

LOTUS WORD PRO 4

WORD PROCESSOR

VERDICT *A great word processor. Powerful and friendly, looks good and is easy to use. Full OLE support. Challenges the forthcoming Word 95 for the top word processor slot.*

PRICE *TBA Should be similar to Ami Pro 3, which is currently £99 per copy.*

SUPPLIER *Lotus 01784 445808*

AVAILABILITY *16-bit for Win 3.1, early August; 32-bit for Win 95, late October.*

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS *486DX2/66 processor or better, 8Mb of RAM, 16Mb disk space, Windows 3.1 or higher.*



Worried by the sluggish sales of its Ami Pro word processor and with an eye on the ever-increasing dominance of Microsoft, Lotus has totally revamped,

renamed and relaunched Ami Pro 3. So say goodbye to Ami Pro and hello to Lotus Word Pro – the *team* word processor.

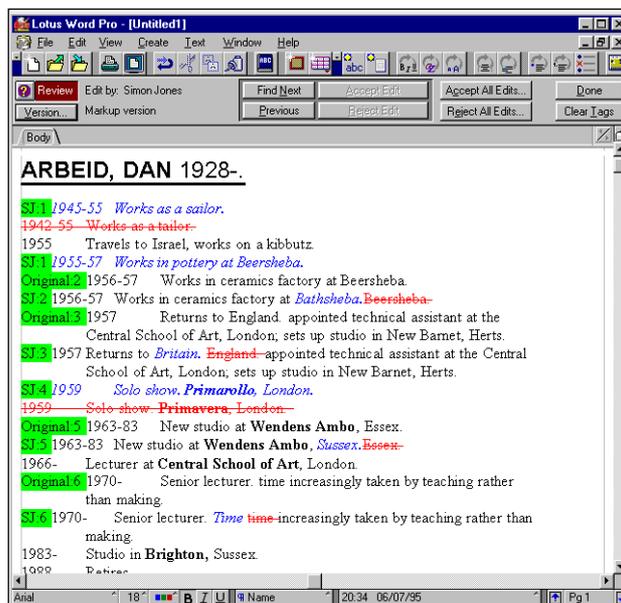
Lotus is trying to be distinctive. In addition to the 'me too' elements such as Auto Correct, Lotus has added genuinely innovative features like Team Review. No other manufacturer currently offers such facilities in its word processor.

Lotus provided a late beta version of Word Pro for testing. It had the majority of the proposed features in place and proved reasonably stable. Before that, I used a far less feature-complete beta for some time.

Although Lotus claims that Word Pro is a completely fresh start, much of Ami Pro lingers in the look and feel of the new product. The SmartIcons are there, many of them with the same drawings. Also remaining is Ami Pro's active status bar, where you can see and change the font, paragraph style and so on. A few extra buttons appear on the status bar: bold, italic, underline and a colour palette. The vertical and horizontal rulers have changed colour and have shrunk slightly. The margin and tab controls on the rulers appear 3D, and the cursor changes shape as you move over them. This helps you know when you're in the right place to change a first line indent instead of a left margin.

Most of the sophisticated formatting of a document is done using Word Pro's InfoBox. This is a free-floating, tabbed dialog box that allows the user to control every aspect of formatting the text, a page, a frame or a table. Lotus has been introducing this feature across all its applications.

The title bar of the InfoBox shows properties for text or for table, as appropriate. Icons



Lotus Word Pro 4 is the ideal teamwork word processor and comes complete with up-to-date revision and editing features.

are used wherever possible. This is good for the user most of the time, but can create problems for support personnel who have to describe over the phone which tab a user should click to change, say, line spacing.

One of Ami Pro's strengths was its logical use of styles. Everything you typed was in a paragraph style, and you could override the style at any point with some local formatting command. Where Ami Pro fell down was in the multiplicity of little dialog boxes you used to manipulate the local formats. The InfoBox is now used for all formatting, both local and for styles. And there's one major change: styles used to be constructed and then applied to the text. Now you format a paragraph as you want it and then create or redefine a style as 'like this text'. Missing, however, from Word Pro is the ability to link individual styles to function keys.

There are now named styles for text, tables, table cells, frames and pages. The definition of styles is contained in each document, but you can copy them from one document to another.

To help you quickly select the format you want, Lotus has invented the concept of cycle keys. These keystrokes and corresponding SmartIcons will cycle through

a set of attributes. Thus <F5> will cycle through normal, bold, italic, bold and italic and underline for whatever text has been selected. Other function keys are used to cycle through styles, fonts, alignments, indentations, bullets, and so forth. Press <Shift> and the cycle key works backwards through the options.

