

## PRICE & PROGRESS REPORT

by Loren Lovhaug

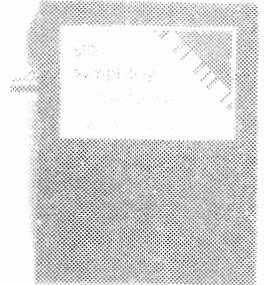
**128 Games in hiding...** You say there are only a few C-128 games? There may be more than you think! Although not widely known, Anton Treuenfels, the programmer responsible for the Commodore 64 and Commodore 128 adaptations of the Wizardry series (and now Twin Cities 128 contributor) informs me that there are really two different versions of Wizardry on each Wizardry disk. The scenario goes something like this: If you autoboot Wizardry on your C-128, the loader activates a version of Wizardry which actually operates in and is optimized for the C-128 mode. The C-128 implementation uses all of bank 1 RAM as well as an any REU (if you have one) as a virtual RAM cache which holds most of the game's data and code. The result is much smoother game play and faster disk copying as Wizardry does not have to access the disk drive nearly as often. Another benefit of C-128 operation is its ability to use the 128's enhanced keyboard. Additionally, if you own a 1571 disk drive, Wizardry uses the 1571's burst mode to read and write data much more quickly. And as a good programmer should, Anton is constantly improving his techniques. In fact, he recently enhanced the virtual RAM cache so that it also takes advantage of the 16 or 64K of video RAM that was not being used for this 40 column game. (Anton says he decided to do this after learning how to tell whether a user has 16 or 64K of VDC RAM from Fred Bowen's article in issue #18 of Twin Cities 128...*See the techie stuff does pay off!*) The VDC RAM enhanced cache will make its first appearance with the third scenario of Wizardry when it is released. The 64 and 128 versions of Wizardry were the first to implement this RAM caching technique, which became so popular at Sir-Tech that within days similar caching schemes were ported to the Apple and IBM versions.

**Speaking of Hiding...** Many of you wrote to tell me you caught my commentary in a recent issue of RUN magazine concerning the lack of C-128 native mode support in Q-link's proprietary software. Most of you also indicated that you agreed with me but felt that the situation would likely not improve. However it appears my shouts are not falling on deaf ears. During the Friday evening session at the World of Commodore Show in Philadelphia an impromptu discussion on Q-link's software developed in front of the TC-128 display. Present at this discussion were two Q-link executives, a Q-link programmer, Fred Bowen, and myself. As you might expect Fred and I were bombarded with the same old lame excuses, that is, until Fred suggested a radically different approach. It was right after one of the executives had suggested that the expense of creating and maintaining a second version of the software made 128 support too costly that Fred said, "Well, one way to do this would be to activate C-128 features from C-64 mode. In this way you could provide C-128 luxury and still have only one version of the code". At first, both the executives and the programmer looked at us with doubt, but as Fred and I began to explain how you could utilize the numeric keypad, the extra grey keys and even the 80 column screen and fast mode while still in 64 mode, we could see genuine interest and enthusiasm building. We also discussed emulating a forty column display on the 80 column screen for those Q-link applications that required the 40 column screen, as well as enhanced features such as DOS support while online and a better email/text editor. The Q-link execs indicated they are interested in the concept, since the "C-128 driver" for this new version of Q-link would be small and work very well without requiring a separate version. I will keep you posted as things develop.

**Cool stuff from the labs...** One software developer who has employed this "128 driver" approach when creating a 64 mode application is Dr. Evil Labs of St. Paul, Indiana. Dr. Evil's shareware KERMIT telecommunications package employs this technique giving 128 owners a much nicer package while keeping development time and effort at a minimum. Fred and other people at Commodore are so impressed with the result that a new version of the 1670 disk will include the latest release of KERMIT (version 2.2). The KERMIT package is

specifically designed to facilitate communications with mainframe and minicomputers which utilize the KERMIT file transfer protocol and supports a variety of common terminal emulations including very well done VT-100 emulation. If you just want to check out this "128 driver" concept I strongly suggest you download the current or earlier versions of Kermit, or better yet, send a \$5 or \$10 donation to Dr. Evil Labs, P.O. Box 190, St. Paul IN 47272. In return for your donation you will get a bound manual. I should also tell you that it is one of the best looking software manuals I have ever seen.

Another "cool thing" from Dr. Evil Labs is their stereo cartridge called the "SID Symphony". This cartridge adds a second SID chip to your 128, allowing you to create and listen to six voice stereo music. Having had the pleasure to enjoy one for several weeks I have to tell you this is a real treat! The cartridge sells for \$34.94, add another dollar and they will include a double-sided disk with music playing software and over two-dozen of the best stereo SIDplayer songs. For music creation, the cartridge is compatible with the enhanced SIDplayer music system from Compute! Books and there are hundreds of music files in the public domain on Q-link and GENIE. At present, the music player software is written in 64 mode, however, Mark Dickenson, the player's author and the stereo SID concept originator is working to create a C-128 version.



**On the visual end of the Spectrum...** Spectrum 128 is a full featured paint program which uses 80 column display for 640x200 pixel resolution. Spectrum 128 will display all 16 standard colors and 128 colors through color dithering. Spectrum 128 is menu operated and requires a 1351 or compatible mouse. Among its other many features are air brush, erase, mirror, multi-color, block fill or erase, pixel editor, color editor, built-in slide show, uses 128 fast mode, support for 1750 REU, support for 1541, 1571, and 1581 drive, support for most printers, create hexagons, diamonds, octogons, lines, boxes and circles, uses 8x2 color cells, create 3D solids, adjustable font sizes, text mode includes reverse, underline, sideways, mirror, flip, complement, and pattern modes. Spectrum 128 is compatible with Basic 8 files, Print Shop graphics, Sketchpad 128 graphics and News Maker 128. Spectrum 128 must be run on a 128D or C-128 with expanded video RAM. Spectrum 128, \$39.95, Free Spirit Software, PO Box 128, 58 Noble St, Kutztown, PA 19530, 215-683-5609, 800-552-6777

**Pocket Writer 3, Talk to me?** Although the gang at Digital Solutions for some reason is unable to return my calls (as of this writing three). I will pass along what I know about Pocket Writer 3. The upcoming release supposedly will be available in February 1989 and include all of the features of Pocket Writer 2 with the addition of: automatic support for multiple columns, macro capability, undo/cancel last command, markers for marking up to 10 locations in one document, book paging, odd/even and left/right, line and box drawing modes, word, sentence and paragraph count, find/replace in either direction, cursor movement by sentence and paragraph. Word through the grapevine is that upgrade price for current Pocket Writer 2 owners is \$30, but I have not been able to verify this. Maybe you will have better luck: Digital Solutions, P.O. Box 345, Station A, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada, M2N 5S9, 416-731-8878.

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