Product Comparison

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD

all them the-Hyundais of the word-processing market — those DOS word processing programs that excite the luxury options and power of the high-priced touring sedans in favor of the simplicity and low prices common in coupes and sedans. These programs are designed for those with modest needs in word processing software. Their aim: to provide a subset of full word processing functions at a substantially lower cost and demanding a significantly lower learning effort for the user. In theory, users of these programs either don’t need all the features, and therefore shouldn’t have to pay for them, or only occasionally need word processing and thus want a program that doesn’t pose much of a learning curve.

Like touring sedans, powerful word processing programs such as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word have their place, especially for those offices with large mailing lists, complex document preparation, and high-volume production. But for the many users with simpler needs, using those high-end programs is like taking a Lamborghini to pick up a pint of milk at the corner grocery store.

In this product comparison, we examine eight leading easy-to-use word processing programs — Dac Easy Word II, Easy Extra, Einstein Writer, PFS: Professional Writer, Q&A Writer, Textra, Volkswriter 3, and Webster’s New World Writer.

Although their list prices vary from as low as $29 for Textra to $295 for Volkswriter 3, these programs are alike in many ways: All are easy to use, offering menus, on-line help, and other features to help you navigate around the program. The sophistication of the on-line help systems ranges from the Spartan lists of Volkswriter 3 to the elaborate on-line explanations in PFS: Professional Writer or Q&A Writer. With the exception of Volkswriter 3, you generally can use these programs without referring to the manual.

Without exception, the programs do a fine job of basic editing and printing. The cursor commands do just about the same thing, although in slightly different ways. All can cut and copy blocks of text, enhance the text with boldface and underline, center lines, justify text, set tabs, and arrange margins. They find and replace text, check spelling (with varying degrees of sophistication), and insert text from files stored on disk.

We will take it as given that each product in this report can do these basic word processing functions, and we will concentrate here on the features and performance that differentiate the products.

Three products can only handle files of about 60 to 65K. This translates into about 30 pages of single-spaced text. For many applications — correspondence, for example — such a limit is of no consequence. But for long reports, this limitation can be a significant irritant.

All systems require lots of disk space, ranging from a high of 1.3 megabytes for Micropro’s Easy Extra to a low of 772K for Einstein Writer. Although all claim they can work fine on floppy disk drives, using these programs on such a system will require you to swap disks. We recommend you run these programs on a hard disk system (which we used for all our tests). What follow are sections on each of the eight programs pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each.

DAC EASY WORD II

Dac Easy Word II is quite fast (see the accompanying benchmark chart) and can handle very large files (about 500 pages), since the program keeps only a small portion of the document in memory at any one time.

Dac Word II has a nice windowing feature. It lets you have four windows open simultaneously. Although you cannot have two windows open into the same document,
**PRODUCT SUMMARY**

**Doc Easy Word II**

List price: $39. Version tested (2) available for IBM PCs, XTs, ATs, or compatibles. Requires 1M RAM, XTs 2.0 hard disk, two floppy disk drives. Hard disk recommended. Doc Easy状况: Inc., 201 Spring Valley Road, Building 110B, Dallas, TX 75248; (214) 458-7208.

Pros: Fast editor; large file size; multiple windows; mailing list; large; low price; Crave Word/Excel compatible; good file importing. Recommended for those wanting multiple windows.

Although this file size is unlikely, it's still unfortunate to encounter the problem.

Doc Easy Word II has its strengths — its speed, large file size, use of windows, and mailing list manager. But its file import capability is limited, and its performance is not rock-solid. This program is for those who want the multiple windows and low $39 price are important.

**EASY EXTRA**

Easy Extra is indeed easy, in fact, no other program in this group is more straightforward than Easy Extra.

The program is also quite capable. Basically, it's WordStar 3.3 with some added features and an easier interface to the main menu. There are no control-key commands as in WordStar. But Easy Extra does read WordStar files directly and will interpret most of the help commands available in WordStar 3.3.

Although the program isn't as fast as DOS 2.0 or even WordStar, there is sufficient space for most mail-listing needs. Unfortunately, the system stores only one field at a time per mailing list. Nonetheless, the file manager is useful and effective.

The one significant drawback is that you cannot reformate a document in one window. You have to use the printer and then go back to your document.

Easy Extra supports a large number of printers, and it handles mail-room functions, although we found no documentation for this manual. The speed is quite good, but there is no help system. Neither is there a mail macro storage, DCA file format support.

We recommend this $99 program for those who are looking for the best word processing program. It offers features that are not available in any other program, such as mail-listing, and it can be used in conjunction with other word processing programs.

**PRODUCT SUMMARY**

**Easy Extra**

List price: $59. Version tested (2) available for IBM PCs, XTs, ATs, or compatibles. Requires 1M RAM, XT 2.0, hard disk recommended. Doc Easy状况: Inc., 201 Spring Valley Road, Building 110B, Dallas, TX 75248; (214) 458-7208.

Pros: Fast editor; large file size; use of windows, mailing list manager. But its file import capability is limited, and its performance is not rock-solid. This program is for those who want the multiple windows and low $39 price are important.

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**EINSTEIN WRITER**

Einstein handles normal editing functions solidly, and it contains a strong set of commands for all the standard word processing features.

One unique feature is Einstein's Compose mode, in this mode, the program splits the screen and brings in a template document that can serve as a model for writing a similar document in the lower window. A short cut of sample models is included with the program.

