Saving Our HEATH Eight-Bit Machines!

SEBHC JOURNAL

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COMFORTER — Twin, Lazer Tag design, $15. [illegible]

COMMODORE 64 — 2 yrs. old, $70. [illegible]

COMPOUND BOW — With sight. $99. Call [illegible]

COMPRESSOR — Large, $49. [illegible]

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COMPUTER PAPER — NCR, 4 cases, 12x8½. $50. [illegible]

COMPUTER TERMINAL - & modem for MTS. $40. [illegible]

COMPUTER — Zenith 100, 2 drives. $149. [illegible]

CONC[illegible]TE STEP — [illegible] $9. [illegible]

The "WHAT'S NEW" Feature

NEW STUFF FOR HDOS AND CP/M USERS
by
A. Stapher
Chief Editorial Assistant

A couple months back Darrell Pelan of Micronics Technology sent us two discs containing his new H89 Modem Program, "MT Modem". We've never been satisfied with HUG's MAPLE program documentation, so we immediately checked out both MT discs on CompuServe (CIS). To our joy both HDOS and CPM version ran identically well! They are oblivious to most Hayes-type modem commands (for example, you don't have to enter three +++ marks when you're ready to disconnect from CIS at a session end). We didn't have a chance to check out how they handle file transfers, but they both have buffer capacity of about 32,000 bits (roughly 4 text pages). MT Modem isn't yet completed (we received a development version) so we didn't try anything fancy with it. But we feel there should be some kind of non-destructive on-screen "help" file included in this program as it's so easy to lose or misplace a hardcopy instruction sheet. Darrell says he expects to have a later version on sale quite soon. This program is expected to sell for about $18, either in HDOS or CP/M version. Contact Darrell Pelan at 205-244-1597, M-F, 9am-5pm Eastern Time.

We also found a couple CP/M utility discs in our mail late last month sent us by Tom Bohon out in Olympia, WA for evaluation. We checked them out and think that Tom and his programmer associates have something worthwhile here! The utilities are designed to run on H8s, H/Z89s, H/Z90s, and Z100s and come on standard 40trk soft-sector discs. User instructions are contained in a file on each disc in WordStar "document mode" but can be read with CP/M's TYPE function on the terminal screen. They can also be sent to your printer via LIST as hard copy.

Disc One is a collection of file-manipulation and hardware control utilities called TexToolS. There are twelve separate programs, each of which provides a different service to help operators more efficiently manage their computer systems. These files are small and FAST. They do not have any special hardware requirements other than a line printer. These files allow you to easily and quickly

restructure text line length
clear the screen
remove trailing blanks and tabs from text
locate differences between two files
add line numbers to a file during copy operation
convert a text file to all upper or all lower case letters
send a form-feed (page eject) to your printer

Some example (.DAT) files are included for you to practice on while you learn how the TexToolS utilities work.

Disc Two has a very useful utility named KEYWORD. This neat utility lets you use your favorite editor or word processor to create very simple ASCII-only "free-form databases" from which you can retrieve facts and figures on any subject contained in them in a matter of seconds. Not only can you retrieve data, but you can insert, add, or delete data from these database files at will. Also you can manipulate the data by proper selection of your own keywords. According to Tom, KEYWORD is fast, simple to use, and a real time-saver for any computer user because it isn't necessary to learn a new language to use it! (Watch for a rundown Real Soon Now.)

As with TexToolS, KEYWORD runs on any standard H/Z 8080 or Z80 computer. Both packages sell for $10 each. Contact Tom Bohon, P O Box 293, Olympia, WA 98507, and tell him you read about it in the SEBHC JOURNAL!

Our Publisher and Managing Editor, "Lenny" Geisler, tells me that he just lucked into an unbelievable thousand-pound, 144-piece cache of factory new, unopened Heathkit and Zenith Data Systems EIGHT-BIT software & Heath Educational packages! As soon as he's able to do it, he'll truck this stuff to our Ann Arbor headquarters, inventory it, and store it in a safe, cool, dry place. He says he hopes to have it completely listed with prices in the October edition.

