



Volume 11 Number 11

99er

November, 1992

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## **MINUTES FOR MONTHLY MEETING:**

OCTOBER 5, 1992

Our October meeting was called to order by Pres. Tony at 7:30pm. There were 12 members in attendance.

Both the secretary's and treasurer's reports were approved.

Gary had no new program disks for the Group library. He did tell us about a company (new to most of us) called Joy Electronics based in Dallas Texas. He felt that the catalog listed some hard to find TI items and that it is prompt in delivery. The secretary will keep the catalog for any members' needs.

Tony pointed out that the collection of other User Group newsletters needs a new home as Cork has gone PC. Everyone's problem is lack of space in the home. It was suggested that they be retained only as long as 5 years back - as 1987, or '88. Bob Hench (our newest member -welcome to the Group, Bob!) offered to use his place to store them.

Since there was no more old or new business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm, and all went back to copying disks and kibitzing.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dottie Swartz, Secretary

## THE STAR NX-1000 RAINBOW PRINTER

by Jim Peterson

After several years of heavy use, my sturdy old Gemini 10X printer decided to ignore the RS232 card, although it still performed in the test mode. So, it seemed to be time to catch up with the advances in technology by buying a new printer.

When a car gives me several years of trouble-free service, I usually trade it in for another car from the same manufacturer. It seemed sensible to do the same when shopping for a new printer.

So, I wanted a Star Micronics printer. I wanted a color printer and the latest model I knew of was the NX-1020R, so I started calling around town for prices. I didn't even bother calling the places whose ads suggested they dealt only in the high-priced heavy duty business equipment, but even the discount computer stores didn't have much to offer. They are more interested in pushing 24-pin printers. As I understand it, the TI-994A cannot drive a 24-pin printer unless it has a 9-pin mode, in which case you would only be using 9 of the 24 pins.

One store did offer to sell me an NX-1020R for \$239. I believe in supporting local vendors, but only when their prices are somewhere this side of the moon. I don't like to buy from those big discount mail order firms, but B.C.S. Megasource was offering the same printer in a Computer Shopper ad for \$169. It turned out there was also a \$20.99 shipping charge, which was a ripoff, but \$189.99 is a lot less than \$239. plus sales tax, and they did ship promptly.

The first thing I did was to run over to MicroCenter to buy a black ribbon, rather than use up the black portion of the color ribbon that came with the printer. To my disgust, I found that generic ribbons were not yet available - MicroCenter could not even find the NX-1020 in their cross-reference manual. I searched their shelves and found the correct ribbon marked ZX9, made by Star Micronics, "for Star 9-pin printers." The price was \$12.95, which is HIGHWAY ROBBERY!

I tried one of the \$4 generic ribbons for the NX-1000, and found that Star Micronics had changed the design just enough so that it would not fit. This was very obviously done in order to force their customers to buy their OUTRAGEOUSLY OVERPRICED ribbons. This is equivelant to selling a car which would only run on a special gas that was only available from the car manufacturer, at \$10 a gallon. Any company that will treat their customers like that deserves to be BOYCOTTED! I will never again buy a Star Micronics product, and I urge everyone else - DON'T BUY FROM THEM!

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## NX-1000 CONTINUED

Well, that is the part of this review that I'm going to send to Consumer Relations at Star Micronics. I have since found a source for generic ribbons at \$8, which is still a ripoff. I know that the other manufacturers pull the same stunt, and it was stupid of me not to check on ribbon availability before I bought the printer. I was perfectly happy with the \$.79 typewriter-spool ribbons of the old Gemini 10X, even if I did get a bit of ink on my fingers.

So, how do I like my new printer? I can only compare it to my old Gemini 10X. That is about like comparing a Model-T Ford to a Ferrari. The Model-T and the Gemini 10X had more metal and less plastic, and probably lasted a lot longer than the new cars and printers will, but printer technology has made a vast leap forward in the past several years.