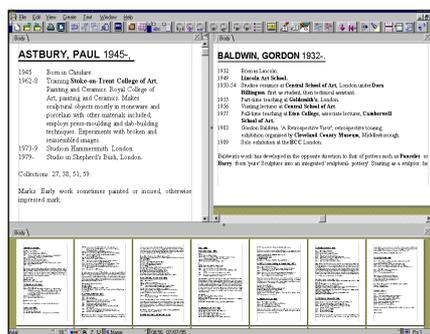
Lotus is selling Word Pro as the team word processor and is making a big noise about the team features. One of the best has to be Team Consolidate.

You can give a copy of a document to any number of colleagues and ask them to edit it. Later, when they give you back their documents, you can run the Team Consolidate on all of them and your original. This compares all the documents with the original and gives you a marked-up copy showing where each person edited the document and what their insertions and deletions were. You can then step through all the edits and either accept or reject them.

If this control isn't enough, you can use the Team Review feature to set up precise details of who's going to review the document, what they're going to do with it and how they're going to receive it.

You can name other people you want to review the document. Their authorisation could just be their Word Pro user name, or it could be something stricter if your operating system or network will co-operate.

The 'what' dialog lets you set what each person can and should do with the document, whether they have to use a new version of the document, whether they're allowed to edit the styles and so on. You can also request comments and give a greeting when they open the document. This could tell them, for example, how long they have to return their edits.



Split the edit window any way you want.

Finally, the 'how' dialog lets you choose how the reviewers are to get the file. You can save it to a floppy and use sneaker-net, save it to a shared network drive and they can all edit it there, email it to all the reviewers at once or create an email chain. Here, you email the document to the first reviewer on the list. Each reviewer makes their edits and comments and then emails the document on to the next until it comes back to you.

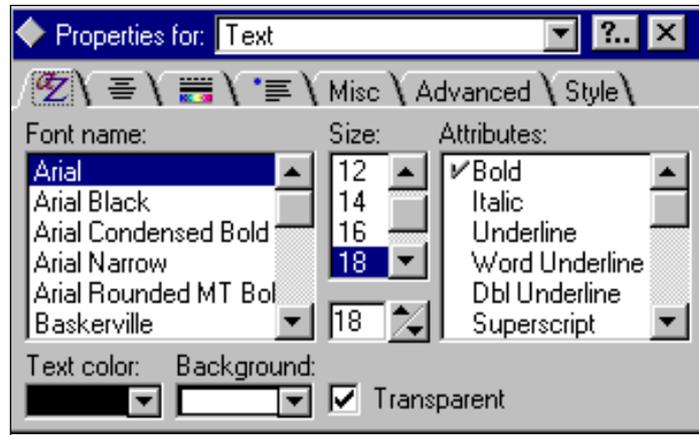
If you choose the email chain for Team Review, you're likely to use the new versioning features. Each Word Pro file can hold the latest state of the document and all the changes that have been made to get it to that state. At any time you can look back to previous versions of the document. Only the latest version is editable, but you can switch to a previous version and save it in its own file, where you can edit it. Each version is marked with the editor's name and remarks. You can even mark the file to create a new version every week or day, or each time it's opened.

If you choose to mark up edits, your insertions and deletions appear highlighted. The default presentation is blue italics for insertions and red strikethrough for deletions. These are only defaults, however, and you can change them to suit. As these settings are for each person, all the people contributing to a document can choose different colours. Word Pro also marks each edit with the initials of the editor. All of this makes life a lot easier for the person doing the consolidation.

Check it out

The spelling checker in Word Pro has to be one of the fastest and most accurate around. It's similar to the checker found in Word 95 (previewed *PC Pro*, issue 10, p124). Click on the spelling check icon and unknown words are instantly highlighted. The spelling checker toolbar appears at the top of the screen containing the usual options. Click on the first highlighted word and the toolbar shows the replacement options.

Once you've dealt with that, the next misspelled word is found in the text. You can break off at any time to change other words or formats and come back to the check when



The InfoBox handles all your formatting needs.

you want. You can even leave the spelling check toolbar active and continue to type.

The checker runs between your keystrokes, marking and finding suggestions for words it doesn't know. You can have multiple main and user dictionaries installed in Word Pro. Only one main dictionary can be active at any one time, but you can activate as many user dictionaries as necessary. Lotus supplies two British dictionaries, one with 'ise' endings and the other with 'ize'.

SmartCorrect is an unoriginal feature, but it's welcome nonetheless. You can give Word Pro a list of your common typing mistakes, such as 'thier' when you mean 'their'. Word Pro will then look out for you typing the wrong version and change it automatically to the right version. You can also use this system to change '(c)' to '©' or 'ABC' to 'Abracadabra Bonsai Corporation'.

