other and other computers directly are included.

I did experience a few problems during downloads from a local electronic bulletin board and another BBS in New York. It lacks the option of using a text editor to change scripts. The program is large for a Macintosh application requiring over 160K of disk space but does work with 128K Macs and requires a smaller *Switcher³* partition to operate than some of the competition.

The product does deserve and has earned it's good press and I rate it 4 and a half stars. Once some of these detractions are removed then it will be even a greater value. Novice users and experts alike can find it useful and its manual provides a clearly written, ready reference for most all telecommunications activities that the Mac owner may perform.

This package costs $79.95 + shipping.
Hard disk and truly user friendly!
Not copy protected!

The publisher is:

Software Ventures Corporation
2907 Claremont Avenue, Suite 220
Berkeley, CA 94705
(800) 336-6477 - Order line
(415) 644-3232 - Corporate Offices
(414) 644-1325 - Technical Support

Works with all Macintosh models 128K through Macintosh+ and Macintosh-XL with MacWorks.

[Note to Editor - Sidebar]

An Overview of Macintosh Communications

Modem's¹ are the third most common Macintosh add-on after disk drives and printers. A telecommunications package is the software for your computer to talk to other computers using them modem . It is a program like any other Macintosh application such as **MacPaint**™. By using a modem hooked into the phone line to talk to other computers a whole new world is opened up. It is not the same as talking to a friend by voice alone.   Electronic mail, Games, Stock Quotes, Weather information from *CompuServe²*™ can broaden the use of and increase the value of your computer to you. The fun and serious uses of computer based communication has just begun to be tapped. Already <u>American Airlines</u> offers a way for you to book your own flights and stock brokers and others can give you direct access to <u>Wall Street</u> stock prices and historical information.

[End of Sub Article]

Glossary

¹<u>Modem</u>, the abbreviation of modulator - demodulator. Modulation is the change of a wave from its current state to a point lower or higher. So most modems take the digital information and shift the wave according to on/off signals.

²<u>CompuServe</u>™, an information utility. The same as the power company is a utility for electricity, <u>CompuServe</u>™, <u>Delphi</u>™ and <u>The Source</u>™ provide the utility of information.

³<u>Switcher</u>™, is a program from Apple Computer and licensed companies written by Andy Hertzfeld. It creates spaces in memory of Macs with 512K or more memory to hold multiple programs and let the user switch to any of those programs at will. It provides an easy way to use programs that are good at their task from different companies to be integrated together.

Accessory Pak 1 (<u>$39.95 from Silicon Beach Software, P.O. Box 261430, San Diego, CA 92126.</u>). The utility **PaintCutter**™, written by Bill Snider, was used to snatch screen saves into this review.

HOLD Folder

8 items   71K in folder   24K available

MCI	CompuServe	Dow Jones	Delphi	The Source
Imagewriter	Scrapbook File		Clipboard File	

MicroPhone™ #1

6 items   377K in disk   22K available

Microphone Review	MicroPhone™	SESSION
HOLD Folder	μ Folder	Graphics Folder