Those microscopic inaccessible idiotic dip switches have been replaced by a front panel which accesses the electronic dip switch mode if you press three buttons simultaneously. According to the manual, the Font button will then select the Bank Number and the Pitch button will select the Switch Number. The remainder of the instructions make no mention of Banks or Switches, but I figured out that by pressing the Font button to the 2nd light and the Pitch button to the 3rd light, and then pressing the Park button, I could turn off Switch B-3 and thereby enable the Tear-off function. Pressing the on-line button causes the printer to remember this setting each time the printer is turned on. Most of the other 15 switches are probably of little use unless you are working with IBM software, multi-part forms, non-standard page lengths, ect.

However, the five buttons on the panel have many other uses which I will use more frequently. Holding down the Font and/or Pitch buttons while turning on the printer allows me to override printer commands in the software and select the font (high speed draft, draft, or one of the NLQ fonts - Sanserif, Courier, Orator or Script) and pitch (pica, elite, condensed pica, condensed elite, or proportional). This takes a bit of learning because some options are indicated by a combination of lights; for instance, Sanserif is selected when the Draft and Courier lights are both on!

I do wish that emphasized and double-struck print could be selected from the front panel - would come in very handy when your ribbon starts getting old and weak.

Which reminds me of a peculiarity of this printer, apparently it is mechanically impossible for a 9-pin printer to print emphasized condensed print. The Gemini 10X manual warned me of this but the NX1020R manual did not. If you attempt to do so, the Gemini 10X and the NX1000 and probably other printers will give you condensed print which is not emphasized - The NX1020R gives emphasized print which is not condensed!

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**NX-1000 CONTINUED**

The printer has too many other features to describe here. There is a 16kB printer buffer - but if you download a character set, this is reduced to one line. The four NLQ fonts print very sharply. In addition to the usual double-width printing, double-height and quadruple size are also available. If you have one of the expensive color ribbons installed, you can print in 7 colors - although yellow is almost invisible. A number of special character sets are available, but I do miss the many graphics symbols that were so readily available on my old Gemini 10X.

Buttons on the front panel make it very easy to advance a sheet far enough to tear it off, and then reset the next page to top of form. There is also a button combination to advance or retract the paper in very small increments. This is extremely useful for getting strip labels aligned properly - and also very dangerous. Pressing the wrong combination can cause the strip of labels to go careening backwards - which is very likely to cause a label to peel off and get jammed under the platen, especially if you are using the better quality strip labels which are attached rather loosely to the backing. I have made this mistake three times, and have been very lucky that I was able to dig out the jammed labels without disassembling the printer. From now on, I make microadjustments forward only.

In the meantime, Harley Ryan took my old Gemini 10X home and got it working with the aid of a 10-cent chip. I wonder what Star Micronics would have charged for that?! It pays to have friends in a user group - the manufacturers are NOT our friends.

P.S. - I have just learned that Midwest Micro sells NX1020R black ribbons for \$3.98 each if you order six. Their 800 number is 972-8844.

This article was copied from the Sept. 1992 issue of Spirit of 99.

**FROM THE CO-EDITOR**

Since Jim Peterson gave his opinion of the NX-1000 I would like to say a few words about the Epson 5500 I just purchased. The cost was \$ 369.00 + tax. You see the quality of print the 24 pin printer gives. It has 12 built-in fonts, 2 scalable fonts, 4 ways to feed paper, optional push/pull tractor, all controls are in the front for easy access also the dip switches. It has paper tear off switch which advances the forms to tear off and then returns them to the position to start printing again. The only thing negative I can say about the printer is that I cannot use the 9 pin ribbons that I have for the FX 286 Epson, according to the users manual.

WE WILL LOOK FOR

**YOU**

AT THESE MEETINGS

Circle your calendar with these meeting dates :

JANUARY  
FEBRUARY  
MARCH  
APRIL  
MAY  
JUNE

JULY  
AUGUST  
SEPTEMBER  
OCTOBER  
NOVEMBER 2  
DECEMBER 7 \*-CHRISTMAS -\*

All meetings begin at 7pm except Saturdays 12 noon at the CAMP HILL SHOPPING MALL COMMUNITY ROOM. The Group equipment will be UP and READY for use at approximately 1hr prior to meeting time.

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**NEXT MEETING:** DECEMBER 7th,1992, at 7pm      \*-MONDAY-\*

**PLEASE NOTE: CHRISTMAS PARTY AFTER MEETING**