Reviews/Software InfoWorld



By Cynthia E. Field Review Board

The graphics environment of the Macintosh on the Apple II, with pulldown menus, windows, and ico can make the underlying software all the more attractive. Two products that today best emulate

the Macintosh environment on the Apple II are Catalyst 3.0 from Quark Inc. Mouse Desk 1.00 from Version Soft (distributed by International Solutions). Both programs provide a Macintoshlike desktop that you use in place of issuing cryptic system and file commands. They are similar in intended use, though differing in appearance and features. Apple Computer Inc. officially supports Catalyst in the United States, selling it with the Unidisk 3.5; Apple Europe, on the other hand, supports Mouse Desk.

FEATURES: At first glance, both Catalyst and Mouse Desk look quite similar. Both give you a Macintoshlike user interface, complete with menu bars, bitmapped graphics, and icons that represent disks and files. And both let you install multiple ProDOS applications onto a single mass storage device, such as Apple's 5- or 10-megabyte Profile hard disk and its 800K Unidisk 31/2-inch floppy disk drive. You can view multiple files and disks and point and click to open particular files. Both programs support the use of a mouse but can also work keyboard commands

Both programs require 128K of random-access memory (RAM) and one drive either a 54-inch floppy disk drive or a 31/2-inch Unidisk drive. To run Catalyst, your Apple IIe must have the enhanced read-only memory (ROM) upgrade that allows the monitor to display Apple's alternate character set, known as mouse text. The upgrade is not required to run Mouse Desk, but the screen appearance suffers without it.

Like the Macintosh desktop, both Apple II desktop management programs use icons symbols that represent applications (volumes, subdirectories, or files) and activities, Catalyst and Mouse Desk both have the trash can icon, which you can use to delete programs or files from a disk. Only Catalyst has the Macintoshlike wrist watch icon for "please wait" during disk access. Catalyst and Mouse Desk both represent disks by icons that look like 31/2inch or 51/4-inch disks.

Catalyst and Mouse Desk make mass storage devices more convenient to use, because they make it easier to deal with the numerous files you can fit on such largecapacity drives. Both Catalyst and Mouse Desk support internal RAM disks such as Apple's Memory Expansion Card and can copy selected programs to it from external storage devices, either automatically at start-up or later during your work session.

Making the Apple II **Emulate Macintosh**

Although both programs create a ver Macintoshlike front end on the Apple II. close scrutiny reveals a number of differences between them. The Catalyst desktop offers four menus, with about two dozen choices, while Mouse Desk has eight menus with more than three dozen choices. True to their Macintoshlike nature

both programs have windows that you can open, grow, move, stack, and close. In Catalyst, the active window has horizontal stripes in the title bar; in Mouse Desk, the active window's title shifts from black letters on a white background to white letters on black

Both programs display their desktops in double high-resolution mode, but only Catalyst offers you a Change Desktop feature with which you can switch from the default appearance (black text on a gray background on our Apple Color Monitor II) to any of nine others, including black text on a white background. In addition to the Catalyst program,

Quark includes other programs on the 31/2 inch version we tested, such as Quark ams Filer (which is similar to Apple's ProDOS utility), Quick Copy (a faster disk copying program), and Backup II (for backing up hard disk drive files) and Apple drawing program Mousepaint. Apple S tem Utilities, Version 2.1.1 and ProDOS Basic are also included. The 51/4-inch version comes on three disks, while the 31/2-inch version is on one disk.

Catalyst has some built-in desktop accessories, such as an on-screen clock that works if you have a hardware clock installed, a four-function calculator, and a sliding-letters puzzle similar to the one the Macintosh has

Though the programs are similar, they take a different tack at looking at files Mouse Desk generally displays every file on the disk, either as an icon or as a file name; file folders are displayed where subdirectories have been created. Catalyst, on the other hand, displays icons representing programs but not the individual files that make up that program. For example, it will show a single icon representing the entire complex of programs and overlay files that constitute Appleworks.

The Mouse Desk shows menu display files by name, date, size, or type as well as by icon. With Catalyst, if you want more details on the individual files than are provided by the program icon, you have to leave the Catalyst desktop and go to the System Utilities program to catalog a disk in the conventional Apple II way. PERFORMANCE: The necessity of

leaving the Catalyst desktop to work with files or format a disk is an inconvenience that mars Catalyst's otherwise nearly flawless performance. Just when you get used to using the mouse, you're forced to go back to the arrow keys on the keyboard to use ProDOS utilities. Quitting the utilities takes you directly back to the Catalyst desktop, though, so this really is a minor aggravation, and our working style doesn't require us to use the System Utilities often. Others may find it more annoying. A Quark spokesman told us that the company is aware of Mouse Desk's built-in file-handling features and may take steps to improve Catalyst in that direction.

Both Catalyst and Mouse Desk may be able to help you install your most frequently used applications on one 31/2-inch disk or on a hard disk. Catalyst enjoys a slight edge in this regard by being capable of installing even some copy-protected ProDOS programs. Catalyst can copy any copyable ProDOS program for you. It can also install protected software if the software developer provided a Catalyst identification file in its program (Catalyst locks the program to itself using a Catalyst serial number). Not all third-party developers offer such a

The Catalyst from Quark Inc. makes the Macintosh graphics environment avail-able to Apple II users.

