"CARDS, DIE-HARDS, and DEAD HORSES: A report on TI XPO 88-Fest West"

THE CARDS being plied at the TI Fest West-XPO 88 in Las Vegas last month were not the pasteboards so common in the casinos. They were RAM cards and instead of wearing hearts, spades, clubs and diamonds, they were labelled Horizon, Rave (yes, Rave), and Databiotics. The long awaited Grand Ram from Databiotics was demo'ed by Ken Hamai, of Orange County who was also showing off his zany hardware (goto "Personalities Section" on the next page for a sketch of Ken and other show headliners.)

KEN GOT HIS GRAND RAM the night before the show so he was hard pressed to show off its capabilities: It has "hot keys" that can be toggled to turn on/off the title screen etc., can be configured so it emulates up to four drives, and has a clock. The size ranges from a stripped down 52K priced at $147 up to $315 for a 512K model. Ken did work in a plug for his HamRam or HamCracker superspace mod. It permits bank switching the RA from Multiplan to TIWriter. The Grand Ram has other features: an analog-digital port for one (but no card, as yet), and a printer spooler.

RAVE'S PRESIDENT, John McDevitt was on hand to explain the workings of the new Rave 99 Memory enhancement system, which is the long way of saying RAM card. This card has three memory variations that start with a 64K board split up into 32K of main memory, and four segments: 8K at >6000 -> >7FFF 8K System DSR memory 8K Non DSR 8K User DSR memory

ADDITIONAL MEMORY can be added to bring the 64K card up to 256K and 512K in $100 steps: $199.95, $299.95 and $399.95. This is said to be a good board. It has a somewhat unique memory saving device employing a substantial capacitor which will hold file and program data up to five days, and a lithium battery can be slipped into the refresh circuit too. It has a "macro loader" (software) which will permit operation without a module in the cart port. J. Peter Hoddle was on hand to demo the software he devised for the card which included a memory management system for bank switching, and program loading. McDevitt commented

"The software pulls it together."

BUD MILLS, the new owner of the Horizon Ram Disk, had some fun showing off the latest adaptation to the popular HRD board. This was what he called the Phoenix HRD, a 1MEG board with some added horsepower, uh,uh, chips, that is, to make it work with Myarc's 9640. And therein lies the reason for the name: Myarc originally planned on calling the 9640 the "Phoenix" but couldn't because the name had already been adopted by another brand. However, Mills felt free to use the name for his card. Mills pointed out that he is not a hardware designer but a "parts man." He told a bit about the card's history and noted in his brochure over 800 kits have been sold.

TOM SPILLANE OF DIJIT SYSTEMS was also on hand with his new Advanced Video Processor Card (AVPC) which brings the TI up to the graphic's capability of the 9640 and/or Amiga's and ST's as it uses the same Yamaha video chip. It offers 192K of fast video RAM hi-res bit map graphics, and supports video digitizing, among other things. The price is $220 + $25 for appropriate monitor cable.

ANOTHER CARD (in this poker hand) that was represented at the show was John Willforth's expansion box proto typing board. Stocking this item was L.L. Conner Enterprise. Conner came all the way from Lafayette, Ind. to be at the show. He operates a mail order business dealing in TI goods: L.L. Conner, 1521 Ferry St. Lafayette, IN 47904 (CONT. p2)

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REPORT FOR THE SDCS

The February 16th meeting featured a demo by Woody Wilson of how to place TI-Artist Instances in TI-WRITER. Two programs were shown: one, from TI-SIG and SCCG newsletters and the other a program from TRIO+ Software. The group was interested in the method of placing a picture anywhere on the printed page as well as the simplified method of putting text with the picture and NOT using CRLF at the end of the text line. Only seven members attended. Watching TV?

("CARDS,DEAD HORSES DIE HARDS" CONT'D)
AN OLD TIMER and familiar face to all
was Franz Wagenbach of T.A.P.E. Inc who
is the U.S. distributor of Mechatronics,
the West German hardware line which ha
been producing variations of many of the
same types of cards already mentioned.