Here's a partial list of BRAND NEW, UNOPENED HDOS & CP/M items we shall be offering Real Soon Now:

* Complete Heathkit/Zenith Educational Systems packages for Programming in Microsoft BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL, CP/M, etc.
* Microsoft SUPER CALC
* MBASIC-80 (HDOS and CP/M)
* Assemblers
* Word Processors
* Communiations software
* Some standard H/Z operating systems (as yet unkown)
* And miscellaneous unclassified stuff on 8-inch discs...

All original Heath and Zenith proprietory software (Heath-Zenith specific, such as CP/M-80, etc.) has original factory warranty registration documents enclosed. In a few cases you may not be able to get much help, but isn't that why you subscribe to the SEBHC JOURNAL?!

There's a quantity of dealer demo software packages also available for people who don't mind reading manuals stamped with red warnings of "Not For Sale - For Demonstration Only". They're all NEW, UNUSED software packages, and you can easily read the text through a sheet of red cellophane laid over the page. Demo packages will be cheaper than "virgin" software.

==> Please Note <==

SOFTWARE PROFITS DEDICATED TO KEEPING The JOURNAL SOLVENT!

HDOS 3.0 HOW TO!

A MENU SYSTEM FOR YOUR HDOS 3.0
SYSTEM DISC
by
Southern Associate Editor
Allie C Lingo

Having heard promises for a batch file tutorial under HDOS 3.0, I've been very patient, but havn't yet seen anything in print. I needed such an article because I don't remember half the time to start the HDOS-3.0 clock task on booting my system disc. My "forgettery" is better than my memory, so usually when I created a new disc, the default time would be stamped on the files rather than the correct time & date!

Anyone interested in HDOS 3.0 has probably heard that it supports execution of "batch" files. But for those of you who don't know about them, batch files are text files containing commands which are read by the HDOS-3 System Command Processor (SYSCMD). Batch filenames have '.BAT' as their extension. The HDOS-3 command processor automatically searches for and executes SY0:AUTOEXEC.BAT whenever the system is booted.

Note: HDOS 3.0--as does HDOS 2.0--will first look for and run SY0:PROLOGUE.SYS if it's on the disc, otherwise it just continues the boot-up sequence or loads and runs AUTOEXEC.-BAT.

Basically, a batch file is a list (or batch) of commands which the system will execute in sequence just as if they were entered at the keyboard. Using a batch file, several commands may be executed with a minimum of key strokes, thus making life a little easier for the operator.

My attempt at making my system disc menu-driven uses an AUTOEXEC.BAT file which prompts me to set the clock, sets the PATH and runs a second file called MENU.BAT. A third batch file, PWRDWN.BAT, is called by MENU.BAT for the purpose of dismounting all the drives in preparation for turning off the system.

There are a few special characters for use in HDOS-3 batch files. Here's a list of those I used in my '.BAT files:

$e = <ESC>ape character	$_ = NEW LINE character
$, = TAB character	$s = SPACE character
$ep = Reverse Video ON	$eq = Reverse Video OFF

There are other special characters which may be used in HDOS-3 batch files; for a more complete list refer to the HDOS-3 documentation on your distribution discs.

The first file I created was AUTOEXEC.BAT. On bootup it reminds me to enter the time by automatically starting the HDOS-3 clock task (start clock or st clock). Here's the text of that file:

```
rem  AUTOEXEC.BAT by A. Lingo  9/13/89
rem
start clock
echo off
echo $eE
PATH SY0:
menu
```

The first two lines are REMARKs which are not executed. The third line automatically starts the clock task (start may be abbreviated as 'st') and I am prompted to enter the time. I didn't put a line of code in to prompt for the date because the system does it anyway. The next line turns off echo to the screen so it doesn't get cluttered up with all kinds of stuff. I didn't turn the echo off before starting the clock just in case the clock task couldn't override the echo-off command, or the clock task may turn the echo back on. Next, in the fifth line I want to echo to screen ($eE). The $e from our previous list is the <ESC>ape character, and when used with letter E clears the screen and homes the cursor. It's similar to using 'PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"" in BASIC. Next we set the PATH so the system knows where to look for the files we'll use. In this case I use SY0:. Last, but not least, we find 'menu'. This refers to batch file 'MENU.BAT' which we want AUTOEXEC.BAT to run.