When you try to install a program from a cooperating vendor, Catalyst works in straightforward fashion. When you try to install another copyable or copy-protected program, a Catalyst dialog box opens and tells you that the program is a "custom" program. It will then put a program icon on the desktop, but you must use System Utilities to copy the files associated with the program. If you follow these directions, copyable programs install easily. Copyprotected ones seem to install (the files are transferred), but these programs may crash when you attempt to load them.

Using Catalyst, we successfully installed Appleworks enhanced with the Pinpoint desk accessory program (from Pinpoint Publishing); the Pinpoint program itself; Applewriter II, Version 2.0; Mousewrite (from Roger Wagner Publishing); and Procom-A Communications Software (from Prometheus Products). We were not able to install Mouse Word (from International Solutions), a copy-protected program lacking a Catalyst identification file

When asked to list some other Catalystinstallable programs for us, a Quark technical representative mentioned the ProDOS version of PFS File, Business Works, Sensible Speller and Grammar, Supercalc 3A, and Quark's Word Juggler Apparently, they all have Catalyst serial

Using Mouse Desk, we installed Applewriter II, Appleworks with Pinpoint, Pinpoint accessories, and Mousepaint. According to International Solutions, some users have experienced difficulty in installing Mouse Desk-installed Mousepaint and Pinpoint. We encountered no problems with Mousepaint, but we could not get one of the Pinpoint accessories to work

Besides using Catalyst and Mouse Desk to manage files and install programs on hard disks, you can use these desktop organizers as program selectors. Both Catalyst and Mouse Desk have Run options that can be accessed either by the mouse or by keyboard command. Non-ProDOS programs can be started

after quitting Catalyst and pressing several keys to restart. Mouse Desk does not have a formal quit option. Instead, Mouse Desk offers its start menu where you can directly InfoWorld reviews only finished, produc-

tion versions of products, never beta test

number, nor does International Solutions. nersions Excellent/5 Symbols/9 - 10: Tobs in its clas

Very Good/4 Symbols/7 - 8.9: Offers special benefits Satisfactory/3 Symbols/5 - 6.9: Meets essential criteria Poor/2 Symbols/3 - 4.9:

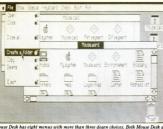
Falls short in essential areas Unacceptable/1 Symbol/1 - 2.9:

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Mouse Desk has eight menus with more than three dozen choices. Both Mouse Desk and Catalyst have windows that you can open, grow, move, stack, and close.

start a program in slot 5 (where our Unidisk 3.5 was installed) or slot 6 (the conventional location for 51/4-inch drives). Either Catalyst or Mouse Desk, by offering Apple II users the easy-to-use

Macintosh interface, can revolutionize and optimize the way you use your computer system. Both programs have taken on difficult tasks and more than exceeded our expectations, earning each a very good rating in performance DOCUMENTATION: While Mouse

Desk and Catalyst are, on balance, evenly matched in terms of performance, the inadequate documentation accompanying Mouse Desk caused us to downgrade it in this category. When we called International Solutions to complain about the manual, the spokesman was apologetic. He called the manual "sketchy" and assured us that a new manual was in the works, along with an update of Mouse Desk to Version 2.00.

The current Mouse Desk manual is only 12 pages. Do not expect to find a table of contents, index, or other helpful features and do not expect a tutorial. You'll find individual sentences written in the imperative, telling you to do this and that, but overall the instructions are cursory. The technical representative we spoke to told us that new users with RAM disks were experiencing particular difficulties in using Mouse Desk because of the inadequacy of the documentation

Overall, our feeling is that the manual was rushed. It's riddled with typos and references to pages that are not there. Manuals accomp panying other Mouse Series programs from International Solutions are so well-done that we feel justified in expecting more. Though the program is usable without the documentation, we are obliged to rate Mouse Desk's documentation poor because of its inadequacies

The Catalyst manual, at the other end of the spectrum, reminds us of the wellregarded manuals that accompany Apple products Not only is the Catalyst guide like an Apple manual in size and style, but it also emulates one in completeness and clarity.

More is not always better, but in this case it is Enjoying the Macintosh environment on an Apple II is a new experience for many users, and though the mouse and the visual interface make the software nearly instinctive to use, there is no substitute for adequate documentation.

The 138-page Catalyst manual contains senarate and easily located sections on installing and using the program. There are separate tutorials for mouse and mouseless users. Reference sections and appendixes explain disk drives, memory, and ProDOS. The only flaw we found was in Appendix B, where Quark washes its hands of helping you install "custom" programs. The com pany asserts that you will have to call the developer of such a program for help. We

would be naive to think that Quark could know everything about every application a user might have, but, as a start, the manual could contain a list of programs that are compatible and those that are not Taken as a whole, the Catalyst manual

with its explicitly labeled diagrams and error-free prose, is a welcome change from most we have seen. Despite the lack of any help at all installing custom programs, it earns a very good rating

EASE OF LEARNING: Even users who are unaccustomed to mice and Macintoshes will find that Catalyst and Mouse Desk are not at all uncomfortable and will be clicking, moving, and dragging like a veteran in no time. Copying a program can be as easy as dragging icon and placing it on top of another. We do not think you will miss having to memorize commands. If you prefer to learn some commands, most of the commands in Catalyst and Mouse Desk are mnemonic; for instance, apple-N shows files by name, and apple-G grows a window.