Some of the most trivial improvements can be the most useful. Word Pro will allow you to drag and drop text or cut and paste it, and it will automatically sort out the spaces around the text. You shouldn't be left with words run together or full stops hanging in mid air. It even works out that if you're in the middle of a word and you click the bold icon, you probably want to make the whole word bold.

SmartFill helps you by filling in common sequences of data in a table. If, for example, you type 'Monday' in a table cell you can then <Ctrl-click> and drag the cell handle (a small blue corner showing the current cell) down another six rows: when you release the

mouse button, Word Pro will automatically fill them in with 'Tuesday', 'Wednesday', and so on. You can set up your own sequences of data and edit the ones provided.

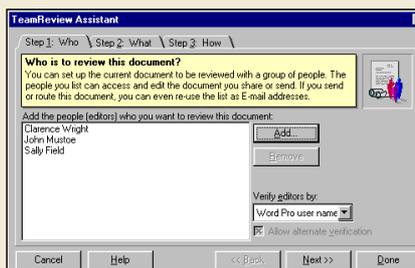
Lotus provides several Assistants to help in common tasks. These are multipage dialog boxes, much like Microsoft's Wizards. Assistants are provided for mail merge, team review, creating an index and creating a table of contents.

Another innovative feature is the friendly Ask the Expert help facility. This allows users to ask 'How do I?' questions in their own words. The expert recognises more than 1,500 word processing terms and finds the relevant help text for the task or tasks it thinks the user is asking about.

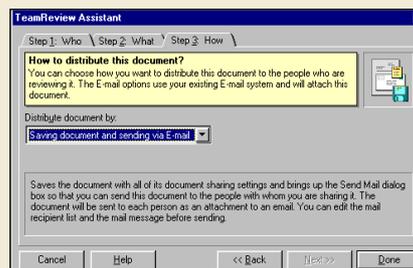
There are many demonstrations of how to perform specific functions in Word Pro. These aren't bitmapped screen shots or animations and they use Word Pro to demonstrate itself. They can be a real boon for users who need complex tasks explained.

Lotus is bringing the concept of SmartMasters, pioneered in Freelance Graphics, to word processing. SmartMasters are shell documents with all of the formatting and none of the text. What they have instead of text is 'Click here' blocks. These are place holders which say, for instance, 'Click here to enter company name'. When you do 'click here', the 'click here' message disappears and you can type the company name that's needed. It's simplicity itself to create a house style with a few corporate SmartMasters.

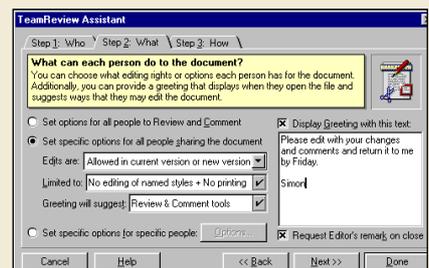
Three steps to team work



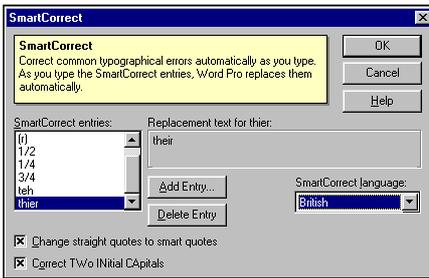
1 Who will review this document.



2 What they're allowed to do with it.



3 How they're going to receive it.



The SmartCorrect dialog showing how 'thier' will be changed automatically to 'their'.

SmartMasters can use all the other features of Word Pro, including one of the best new ones, the section divider tabs. Other word processors provide the ability to divide a document up into sections. Word Pro gives the sections tabs.

The tabs appear at the top of the Edit window, under the ruler and SmartIcons. You can name the sections as you wish. You can make them different colours and

give them different formatting options in the different sections.

The different sections can even be different documents. You click on a tab to go to the top of that section. The tab for the current section comes to the top as you move the cursor through the document. Even the vertical scroll bar gives you the section name and page number as you pull the thumb up and down.

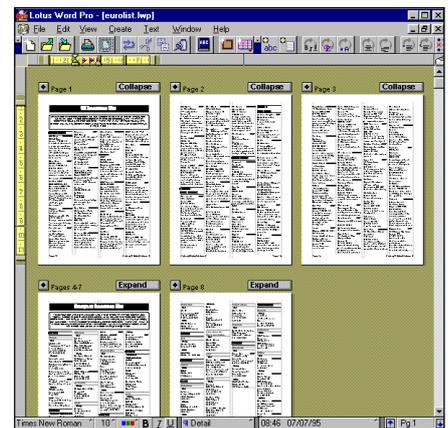
Word Pro allows you to edit your document exactly as it appears on paper at all times. There are preset zoom levels to view the document at full size and double size, and you can use zoom to show the page width or the margin width. The page sorter view offers a fully editable thumbnail print of all pages, and you can rearrange them by dragging and dropping or cutting and pasting them.