To recap: AUTOEXEC has started the clock, turned off echoing commands to screen, cleared the screen, set the path, and finally runs the MENU batch file.

The next file, 'MENU.BAT', is listed below:

```
rem MENU.BAT by A. Lingo 9/13/89
rem
echo off
:BEGIN
echo $eE
echo $_$_$,$,$,$s$s$epHDOS 3.0 SYSTEM DISK MENU$eq
echo $_$_$_$_$,$,$,$s$s$s$s$sPLEASE CHOOSE ONE...
ask $_$_$,$,$epF$eqormat a Disk $epS$eqysgen Formatted Disk
  $epP$eqower Down$_$_  [This line's 80 columns wide -- ed]
if key = 'f' goto FORM
if key = 's' goto SYSG
if key = 'p' run PWRDWN
if not key = 'p' goto BEGIN
:FORM
echo $eE
RUN INIT
goto BEGIN
:SYSG
echo $eE
RUN SYSGEN
goto BEGIN
```

More HDOS 3.0 How To

I wrestled with how I wanted the menu to look on screen and finally decided that I preferred it to be as simple as possible and would use a minimum of keystrokes. Also, I wanted it to ask for specific keys to be pressed and ignore all others.

Originally I used one file for the menu and three smaller batch files to be called and run for the formatting of a disc, making a bootable disc from a formatted one, and lastly one for dismounting all the discs and notifying me that I could remove all discs and power down the system. This system worked fine but really was not what I wanted. I decided that the menu program should do the bulk of the work, not several small batch files.

Getting back to the program, the first three lines have been previously discussed. The fourth line is a label named :BEGIN. Note the colon (:) which must preceed any label. A label is used in conjunction with a goto. 'Label' is defined as characters following a GOTO. To me it appears rather like an interstate information sign telling me where I could exit, get food, and so on. In the case of this file, the characters after the GOTO informs us where the next code to be executed is located if a certain condition is met. The first line following the :BEGIN label clears the screen (ESC E) and homes the cursor. The next line echos the title of the menu to screen. The first combinations of $_ inserts a couple of new lines to space the title down on the screen and the next combinations of $, and $s is my attempt to center the line on the screen (NL,NL,TAB,TAB, TAB,SP,SP,). The next combination--$ep--turns on reverse video, high-lighting the title "HDOS 3.0 SYSTEM DISK MENU". The combination following the title--$eq--turns off reverse video ($ep = ESC "p" and $eq = ESC "q" in standard H19 screen code).

The next line echos PLEASE CHOOSE ONE... to the screen and the same characters (mentioned above) likewised space this line down from the title and center it on the screen.

The next line is an ASK statement. Following ASK are characters which center the line. Please note those ESCape characters which are used to highlight the first letter of each menu selection. (If you copy these programs be sure that your ASK statement is all on one line!)

At the end of this statement are two combinations of $_. This spaces the cursor down a couple lines. Originally I overlooked this and the cursor was stuck at the end of the menu selections. (I didn't like the look of it.) Incidently, the reason I used an ASK statement was to keep from having to type a carriage return after typing in the first letter for each menu selection, that is, using an ASK statement in combination with IF KEY = value statements. Just lazy I guess. In my case, the ASK statement shows our menu selections, waits for a key to be pressed then saves the key's value.

We earlier mentioned an IF KEY = value statement; these are the next four lines of code after the ASK statement. The first one checks to see if the value of the key pressed is equal to "f" (doesn't matter if it is upper or lower case) and if it is we 'GOTO' the label :FORM and execute the code there to format a disc.

The same thing happens in the next two lines except that the value of the key pressed is checked to see if it is equal to "s" or "p".

