

HOT KEY

Journal of the IW PCUSER GROUP - (IBM COMPATIBLE)

October 1991 - Issue 1



SECRETARY'S NOTES

Just to update you on the programme for the next few months and apologise for no secretary's notes last month. One just can't be efficient all the time.

The forthcoming programme is as follows (all at 7.30pm, Riverside Centre):

Wednesday 23rd October and all succeeding 3rd Wednesday meetings: informal meeting preceded by David Broughton's BASIC class

Wednesday 6th November Talk on DESQview by Cemoc

Wednesday 20th November Informal meeting

Wednesday 4th December A.G.M. and further talk (by popular demand) on DOS by Mike Parsons

Wednesday 18th December Informal meeting and Christmas Party

Denny Linzmaier (404701) is our new membership secretary and will be responsible for collecting attendance fees, encouraging new members from among the visitors and enquiries we receive, chasing up membership subscriptions as they fall due and generally keeping us all in order. Any membership queries then to Denny.

This note may be taken as formal notice of the AGM in December. AGM's are a time for appraising what's gone on in the past year and what projections are for the next. Also for all change round on the committee. If you like the way things are run, fine; if not then come along and stand for committee yourself. Or nominate someone else (preferably in writing with the nominee's approval, to the secretary). Both your chairman and secretary will be standing down this year, and I understand Sean will be looking after the selection of speakers (and will of course be open to suggestions), and yours truly will be hoping to help David Broughton with a regular newsletter. Denny Linzmaier is already looking after the membership and we hope will continue to do so. Don't miss the AGM in December for exciting changes!

And of course - the Show! Jonathan Burt and Denny have been putting in a tremendous amount of energy in getting

this organised. It looks like we are going to have a considerable number of professional exhibitors as well as the all-formats clubs joining in. It's on Sunday 24th November, all day, at the Royal York Hotel, Ryde. There will be more publicity and raffle tickets available at the next meeting - and also the free tickets for members, so be sure to come along!

Roger Skidmore

EDITOR'S NOTES

This is the first issue of a new style User Group magazine edited by David Broughton and put together for compiling by Roger Skidmore. It combines the Secretary's regular notes with the Magazine/Journal.

Contributions are needed. We would like articles, news, views, and particularly reviews of software. What is your favourite software? We would like to know about it! Advertisements are also welcome.

Please send all contributions to:

HOT KEY Editorial, 17 Golden Ridge, Freshwater, IOW,
PO40 9LE Tel: IW 754936

Contributions are welcome - in ASCII format on floppy disk please.

THE EDITOR'S PROGRAM OF THE MONTH:

This month's program is a small utility which enhances those warning or other messages that come out of batch files. This program is EKO and it replaces ECHO in batch files to make the messages they display appear in colour or flash or are emphasised in one way or another according to your VDU characteristics. After the word EKO you have a hex code which is the attribute byte required for the following text, and then out it comes in the desired colour (or flashing, or inverted video, or whatever). Like it? I do. Available free from the editor.

LIVING WITH LASERS

Well, I've had my Hewlett Packard LaserJet Series II for about two years now and I'm just coming to terms with it. There doesn't seem to be an easy "How to do it" book for HP's so mostly I've found out for myself. Unless you're a printer guru there may be a few tips here for you which will save many hours of frustration (or is that what we're in it for?)

A "Font" is a complete set of characters in one typeface and one size. If you've got an HP III then some of them are scalable, or can be sized to demand. There are on-board fonts built into the printer; there are cartridge fonts which you buy (from Kingston Technology tel: 0252 316060), and there are soft fonts which come on floppy disc and you download to your printer's memory. Soft fonts need to be HP compatible and have esoteric file names ending with something like *.R8P. Then there's the HP graphics language which you call upon by embedded printer codes. And there are the mysteries of the PostScript language.

Now I'm a fumbler and not a guru, but I've got a few tips which have helped me to live usefully with my HP LaserJet. Actually I have to confess at home I have a Brother HL-8e which has more built-in fonts and several emulations - which means I can tell it to act like an Epson printer if I want to, but normally I tell it to act like an ordinary HP LaserJet Series II. If I had to start again I'd buy a real HP series III because it's much more advanced - except Hewlett Packard don't believe there are any other printers around to emulate, or now there is the new scalable Brother HL-8v with a few extra font built in.

The usual fonts are Courier (like a typewriter), Times (like the Times newspaper with seriffed letters) and Helvetica (which just means sans-serif - no twiddly bits). This is printed in 10pt Times Roman proportional - a seriffed font where each letter has its own individual width assigned. There are HUNDREDS of exciting other fonts with weird sounding names, and fonts that for proprietorial reasons are the same as Courier, Times and Helvetica but with different names.

The HP Graphics Language can produce shades, lines and other effects. It's called HP-GL. I don't know much about this yet but it uses more embedded codes. And it's in the manual! And there are independent manuals dedicated to HP LaserJets (from Computer Manuals, tel: 021 706 6000).

