For those of you who have waited patiently for useful applications to run with Microsoft Windows, your prayers have been answered—at least in word processing—with Ami. This executive word processor from Samma bears no resemblance to its parent company’s popular office/professional word processor, Samma Word 2.02, fitting instead into Microsoft Windows with ease.  

This review is based on scoring and testing criteria established in our September 28, 1988, feature on a comparison of executive word processors.

FEATURES:

Something like a cross between WordWrite and Microsoft Word, Ami does about 80 percent of what an executive word processing product should do and does it with a WYSIWWYG vengeance—showing fonts, graphics, and actual line endings (unlike Windows Write). The program takes advantage of the Windows interface to provide a word processing environment in which all possible formatting information is displayed on the PC graphics screen. Much like the preview functions in such products as Wordperfect Professional 5.0 or Word Perfect 5.0, the Ami screen indicates type style, size, and enhancements just as they appear on the printed page. Unlike those products, however, Ami word processing functions can be performed on the preview screen, which makes Ami's word and text formatting completely dynamic with every change reflected on-screen as it takes place.

The concept is terrific and the execution quite good, but you’d better have a fast computer and good Ami performance as a reasonable speed. On an 8-MHz 286, the program is very slow in the graphics (layout) mode; there is, however, a draft mode that temporarily strips out formatting for faster, easier, on-screen editing. In layout mode, though, even a modestly proficient typist can run away ahead of the display screen, and editing the document can be tedious. While full screen mouse support is available (as with all Windows applications), Ami works fastest with keyboard keys.

Ami has a standard Windows-style menu for accessing program functions such as fonts, editing functions, the spelling checker, and file management. Although DOS functions, such as deleting and renaming files, can be performed from the main Ami menu, Ami highly recommends using the Windows Explorer or the Ami menu (although these can be accessed in other ways as well) by the click of a mouse.

Ami imports a variety of formats and handles fonts with great facility. Graphics compatible with Windows can be imported and included in a document with ease. Curiously, however, there is no easy way to get a Microsoft Word document into Ami without losing important formatting information in the process.

Ami's graphics system uses frames, which are variously sized boxes inserted into the middle of the text and expanded to the desired size. Regular text can flow around the frame or the frame can be overlaid on the text. Frames contain either text or graphics data, and you can import a number of graphic file types into the frame for resizing.

Although the product lacks mail merge, a serious omission for office use, and has few of the enhancements related to complex document preparation, such as indexing, footnotes, tables of contents, sorting, math, and similar functions, its admirable formatting capabilities earns it an important place as one of the first serious Windows word processing systems.

PERFORMANCE:

Ami’s editing capabilities include an easy copy/cut/paste feature that uses the Windows clipboard (which lets you exchange data with other applications) and easy mouse or keyboard cursor movement. Four types of tab stops are easily defined, and the screen display shows page numbers. However, the program requires practically everything to work with the pre- or user-defined styles. For example, there is no indent tab other than what is included as part of a defined style. The search-and-replace feature is reasonably quick but was occasionally inconsistent in replacing words. Other attractive terms include a revert function for returning to a pre-edit version of a file, multiple document views, and a superior layout function that handles complex layout changes, such as columns, easily and visually. If you like, you can balance columns and modify line and paragraph spacing independently. Ami lets you display the current or previous state. We gave correspondence forms very good.

The spelling checker integrated into Ami is quite large with 130,000 words. It checks spelling only from the cursor to the end, so if you want to spell check the entire document you have to move the cursor to the beginning before starting. The dictionary contains several words not in Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary: thyme, while, who, what, still, whom, presumably several of these “words” are actually types or abbreviations. Still, it would be better to let the user add their own abbreviations to the custom user dictionary rather than placing them in the main, unchangeable dictionary.

There is no thesaurus. While you can stop your word or all occurrences of a word, add words to the dictionary, and get a count of number of words checked, there is no spelling check of words inside a text/graphics frame.
Push your software to the limit.

If you want to get the most out of today's high-powered software applications, we have a few words of advice: Use a Microsoft® Mouse.

The Microsoft Mouse gives you easy access to powerful features built into your software. Without taking your eyes off your screen, you can pull down menus, highlight text in a full window, copy, cut and paste forms faster than you can type. And more things, from here to there, with no command-key mumbo-jumbo.