Most word processors can divide the screen in two and show different parts of the same document. Word Pro lets you split the

screen into many panes and one of four different zoom levels or views in each: Zoomer, DocSkimmer, PageWalker or Panorama. Selecting one splits the screen into two or three different view planes. For instance, Panorama has a page view, a layout view and a draft view.

Just as Microsoft is rolling out Visual Basic for Applications into all its Office products, so Lotus is making LotusScript the common language of all its applications. WordPro is the latest to benefit. While this means that previous Ami Pro macros have to be rewritten it does give much better automation facilities within Word Pro and across all Lotus applications.

Lotus has also beefed up the import and export filters provided, and is happy to claim



The Page Sorter view allows you to change the order of your pages.

that you can swap documents from Word 6 and WordPerfect 6 to Word Pro and back again. Word Pro handled a selection of imports and exports with ease, but you might find you have difficulty with highly formatted ones.

Such is the hype surrounding all things Internet that Word Pro boasts the first direct interface of any office application. The program can read from and save to Internet nodes using FTP. World Wide Web support is promised for the final version. For those of you with your own Web Home Pages, Word Pro can read and write SGML and HTML, so you can maintain your Home Page with just one tool.

Finally, Word Pro should ship in a 16-bit version for Windows 3.1 and 3.11 some time soon, although Lotus won't give a date. This version works happily with Windows 95, but lacks support for long file names and the like. A fully 32-bit Windows 95-specific version is scheduled to ship 60 days after the release of Windows 95.

Simon Jones

Second opinion

Steve Boxer rediscovers an old friend in Word Pro 4

For a long time I thought of myself as a traitor. I'd been an Ami Pro user since the days of version 2, which was, along with, perhaps, Precision Software's SuperBase and Microsoft's Excel, the first *proper* Windows software. This was the piece of software that invented the idea of icon bars. If you show me a piece of software today without an icon bar, I'll show you a piece of software that won't shift a copy. But when Word 6 for Windows arrived and I'd satisfied myself that it was free of bugs, I felt obliged to switch to it.

Ami Pro 3, of course, represented a massive leap forward from version 2, but it had languished in Lotus software vaults for a couple of years without receiving the blindest bit of attention, and was starting to feel very creaky. Having decided that, with version 6, Microsoft had finally created a version of Word that was Ami Pro 3's superior, and that no new version of Ami Pro was likely to appear in the foreseeable future, I was forced to switch.

Of course, Word 6 had, ahem, borrowed a lot from Ami Pro 3, right down to endowing it with a sensible set of keystrokes. But Word looked and felt slicker, had been arranged so that everything was easy to find and contained modern usability features that simply weren't there in Ami Pro 3. This included the intelligence to work out where spaces should be when dragging and dropping, decent right mouse button support and so on. It lacked Ami Pro 3's individuality, of course, and I soon learned that it sometimes flattered to deceive (AutoCorrect has a nasty tendency to alter things that are correct). But the plain truth was that, once set up to my satisfaction, it allowed me to complete documents quicker than Ami Pro 3.

So discovering Lotus Word Pro 4 is like unexpectedly finding an old friend whom you'd presumed dead. It's the answer to the prayers of corporate Ami Pro users obliged to stick with that product, as it's light years ahead of version 3. A lot of the new functionality is very useful, in particular the InfoBox dialog, the highlighting of misspelled words and the English language Help system. It's been brought right back onto the cutting edge. The ability to edit SGML and HTML documents is essential, as are unlimited undo/redo levels, and the menu structure is much less arcane. Once again, it feels like a word processor that can take on all-comers (it's well ahead of Word 6), yet it retains its colour and individuality.

In short, its great and will reaffirm any faith in Lotus that Ami Pro users have lost. If only it had appeared 18 months ago: how many Ami Pro users, like me, have reluctantly switched to Word? If you're an Ami Pro user, you'll find upgrading to Word Pro gratifying. Likewise, if you operate in a groupware environment and need state-of-the-art document tracking, or if you pull a lot of documents off the World Wide Web. But years of watching Ami Pro's progress have left me cynical. The new version of Word in Office 95 is Word Pro's equal in terms of functionality, and will receive a higher level of backing from Microsoft than Word Pro will get from Lotus. And now that Lotus has turned Blue, who can predict what will happen to it? Lotus, once more, has a great word processor. Let's hope that, for the first time, it recognises it.

pc PRO	FEATURES	★★★★★
	EASE OF USE	★★★★★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
	OVERALL	★★★★★