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IMPACT/99

by Jack Sughrue

1988 BLUE RIBBON WINNER

The first annual IMPACT/99 Blue Ribbon Software Winner is given this year to Asgard Software!

Asgard continues to provide unusual and exciting programs and specialty files for the TI owner, while moving right into the Geneve upgrading. This software house has provided some peculiar - if not downright eccentric - pieces of software for many years now. Just when you think nothing new can possibly come out for our little marvel, Asgard leaps to the fore with something new, at the least, and mind-boggling, at the best.

There are a lot of excellent software companies out there - most Mom 'n Pop type (even though run, usually, by VERY YOUNG people - who are producing or distributing wonderful things for the wonderful TI; companies like TIGERCUB (the granddaddy of the TOP QUALITY FOR LOW PRICE companies), Databiotics, Genial Computerware (a branch of the GENIAL TRAVelER diskazine, one of the best buys in the industry), DOS (Disk Only Software), and many others. So coming to this choice with this award was not an easy matter. The idea to even CREATE such an award came from John Zittrain and Ron Albright. Last year they named Asgard, "Computer Software Company of the Year." I thought a lot about the idea of giving an award as a way of announcing to the software companies that WE'RE STILL HERE and we still appreciate all that is being done to support the 99. Too often these companies (and the long-suffering Fairware authors) hear only the complaints and none of the accolades.

Thus, "The IMPACT/99 Blue Ribbon for 1988!"

Asgard Software (P.O. Box 10306, Rockville, MD 20850) is owned and operated by Chris Bobbitt. He is also one of the programmer/artists among a large stable of programmer/artists. He actively seeks programmers to create and develop materials for his company, contracts with the authors, packages and promotes the finished products always in a professional way. There is nothing slipshod or amateurish about anything put out by Asgard. Mr. Bobbitt has maintained one of the highest standards of professional excellence of any software company in the orphaned industry.

But it is not just the packaging and distribution that make for a successful software company. Without good-quality software, all else is gesture. It is here - providing that consistent quality - that Bobbitt and Asgard shine.

The latest catalog (free) is as ecletic a collection as would please the most demanding connoisseur. The 34 disks include a good share of games (or programmer's dream of utilities to change or create games), a collection of graphics programs that is second to no one, some incredible utilities (EZ-KEYS being one of the most unbelievable I've ever encountered), and some peculiar miscellaneous programs that are for a more discriminating audience. With regard to the latter, Asgard is the only company I know of that would publish such esoteric stuff as a RECIPE WRITER (and follow it up with a series of specialized recipes called ELECTRONIC GOURMET), a STAMP MANAGER, and a freeform database which has nothing like it for any computer I've ever used (TOTAL FILER). I mean, there has to be a very small audience for these specialty items. How many gourmet computer freaks are there? Yet, for those few (Maybe there ARE many!) who are out there, it's really nice to have a company that makes stuff for you and continues to add updates and support disks.

Although I look forward to getting catalogs from ANY company that supports TI - (Anybody out there know what ever happened to PILGRIM'S PRIDE?) -, I really love opening up the latest one from Asgard. I never know what to expect. I DO know, however, that I'm not going to be ripped off. Of the 34 disks, more than 20 are under $10. Those are Fairware prices! And all the programs have warranties and exchange and upgrade policies. Bobbitt says he continues to keep the low prices as his way of trying to keep the market viable and to thwart pirates. (It's hardly worth pirating a $5.95 disk, particularly if you miss the excellent manuals that come with the programs.). I like that philosophy.

But I particularly like Bobbitt's consistent policy of not putting protections on the disks or files. Hooray! I make backups of everything and salt the originals away. No problem. Then I enjoy peeking and probing the programs, learning all the while and customizing when it suits me. And playing with the thing. This is how many of us learn from the experts. (Almost all I know about computing, for example, came from Jim Peterson of TIGERCUB Software. His programs, too, are all unprotected. His NUTS 'n BOLTS series is the single biggest influence on TI XB programmers that has EVER existed. And like Bobbitt and Asgard, it has always been a policy of Peterson and TIGERCUB to sell only top quality stuff at very low prices.) I almost never buy anything that has super protections on it, like the QS stuff. I know it's a way of looking at the piracy thing to be on one side of the fence or another, and I can appreciate other points of view. For me, I buy lots and lots of hardware and software every year and encourage lots of other people to do the same directly, by mail, and by these reviews. I don't give anybody commercial software. But if I can't get inside, I personally do not want it.