THE DEAD HORSE: Myarc's Geneve was very
much on the scene: There were about
seven being used for displaying/demoing
software and cards. Also present was the
on-going debate if 99'ers should upgrade
to it. Actually, the 9640's operation
is established well enough, this should
be a dead issue, a dead horse.

LES MERRYMAN, West Coast distributor for
the new computer, took the podium to
defend it. His message (or is it, his
massage) was that 9640 owners should be
patient, all the good things said about
the computer will come to pass. For an
instance, he said the long in coming
hard disk controller has reached the
beta test board stage and has so far
proven to be "hardware safe." Holding it
up is delivery of a circuit board. He
noted it will be capable of performing
sophisticated operations such as multi
tasking and eventually could also have
substantial data base power. He said
the c99 subset is being prepared for the
9640 and it should not be difficult to
port heavy duty software to it, using
that language. This brought a response
from Bob Boone of Ottawa, Ont., who said
he was aware the c99 subset had already
been supplied to Myarc. So where was
it.

BOONE DID COME TO MYARC'S defense when
your's truly asked about the rumor that
only 250 chips critical to the computer
had been disbursed by the chip maker
(Yamaha.) The implication was that the
company had produced no more than 250
computers. The reasoning was faulty:
Boone said he knew at least 700 Geneves
have been sold.

NOW FOR THE DIE HARDS: The die hards
were those of us, the vendors and buyers
who braved a mild but unusually rainy
Las Vegas weekend to attend the Fest.
The convention room was never very
crowded when I was there, but group
assembled was congenial and helpful to
all. The Southern Nevada User's Group
of Las Vegas, the hosts, are to be
complimented. They were like good
software: Transparent until needed and
then right there!

*****

PERSONALITIES AT the XPO:

MEET Ken Hamal, a hardware hacker from
Orange County who had fun showing off

his all black Darth Vader console.
"Where did you get the black console,"
asked I, the rube from San Diego. Ken
laughed and said: "It's a regular TI, I
just took off the metal cover." The
reason, he said, was because the metal
reflects light (in his set-up at home)
and that bothers his eyes. But after he
removed the cover, Ken bolted a small
gnat powered fan over the power supply
vent and then attached a dolls head
replica of Darth Vader atop that. And
there you have the Darth Vader console!

MEET Ray Kazmer of Sylmar, CA and a
member of the San Fernando Valley 99ers.
Ray is the guy who brought out the
Woodstock Christmas cartoon just before
the holidays last year. With little
prodding, Ray told how he happened to
come up with the theme. He had an idea
just before Black Friday, 1983, as to
how he could incorporate Charles Schulz'
cartoon character from the Peanuts comix
strip, into a TI arcade game. He then
contacted King Features, the strips
owners, to see if they would give him
permission, and once they said yea, he
says he contacted the then head of
Atari. Would they be interested in such
a strip. Sure would, he said. But, he
would have to run it by the board.

THEN HISTORY took two sharp u-turns and
Ray lost his gambit: TI left the home
computer market and Jack Tramiel took
over Atari, and the guy he had talked to
about the idea was gone in a house
cleaning, and so was his idea.

ANYWAY, LAST YEAR, Ray got the idea of
resurrecting the idea to put out as a
fairware, amusement idea. He was very
pleasantly surprised with the reception
it got.

NOW RAY, who is not just a die-hard, nor
just a true believer, but, verily, a
"man with a vision" got to talking with
some of the software/hardware talents
assembled at the Fest and came to the
conclusion that a supercharged 99 using
10MEG of memory and capable of running
3-D animation is possible. Even
programs and files from other computers
could be translated by such a computer
for use on the 99/4A, Ray said. What
was it Emerson said: "Hitch your wagon
to a star, else what's a heaven for?"

RAY HAD on hand copies of his popular
Woodstock cartoon and another program
he's created which should be of interest
to people who have the Infocom text
adventures. It's a quick loader which
permits loading the adventures more
rapidly than they do as presently set
up. This item is also fairware. The
program's name is Rapid Loader, version
two.

