Turbo Printing with the BJ-10e

Mike Williams assesses the latest Turbo Driver from Computer Concepts.

or some while now I have been using a Canon BJ-10e bubble-jet printer with my floppy based A310 at home, and I was therefore delighted to have the chance to try out Computer Concepts new Turbo Driver for this printer.

The Turbo Driver kit consists of a specially wired cable to connect printer to computer and two discs, one containing the Turbo Driver and test files, the other the outline font manager (!Fonts) and three fonts (Corpus, Homerton and Trinity). There is also a short but adequate 14 page manual, and the whole lot is packed in an attractive box.

To my initial disappointment, it proved impossible to use the Turbo Driver on my 1Mb A310. The test file printed with no problems, but there was insufficient memory to print a moderate text file direct from DeskEdit. Consultation with CC confirmed

Test File	Std Driver	Turbo Driver	
	Print Time	Print Time	Release Time
Text (direct)	65	140	3
Text (DeskEdit)	62	115	3
Ovation (with graphics)	190	175	20
Sprite (164K)	140	115	18

that you really need a minimum of 2Mb to use the Turbo Driver.

The rest of this review thus relates to my experiences with an A5000 (with hard disc) in the RISC User office. Using the standard BJ-10e printer driver as supplied with the A5000 and Computer Concepts Turbo Driver, I carried out a series of timing tests (see table 1). In general, the Turbo Driver offered only a limited improvement in overall print time, but because it is able to print in the background, the time before the system was released for further use was

significantly reduced, typically to around 20 seconds for a page which might take 175 seconds to print. Thus the Turbo Driver can offer a major improvement in productivity where your machine would otherwise spend lengthy periods tied up with printing.

When it came to simple text printing, the standard printer driver still has some advantages as the Turbo Driver handles all printing in graphics mode, thus converting the screen system font to a rather weak looking Courier (the font is user selectable), rather than using one of the BJ-10e s built-in fonts. The Turbo Driver also failed to recognise any of the DeskEdit embedded style codes (which are the standard codes used by Acorn printer drivers).

As for quality, there was hardly any difference as far as the Ovation page was concerned (incorporating three Draw files). The sprite used was a full screen dump (of PenDown Plus). That produced by the Turbo Driver was darker, and the darker shades were more uniform than with the standard driver. However, the standard driver gave better contrast, and in my view (in this instance) produced the more pleasing result. Other differences were minimal.

CONCLUSIONS

Although printing time as a whole is only slightly improved, the fact that the machine is released for further use after only such a short period is very useful, particularly where lengthy documents are concerned. The increase in usage obtained is invaluable.

Against this, if you do much text printing, and your other print requirements are moderate, then the Turbo Driver has less to offer - it is a pity CC does not support text printing more fully. Overall though, the Turbo Driver is an R

excellent product.

Product   Turbo Driver (BJ-10e/BJ-10ex)
Supplier   Computer Concepts
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Price   £49.00 ex. VAT