The fourth IF KEY statement is a little different. I used this statement to ignore values of all other keys. That is, all key values not equal to "f", "s" or "p". Except for Control C (CTRL-C <CR>), striking any key other than those wanted will return us to the label :BEGIN, the screen is erased, the menu is re-displayed and we are again prompted for input. I almost forgot... You're probably asking yourself about the IF KEY statement ending with "run PWRDOWN". This statement is different, too. If the key value equals "p" then a batch file named PWRDWN.BAT is run which takes us to power down. I'll get into this a little later.

We have now come to the second label called :FORM. The first line following clears the screen. Don't assume the program to be run will clear the screen. The next line is then executed just as if we keyed it in at the system prompt. In this case, RUN INIT. We then follow the prompts of INIT and upon exiting INIT we will be returned to the next statement, a GOTO, which sends us to the label :BEGIN and displays the menu, again awaiting for us to enter a keystroke. The third label, :SYSG works similarly except for the command RUN SYSGEN. If you wanted to SYSGEN a minimum disc SYSGEN/MIN could be substituted which would install only the necessary system files.

To recap, we find that the MENU.BAT batch file does quite a lot. It turns off echo-to-screen to prevent commands being executed from cluttering up our screen (and maybe our minds). It clears the screen and types the menu to screen and waits for our selection. Sensing our selection it checks to see if the keystroke is valid and if it is not will erase and redisplay the menu. If we keyed in a valid keystroke the menu program will run the appropriate program and upon exiting the program will redisplay the menu.

The only thing left is to attempt to explain the third batch file called PWRDWN.BAT. I had originally hoped that I could have MENU.BAT take all the load, even for the power down part. I tried putting the code in PWRDWN.BAT into a label called :PWRD but could not get it to work right... kept getting a "batch file not found error". The code for PWRDWN.BAT is:

HDOS 3.0 How To concluded

```
rem PWRDWN.BAT by A. Lingo 9/13/89
rem
echo off
echo $eE
MD SY:\D 0:
wait 2
echo $eE
echo $_$_$,$,$s$s$s$s$s$s$ep***ALL DRIVES DISMOUNTED***$eq
echo $_$_$,$,Remove ALL Disks and Turn Off Power, OR
echo $_$_$,Install Bootable Disk in SY0:, Do a SHIFT-RESET,
   RE-BOOT  [Line broken to fit column -- ed]
```

The first four lines of PWRDWN.BAT have already been explained. The fifth line dismounts all units of the primary device (MD SY: = multiple dismount of SY:), that is, it dismounts SY1:, SY2:, etc. The original version of HDOS 3 which I have doesn't dismount SY0:. So I must use D 0: to dismount SY0: to get ready for power down. A backslash (\) separates the commands. The next line is WAIT 2. This holds the screen for a couple of seconds so I can see that all the drives have been dismounted. This line doesn't have to be in here--it just makes me feel better seeing the drives have been dismounted before the screen is cleared by the next line. Finally the last three lines echo to the screen that all the drives have been dismounted and that I can remove the discs and shut off the power or install a new bootable disc in SY0: and re-boot.

It is my hope that this article will spark some interest in HDOS 3 and using batch files with it. I would like to hear from others on the subject of batch files. Perhaps those who are much more knowledgable than I will put in their two cents-worth as it were. For example, I can envisage a batch menu system being created for a disc full of applications programs. When the disc is booted, a menu of all the applications would be written to the screen, and with only one keystroke any listed application program would run. Upon exiting, the menu would reappear waiting for your next instruction...

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Editor's Notes:

Allie sent the text of this article to me on a double-sided, 40trk HDOS-3.0 soft-sector disc. I tried to read it with HDOS 2.0 on Heather (my D-G Electronics Super89-CPU-equipped H89A) with absolutely no luck whatever! After a couple phone calls to Allie, we both decided that his HDOS-3 system didn't like being run at 4Mc/S, so I fired up Hachibanko (my H8) and found she'd run HDOS 3 without the slightest hesitation!