(CONT'D FROM P2) MEET J. Peter Hoddie, a college student from back East who everyboy knows is one of the 99's foremost software designers. Peter noted that some of the top programmers working with the TI are mere youngsters: He's 21 years old and a college student, Paul Charlton is 23 and a student at Rensellaer Tech., Mike Dodd is a 16-year-old high school student and Jim Lohmeyer just graduated from high school!

ALL OF WHICH prompted Peter to quip that the software for the Myarc Geneve was designed by the "Brat Pack" (of which he was the chief exponent.)

MEET Barb Weiderhold, owner of the Queen Anne Computer Shop, of Seattle, WA. Barb had hopes of demonstrating a new development called a Videoflex card being developed by Miller Graphics of Washington (state -- and not to be confused with Craig Miller of California who was not there.) David Miller the owner was unable to get it to the show. The system is being developed by Miller with software by Tom Wynne of the Puget Sound 99er's.

BARB EXPLAINED Videoflex is an operation in which video tapes (as in VCR) can have text added for subtitles, but also to "hook" a picture from the tape and print it out to a printer for instance. This would require a Geneve, and could be useful, say, to a teacher.

***** AS A FINAL NOTE about Xpo88-Fest West, the attendance was not large in numbers, but 100 per cent in interest. (We heard about 200 attended. But almost any 99/4A hardware or software -- commercial and fairware -- was available. If the SNUG'ers throw another one, be sure not to miss it: Some of the cards in Las Vegas are electronic. By John D. Johnson

A NEW AND MORE COMPLETE VERSION of his c99 Compiler has been released by Clint Pulley of Canada. The latest version was obtained from the LA 99'ers fairware library and brought home from Las Vegas. It should be in the library by the time you read this. The latest version has several new features including a GOTO function. Pulley put it in last, because he wanted us to learn how to program without it. And it sounds like he has brought the sub-set up to where he feels it is complete and can stand on its own.

(Editor's note: I was having trouble getting a c99 file fetching program I wrote in c99 to work using the last c99 version. With the new one (Vers.4), it

operated properly. In his commentary, Clint Pulley indicates he treats the function I was using (a while loop) as a "special case." In any case, thank you again, Clint Pulley.)

OCTOPUS DISPLAY CORRECTIONS
By Waldo Hamilton

IN USING THE OCTOPUS and comparing its display to the original articles (Dec. 1987 TISIG Newsletter), I began to get a little uncomfortable with at least one of the illustrations. I therefore built some circuits to verify or clarify some of them. The corrections are on page 4.

I also felt that a few users' hints would be in order, so here they are:

Since the drawings all show the scope traces with connections giving a horizontal trace with an open circuit, and vertical trace with a short circuit, some equipment can cause confusion. Ideally, the schematic should give traces matching the illustrations. Some "Octopi" I have used give traces opposite what is shown. i.e., open circuit gives vertical trace. Do not be alarmed. All you have to do is reverse the connectors at the scope.

Most scopes have an "X-Y" switch setting. This would be the setting you want to use.

As to scale settings:
Vertical amp; 1 volt
Horizontal; 1 volt

As far as I know, you are not concerned with the Timebase controls on any scope in using the X-Y function, unless that control shows an X-Y function.

The presentation you get once the equipment is set up is going to vary with which probe you put on a given point.
If the presentation does not match the illustration, simply reverse the probes. The variation is usually 180 degrees (upsidedown or right-to-left) from the illustration.

The angle of the trace with resistance will vary with the value of the resistance. Do not be concerned with the exact value here; we are mainly looking for shorts or opens. However...with experience, you will probably develop a feel for whether an expected display with a marked value is ballpark correct. A 100K resistor is not going to give the same angle as a 30 ohm resistor, obviously.

