Word Perfect’s Little Sibling
Is a Useful Word Processor

Letter Perfect is a fast, effective word processor for executives, laptop PC users, and students.

By John Lombardo

Unwilling to leave the executive word processing market to other vendors, Word Perfect has shrunk its best-selling, professional word processor into a small but effective program called Letter Perfect. This trimmied-down product gives the executive, student, or laptop operator a reasonably fast, keystroke-identical (to Word Perfect) word processing program that can satisfy most general-purpose tasks. Pull-down menus with full mouse support make the program easy to use.

Letter Perfect works with Word Perfect Shell 3.0, a DOS shell that offers memory management, keyboard macro utilities. This program competes with executive word processors such as Professional Write (see review, September 17, Page 81), and Ami, Beyond Word Writer, and Q&A Writer (see product comparison, August 7, 1989, Page 51). Letter Perfect does not replace Word Perfect Executive, the company’s integrated package that includes a spreadsheet, a basic database, and an appointment scheduler.

FEATURES:

- In order to run Letter Perfect you need only one 720K floppy disk drive and 640K of free RAM, rather modest limits that most laptop computers can handle. Some parts of the program, such as the spelling checker and thesaurus, look like the modules in Word Perfect 3.1, but have smaller dictionaries and somewhat less capability.
- Other sections of the program are similarly down-sized; for example, Letter Perfect can create outlines, but not footnotes. The program cannot handle columns or indents, or print line numbers. It doesn’t sort or support drop-caps.
- Letter Perfect has mandatory widow and orphan control — useful features that you can’t turn them off even if you want to.
- Letter Perfect will accept Word Perfect 3.1 documents. Formatting codes that Letter Perfect can’t use are retained when Letter Perfect imports a Word Perfect file, which means that several people can work on a document, each using either of Word Perfect’s editors.
- The program has no macro capability of its own, but the included Shell can use Word Perfect’s hypenation capabilities if you have the program. You can set left, right, center, and decimal tabs, and you can define the tab leader (although it’s not that easy to change it from the default period character).
- The search and replace feature lets you operate on formatting codes as well as text. A quick key combination will insert the date and time.
- Keystroke macros are supported.

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through the Shell program. This is useful, but nothing like the elaborate programmable macros of Word Perfect. We rate basic editing good.

The spelling checker in Letter Perfect is a smaller version of the module from the parent product, Word Perfect 5.1. Included in an adequate dictionary, multiple special dictionaries, and the capability to maintain capitalization and check for irregular capitalizations. The thesaurus produces word lists with parts of speech, but again the word lists are not as comprehensive as Word Perfect 5.1. We rate the spelling checker and thesaurus good.

Mail-merge functions include the capability to skip blank records and use field names in any order. The user can set a prompt for keyboard input for certain information. Letter Perfect comes with a separate program that will convert a variety of database formats into files Letter Perfect can use. We rate mail merge very good.

Letter Perfect supports a host of printer graphics formats into a document that Word Perfect can — in an executive word processor, this is an impressive capability. The program also offers solid line-and-box drawing tools. Letter Perfect's graphics manipulation features are more limited, however. You can scale a graphic but not crop it, and all images must be anchored to particular paragraphs. Compared to the competition in this market, Letter Perfect's graphics are very good.

Letter Perfect can read the same text file formats as Word Perfect (with the help of an included external program), including ASCII, DCA/RTF, WordStar, and Multimate files. Compatibility is very good.

Letter Perfect performed very quickly in most of our speed tests. However, the product was notably slow in one format test (files Word Perfect, the text related to each page must be reformatted individually). Speed, on balance, is good.

**DOCUMENTATION**

Letter Perfect's documentation is clearly presented and comprehensive. There is context-sensitive on-line help. In fact, the
Letter Perfect is particularly well suited to those who need to access Word Perfect files but don’t need all the features of the bigger program.

We were able to get through quickly each time we called. The technicians had correct and helpful answers to our questions. Technical support is very good.

Letter Perfect is particularly well suited for laptop computer users, executives, and those who need to access Word Perfect files but don’t need all the features of the bigger program. Letter Perfect functions quickly and effectively, with a minimum of user interference. At $29, we consider it a very good value.

Mr. Kerr is right, of course. You can simultaneously view contents of two directories on different drives. The point we want to make is that you cannot view two different trees at the same time. Windows requires more steps to move files between directories and drives than MultiFinder does. For example, Kerr demonstrates that the number of steps is six times. Windows' File Manager has been frequently criticized for its sometimes awkward interface.

Printer Sharing Oversight

In your September 10 issue (Page 81), you compared several printer sharing devices that had their pros and cons. One product, PC-Interlink by Software Inc., was not listed in the comparison. From the results I read, PC-Interlink has made a superior showing.

PC-Interlink includes an integrated printer spooler that allows users to buffer their print jobs. This will free up the computer so that the user can go on to other projects while PC-Interlink prints in the background. PC-Interlink can handle all types of printer jobs, whether it be text, graphics, or a combination thereof. With PC-Interlink, users can simultaneously send output to as many as eight printers.

At $29.95, PC-Interlink is the best value in the printer sharing device category. No one product currently on the market offers everything that PC-Interlink offers. PC-Interlink is a simple, low-cost, no-hassle solution to sharing printers, transferring files, and sending messages.

Michael West
Vice President
Software Inc.
Richardson, TX

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REVIEW RESPONSES

Windows 3.0 File Manager

With regard to your product comparison on multitasking environments (September 24), you missed the point that Windows 3.0 File Manager is better than it was in Windows 2.0. I have been able to look at separate directories on different drives without any problem. First, open File Manager, second, select the desired drive by clicking on it, third, double-click on the icon in the directory that you are interested in. A window will open showing all files in that directory. Fourth, if you wish to view the contents of another directory, simply drag the current window with the files and drop it in the file. Open another directory window by repeating the second and third steps. In this way you can even look at three or four directories at the same time. The only limitation is the screen size.

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