Then I tried to run HUG's HTOC.COM under CP/M so I could do a little 2-column text formatting for the JOURNAL, but HTOC didn't recognise HDOS-3 text files! Somewhere in my stumblings I discovered that HDOS 3.0 recognises HDOS 2.0 files and directories, so I INITed a new disc under HDOS 2.0 and used HDOS 3.0 to successfully copy Allie's files to the HDOS 2.0 disc. HTOC.COM then read the files and cheerfully converted them to CP/M ASCII format.

This let me get at the files for editing and putting them in two column form without further strain or pain! An editor's life easy it ain't!

As soon as I can get this edition to bed and out the door I'll get really deep into HDOS 3.0 and all later permutations thereof--understand that it's now up to ver 3.20--if I can somehow wangle a copy from someone "out there in 8-bit land".

It's very interesting to see how close Bill Parrott "& Co" have made HDOS 3.xx function quite similar to ZDOS or MS-DOS. It makes much easier an operator's transition between eight and sixteeen bit H/Z machines.

Now all I have to do is dig into all those HDOS 3.0 application programs and find some way to get HDOS 3.xx to run equally well at either two or four Mc/second CPU clock rates...

An afterthough: My daughter has brought several ibmpc and MS-DOS "compatible" packages of test software to run on my H120 under ZPC (Pat Swayne's ibmpc emulation software). Most of them work pretty good but I can't help noticing that they are not as fast as similar stuff on my H8, say--for example MICROSOFT's SUPERCALC. Sure, the screen graphics are impressive, but because of ibm's penny-pinching single-minded one-CPU architecture, those sample software graphics routines severely put the brakes on my H120's program execution speed! (It has the 8Mc/S clock upgrade installed and runs Z-DOS and other MS-DOS software really wizard!)

Why spend gobs of money for fancy software to run on an outrageously-priced system unless you think upholding your fancy-schmancy yuppy image is somehow REALLY important?!

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OR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SALE... FOR SAL

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==> S U R P L U S, V I R T U A L L Y N E W <==

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WANTED... HELP WANTED... HELP WANTED... HELP WANTED...

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Running HDOS 3.0 in my H89 w/2 internal floppies, planning on adding a hard drive but need information from users having experience with Micronics Technology ST-225/125 internal set-up. Kim Walch, 110 Madeira S E #310, Albuquerque, NM 87108.

LOOKIT WHUT I DONE DID!

WRITE A CP/M SUBmit FILE and SAVE A HARRIED SOUL!

by

Leonard E Geisler

The wife of a suddenly-deceased, former member of the defunct A*SQR*HUG (Ann Arbor HUG) has been depending on me for lots of technical support for somewhat more than a year. She and her husband were fairly high-level Amway products distributors. When he died, her husband left her with an H89 which was verging upon self-destructing, absolutely NO working knowledge of the computer, and several thousand dollars-worth of unfilled orders awaiting processing! He did leave scads of scribbled fragmentary notes, but they weren't in any logical order. Some even dated back five years or more! You can imagine the tremendously-ugly chore staring her in the face, not to mention her emotional state of mind!

Moral: Even if you don't expect to die in the very near future, at least prepare a brief set of operating notes for your survivor(s) use! And inscribe on its' first page in BIG scarlet letters: "DO NOT LET ANY IBM COMPUTER USER WITHIN 100 MILES OF THIS H/Z MACHINE, OR EVEN TELL THEM ABOUT IT!" This may prevent some well-meaning but highly ignorant sixteen-bit "computer expert" from trying to help by "resetting" the H89 while it's running a program (and not printing on-screen) by switching off the A-C power. Imagine what that did this poor lady's working discs and files, and her composure!

Having put in a full three months on getting this lady's machine back into proper operating condition, I've spent a similar amount in learning how to run that gosh-awful bug-filled "proprietory" Amway accounting software. It had been written in an obscure CP/M BASIC dialect, then COMPILED! As her original working discs had been trashed, I had to buy a copy of ANAPRO's EMULATE program so I could convert Amway's Magnolia-format CP/M distribution discs to run under Heath's CP/M. Eventually I developed a vague idea of what the programs did, but not the how or why of them. And the software manual was absolutely NO help whatever (it was written by a programmer for other programmers).