Anyway, I particularly like the Asgard policy.

The PROGRAMS!!!!

Yes, the programs. That is, after all, how my decision finally came to be made. There are six games listed (plus some that come with the Tunnel of Doom Editor)

and they are superb. And quite different from one another. BALLOON WARS is an old favorite that has been updated. You fly a balloon across enemy lines in WWI Europe. It's very tricky business, this balloon version of the flying programs (for airplanes) making the rounds these days. Ingenious. Missile Wars (by the great programmer John Behnke) is an alien-attack game that is VERY fast and very well designed. It is tough, fun, and a little frantic. The manual is a model of philosophy. Kirkegard might have approved.

HIGH GRAVITY was, until very recently, my very favorite game of all time after DIABLO. The former is as wonderfully ingenious as anything I can think of. It is not spectacular, has no special effects, is simple in concept, has the added feature of incredible cleverness. Is addictive. I keep it right on my PLUS! disk to automatically sit in my RAM disk for any time I need a fix. Then along comes Donn Granros and Ed Johnson to put out the remarkable LEGENDS. This is a graphic/text adventure. More in the slash and hack style of D & D than in the ruminating style of Infocom. I've never seen a D & D type of game for the TI that was anywhere nearly in the same class. LEGENDS is simply teriffic! I love it. It is addictive. I'm one of these people who plays a lot of games. A game freak. No matter how hard I try to be a grownup, responsible person, I am doomed to failure. Thank goodness. I have all sorts of work to do. Papers need correcting. Articles need writing. Letters, too. All kinds of things NEED to be done on my computer. And time is scarce, as it is for everyone.

But before I do anything worthwhile, I decide to play LEGENDS "for just a few minutes to unwind." It doesn't work. I don't work. I don't care! LEGENDS is more fun.

This fast (and fast-paced) two-disk game is colorful and animated. You (and up to three others) visit a strange island. It has inns, a training area for experiened war-party members, a store for weapons, another for magic items. When you travel this land of forests and rivers and inns and mountains you will need to be constantly on the alert. For much awaits you.

So after you and your party explore and experience the island, hopefully gaining much wealth along the way, stopping at inns for a much-deserved break, you might hop the nearest teleporting rock to a reasonable facsimile of civilization where you may train and develop and prepare yourself for...

THE DUNGEONS!

twist in this maze-like atmosphere: friendly encounters.

All along the way - on island or under island - you'll encounter weird creatures. The graphics are exceptional. The patience you'll need to get through them must also be exceptional. You must fight, cast spells, negotiate, and run at the right times. The better you get at this game, the more the challenge.

LEGENDS is one of the few superior games that came out for the TI this year. It is a game for many.

There are two other games listed in the Asgard catalog (THE HAUNTED MINE II and THE VOLCANO FORTRESS). I've never played either of them, but I wouldn't hesitate getting them, as I've never gotten anything from this company that didn't exceed my expectations.

Next IMPACT/99 I'll review three of the best (and, for me, most-used) programs I own. They are all Asgard and all exceptional: EZ-KEYS, FONTWRITER II, and TOTAL FILER - lest you think life is all fun and games for me.

CONGRATULATIONS, ASGARD! Keep up the great TI efforts!

[Jack Sughrue, Box 459, E.Douglas, MA 01516]

GENEVE Notes
By Ron Prewitt

Here's a note of caution based on my experience with MDM5 V1.25. I installed the MYARC HFDC with the V7 EPROM and a ST251 HD on my GENEVE. I used MDM5 V1.25 to format the HD using the defaults for interlace and head step rate. The formatting seemed to go fine, fairly rapidly and with no sector errors.

But when I tried to copy files to the HD, it would often not be able to write a file but instead the HD would chatter for a few moments and a "unknown disk error" message would be displayed. The same thing would often happen when trying to delete or access a file on the HD. I tried reformatting the HD using different combinations of interlace and head step rates, but the same frequency of errors still occurred.

When just about ready to throw everything out of the second story window, I decided to try using MDM5 V1.21 that came with the HFDC. I reformatted the HD with the defaults and everything has worked fine.

****

The October issue of MICROpendium had an article that described how to revise the SYSTEM/SYS with a sector editor to have it look for the AUTOEXEC on the HD root directory instead of floppy drive one. I revised "DSK1." in both places to "WDS1." and re-booted. Instead of finding the AUTOEXEC file on the HD the system "hung up". After a couple of trys I went back to my unchanged SYSTEM/SYS.