The trace is going to vary with different values of capacitance, also. A low value will be barely discernible...a large value (such as 1000uF) will give closer to a circle. If a small value looks like a short, turn the X control to a smaller value to spread the display more. If the cap is indeed shorted, it will not spread. The same applies to inductance...spread the Y setting.

Junctions do not give as sharp an angle vertex as the illustrations show. The vertex is usually slightly rounded. Be concerned with the angle beyond the vertex.

There is also some variation with a Collector-Emitter check. Ideally, since this check does not turn on the base, the indication should be that of an open (a straight horizontal line). However...recently I have seen some new unused transistors showing some activity on this check. I have not yet gotten a definitive answer from engineers on this issue. To me this looks like a leaky junction. If the leakage is not too great, and the circuit not too choosy, they seem to work. However; if I had my "druthers", I would not use them. When a transistor is off, I like to know it is really off. With leakage I am not sure.

Some displays seem to vary with component values used in assembling a given octopus. The ones I have built give solid lines on junction checks. Some others give what appears to be a slight "loop" appearance on junction checks. This should not be too much of a problem if you catch it right away and are aware that it can happen.
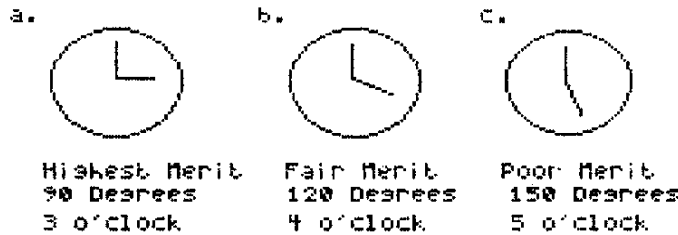Good luck!
===

Figure 3   Transistor Check Single Junction.
(Out of Circuit or Isolated)

a. Highest Merit 90 Degrees 3 o'clock
b. Fair Merit 120 Degrees 4 o'clock
c. Poor Merit 150 Degrees 5 o'clock
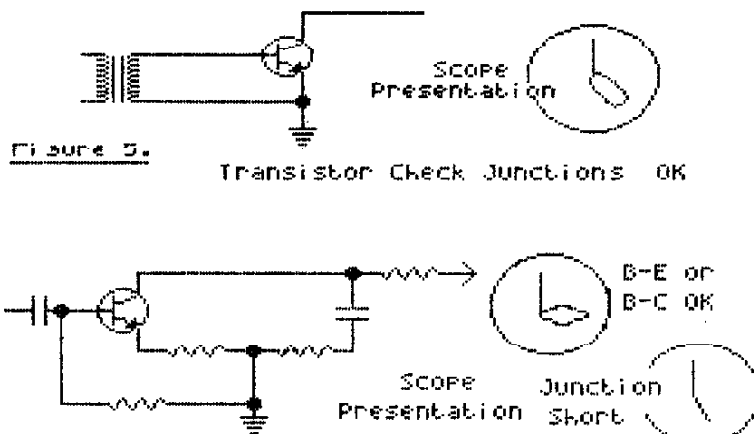
Figure 5.   Transistor Check Junctions OK
Scope Presentation

Figure 6.   Transistor Check
Scope Presentation
B-E or B-C OK
Junction Short

NOTES FROM WOODY'S DESK

I had a wonderful time at the Las Vegas XPO. I brought back so many programs that I still have not had the time to learn them all. Ray Kazmer presented me with a disk that really impresses me... 2693 sectors of programs compressed and archived so that it catalogs as 1439 sectors used! The new Archiver Vn. 2.4 is excellent. I have to make myself a note to send in the fairware payment... it is worth it!

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In November 1987 we published a conversion program for converting TI-Artist instances to a DV/80 format so that they could be used in TI-WRITER. One fault I find with the program is that it does not signal you when it is finished. I like to be doing something besides looking at a unchanging screen for many minutes. So here is my solution: Change the last line of the program (the line with "END") as follows:

```
650 FOR X=1 TO 10 :: FOR L=0
TO 30 STEP 2 :: CALL SOUND(
-50,700,L,2100,L,4200,L) :::
NEXT L :: NEXT X :: END
```

Now when the program finishes, it will ring a bell 10 times. You can change the X=1 to 10 to any value that you want. Just be sure the volume on your TV or monitor is turned up so you can hear it.

