WORDWISE PLUS
ON A TV NEAR YOU

By Richard Lambley

Ease of use is the key to this ROM-based word processor for the BBC Micro, which is now endowed with a comprehensive programming language of its own

The original 8K ROM-based word processor for the BBC Micro has been joined by a 16K version, Wordwise Plus. The new program retains the simplicity which has made Wordwise consistently popular but embodies improvements and extensions which make it very powerful indeed.

Operation of both versions centres on a menu page, which gives access to the Edit mode, used for typing text in, and to various options for loading and saving. No special command words are needed to initialise the system, which makes it easy for inexperienced users.

A feature of Wordwise Plus is the segment menu, through which memory not used for the main text can be split automatically into up to 10 areas for subsidiary tasks, such as making notes or preparing address labels. Like the main text, segments can be saved, loaded, previewed or edited.

The Edit mode is perhaps Wordwise's most notable idiosyncracy. Its screen format is a 40-column Teletext-mode display. Characters typed in appear halfway up the screen, which scrolls upwards to accommodate them, word-wrapping as necessary. The user can move freely about the text by means of the cursor keys.

To see the text as it will appear on the finished document you have to return to the menu by pressing Escape and then select Preview mode. Wordwise allows lines of up to 180 characters, but no sideways scrolling is provided and lines more then 80 characters long are folded over in Preview mode. Hitting the space bar halts the text as it rushes upwards.

Some may regard the enforced use of the Teletext mode as an inconvenience, but it is a compromise with several practical advantages. Even on the poorest colour TV Wordwise remains usable, and Teletext mode is the key to Wordwise's most flexible and convenient feature — its powerful embedded commands. In Edit mode, embedded commands are coloured green; in Preview mode they are hidden but are acted upon where possible. A typical command consists of a simple two- or three-letter mnemonic, which is sometimes followed by a number.

One especially useful command sends control sequences direct to the printer, eliminating the need for special printer-driver programs. A feature carried through from later editions of standard Wordwise makes it possible to insert commands directed to the machine operating system or to other sideways ROMs, which might include printer utilities such as Computer Concepts' own Printmaster. An important addition in Wordwise Plus is the Print File command. This concatenates the file in memory with others on tape or disc for viewing or printing as a continuous document of unlimited length.

The most unusual and significant extension is Wordwise Plus's built-in high-level programming language. This Basic-like language for manipulating text contains about 70 keywords, which is as many as you get in Basic itself on some computers. They handle keyboard input, output to printer or screen, subroutines, Repeat-Until loops and a full range of filing commands.

Programs can be stored in the segments and executed by pressing Shift plus an appropriate function key. They can even call each other. The possibilities are extensive, though it is hard to imagine the average user exploiting them fully. The demonstration cassette gives some interesting examples of what can be achieved, among them a mail-merge routine and a utility for printing text in dual columns.

Owners of the standard Wordwise can upgrade for £21 plus VAT by returning chip and manual to Computer Concepts. A disc extension for use with the 6502 second processor to take advantage of the extra memory is available at £4.95. An EPROM-based spelling check is available from Beebugsoft for £31.
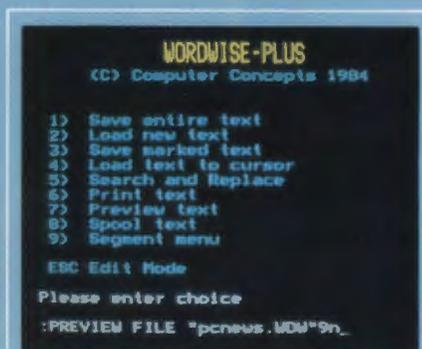
Wordwise Plus's programming language commands can be entered on the menu or into a memory segment.

SPECIFICATION

Description: EPROM-based word processor for the BBC Micro with disc or cassette filing system; maximum document length is limited only by the storage medium; includes an introductory booklet and reference manual, cassette containing an example document, utility programs in the Wordwise language and typing tutor
Hardware requirements: BBC Micro model A, B or B+; Wordwise Plus works with the Aries B-20 and Watford screen-memory boards, with the 6502 second processor, DFS, ADFS and NFS and with version 104j onward of the Kenda double-density disc interface
Price: £49 plus VAT
Availability: now
Distributor: Computer Concepts, Gaddesden Place, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 6EX. Telephone (0442) 63933

CONCLUSIONS

■ Wordwise scores heavily for convenience, and in its expanded form scores also for versatility.
■ Wordwise Plus's novel text-handling language extends its capabilities far beyond those of other word processors for the BBC Micro.
■ Its 46 embedded commands give flexibility in layout and enable the user to take full advantage of printer facilities.
■ The segment menu allows you up to 10 areas for subsidiary tasks without disturbing the main text.
■ The Spool option generates a text file stripped of control codes, useful for writing Basic programs and for electronic mail. ▥

WORDWISE PLUS

▥ VERDICT

	POOR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Performance	□	□	■	□
Ease of use	□	□	□	■
Documentation	□	□	□	■
Value for money	□	□	□	■

□ Wordwise Plus is simple to use, versatile and very convenient. Existing Wordwise users will find the upgrade well worth having.