Running within the Windows environment, WinText requires the same hardware as Windows. As with most Windows applications, WinText benefits from mouse use, although it can be run entirely from the keyboard.

As an executive word processor, WinText is a little pricey at $350. Yet it is currently the only word processor other than Write that runs under Windows.

WinText 1.0 requires Microsoft Windows, 312K of memory, and a graphics monitor.

Palantir Inc., 1313 Tomboy Parkway, Suite 101, Houston, TX 77064, (713) 955-9787.

— John Lombardi

SPASH

How about a splash of color in your life? If you have a VGA board and a color monitor, it can happen. Splash is a paint program that fully exploits one of VQA's most deceptive assets. It produces images that can have up to 256 colors. It might seem that with a resolution of 320 by 200 pixels, the pictures produced would look like simple monochrome line drawings. However, as is obvious, even with all those colors available, Spash gives some stunning pictures. Spash has this oddness that gives some the feeling of having a hot resolution.

Splash only runs on a VGA board. It uses the keyboard to move the paintbrush, select colors, and learn and use. One menu contains the various functions of the program, and a second menu at the bottom of the screen contains the color palette, brush size, and patterns.

One of the features of the tools are airbrush, squares, circles, air fill, cut and paste, rotate and flip, and others. Included fonts have the capability to run on the texture of the selected pattern along with the color. Rainbow letters are easy to use, and there is a magnified edit available for bit-by-bit editing.

One of the latest features is how all of the colors are selected. There are other paint programs that can utilize 256 colors, but they force you to select them in groups of eight or 16 — seeing how shades relate to each other is hard. Spash has all the colors visible at the bottom for easy selection.

Spash works best on a Mac II in color. It supports LaserWriter and LaserWriter 310 image writers, and will print maps up to by 22 inches. It can export your personal files in ASCII format, to be included in spreadsheets, word processors, or databases.

Getting Spash up and running is very simple. The program files on the floppy disk can be copied to any convenient folder on a hard disk. These files are not binary or system files to install. They are just plain text.

Spash only reads one database file format. Imported files must be in an ASCII/Tab delimited format. This means that files may have to be translated every time they are exported from the main database. This could be a major drawback, depending on the database you are using. The file format is very flexible, and future versions are likely to be updated.

Working within Spash is fairly easy. On the top of your screen is the color menu, which is represented here, including some inexpensive color printers.

Spash is priced well and also comes with a scanning capture utility that can grab some of the highest resolution images up to a maximum of 256 colors.

For a more detailed review of Splash, see the upcoming product comparison of PC paint programs on December 5.

Geotech Software, 1 Kendall Square, Cambridge, MA 02139; (800) 626-0706.

— David Chalmers

GEOQUERY

If you have logged for a vage to view data in a geographical format, Osella Corporation has a solution. Geoquery for the Macintosh requires database files containing a ZIP code with an on-screen map of the United States. You can extract information about your data, based on the ZIP code location, from the customized map. Geoquery accomplishes this trick by knowing just how to use the ZIP code to zoom in on a city, town, or even a group of ZIP codes.

The program is targeted primarily at sales and marketing managers who work with data on customers' locations and sales territories. It is also useful for those making site location and distribution decisions.

Geoquery uses a "pumpkin filter" to display individual records on a map. Like the color on a road atlas, each group of records within a ZIP code is represented by a pumpkin symbol. Different colors can be used to represent groups of records, giving even more information on the screen.

Once the pumpkins have been loaded, the map can be "queried" by defining territories. Geoquery then produces reports based on the records within the territory.

Geoquery includes three atlas files covering the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. In addition, there are two database files with U.S. cities and Midwestern hospitals, specialist atlas files and charts are available separately.

Geoquery works best on a Mac II in color, supports Laserwriter and Laserwriter 310 images, and will print maps up to by 22 inches. It can export your personal files in ASCII format, to be included in spreadsheets, word processors, or databases.

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— David Chalmers

KOHAN TEN HAME

Software disk caching programs that speed up disk access have been available for some time, generally these programs use a 32K cache that is distributed through the use of disk controllers. Enter the Kohan Ten Time hard disk controller.

The Ten Time 128K has high-speed RAM and proprietary controller circuits, making the controller the fastest on the market. The controller also has a lithium battery backup to prevent the loss of data if the power fails. The controller can be used for diskless computers, and it has the capability to do a 1:1 interzone. The device is like a diskette, but the data on it is stored in memory, preventing the next disk from being accessed.

All of those fancy terms and high-tech capabilities are in a way of saying that it's faster — at least 10 times quicker (hence the name Ten Time) to the mammoth. According to the vendor, the Ten Time is the fastest disk controller on the market. If there is a cache like three or four times faster, which is rumored to be available in the future, the controller will be used. Desperately 286/12 with a 32-megabyte CMI 6426 drive and a variety of software. The program that comes with the diskless system is a bit slower. Applications such as PageMaker and Design III run considerably faster. The vendor says the access speed is 10 times faster, the throughput is only three to 10 times faster.

The installation of the board is simple as a result of the clear documentation. Software is included with the board to format your drive and set the parameters. The board has several jumpers on it, but we found it to work flawlessly using the default settings.

The hard/floppy version of the board costs $695; the hard disk version only is $685, which is less than the price of upgrading to a faster drive. Although the random access isn't as quick as it would be with a 68K, the price/performance ratio is quite nice.

Kohan Corp., 1829 W. Drake Drive, Suite 208, Tempe, AZ 85281; (602) 945-1300.

— Michael Hildrum