Literally hundreds of applications support the Mouse. But as the leading software developer for personal computers (and one of the first to bring a graphical interface to PC screens), we've gone a step further. Microsoft Windows® 2.0 comes with PC PenBrush® for Windows. Microsoft Paintbrush or EasyCAD™ actually come with the Mouse (or vice versa). Already, the Microsoft Mouse has made its way into the hands of over one million personal computer users. And that number is sure to grow even faster. After all, graphically oriented software is the driving force behind improved productivity.

But it's the Microsoft Mouse that puts you in the driver's seat.

Microsoft® Making it all make sense.

© 1988 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. MICROSOFT and PenBrush are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. IBM, Windows, EasyCAD, and PC PenBrush are trademarks or registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation. All other products and names mentioned may be trademarks of their respective companies. 2/28/88 3:01 PM
Furthermore, the menu of icons on the left-hand side of the screen makes it very easy to access common tasks.

Many people prefer the keyboard to the mouse, however, for word processing. Ami's facilities for keyboard operation are as full and sometimes more effective than the mouse interface. Size and a serious impediment in layout mode, and you'll find yourself using the draft mode — even if you don't want to — to get sufficient speed to edit effectively. We rate one of use so far a very good score.

ERROR HANDLING:

Simple errors are handled with aplomb, and the program supports a single-window undo that will undo backspace deletions and formatting changes. File save options are various, and the program protects users from exiting without saving. In addition, there is a revert function that cancels changes made in an editing session and confirms that you really want to abandon the changes. You can save under a new name or attach a different file name.

SUPPORT:

Ami also offers update information one year of free support on a regular telephone number for registered users. There is a special $50 rebate for an upgrade to Ami's professional version, which will contain more advanced features, although it is not yet available. There is a newsletter, BBS support, and a money-back guarantee good for 30 days. We rate support policies very good.

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ami Pro</th>
<th>Professional Write</th>
<th>USES Windows Write</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Load</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save &amp; continue</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import ASCII</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export ASCII</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import DCA</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>14/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom commands</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top to bottom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual scroll</td>
<td>13/9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last word</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling checking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values in seconds, unless otherwise noted (1.00 to one minute).

Does not support DCA. "Could not globally standardize. Each section had to be entered individually. Memory time using same style in same mode using the whole file was 1.94. Using draft mode, some time will be significantly faster. Does not include a spellchecker.

Technical support gives us quick and informed answers. We asked about the capability to edit documents of any size (no real limit on document size) and about importing MS Word documents. Yes, you can import them, but you lose all formatting information as it comes in as a text file through the clipboard.) We rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:

Within the context of executive word processing programs, Ami is a good value at $199. (The price will be $149 until March 15 as an introductory offer.) Especially good with complex formatting and graphics inclusion, in ease of use and effective menu system make this a product of choice if you need an executive word processor and a small computer.

Hewlett-Packard Continues Laser Printer Market Reign

The Laserjet IID features two-sided printing, two paper trays, and an optional envelope feeder.

BY GREGORY SMITH

This month's column will focus on the Laserjet IID. In fact, the Laserjet IID is the most compatible laser printer in the Laserjet Series II. With minor (but enhanced) font capabilities and 300-by-300 dpi resolution, the Laserjet IID offers several improvements, including two-sided (duplex) printing, two paper trays, and an optional envelope feeder.

This printer is evaluated using testing and grading criteria established in our October 3, 1988, product comparison of Hewlett-Packard and compatible laser printers.

FEATURES:

HP designed the IID around an eight-page-per-minute Canon RF printer engine, similar to the Canon SX engine used in the Laserjet Series II. In fact, the Laserjet IID is 100% compatible with Laserjet Series II fonts (including the new HP Type Director font package) and HPs PCL language.

The most visible change is the addition of a second paper tray. Selected through software or the printer's front panel, you can direct the IID to automatically switch to a second paper tray when the first one empties. Effectively doubling paper tray capacity to 400 sheets. The IID's design also allows an envelope feeder to be attached in addition to the two front-loading paper trays.

HP hopes that introducing duplex capability to the desktop laser printer market will be the Laserjet IID's coup de grâce. The IID prints on both sides by printing the first side, flipping the paper, and then feeding it through the printer a second time.