Later fellow Geneve user Jim Smith told me he had talked to Lou Phillips and was told to use "hdS1." instead of "WDS1." I made the changes to SYSTEM/SYS using "hdS1." and now my AUTOEXEC file executes from the HD.

I also had been unable to ASSIGN the HD in MDOS using "WDS1." Using "hdS1." instead of "WDS1." also worked for assigning the HD.

****

The following is a group of batch files including the AUTOEXEC file I use to create a MDOS menu that boots automatically from the HD on power up for selecting programs to execute including GPL and GPL files from the HD. The MDOS MENU will also automatically reload and display when a MDOS program is exited or a return to MDOS mode from GPL.

```
"AUTOEXEC"

ECHO OFF
TIMODE
RAMDISK 120
ASSIGN D=hdS1:
D:
CD \MENU
BOOT

"BOOT"

ECHO OFF
CLS
MODE 40
TYPE BOOT-M
PROMPT CHOICE?

"BOOT-M"

----------------------------
   MDOS  MAIN MENU
----------------------------

   A - RETURN TO MDOS

   B - EXTENDED BASIC

   C - SET CLOCK

   D - BATCH FILE EDITOR

   E - MY-ART

   F - EDITOR ASSEMBLER

   G - GIF2

   H - MULTIPLAN

----------------------------

"A"

ECHO OFF
CLS
MODE 80
ECHO ____________________
VER
ECHO ____________________
PROMPT $_$d$b$b$t$_$_$n$g
D:

"B"

ECHO OFF
CLS
TYPE NOTE
D:
CD \
GPL WDS1.GPL.XB
CD \MENU
BOOT

"C"

ECHO OFF
CLS
D:
CD \MENU
TYPE NOTE
CLKM
BOOT

"D"

ECHO OFF
CLS
MODE 80
TYPE NOTE
QDE
BOOT

"E"

ECHO OFF
CLS
TYPE NOTE
D:
CD \MYART
MYART
CD \MENU
BOOT

"F"

ECHO OFF
CLS
TYPE NOTE
D:
CD \
GPL WDS1.GPL.EA
CD \MENU
BOOT

"G"

ECHO OFF
CLS
MODE 80
TYPE NOTE
D:
CD \GIF
GIF2EXE
CD \MENU
BOOT

"NOTE"

Processing Your Selection

**********
Happy Computing
```

TI VIRUS PROGRAMS

JOE NOLLAN

This past month the newspaper has been filled with reports about the latest computer virus. One article explained that this virus multiplied and held a large number of computers hostage. This was not the first, but to date it is the largest and most widespread. I want to address this article to how such a virus can affect our TI-99 computers. The simple fact is that they can't. The reason for this imune system is because of the way our operating system is held in our computer. The operating system is the bottom line workings of the computer. This would include such things as disk access and video display. The operating system in the TI-99 is in ROM (Read Only Memory) and as such can't be changed. The computers that have taken ill in the latest example were using the UNIX operating system and in a previous case it involved computers using the MS-DOS operating system. These operating systems come on a disk and are loaded into RAM (Read-Write Memory) when the computer is first turned on. Being RAM resident they can be altered and thus susceptible to a virus.

The TI is not imune from all forms of destructive programs but it is imune to a viral infection in its operating system. There are however programs (X-Basic or machine language) which may not be of a viral nature but can be just as destructive when they are run. Although I haven't seen any, I am aware of how they could work. These would not affect the operating system (in ROM) but would rather work like a DISK MANAGER gone mad on autopilot sweeping your disk clean. The most probable scenario would be that when you run the KILLER program it would sweep your disk entries. It would take about a program lines to do this and as such could be well hidden in a program listing. An additional program line could make the KILLER program a SLEEPER program that wouldn't do anything until it had been run a certain number of times. A program could be subtle and only KILL one file on your disk so that it's presence may escape detection for a period of time. The thing to remember about these programs is that they are just that, programs. When you stop running the program the trouble is over. Don't run the program again. The TI can be cured with a power down. When you power up again, it will be as friendly as ever.

How do we combat this destruction? First by being careful of the source of our software programs. Since these are programs it is fairly easy to track down the source. You certainly know where you got it. Which program was running when the problems occured? Remember that a running program can LOAD and RUN another program. This path through programs can be followed as long as everything is still intact. One precaution is make a backup copy of a new disk before running the programs on it. This is a good idea in any case. Another precaution when running a suspect program, is empty the disk drives. Don't leave a disk of your favorite utility programs in drive two. The program may attack a different drive, or all drives including a RAM disk. When you become aware of such a program, let everyone know. The consolation of losing your disk files is in knowing that you may help someone else avoid it.

