FRONT-RUNNER
DESKTOP MANAGER

for the Amstrad CPC
By SD Microsystems

User Manual

Front-Runner

Written By Boo The Ghost For SD Microsystems

Welcome to Front-Runner, the desktop package for the CPC. Very simply, this software will allow you to manipulate and load files with ease. Realistically, this package could make your life with the Amstrad Disc Operating System a lot easier than it is right now!

The package itself is a WIMP system, WIMP being an acronym for Windows, Icons, Menus, and Pointers, meaning basically that the input device is a little pointer on screen as opposed to keyboard input.

The Important Bit

As is usual with all software you buy, this package has a copyright on it, which runs as follows - This package, being either code, graphics, or text, may not be reproduced without prior permission of the author. Any violation of this will result in some very nasty looks indeed and a firm slap on the wrists. However, there is no reason why you should not make a backup for your own personal use (this is, in fact, advisable) on the condition that you do not then give either the original or backup to anyone else.

A Potted History Of The Wimp Concept

A while ago now, a group of programmers got together in order to design a system for operating computers other than the standard keyboard input method (That of typing commands on a keyboard). The method they designed was by moving a pointer around a screen, and pointing it at the file you wanted to load, the option on a particular menu, etc. This concept was later developed by a major American corporation, who have produced what is considered the ultimate in user friendly packages, being a very advanced and intricate but easily used package on the PC range. Now, instead of crying out loud because this information is of absolutely no use to you as you don't own a PC, you can instead run the disc or plug in the ROM (depending on what you bought) that accompanied this manual, and bask in the glory of a cut down WIMP system for the CPC, giving you many of the features of the other desktops around today! If you like, call this a BIMP system (A mutated acronym - Boos, Icons, Menus and Pointers).

Getting Started

After inserting your disc and running it (typing RUN "DISC" should suffice) or installing your ROM and turning on your computer, you should be faced with a top status bar, containg a few options, and a few icons, and a little pointer. This pointer can be moved with the cursor keys and COPY or the space bar, the joystick, or a mouse (if you are lucky enough to own one!). To select anything at all, move the pointer over your desired wotsit, and press FIRE or COPY depending on what form of control you are using. This is known as clicking. Remember that, or you'll get lost later in the manual. Also, hitting the space bar instead of COPY or FIRE will double-click a file, which has the effect of running it.

The way in which this package operates is simple. The files on the disc are displayed on the main part of the screen, and these files, with use of a pointer, can be executed or tagged in order to perform various operations, such as erasing, copying, etc. To tag a file, move the pointer over it and press FIRE or COPY, and to un-tag a file, press the D key.

The other important feature of your desktop is that of the folder system, whereby a folder can be created, appearing as a file on your catalogue, that, when double-clicked, will take you through to another directory within the main one, allowing effective organization of discs.

A Key Summary

CURSORS/JSTICK   Move pointer
COPY/FIRE   Select an option/Tag a file
D   Drop a file (Untag it)
SPACE BAR   Execute a file (Double click)

The Menu Bar

This, for all those who cannot take a subtle hint from the title, is the bar across the top of the screen with the different menus, etc. on it. The little pictures (icons) across the bar are for a variety of functions, and the menu selectors are along the bottom of the bar. The menus are detailed later, but the icons are explained below:

>   L   !   !   !   !   !   R

The 'A' Icon   This icon will initialize Front-Runner and catalogue drive A. All folders, etc, will be left, and all other parameters reset.

The 'B' Icon   This does pretty much the same as above except with the B drive.

The Ghost   The ghost isn't for anything much really, except decoration.

The 'D' Icon   The D here stands for 'Drop', as this icon will drop all tagged files. The file tagging system is explained elsewhere.

The Arrows   These arrows will move your catalogue up or down, allowing you to see the whole catalogue as opposed to the first chunk only.

The 'X' Icon   This icon will exit from the current folder, passing you into the previous one.

The Copy Menu

Disc   There are full disc copying routines provided in Front-Runner, all of which are accessed through this menu. In the short of it, this option will copy most un-protected discs from drive to drive.

You will be prompted for a source drive, and then a destination drive, and after confirmation, your disc will copy!

Files   This option is also quite simple, and works in much the same way as the disc copier, except that this option copies all tagged files from disc to disc. Because files are being copied, you may copy a file from any format disc onto any other format disc. This option is, however, only available to 128k users.

The File Menu

C Erased   This option basically gives you a list of erased files that are still left on the disc, for use with the unerased command. Pressing DOWN will scroll through the list, with COPY to end.

Erase   This will erase all tagged files.

Unerase   If a file has been accidentally erased, this option can recover it. You will be prompted for a filename, and the file will be brought back into user area 0 (No folder). Some files may have become corrupted when erased, so they may not always be suitable for recovery.

Rename   You will be prompted for two filenames, the first being the original filename, the second being the new filename and lo, the file will be renamed.

Tidy   This nifty little function basically removes all .BAK files from the catalogue.

