

REPLAY DISC UTILITY

When Vine Micros released their TD Rom, it seemed an excellent low cost method of transferring a large proportion of cassettes to disc. For less than the cost of two Replica II discs, an endlessly useful system could be used. One of the snags, however, was a small but annoying selection of games and other programs which would not succumb to the Rom. At the time it was the best attempt to solve this tricky transfer problem that I had seen, but now along comes another brand new idea from the same company. Their advertising claims 100% success on transferring cassettes, and despite exhaustive tests, I cannot disagree with this claim - it put every single program I could find onto disc, even such well-known challenges as Castle Quest, Frak! and the Mr. T series from Ebury.

It is a little trickier to fit than a mere Rom, but the instructions are clear and illustrated where necessary. There is a Rom to fit, plus a 16 pin IC header and either another IC header or a clip-on probe which is hooked onto the main 6502 processor. It does take a little thought, but if you can fit a Rom you should have no trouble. There is no soldering at all to be done. Once fitted, the disc has to be initiated, and this is where the only real drawback of the system comes in. The foolproof nature of the transfer is possible by saving the entire 32K memory, and thus only 3 titles can be put onto one side of a 40 track disc with a standard Acorn DFS. This does appear wasteful, but nothing good is ever achieved without some sacrifice.

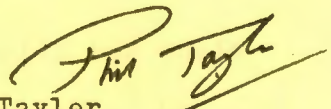
On an initiated disc, the title of the program to be saved is entered, and then Break is pressed, and the program loaded as normal from tape. When the title page is reached, or any other suitable point), the push button which emerges from the Replay system to the outside of the machine is pressed, and this freezes the screen completely. In fact, it freezes interior clocks, keyboard etc. except for the appropriate function key which is pressed to download onto disc. The same button can be used as a freeze button with any game, as an extra bonus.

As with the TD Rom, the beauty of the idea is that it does not break

copyright, as a Replay disc can only be played back through the same Replay Rom system. On top of all this, there is a further bonus allowing a screen to be dumped to printer, although the screen dumps are themselves not included. It is even possible to copy about 75% of disc software, from the original to this back up.

Versions are available for 8271 DFS s (Acorn, Watford Single Density and Pace Single Density), the 1770 type for Opus 3.45 and Solidisk, and type R2791 for Opus 3.15. Vine Micros are offering a trade-in on the TB Rom, but I would certainly advocate having both, so that the 90% of tapes can transfer economically using TD, and the stubborn ones will at last be guaranteed with the help of the Replay disc utility.

Screen Display	N/A
Usefulness	+ + + + +
Ease of use	+ + + +
Overall	98%


Phil Tayler

N.B. This review was written by Phil Tayler who reviews regularly for Micro User, Electron User and Computing with the Amstrad.

The review was due to appear in the "Personal Computing Today" magazine, but unfortunately this monthly ceased publication recently. Permission has been given by Mr. Tayler for us to make use of this review.

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