Fonts have to be controlled by printer commands. Your printer cable funnels down it all sorts of things. If you type COPY *.* LPT1 it mostly sends ASCII codes. If you print a document in TASWORD it does much the same; if you print a document in WordPerfect I've no idea what goes down that cable. Wordprocessed documents contain all sorts of page formatting information, control codes and the odd ASCII code for your letter or whatever. I prepared this document in Symantec's Q&A - my favourite flat-file database and wordprocessor. As far as I know it is the ONLY database/wordprocessor that gives such good control of laser printers. Not perfect, like WordPerfect, but very nearly so. I use it lots for formatted laser reminder

letters in my business. It's a lot more friendly, too, than many other wordprocessors.

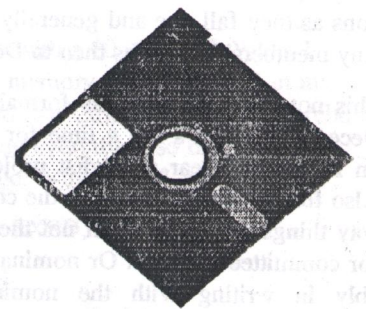
You can pre-set your printer to your desired font, or you can send these printer formatting commands by hand, as it were, with embedded printer "Escape" codes so that they get to the printer before the ASCII codes representing your text, or through instructions given in your wordprocessing document. If you have told your WP that you are using an HP II (in printer setup) and been able to tell it that you've got such-and-such a font cartridge then your friendly WP will allow you to insert font change commands and that's all there is to it.

Soft fonts are much more fun, and this is where the true versatility of font control comes in. Took me ages to find out. Gary Elfring of Wasco, Illinois, must be one of the pioneers in supplying soft fonts and soft font management programs to the shareware world. Many of the shareware laser and deskjet utilities are due to him. Best of all is his Terminate and Stay Resident (TSR) download utility (latest version is 2.9). You also get some fonts along with it. If you have a laser or deskjet with additional RAM then this program is a MUST. Right now if I type <CTRL ALT D> I get a list of my available soft fonts up in front of me. I can mark and then download them with a few keystrokes. Because I have already loaded in the font description into the Q&A font manager using Symantec's QAFONT.EXE program (truly brilliant) I can call up whichever soft font I require.

Different WP's have different ways of remembering the font descriptions. WordStar will go get the font description from an existing font; for WordPerfect you either need a font manufacturing program which will install the information in the program or be a lot cleverer than me.

Best of all if you're using Windows or WordPerfect is Bitstream's FACELIFT, or MOREFONTS ver 3.0 program. These will not only create and install the font description in either of these programs, but will also download the chosen font on the fly and in any point size you select. So I've already got scalable fonts on my HP II printer. Laser Solutions Ltd (tel: 0737 778114 and ask for Steve) do the same thing but by Glyphix. This offers fewer fonts but some elements of HP-GL. I got FaceLift because it was cheaper.

You don't need to buy individual fonts, although there are plenty around in the shareware world. The program called MoreFonts from Power Up! (tel: 0252 376000) will manufacture a stunning range of soft fonts for you and either save them or download them to the printer as they are made. Typografica and Type-Director will also manufacture them for you. MoreFonts and Type-Director will also install them in WordPerfect.



Now I'm hoping to buy Paradox 3.5, which has a basic text editor for mail-merge letters, etc. How do I get it to produce these wonderful fonts on the laser printer, or do I have to stick to boring old Courier 10 pt? Well I don't know. If the text editor will permit embedded printer codes then I'm in business. Either I can enter the font change code laboriously copied out from the manual, or I can use a memory resident program called LaserMenu (again from Power Up!). I haven't mastered this one yet (because I haven't needed to), but I fondly hope it will do what it promises and embed document codes which in memory resident mode it will translate into my font descriptions as the document is sent to the printer.

Oh, and for those of you who need to change your Epson printer output into HP II control characters there's a shareware program called CLASER which will do just that. You don't need an Epson emulating cartridge and you can reset it through your software (try MARK and RELEASE).

Well that's all for now on fonts. Fonts can be fun especially if you've got a laser printer. If you have a dot matrix printer you can still use fonts. There's a program called LaserTwin from Metro software which will (albeit slowly) make your DMP work like a laser and respond to laser commands - even allowing "downloading" of soft fonts. The shareware programs LQ and FXMASTER will also allow the use of various fonts with DMP's. DeskJets are somewhere in between - at their most versatile with added memory which will allow some degree of real downloading of soft fonts.

Roger Skidmore

CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT FILES

..... a review of Mike Parsons' October talk

Mike Parsons gave a talk to the group on 2 October about those mysterious lines that make up the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. This subject sparked off a great deal of interest, so much, in fact, that Mike was unable to cover more than a few of the many commands that appear in these files. His general conclusions were that most of the commands, such as FCBS, KEYB, SHELL, BREAK, LASTDRIVE, etc, are not needed because DOS assumes suitable defaults for these things anyway that apply most of the time. But COUNTRY should be set to 44 for UK users and UK keyboards generally need KEYB UK (DOS 4) or KEYBUK (DOS 3):

He explained the reason why there are so many commands is that IBM insist on upwards compatibility on each new release of an operating system, so all the old and now useless commands must remain.