I have not provided any details about how to write these destructive programs because I don't want to encourage anyone. I did see a cute program which emulated the TI starting with the

READY prompt. When run this program would show the READY prompt and flashing cursor making you think everything was normal until you type in a command. In *response* to your command statement it would give you an excuse why it didn't want to do it. It was a elaborate program and was fun to watch. There was nothing destructive about it and when you turned the computer off it was gone. Program 6165 in our library is one such program.

You can imagine your II computer as having all of its shots so far as a virus is concerned. It is up to you to avoid exposing it to any of these other programs.

DISCLAIMER

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SOUND FAMILIAR? :by Arthur Author

REPRINTED FROM THE 'NORTHWEST OHIO USER GROUP'

WARNING! THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS DETERMINED THAT COMPUTERS CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR MARRIAGE, (HEALTH). AND HE HAS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING SELF TEST QUESTIONAIRE. IF YOU ANSWER YES TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, THEN PERHAPS YOU ARE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME AT THE KEYBOARD AND YOU MIGHT WANT TO START PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO YOUR MATE. REMEMBER, THIS LITTLE QUIZ CAN ONLY PIN-POINT A POTENTIAL PROBLEM IF YOU ARE TOTALLY HONEST IN YOUR ANSWER.

1. **DOES YOUR MATE LET THE KIDS USE YOUR FLOPPY DISKS FOR FRISBIES?**

2. **DO YOU ASK "What's for dinner?" AND YOU ARE SERVED A PLATE OF BROKEN GAME CARTRIDGES?**

3. **BECAUSE THE P-BOX FAN IS TOO LOUD AND YOUR MATE CAN'T GET TO SLEEP, DOES SHE/HE SHOVE A PENCIL THROUGH THE BACK OF YOUR P-BOX, STOPPING THE FAN?**

4. **AFTER BEING CALLED FOR DINNER 3 TIMES AND EACH TIME ANSWERING WITH "I'll be there in a minute", DOES YOUR MATE COME INTO YOUR COMPUTER ROOM AND DUMP A SERVING SIZE SPOON OF TUNA CASSEROLE ON TOP OF YOUR CONSOLE?**

5. **WHEN THE BEDROOM WINDOW KEEPS FALLING DOWN, DOES YOUR MATE USE YOUR CONSOLE AS A WINDOW PROP?**

6. **DO YOU THINK THE KIDS ARE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME WITH THE COMPUTER, BECAUSE THEY START LISTENING TO PROGRAM CASSETTES ON THEIR PORTABLE STEREOS?**

7. **IN DIVORCE COURT, THE ONLY THING THAT YOUR MATE DOESN'T DEMAND HALF OF, IS YOUR COMPUTER?**

I WONDERED WHY MY KEYBOARD FELT A BIT MUSHY AT TIMES. I COULDN'T FIGURE HOW THE DENTS AT THE FRONT AND BACK OF THE CONSOLE GOT THERE EITHER, NOW I KNOW. IF YOU THINK YOUR FAN IS NOISY, YOU SHOULD HEAR MINE TRYING TO TURN WITH DENT BLADES. OH WELL, THAT LITTLE STORY REALLY 'HIT HOME', ESPECIALLY AFTER I SPENT LAST EVENING TYPING THIS PORTION OF THE NEWSLETTER. WHEN YOU SEE ANY TYPING ERRORS, DON'T BLAME ME; IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TRYING TO TYPE AND PUSH THE CAT AWAY FROM THE KEYS. SHE SEEMS TO ENJOY LICKING THE KEYS FOR SOME ODD REASON.

Merry Christmas

CHRISTMAS PARTY

FOR ALL MEMBERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES

DECEMBER 15, 1988

SOUTH END POOL BUILDING

OUR REGULAR MEETING PLACE

BRING YOUR FAVORITE PARTY SNACK
in ENOUGH Quanity to
to SHARE with EVERYONE

- - - - - - -

POP and COFFEE will be
Furnished by the Club.

