Quest Products - A Few Updates

SIMON N. GOODWIN - WHERE ARE YOU?

On page 13 of QLTR #1, I mentioned a bug in the driver software for the Quest floppy disk interface. I have investigated this further and would like to revise my first impressions. The problem is not a 32K file size limit after all: the Quest version 1.05 software can handle large machine code files, e.g. Quill et al, SuperBASIC programs, or Archive databases.

Difficulties seem to arise only with programs compiled with Simon N. Goodwin's 'Supercharge' or 'Turbocharge', sold by Digital Precision. I have tested such programs from the Quanta library and software supplied by PDQL and DP. In each case the result has been the same. The program can be copied to a Quest 5.25" disk but when an attempt is made to run it with EXEC, EXEC_W, EX or EW the program is dumped to the screen in #0. Example programs this happens with include 'Super Backgammon', 'Image Enhancer' and 'Better Basic'. The problem does not seem to apply to compiled programs in general as those produced with Q_Liberator seem to copy and load quite correctly, for instance Zitasoft's 'Sidewinder' or CGH Services' 'Starplod'.

There is no point in trying to attribute blame for this matter. The Quest drives were taken off the market before Supercharge and Turbocharge were first released, so neither Quest nor Digital Precision could be expected to be aware of the incompatibilities between their products. However there is a large number of programs compiled with DP's compilers, including some from CGH Services, and it would be unfortunate if Quest owners were unable to use them. Perhaps DP or Simon could explain the reason for this incompatibility and how it can be overcome (which might require some modification to the compilers or the Quest device driver). An answer in the pages of QLTR would be ideal, but SQW would be a suitable second choice. Or if an answer is supplied directly to me I will pass it on via this magazine.

CP/M-68K - SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS

Can any reader do 8" to 5.25" or 3.5" disk conversions? Some CP/M-68K computers used 8" drives and someone might be able to supply some software which I would like to try to run on the QL.

I wonder if Quest cheated when they produced their version of CP/M-68K?. In theory it 'turns off' QDOS, but in practice a few QDOS extras seem to work. If Speedscreen on ROM is turned on with _SPEED 1 before loading CP/M-68K the screen output does seem faster. (_SPEED 3 grabs some memory and stops CP/M loading.) If Toolkit II is present on ROM its last line recall key press of ALT-ENTER still works with CP/M-68K. Also the TK2 NFS_USE command allows CP/M-68K to access the devices, e.g. microdrives or ramdisks (if renamed as microdrives by the DEVNAME RAM,MDV QfLash command), on the other QL on my network - this should not be possible! (Can any other CP/M machines use a network or is the QL unique?) Finally, the QDOS CTRL-F5 key press freezes the screen display in CP/M-68K as normal, but generates a block character on screen. All this seems to suggest that Quest may have used some QDOS ROM routines to speed things up. I would like to know whether CP/M-68K will function correctly on a QL converted to QView's 'Minerva' operating system upgrade?

TONY TEBBY - WHERE ARE YOU?

By experimentation I discovered a strange use for the FLP_USE MDV command on my Sandy disk interface. I copied the CP/M-68K boot software onto a 3.5" disk and using microdrive emulation loaded it up. FLP1_ (emulating MDV1_) then became drive A: under CP/M-68K. By using the Quest MDCOPY utility I was able to transfer QDOS files from 3.5" disk to CP/M format 5.25" floppy. I then tried formatting a 720K 3.5" disk with the MDFORMAT command. It produced a 100K CP/M disk, which the operating system thought was a very fast microdrive cartridge, and the remaining 600K or so could still be used for QDOS files! Under QDOS, using the TK2 WSTAT command, I found that CP/M-68K had produced a 100K file called CPM_FILES.

It was possible to copy CPM_FILES to another QDOS disk and then CP/M-68K could still read the new disk as if it had been formatted with MDFORMAT. None of this is documented in Quest's CP/M-68K User Guide or the Sandy disk interface manual so I don't know whether QDOS or CP/M should get the credit. Can Tony Tebby provide any enlightenment?

Michael L. Jackson

ED: Tony Tebby can usually be reached at QJump, 24 King Street, Rampton, Cambs, CB4 4QD. (tel: 0954-50800).

Simon Goodwin, as he writes regularly for QL World, will probably get any post sent there, clearly marked for his attention.

Any more information regarding Quest products and CP/M-68K would be most appreciated.

LETTER

LETTER(S) FROM RICH MELLOR

(I've taken the liberty to string together some comments Rich has made to me in various letters as they may well be of interest to other readers.)

QLTR1 - Very good, especially those articles by a Mr R. Mellor.

Lightning - Special Edition v2.09 works fine with Hack now, even Mortville Manor will run with it switched on, althhough the display is still slightly corrupted for some reason, and the ROM version is a lot faster than the previous ones. When I get time I'll do a follow-up review of Lightning Special Edition.

Machine Code tutorial - I'll try and find time to do Part Two of this, but my studies are taking up a lot of my time at present.

Quest Interfaces - Didn't Tony Tebby do an updated version for this?

Rich

HELPLINE

Like our sibling magazine, QL Adventurers' Forum, we'll be running this as a regular feature. The main difference is that whereas I something about adventures, I know a lot less about the technical side of the QL. So if you see a query in here do write with your answers.

TURBO - WHEN ERROR

This is from Rich Mellor and regards Turbo v2.05, in particular getting the error - trapping to work properly.

"I have tried the following lines in a Turbo program (near the start).

10 WHEN_ERROR 1
20 CLS: INK 7: PRINT 'AN ERROR HAS OCCURED'\'THE ERROR NUMBER IS';ERNUM%\'THE LINE NUMBER IS';ERLIN%
30 PAUSE:STOP
40 END_WHEN

However when an error does occur in the program, the error is merely reported in the normal way, without the code being called. Is it anything to do with the fact that the above lines occur in the main body of the program, whilst the error is caused by a line within a PROCedure ? I have tried putting the above lines in the offending PROCedure, but to no effect.

MONITORS AND DISSASSEMBLERS

Ian Bruntlett, of QL Forum fame, has written in recommending the dissassembler in the QUANTA library and QMON v2.00 as the best monitor. Any more offers?

QL SCANNERS

Have any of our readers (or people with whom they are in contact) had any experience with Juergen Falkenberg's QL Scanner? The reason I ask is because the members of the Scottish QL Users Group spent a most frustrating day trying to get Alex Beveridge's scanner to work, but with little success. This particular scanner works by having the optical scanner attached to the print head of a printer, which transmits the data back to the QL onto the screen. I have a similar device for the ST, but have never used it. All offers of advice and help to Alex c/o of the Scottish QL User Group.

More next time, Richard