Computer finally up and running, the lady's business needed tending to. There I couldn't help, except when the computer appeared to hang up. Then I'd dash over to the south side of town, spend an hour or two getting the machine to acknowledge that I knew how to make it run, then persuade its' owner it was safe to resume work. Often I'd stay a while, watching machine and operator function until I was satisfied everything was back on a reasonably even keel.

Every time I went on one of these calls I'd leave a fresh set of operating instructions written in the plainest English I know. This would serve her until work began to dangerously pile up, then she'd have a part-time "computer literate" girl come in and help out. Usually the part-timer did a good job, but occasionally she and the computer would fly into a snit. Usually I could talk her through them over the phone.

Eventually these ladies became comfortable with the H89, but at every month's end Amway's miserably-slow software would take more than SIX HOURS to close out all accounts and transfer records! I replaced her Heath CPU with a D-G Electronics Super89 CPU set to run at 4Mc/Sec clock speed. This has greatly reduced close-out time, but next the part-timer gets a new job, so we're back almost to square one.

The lady's husband had regularly backed up his Amway data discs at month's end--it was easy because she'd be taking care of other tasks. Now she continues to back up files every month, but she's usually doing twenty different jobs simultaneously. It's easy for her to get rattled and sometimes miss a step or two which often results in chaos! When it comes to running the backup procedure, the slightest "operator malfunction" means Terminal Disaster!

To get around this roadblock I wrote a simple one-screen set of plain-English instructions and saved it on her system disc (internal drive A:). Then I ran D-G's CONFIG80 and set warm boot AUTO to TYPE the file AMWAY.TXT. Now, whenever she boots the interal drive, she immediately sees the not-easy-to-avoid message telling her, "Remove all discs from both external drives, insert a blank disc in B:, the data disc in C:, then enter EX AMWAY<cr>". This loads EX.COM which reads AMWAY.SUB and automatically runs this 6-line CP/M submit file (which virtually eliminates her "backup blahs"):

```
FORMAT B: TO DS,ED^M      (^M is CP/M's line-feed command)
Y                         (Runs FORMAT's internal FBAD)
PUTSYS C: TO B:           (Runs D-G SYSGEN utility)
PIP B:=C:*.*[V]           (Copies & verifies all files)
PDIR C:                   (Hardcopies disc directories
PDIR B:                    for comparison)
```

It finishes with a freshly-copied backup disc and the two printed directories (not necessary but calms one's nerves).

I haven't tried a similar auto routine under plain CP/M as Livingston Logics Labs' D-G Super89 BIOS-80 software does so much more with only a key-stroke or two than distributed versions! Wonder if any readers might like to try something like this? We shall be delighted to print your work in the SEBHC JOURNAL. And you'll get a one-year extension to your present subscription, as well as seeing your work published.

Note: If Associate Editor Allie Lingo hadn't sent us his HDOS-3 article I might never have even tried writing any kind of 8-bit automatic routine. Thanks for the inspiration--your example encouraged me to experiment! In fact, I've written a few batch-type (ZDOS and CP/M85) routines for my H120...

* FOR YOUR INFORMATION *

Associate Editor Rick Swenton has sent us a Preliminary Copy of the manual for his "X10.COM - CP-290 Interface Software for CP/M". You're asking, "What's a CP-290?!" if, like me, you just skim through the latest Heathkit or Radio-Shack catalogue until you get to the "good, computer stuff". You need more information, and here it is:

Briefly, the CP-290 Interface is a major component of the X-10 System Home Power control unit. A properly-installed computer interface unit connected to your home computer (H8, H/Z89, etc.) can be programmed to make the house it lives in run virtually self controlled. The X-10 almost fully-automates a dwelling, turns lights, appliances, radios, TVs, security alarms, etc., on and off at the owner's whim, desire, or needs. In short, it's an electronic majordomo! What's more, it can be set up to answer the phone when you call home from anywhere in the world and be made to do any task you've programmed into it.