Printer support is good. Einstein supports a list of generally available printers and automatically supports several print settings under most conditions. However, you must enter any extra features in a special

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**EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR BENCHMARKS**

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<thead>
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<th>Processor</th>
<th>Word Star</th>
<th>Easy Extra</th>
<th>Easy Word</th>
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<th>WordStar</th>
<th>WriteOut</th>
<th>Writer's New World</th>
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**Einstein Writer's Compose mode looks like a template that can serve as a model for what you write in the bottom window.
Einstein Writer

List price, $75. Version tested (7.0) is available for IBM PC XT, AT, or compatibles. Requires 128K RAM, two floppy disk drives, DOS 2.0 or later; hard disk recommended. Peripherics, 1600 Bayard Ave, Woodland Hills, CA. 91367. (818) 884-7470.

Pros: Effective editing and formatting of standard spell-checker. Includes spell-checker error correction, solid help system, and good print-quality. Cons: Limited font size (60K), complex command sequence, slow spell-checking; no mail-merge or letter templates are included. Recommended for those whom the ease of use is of some interest.

PSF: Professional Write

List price: $199. Version tested (1.0) is available for IBM PC XT, AT, or compatibles. Requires 320K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives. Software Publishing Corp., 1901 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA. 94040, (415) 982-8910.

Pros: Exceptionally easy to learn and use; formidable spell-checker, helpful mail-merge and letter template capability. Cons: Files limited to 60K; some limits on ability to exploit printer's graphical capabilities. Recommended strongly for its ease of use. A good choice for small offices with modest document production needs and correspondence, and significantly mailing list applications. It's less effective if long documents are required.

Q&A Write

List price, $199. Version tested (1.0) is available for IBM PC, XT, AT, or compatibles. Requires 384K RAM, (312K RAM recommended), DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives; hard disk recommended. Symantec Corp., 1001 Torre Ave, Cupertino, CA 95014; (408) 253-0600.

Pros: Outstandingly effective user interface and help system; outstanding mail merge facility. Cons: Printer support especially for lasers, much better than average card file system, includes math and graphics fonts. Symantec's Q&A Write is a competitive system. It supports the user's system of choice in this group for all users except those for whom the extra features of Volkswriter 3 are essential.

Additional comments:

PSF: Professional Write supports all the conventional editing features, but its extensive mail-merge and file support on its exceptionally full printer support and its superior card file system. Q&A Write supports a wide range of printers and its mail-merge facility is especially strong in letter writer support, handling postscript devices and a wide range of fonts and the HP LaserJet. In addition, a facility for creating new font descriptions lets you add new fonts as they become available.

Additional comments:

Q&A Write makes use of the text onscreen, including virtual text. It supports a wide range of printers and its mail-merge facility is especially strong in letter writer support, handling postscript devices and a wide range of fonts and the HP LaserJet. In addition, a facility for creating new font descriptions lets you add new fonts as they become available.

The dictionary, however, has some unique features. Its browse feature, for example, lets you look through the dictionary to check for hyphenation. Unfortunately, it doesn't hyphenate automatically.

The dictionary also has a look-up command, which
Webster's most significant advantage is its outstanding thesaurus and its capability to handle multiple style sheets.

You can invoke a four-line menu at the top of the screen, a couple of lines at the bottom, and several lower menus. The main menu offers options such as help, search, print, exit, and other utility functions. The search feature is quite powerful, allowing you to find words and phrases quickly. Once you have found the word you need, you can choose to define it, add it to your personal dictionary, or use it in a sentence.

Webster's thesaurus supports the choice of nouns and verbs groups and offers further brings for you to check.

works both forward and backward in the file. You can insert the system time and date into your document with a keystroke. In addition, Webster's supports inline drawing, letting you put boxes and similar figures into the text. Webster's will let you change your formats as often as you like, and at the same time you can protect a block of text from a format change. This is useful for tables and other specially arranged material. The program controls fonts and characters, although you can't turn off this feature.

The spell checker is one of the most useful features of Webster's, and it's easy to use and learn. It uses an easily understood message system with lots of explanation. For several reasons, we think this program is aimed at professional writers who need assistance in preparing manuscripts for subsequent editing and publishing. Webster's New World Writer (SWW) supports all the normal print enhancements (bold, underline, italic), in addition to also it has the same spell checking, word processing, and formatting capabilities. Thus, it is a good program for professional writers and office use, and while the English dictionary is useful for everyone, it's particularly valuable for writers searching for exactly the right word.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The eight word processing programs included here represent "easy" word processing at its best. Each makes the writing task a pleasure. Of the eight, not so easy-to-use, Volkswriter 3 to Q&A Write and PFS Professional Write. These last two programs seem to be the best of the full-featured, full-screen word processors. The Volkswriter 3 version is easy to use, and offers excellent printer support. However, unlike large features, these are not essential requirements. Volkswriter 3 and PFS Professional Write are better choices. Volkswriter is a good but limited product whose effectiveness is reduced by an absence of features and modest printer support.

Because of its large file size and excellent design, Volkswriter's New World Writer is a good choice for authors. But the lack of a spell checker is a feature that makes it less suitable for other tasks. Volkswriter 3, the most powerful in this group, can also handle large files. But it offers little on-screen help and is not as easy to use as competing programs.

Executive programs Q&A Write and PFS Professional Write, we prefer Q&A Write because it is at least as easy to use, has more power, and can handle larger documents. However, as a first word processor, PFS Professional Write is the more powerful program in this class. Volkswriter 3 is a good choice for beginners and intermediate users.