**Reviews**

**Desktop Computers**

**Compaq Strikes Again With Classy Clone**

**DESPRO 286 IS IBM PC/AT COMPATIBLE AND EVEN FASTER THAN BIG BLUE'S BABY**

**By John Lombardi**

**Review Board**

Knows since its inception as the classier clone company, Compaq Computer Corp. has done it again. Close of the IBM PC AT, the Despro 286, is an impressive piece of equipment. The machine is sleek, elegant, powerful, and - like the original Compaq portable - is of some ways better than the IBM machine it copies.

The machine comes in various configurations, but the one we tested, known as the Model 2, arrived loaded. It had a 30-megabyte hard disk, one 1.2-megabyte floppy disk, and one 10-megabyte cartridge tape drive for backup. Its display was a dual-mode 10-inch amber monitor. The heart of the machine is its dual-speed Intel 80286 processor, augmented by 640K of static memory operating under the control of a slightly enhanced version of the MS-DOS 3.3 operating system that includes Microsoft Basic 3.0.

In addition, the system includes 1.5 megabytes of extended memory. Of course, MS-DOS 3.0 does not recognize more than 640K of memory, so the large memory space in this machine swallows software, including alternative operating systems such as Unix, that can use it. Right now, the main thing that can be done with the extra memory is to create a large read-only memory (ROM) disk; the operating system utility disk handles that effectively.

Compaq has done it again. Its clone of the Compaq computers will recognize this machine as belonging to the same family. The dual-mode monitor is a big improvement over the color graphics monitor that comes with the IBM model, and it's almost as good. The IBM color graphics adapter provides. The display hardware also produces standard IBM red-green-blue and composite color output, making an excellent solution to the multiple display quality many users have.

The keyboard has a slight feel to the keys compared to the early IBM PS/2 models. However, the keys are quieter than the early PS/2 models. Compaq, in our judgment, is a better feel than the standard PS/2 model. However, the keyboard is not as good as the IBM keyboard. It is also designed to be used with a standard PS/2 mouse.

The Compaq Despro 286, next to its small portable sibling, runs IBM PC/AT software — and other IBM PC compatible programs — in both a standard speed mode and a high-speed mode.

The instructions are clear and, except for the 30-megabyte hard disk, everything works just as expected. The machine's 10-inch amber monitor is certainly adequate. The company also offers a 12-inch color monitor for those who want more video output.

We recommend the Compaq Despro 286 as a good choice for those who want a powerful, IBM compatible machine at a reasonable price.
for the test of setup and installation.

- MS-DOS 3.0, version 6, provided with this computer, looks like PC-DOS 3.0 with some minor enhancements. Delivered on three 360K diskettes, the operating system includes a diagnostic program and a helpful setup routine for the hard disk. It also includes utilities for a tape backup. The manual, prepared by Compaq, offers clearly complete, well-written, and elegant explanations of the operating system and the basic programming language. Spiral-bound and inserted in a hard diskette, the manual provides a good guide to the machine and its operating software.

Although the manuals are good, they perpetuate a poor Compaq tradition of providing as little technical detail as possible. From the manuals provided, we couldn't find out which processor is in the machine or at what speeds it runs (6 MHz and 8 MHz). In fact, we could not determine anything at all about the characteristics of the disk drive.

- Although the success of the Compaq Deskpro 286 depends on compatibility with the IBM PC AT, as well as some unique features, the manuals fail to mention the existence of IBM. Although this may contribute to corporate policy, it doesn't help the user who wants to know how software and hardware products developed for the IBM PC AT will work with the Deskpro 286. What effect does processor speed have on compatibility? How does MS-DOS differ from PC-DOS? How does MS-DOS Basic differ from PC-Basic? Again, the press release provides no information about compatibility with other products.

- Until more software and hardware developed specifically for the IBM PC AT appears and is tested, it is difficult to measure exactly compatibility between this machine and IBM A. The Compaq Deskpro 286 with its AT-compatible extended memory, as well as AT-compatible extended memory, is a cheap alternative to installing IBM A. In fact, there is no reason to upgrade to IBM A if you are not interested in extended memory. However, if you want to use extended memory, the Deskpro 286 is as good as the IBM A.