The X-10 has many practical applications. For example, you can get a wireless remote-control package which lets you turn on selected lights from up to 150 feet away from your home. There also is a Timer Command Console which lets you, among other things, set various lights throughout the home to turn on and off RANDOMLY to give it a people-are-at-home look to crusing breakin artists. It is a Real Powerhouse system!

The system's formal name is "X-10 Powerhouse". It's sold by X-10(USA), Inc., 185A Le Grand Avenue, Northvale, NJ 07647, phone 201-784-9700 or 800-526-0027. At present the X-10 is selling for $49.95. Various add-on modules sell from about $19.95 to 49.95 each. Heathkit lists a number of X-10 products in the latest (Christmas) catalogue--we suggest you refer to it for more technical details and prices of the various modules.

The X-10 is also sold with different names by many Yuppie-type catalogues. Radio Shack sells it renamed as "Plug'n'-Power" and other vendors carry similar (if not identical) devices such as Stanley's Lightmaker. And even Sears has one.

Whatever the brand name, they all have two basic types of controllable modules, one for incandescent lights only (uses triac switches which also work as lamp dimmers), and one for appliances. The latter are universal in application and use a-c relay contacts to apply power to inductive loads.

You've been dreaming of computerising your home but didn't because there wasn't any software for your H/Z 8-bit machine? Cheer up! Rick Swenton's X-10 290P interface software lets you use your computer's serial modem I/O port to pre-program the 290P with up to 128 combinations of light and appliance settings! Then disconnect the module, and free up the modem port for other duties. The interface module then carries out all its' pre-programmed commands... More, NEXT MONTH!

Subscriber Al Bjorling sent us a most interesting piece of text: SIGMPOS.PAP (translated, that's Sig/M Position Paper). If you've been wondering what was going on with Sig/M's CP/M public-domain software, here's a condensation of their Paper:

"This paper has been prepared to inform interested readers of the current state of Sig/M, and [to] make suggestions as to what Sig/M should be doing in the future, and lay groundwork for going in that direction.

"For many readers Sig/M may be an unknown acronym. To understand what Sig/M is, how it came into being, and what it does (and intends to do) here is a short history:

"In the early days of computing the first operating system in wide use on microcomputers was CP/M-80 designed to control 8080 and Z80 microprocessors. Then also there were very few programs for use with this brand-new system and computers using it. Out of this need the CP/M Users Group and CPMUG library was formed to provide a means of storing and sharing the works of various software authors.

"For a long time this concept flourished and grew; everyone using microcomputers helped each other without competition because there was plenty of work for everyone. Early contributors read like a Who's Who of personal computing, and includes the names of industry pioneers Ward Christensen, Don Tarbell, Bruce Ratoff, Don Fowler, and many others.

"Eventually Sig/M was founded because CPMUG's software was being distributed by Lifeboat Associates, a commercial firm, which would not release [public domain] software which competed with Lifeboat's own programs. 'Sig/M' means Special Interest Group - CP/M. It was set up by and is controlled by the non-profit Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey (ACGNJ) with the object of preventing conflict between public-domain and commercial software. Sig/M was very active until the mid-80s which brought introduction of IBM's PC and MS-DOS to the microcomputer world and subsequent formation of the 'P-C Blue Library' by the New York Amateur Computer club.

"The P-C Blue library is mainly applications software submitted as 'shareware' of which about 88% is without source code. But Sig/M's is mostly utilities and program development tools, and source code is included. The MS-DOS community grew without ready availability of source code. In contrast CP/M users have created a large body of CP/M-86 software (with source code intact) by converting existing CP/M-80 programs and it's available to MS-DOS users virtually free.

"Most MS-DOS software developers are tied up by Microsoft non-disclosure agreements and can't release the fruits of their labors without facing lawsuits and loss of working relationship with Microsoft and other firms...

"Sig/M software distribution stopped when Glen Dusch (he'd been in charge of Sig/M's post office box) had a stroke. Resulting library operation has been very fragmentary because no one was able to handle library distribution. Sig/M software is still available on CompuServe and numerous private CP/M-user's bulletin boards, and as re-organisation proceeds we hope it will again become available by retail mail order."

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