Mike could have spent many more hours on the subject, as much was not covered at all, such as DRIVPARM, STACKS, SHARE, PATH, APPEND, ASSIGN, PROMPT, MODE, CHCP, etc, so maybe there is scope here for another informative evening. Many thanks to Mike.

Next month's meeting is on DESQview.

Ed.

GAMES REVIEW PART 1 BY 'THE STING'

If you don't enjoy watching LCPs (Little Computer People, to those new to gaming), helping Guybrush Threepwood (or Peepwood as the Sheriff calls him) then you are in the minority because these are the two games set to take Britain by storm. At the European Leisure Awards 'Lemmings' (Psygnosis) won 'Most Original Game' and 'The Secret of Monkey Island' (LucasFilm) won 'Best Adventure Game'. But what is the fuss all about?

LEMMINGS FROM PSYGNOSIS

I recently discribed 'Lemmings' as a game where about 50 LCP's continually walk between a rock and a hard place until you direct them to do otherwise and this is a very apt discription except it doesn't go far enough, for it is a highly addictive game combining humour, strategy and the inevitable heart attack!! The game is played thus - you are given a landscape with lots of different obstacles that the lemmings have to get across before they can leave and you have to help them. This is done by instructing one to either build a bridge, dig a tunnel etc (they can even be made to sacrifice themselves for the good of the rest). But you have to be very careful because they will quite happily leap off the nearest cliff to their deaths (hence the title).



The humour comes from watching the LCP's doing hopefully what you tell them, the strategy from having to plan which LCP does what and the heart attack because the game can become very fast and furious and if you make a mistake you could end up having to watch them die (in some cases quite horribly). There is also a time limit and a minimum number you have to get to freedom before you can complete the level. There are about 140 levels ranging from ones you can do with your eyes shut to those that you cannot make a single mistake on. Every level has a password so you can skip all the levels you have already completed and begin where you last left off. I thoroughly enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone with a strong heart and a robust computer.

Tim Bateman

GAMES REVIEW PART 2

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND FROM LUCUSFILM

The second game making quite a stir is 'The Secret of Monkey Island' that comes from the makers of 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade' (a game that took me 3 months to complete) and 'Their Finest Hour'. Both won many awards, and this will be no exception. It is a very different type of adventure game because you don't spend hours typing in commands or getting very frustrated when the program will not understand what you are typing. This is overcome by having all the commands you need in the bottom half of the screen so you just select the one you need with the cursor. In the main part of the screen you can see what happens to your hero as he carries out the commands you give him. That is how the game works, but what is the story about?

The story begins with the arrival on Melée Island of Guybrush Threepwood, who wants to become a pirate. It is your job to guide him through all the puzzles that will help him. Straight away you discover that before your character can become a pirate he has to do 3 tasks - steal the Idol of Many Hands, defeat the Sword Master and find the missing treasure. Once that is done you can head for Monkey Island and that is where the real fun begins (but to find out what happens you'll have to buy the game!).

Although both the story and the game's structure are far from original the excellent graphics, huge array of colourful characters and the tongue-in-cheek way it is written all add up to an extremely enjoyable game. Some of the puzzles are very difficult to complete but many of the characters will give you helpful clues and being a very strong lad, Guybrush can carry everything he can pick up. The writers also made it very difficult to die so there is no need to worry about killing your character if you make a mistake. I would recommend this game to anyone who enjoys playing adventure games, but are not very good at them or to anyone wishing to start playing because this game is for the beginner. However if you enjoy playing the usual type of adventure game then this program may not be to your taste.

If you do decide to buy the game then look out for the Grog drink dispenser, it may look familiar, the Red Herring and the Deadly Piranha Poodles!!



Clue number 1 to my identity is: "I liked this game so much I nearly bought a computer."

If anyone would like help with these (or any other) games then please write in.

Tim Bateman

BUG OF THE MONTH: Have you ever been mystified by what the batch processor does sometimes near the end of the batch file? I had a DEL MYFILE line as the last line of a batch file once and it would always complain with the message "File not found" when I knew it had been found and deleted. It was many months later that I discovered what was going on. There is a bug in MS-DOS's batch processing system which causes the last line to be done twice if the last line is not properly terminated with carriage return/line feed (CR/LF). This explains the mysterious message: the file had been deleted properly the first time, but when that line was done again the file could not be found because it had been deleted! There was no damage in this case, but suppose the last line required some important program to run that was required to be run once and once only.

I had a tendency at one stage to omit the last CR/LF from batch files because it saved a screen line when it ran, but if one turns echo off, that line is saved anyway. So the moral of the story is: always terminate the last line of your batch files.

Letter to editor....

Dear Sir,

I have an IBM-PC clone with a 80386 CPU. When I allocate some expanded memory with EMM386 in my CONFIG.SYS file, I find that Ctrl/Alt/Del does not reboot the computer but locks up everything so that only a hardware reset is possible. Why is this?

Yours faithfully, PERPLEXED, Niton.

[Can anyone help? - Ed]

Puzzle Corner:

What is this?