Those of you with the Super X Basic could simplify this by using the chime feature of the module.., This method, however, will work for anyone.

JOHN MOYTA CALLED MY attention to a feature of PRBASE that can cause you a slight problem if it is overlooked. When preparing your report formats, be sure to use the SPACEBAR to step from one position to another. The caret symbols must be typed over or erased by means of the spacebar. Do not just use the FCTN S or FCTN D keys to move from one position to the next. If the required spaces do not appear between the items in your header, the report will not print properly.

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STATUS REPORT ON "UNDB"

AS THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER was being written, two disks with material about "The United 99/4 Data Base" came from John Owen of the Johnson Space Center Users Group. We, of the TISIG (and the SCCG) are participating in the project of indexing all of our news letters and including them in the Data Base.

The new disks are named "UNDB-INFO" and "UNDB-START". Due to the tight publication schedule of this issue of our own newsletter, we will be unable to give a full report on the contents of these two disks. I have had time to scan the disks and find that they contain a lot of useful information that will be of value in preparing future indices for submission to the JUG.TX group. In addition, some of the information will be most helpful to anyone using PR-BASE.

There are now three single-sided disks full of data (more than 1000 screens). These disks will be placed in our group library when received. I would like to see each member with copies of ALL of the issued disks. Further, JUG is asking for assistance in indexing various publications, such as MICROpendium, Smart Programmer, TIPS, Short Programs, Computer Shopper, Home Computer, Ryte Data, etc. Volunteers for this project will be most welcome. Get the disks from the group library and go to it! (Let your User Group officers know about your participation.)

Let me put in a few remarks of my own at this point. First, to participate in this project you must have a disk drive. Second, while you can initialize a disk for PR-BASE using a regular disk manager you can NOT read the disk with such a manager. You MUST use the program named "PR-BASE VER. 2.0". ALWAYS label your disks "PR-BASE" so that if you accidentally try to catalog it with a disk manager, you won't think it is a blank disk. The program "REDISKIT" WILL work and makes fine copies of PR-BASE disks. In fact, if you copy with "REDISKIT", you do not have to worry about initializing the copy disk since "REDISKIT" does that for you. Third, always keep a write protect tab on your master disk. It is so terribly easy to wipe out any disk and PR-BASE is no exception!

Roland Anderson and I found out the hard way that it pays to keep a back-up copy of the DATA disk that you are currently using. I wiped out a master disk!

There is one thing about this project that I feel should be emphasized. DO SEND YOUR fairware contribution to William Warren. You can obtain PRBASE Version 2.0 (which is the issue that is to be used, NOT 2.01) from our library or your friends, but that does not relieve you of the responsibility of paying for it. I fear that too often some people think that the act of obtaining a disk from a group library obviates the necessity of reimbursing the authors of the fairware programs on the disk. If you USE it, PAY for it.

# SAN DIEGO COMPUTER SOCIETY

TI-SIG

MARCH 1988 NEWSLETTER

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of each month, at 7 P.M., in the Game Room of the North Park Recreation Center, 4044 Idaho St., San Diego

TI-SIG OFFICERS 1987/88
President : Don Goodno .... (619) 281-2111
Vice Pres : Woody Wilson .... (619) 264-6515
Treasurer : Gil Pico .... (619) 692-4346
Secretary : Lutz Winkler .... (619) 277-4437

NEW MAILING ADDRESS

TI-SIG
San Diego Computer Society
P.O. Box 5263
San Diego, CA 92105
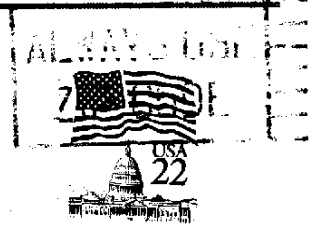
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