Merry Christmas Merry Christmas Merry Christmas

DECEMBER 1988

LABEL MAKER
JOE NOLLAN

This month I want to cover a simple label making program. It is a no frills label maker that does just one thing, print a custom label. The label contents are changed by editing the program lines. I don't like to see Newsletters filled with long program listings. I would rather see program reviews and comparisons with a note about the program's availability. As I said before this is a simple label program, and that is it's selling point. I include it when I pass out a disk of programs so that you can print a label for your disk. It adds a nice professional touch. The listing is very simple and straight forward.

```
100 CALL CLEAR
110 PRINT "LABEL MAKER": : :
120 OPEN #1:"PIO"
130 PRINT #1:CHR$(27);"E";
140 PRINT #1:CHR$(27);CHR$(14)
150 PRINT #1:" MAIN HEADING"
160 PRINT #1:" LINE 1"
170 PRINT #1:" LINE 2"
180 PRINT #1:" LINE 3"
190 PRINT #1:" LINE 4"
200 PRINT #1:
```

The main heading is in enlarged print and is limited to 17 characters, however 15 is a more practical limit. If your heading has less than 17, then add some spaces to keep it centered. The next 4 lines of print are regular type and are limited to 34 characters each, but a more practical limit is 32. Using the maximum line length will leave no border space on the edges of the label. Spaces can be added to center each of these, and line 1 or line 4 could be left blank for additional clarity. This is a TRY AND SEE program. Print a label on a scrap of paper and make any changes you want. For more than one label you could add line 210 GOTO 130, or insert a FOR-NEXT loop. There are many more additions and changes that could be added to this basic program such as inputting the number of labels to print, or inputting the line contents as the program is running. I won't get into these changes because they will defeat the original purpose of a short, simple label program, and also because such label making programs already exist.

I enjoy sharing program tips and as always will answer any questions. Joe Nollan 572-4680.

The following poem appeared several years ago in a newsletter whose title was misplaced. It was titled TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS and was by Rolland W. Halliday. I have modified it somewhat and give sincerest appologies to Clement Clarke Moore.

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THE NIGHT BEFORE TI-FAIRE

'Twas the night before TI-FAIRE, and all through the house
Only the COMPUTER was stirring, run by its own little MOUSE.
The HARD-DRIVE was hung in the PE-BOX with care
In hopes that some SOFTWARE soon would be there.

The SPRITES were nestled all snug in their GROMS
While cute LOGO TURTLES danced in their E-PROMS.
And mama with her 32-K and I with my KRACKER
Had just KEYBOARDED in a GAME after supper.

When out in my SYSTEM there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my CONSOLE to see what was the matter.
I turned on the SURGE and flipped on the switch
And my SYSTEM came alive with nary a hitch.

The NOISE and the SOUND in the quiet room,
Made me fall from my chair with a resounding boom.
And what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a giant CRT, with a SCREEN crystal CLEAR.

With a little old PROGRAM so lively and quick,
I knew in an INSTANCE, it must be GRAPHIC.
More rapid than LASERS the CURSOR it came,
And WHISTLEd, and BEEPed and PRINTED each name.

"Now INPUT! Now OUTPUT! Now MICRO and BASIC!"
"On FORTH! On PASCAL! On ASSEMBLY and 'C'!"
To the top of the PRINTER, To DISKETTE and all
Now PRINT: "Dash away,Dash away, Dash away all."

As SPRITES that before a CALL CLEAR can fly,
Ere they meet with a GCHAR, and then do die,
So right to my MONITOR the cursor it flew,
With a RAM full of MEMORY and an RS232.

And then in a NANOSECOND, I heard with a sqreech
The CLICKING and CLACKING of KEYS from the SPEECH.
As I lifted my head, and was again sitting down
I saw a IMAGE of 99 that came with a bound.

It was shown all in SILVER from its' top to its' SWITCH
The KEYBOARD was QWERTY and held not a GLITCH
The SCREEN itself was a cool vivid BLUE,
But could be changed on a whim to a different HUE.

Its CURSOR how it TWINKLED, Why, it looked so merry,
As it raced 'cross the SCREEN with such a scurry.
Its' MEMORY was flawless. Its' COLOR was superb.
It moved BITS and BYTES with a SPEED yet unheard.

It spoke not a word, but went straight to its' work,
And filled all the HARD-DRIVE, and then turned with a jerk,
And changing the SCREEN to a COLOR it chose
And giving a blink, up to the CRT it arose.

It sprang to my SCREEN, gave a soft little WHISTLE,
And away it did fly like the down on a thistle,
And I saw it PRINT ere it went out of sight,
"HAPPY TI-FAIRE TO ALL AND TO ALL A GOODNIGHT!"

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MEETINGS - 1st and 3rd THURS. - 8 p. m.

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