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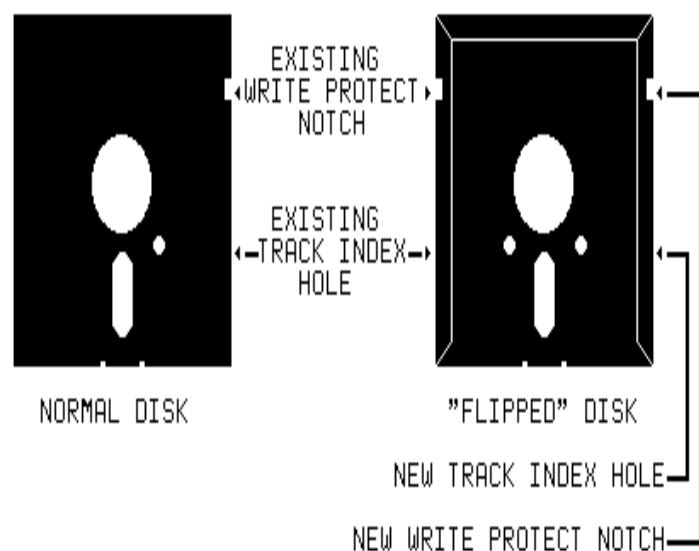
"One is never enough"



YOUR DISK CAPACITY by Gerry Kennedy - VAST Users Group

This article may be old news to many of you, but I have encountered quite a few people lately who haven't discovered "flippy" disks. If you are still using the original equipment single sided disk drive that came with your expansion box, you have the option of modifying your disks so you can use both sides of them. In order to read the backside you must flip the disk over, thus the "flippy" name.

The only tool necessary for this project is a hole punch. It would be advisable to use one that has a hinged holder to catch the pieces as you punch the holes, otherwise they could fall into the disk jacket.



In the illustration, we have a disk that is modified to be a flippy. At point A is a square notch. This is the read/write protect notch. At point B is a hole with a matching one on the back side. If you turn the disk carefully in the jacket, you will see a small hole in the disk here. This is an index hole for the disk drive. To make use of the back side of your disk, you simply make holes on the left side of the jacket to match those on the right. Those additional holes are shown by points C in the illustration. I know, the read/write notch is square. The disk drive doesn't care if it's round or square. If you insist on having a square hole, I've seen tools advertised that will cut a square hole and they cost about 15 bucks. The round punch is about \$2. Don't worry about making that hole too deep either. You would have to punch a hole almost a half inch deep to cut the disk inside (you wouldn't cut it that deep would you?).

The best way I have found to mark the disk for punching is to lay another disk upside down over the intended victim. If you turn the disk so the index hole is showing, you can mark the jacket of the bottom disk through it. Point of caution here! You only want a hole in the jacket, not the disk. You'll have to mark both sides of the jacket at the index hole and slip your hole punch into the jacket. I use a piece of label backing to protect the disk from scratches when I do this part. If you have a disk that's no good you can use the jacket for a template by removing the disk. It's a lot easier to mark the index hole this way. Otherwise you can only make a small mark on the jacket though the index hole in the upper disk.

One other thing I might mention here just so you can be forewarned. Theoretically, what you are doing is a no-no. When you turn the disk over, you're turning it backwards in the drive. The lining in the jacket is there to catch dust etc. and keep it off the disk. When you turn it backwards, you are putting dust on the disk. In actual practice, however, I've never heard of anyone having a problem. Many people do this, including software manufacturers. It isn't necessary to purchase double sided disks either. Although single sided disks are only guaranteed on one side, I've yet to see one that was bad on the back. If you should have a bad sector, it will be flagged when you initialize the disk if you verify the sectors and then when the computer writes to that disk, those flagged sectors are just skipped.

Gerry Kennedy

TI CLASSROOM

BASICALLY SPEAKING

By Tom Moran - Former VAST member



YOUR TI DOES WINDOWS

Windows, windows, windows. HouseKeepers don't do them...but computers do, including your TI-99/4A.

What the heck is a window in computerese? Quite simply it is a program subroutine or memory resident program that allows your computer to display some information without disturbing the current screen.

REVIEWED

MYARC EXTENDED BASIC II (XBII)

by J. Peter Hoddie



Myarc has recently released a new version of Extended BASIC which they call Extended BASIC II (XB II). Lou Phillips, president of Myarc, describes this product as a stop gap program until they can get their new computer to market. Which is to say, XB II is essentially the version of BASIC that will be in the new machine with the exception of a few commands (such as mouse support) which are not included in the 99/4A hardware.

The biggest advantages of XB II over TI's XB is that it runs between two and four times faster and it can use up to 512K for program storage. XB II will only work with a memory expansion/print spooler/ram disk card from Myarc with at least 128K of memory. The reason XB II is faster is that the entire interpreter is written in assembly language instead of assembly and GPL (TI's slow, interpreted proprietary language). Furthermore, XB II uses CPU memory instead of VDP memory to store strings so that access time to string variables is drastically reduced.

XB II is 100% compatible with TI's XB. Myarc uses the assembly loader from the Editor/Assembler cartridge instead of the TI's XB loader so that not only is load time cut way down but assembly programs can be linked which simplifies writing assembly code for XB significantly. The XB II cartridge also includes an empty GROM socket. Phillips said that this socket will allow you to put the GROM from your TI-Writer, Editor/Assembler, or other one GROM cartridge into the socket, thus creating, in effect a dual purpose cartridge.

Now to describe some of the new commands in XB II that really make it shine. First off, in XB II you can use 40 column text mode and bit map graphics. Myarc made this possible by moving nearly all the data and tables that TI placed in VDP memory into CPU memory. Thus nearly all of VDP memory is free and can be used for graphics.