- The Deskpro 286 is designed to be a personal computer at a low price, and it is equipped with a full-featured operating system. This is an excellent computer for users who want to use a computer but have no experience with IBM A. The Deskpro 286 is a good choice for users who want to use a computer and have limited experience with IBM A.

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you'll be OK. If not, you'll be like us, unable to get a tape to make the tape backup work.

For a machine in this price range, such a support policy is admirable.

Given its sterling performance and the high quality of the hardware, packaging, and instruction manuals, we think this is a fine machine in spite of Compaq's unwillingness to offer any telephone support. If your dealer is able to support the machine, we suggest you buy the technical manual at the same time you buy the machine so at least make sure that you get an extra manual of technical information.

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**Databases**

**Power and Simplicity Combined**

**FILEMAKER HANDLES MEDIUM DUTY DATA TRACKING AS WELL AS ANY MACINTOSH PACKAGE, WITH GREAT SUPPORT**

BY DOUG AND DENISE GREEN

**FileMaker**

Power and simplicity sold both hand in hand in the realm of computer software. FileMaker from Forethought, a medium-duty Macintosh database management system that includes report and form generation, is a pleasant enterprise that provides excellent features and ease of use.

Unlike many microcomputer management systems, FileMaker lets you construct elaborate reports or layouts off the database. This makes editing records as they are presented in various layout views tedious than with other databases we have used. You can also use the clip-board to paste graphics from other Macintosh products such as MacSoft's InfoSoft.

Intended as a medium-duty database, FileMaker does not include a programming language as do products such as Base III or Base 3000 on the IBM PC or Macintosh on the Macintosh. Despite this, however, it resembles more complex products and provides an excellent mix of power and flexibility. It uses the standard database organization of files, records, and fields. The number of records in a file and files in a record are limited only by disk space. Additional layouts for editing, forms, and columnar reports increase the need for more disk space.

Typical microcomputer databases allow you to define fields on the screen and then store data. Additional screens are seldom available, and producing reports or forms often requires extra software. Macintosh-based products allow unlimited fields that can be viewed in countless arrangements, but they are expensive and difficult to set up. They also require buying separate report writers.

FileMaker uses the macro-based approach to deliver unlimited fields and creates as many different screens or views as you like for viewing or editing data. It goes one step further, however, by allowing you to use a screen layout as a report or a form that can be printed. This means that once you know how to set up a screen that can contain all — or only some — of your fields, you can write reports and fill out forms. You can actually write your data on these reports or forms itself.

Although you do not give a formal name to each layout, you can easily scroll from one layout to the next depending on how you wish to view, edit, or print selected records.

You are not limited by the size of the Macintosh screen. Layouts of up to 14 inches by 36 inches can be created, and you simply use the familiar scroll bars to move up and down or left and right within a layout.

A layout is divided into specific parts that can each be tailored to fit the needs of the individual user. You can present a list of all the fields you have defined. Each field is in a box of its own that can be moved, cut, or resized using familiar click-and-drag techniques.

All fields are automatically indexed as you enter information into them. This facilitates multiple-level sorting and searching, as unique key fields are not required. Different field types include text, numbers, dates, and fields that result from calculations. Calculations can be field formulas up to 250 characters long and include the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Several data formats are allowed, and the program handles all of them correctly when used for sorting.

In addition, you have special summary fields for (total), average, and count. Summary and derived fields change as the dependent values are entered, similarly to the way they would in a spreadsheet. This is a useful feature.

FileMaker's power is added by the well-

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**Infoworld**

**REPORT CARD**

FileMaker

**SUMMARY**

FileMaker is a medium-duty database program for the Macintosh organized around data entry and summary forms. The forms, which can be rendered very attractive with Macintosh graphics, are simple to construct. The product, outside of the look, of a programming language found in more complex products, offers one of the best means of power and flexibility combined with ease of use we have seen in Macintosh databases.

**PRODUCT DETAILS**

List price $190. Version tested is 1.0 available for the Apple Macintosh. Requires 128K RAM, one megabyte recommended. Published by Forethought Inc., 1273 Linda Vista, Santa Monica, CA 90403. (213) 829-2925.