Type   Will display an ASCII file on screen. Pressing DOWN will scroll through the file, with COPY to end.

Print   This option performs the rough equivalent of type, except for the fact that the file is now outputted to printer. It is roughly advisable to load your printer with paper, etc, beforehand, as no major on-screen prompts are given.

Info   Will give information on all files tagged, with the same scrolling method as C Erased, etc.

The Format Menu

Data   Will format your disc to data format (Having sectors starting at &C1).

CP/M   Will format your disc in a similar way to the previous option, but with a CP/M format (With a starting sector of &41).

Verify   This option checks a standard format disc for corruption. It displays first the format type, then flicks through each sector on each track.

The Miscellaneous Menu

Doodahs   This is the equivalent of a control panel, allowing you to alter inks, turn the bleep on and off, etc. Oh yeah... Here are some ink values to try:

	Boo	Blue	Indie
0	00	00	00
1	1A	14	12
2	0D	02	06
3	06	01	02

BASIC   I'll give you three guesses!

CP/M   Performs the equivalent of a |CPM command, for booting a CP/M disc.

Version   Every desktop has one, so I thought I'd best include one.

Folders

Prepare   In order to use folders on a disc, you must first use this option to prepare the disc for this harrowing ordeal, and the write-protect tab must be off. A word of warning though, preparing a previously prepared disc will reset the folders

Create   Creates a new folder from the current directory with the name that you must give when prompted.

User   For all those that want knowledge of what's going on inside their machines, this option reveals which user area the current folder represents.

Erase   This option does not actually exist, but I put this bit in to warn you - Do not erase a folder without first erasing it's contents! Folders are, obviously erased using the normal erase option.

Movefile   A group of tagged files can be moved into a folder
             by simply selecting this option, and stating which
             user area the files are to be moved to. The user area
             of your new folder can be determined by use of the
             User option earlier in this menu.

                        The ROM Version
                   Applicable To ROM Users Only
                 (Was there any use in pointing that out?)

    Upon power-up, Front-Runner will initialize immediately. It will
not, however, re-initialize on every reset, only when the machine is
turned off and on again.

    Once initialized, Front-Runner will search for a disc in either
drive, and if a disc is not found after a short amount of time (long
enough to scrabble around trying to find the one you wanted), you will
be placed back in BASIC. Apart from this, the software will act in
exactly the same way as the disc version, instructions for which can
be found in the manual. As a warning to anyone likely to be caught
out, Front-Runner unfortunately destroys the contents of memory when
initialized.

    The ROM is loaded with the following commands:

>   L   !   !   !   !   !   R
|FRHELP   As a little help, this command gives a list of the
             Front-Runner commands with a brief explaination.

|FRDESK   This command enters Front-Runner ready for use. It
             may be used at any time, but the contents of the
             memory will be lost upon entry.

|FR   Just an abbreviated version of FRDESK, in order to
             save valuable finger work?!?

|FRNTON   This sets Front-Runner to treat the next reset as a
             power-up, and initialize on the next reset.

|BOOINK   As a slightly nicer colour scheme for your CPC,
             this command changes the inks to the BOO colours,
             being inks 0,26,13,6.

|STNDBY   I'm not sure why I included this one really, but
             it's here anyway. It kinda puts your machine on a
             standby mode, which enters Front-Runner when you hit
             RETURN

Technical Notes

Following are a few peices of information that you may find useful
when fiddling about with the software. Sorry if the info is disjointed
or incomplete, but that's the way it goes.

The ROM version lowers HIMEM by only 4 bytes, and is a background
ROM. The illegal command to initialize the ROM is FRONT-RUNNER (but
that seems pretty obvious really).

The package itself uses the standard AMSDOS ROM for filing
routines, except for when ROMDOS is used, in which case the software
examines the jumpblock for the slot number and uses some of the high
capacity routines instead (To utilize automatic side switching, large
catalogues, etc). The following formats are recognized in the software
(With ROMDOS installed).

S/Ware	Drive	Sector	Type	Sides	Tracks	SPT	Entries	K	
AMSDOS	*	&01	PCW	Single	40	9	64	173	
	*	&41	Data	Single	40	9	64	178	
	*	&C1	CP/M	Single	40	9	64	169	
ROMDOS	B	&01	D1	Double	80	9	128	716	
	B	&11	D10	Double	80	10	128	796	
	B	&21	D2	Double	80	9	256	712	
	B	&31	D20	Double	80	10	256	792	
	B	&51	D40	Double	40	10	128	396	
	B	&71	D80	Single	80	10	128	396	
400K/S	B	&71	400K/S		Single	80	10	128	396

The folder system creates an information file in user area &FF,
containing a short list of which user areas are engaged as folders and
which are not.

FRONT-RUNNER DEX

COPY   FILE   FORMAT   MISC   FOLDER

CALC .BAS   FR .BAS   FR .BIN   FR .COD

COLS .BAS   FR .SCR   NOTE .   NOTEPAD .BAS   PDRIVER .BIN

MANUAL .

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