To support the new graphics modes, Myarc has added a CALL GRAPHS command to set graphics mode, CALL DRAW, CIRCLE, RECT(angle), and FILL commands which Phillips says are similar to GW BASIC from Microsoft. The DCOLOR command will allow you to set the foreground and background colors of the dots being drawn in bit map mode.

The graphics routines were written by Mack McCormack who said they were the most difficult routines he ever had to write but he now says they work flawlessly. And Mack is one of the few people who could write these routines for the TI, so if he says they work, they work!

There is a CALL MARGINS commands which allows you to scroll one part of the screen while leaving the rest of the screen intact which will allow the creation of some pretty fancy windowing techniques.

To speed things up more there is a DEFINT commands which lets you create integer variables which run faster and take up less memory. Integers will take up one full word of memory (2 bytes).

Myarc has been around for a long time and worked closely with TI when TI was developing their XB. When TI asked Phillips what he thought of XB he told them (among other things) that he thought it could use a function he called TERMCHAR. This would allow you to know what key was used to terminate a line of input (i.e. ENTER, down arrow, up arrow, etc.). This would allow a programmer to make the program do different things (such as allow editing of the input field above if input was terminated with an up arrow) depending on how input was terminated. Thus XB II has this function and allows for eight different keys to terminate input.

The line editor has also been changed somewhat. Instead of having to hold down the right arrow key to get to the fifth line of a program line to make a change, you can now use the down arrow key which will now just go down one screen line and only go to the next program line after it passes the bottom of the current program line. The same idea applies to the up arrow key.

XB II uses the same tokens as XB so that they are fully compatible. The only difference is that XB II must obviously use some of the tokens that were left unused so that it could incorporate the new functions.

XB II will also let you run TI BASIC programs as character sets 15 and 16 are available for use due to some moving around of things in VDP memory. This may mess up some programs that directly POKE or PEEK to VDP memory to control sprites but otherwise should cause no problems.

Phillips said that there will probably not be a compiler for XB II for the 99/4A but that there probably will be one for the new computer which will use an extension of XB II.

XB II is now available along with a 128K expansion card from Myarc for around \$250.

The **GREAT** One-Day Sale

Mini-Mag 

by Leslyn Tepper

Volume 1, NO. 1

Hundreds of people stood in a line that wrapped around an industrial park building waiting for a chance to take advantage of a one day sale of the TI-99/4A computer at only \$99.95.

Included in the package was the console, 4 books, a cassette of 32 games, the Oscar w/programs and the opportunity to buy the "Home Financial Decisions" command module for an additional \$1.99.

Tex-Comp, the company that held the sale, had to limit the purchase of the TI-99/4A to two per person since there was such a phenomenal response to the full page Los Angeles Times ad.

I arrived on the scene at 10 a.m. to find that the line already stretched from the front door of HEAD Computer Products, Inc. (where the sale took place), down the front walk, a block to the corner, and a block past the rear of the building.

It took four (4) hours for that portion of the line to get in and buy their equipment; all the while, the line kept getting longer.

Only five people were allowed to enter the facility at any one time. They were then given their invoice and sent to the pickup window to receive their new computer.

The delay began when the credit card authorization system broke down (maybe they should have used a TI-99/4A!). After several hours, the "cash only" people were allowed to go ahead of the rest of the line. Even with this quicker method, the line remained until well after dark.

I spoke with several people who waited patiently (some sent friends and relatives to the nearest fast food restaurant for provisions). Why were they waiting so long? "Where else would I be able to get a computer so inexpensively?" most answered.

Although there were people there who already owned a TI-99/4A and were getting a second or third console, the majority of the crowd, I found, were getting their first computer.

There were a few who had another kind of computer and wanted to buy this one for someone else (i.e., their children, etc.).

As for Tex-Comp, they sold over 1,000 units, creating for themselves a tremendous January for their local warehouse store. "We had a run on cassette recorders," said Jerry Price. "Fortunately, we were able to provide a GE recorder that had the same settings as the original TI recorder, and for only \$39.95."

"Since the sale, business has continued at a consistent pace." Price said. "With so many new consoles in use, we're getting a lot of users in the store who are now beginning to expand their systems."

In addition to the business the sale brought Tex-Comp for software and peripherals, they have also had many of the people who were only allowed to buy two consoles, return to the warehouse store to buy one or two more "while they last."

How long would you wait to buy a computer? Well, I was there all day, and believe me, I got my two!

THE ORIGIN OF THE GENEVE COMPUTER'S NAME

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The clamshell containing the Myarc's computer on a card says "Myarc 9640 Family Computer". The box calls it "Geneve". What is the origin of these names? No, it has nothing to do with any computer chip. There is no such thing as a 9640 chip. The answer is in an article by Dave Wakely published in the August 30 1986 issue of Chicago Times, newsletter of the Chicago User Group. This is the first published account of anybody actually seeing a working Myarc computer. The report is from the June 1986 Chicago Consumer Electronics Show.

"(Myarc owner Lou) Phillips stated that Texas Instruments asked him not to use "9900" in the name, but he retained the "9" and added the "640" because that is the amount of RAM which comes with the machine."

"With Phillips behind the table was John Keown, author of Module Emulator, who is now doing extensive work with Myarc. I inquired about the origin of the name. Keown jumped in and stated that it was his idea. It seems that a few days before the CES, while they were working together, Keown told Phillips that he felt there should be a name for the new machine instead of just a number, "the 9640". As they were heading down the staircase from Phillips' office there was a framed print on the wall. The name at the bottom was "Geneve", and when Keown suggested this, Phillips agreed to it."