Within a couple of hours we had become familiar with Catalyst. It earns a very good score in ease of learning

Although the visual environment is intuitive up to a point, Mouse Desk's learning curve is stretched out unnecessarily by the program's inadequate documentation. It took nearly twice as long to learn Mouse Desk as to learn Catalyst, Even so. Mouse Desk earns a satisfactory in ease of learning; you can buy it in the morning and be using many of its features by the

EASE OF USE: Catalyst and Mouse Desk could not be much easier to use, thanks to the mouse. You may find the need to leave the Catalyst desktop to manage files and format disks a chore however

Some of Mouse Desk's attributes are awkward, too. Even if you have more than one Unidisk 3.5, you can only display one such disk icon on the desktop. With Catalyst, you can have multiple disk icons displayed even though only one volume may be active at a time.

We found we were able easily to copy Mousenaint from one 31/2-inch disk to another with Catalyst (the program prompts you when to swap disks). With Mouse Desk, we had to copy Mousepaint from the 31/2-inch disk to a 51/4-inch disk and then recopy it from the floppy to another micro disk. Perhaps the new manual will explain an easier way, if there is

The Catalyst System must be present if you want to get back to the Catalyst desktop from an application. With the copyprotected version of Mouse Desk that we used, the Mouse Desk program disk is required as a key.

In spite of these minor criticisms, we found that Catalyst and Mouse Desk speed

up and simplify our day-to-day computing activities so much that both earn a very good in ease of use. As one example, we were able to put the Catalyst System. ProDOS System Utilities, and word processing and communications software on one 31/2-inch disk. Next time we need to prepare a document, we need only start the Catalyst program. We installed Appleworks enhanced with Pinpoint, Pinpoint accessories, and Mousepaint on the same 31/2-inch disk. Pinpoint's Graphmerge accessory can integrate Mousepaint pictures with Appleworks. Anyone using such a combination will delight in the fact that disk swapping has been reduced by at least 50 percent - more if you move among programs a lot.

ERROR HANDLING: Individually. Catalyst and Mouse Desk seem indestructible. Dialog boxes and "alert" boxes help you to use these desktop managers well and avoid operational problems such as unintentionally leaving the programs.

We tried installing both programs together on the same disk and launching one from the other to see if we could somehow have the best of both worlds. Our experimentation resulted in a "fatal system error" message. The problem was not actually fatal; we simply restarted Catalyst and found that no damage had been incurred. Overall, both programs earn a very good in error handling.

SUPPORT: Catalyst is copy-protected and serialized so that programs installed using Catalyst are locked to it. Mouse Desk is currently copy-protected. We have been assured that future versions of Mouse Desk will be non-copy-protected after April 1,

Both companies offer a 90-day free replacement warranty. After the warranty period, Quark will replace damaged disks for \$15; it will recopy disks for \$10.

Performance

Documentation

Error Handling

Ease of Use

Support

Value

International Solutions will upgrade or replace your damaged Mouse Desk program for \$10. When you purchase Catalyst, you receive both program and backup disks. When you purchase Mouse Desk, you must send in the registration card and \$10 to receive your backup disk, at which time you may request it in either 31/2-inch or 51/4inch format. The system disk is in 51/4-inch

format, though International Solutions says it has made 31/2-inch disks available also. Neither company offers a toll-free telephone support line, although both offer free support to registered users. We talked with technical support representatives at both companies. In both cases, we were provided with clear responses and under-

standable answers to our questions VALUE: Both programs offer exceptional value at their suggested retail prices, though both companies are currently promoting their programs with reduced prices.

Although priced at \$99 when purchased separately, Catalyst costs only \$34.95 when you purchase it with the \$499 Apple Unidisk 3.5 disk drive. Mouse Desk's price, \$39.95 for the conv-protected version and \$69.95 for the copyable one that becomes available in April, is highly competitive. According to a company spokesman, Inter-national Solutions is offering Mouse Desk by direct order for \$10, as a promotion to introduce users to the Mouse Series.

At \$34.95, Catalyst is a steal; unfortunately, the Unidisk is a bit expensive. At \$99, we rate it a satisfactory value for such a useful utility. At \$39.95, and even at \$69.95 for the non-copy protected version Mouse Desk is a very good value (at \$10 during the promotional campaign, it's grand theft). Overall, we prefer Catalyst because we like its use of icons to represent programs.



7.0 5 5 6 6	Unacceptat	Poor	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Performance				œ	
Documentation		œ			
Ease of Learning			œ		
Ease of Use				œ	
Error Handling				œ	
Support				œ	
Value	П	П	П	IR.	П

Quark's Catalyst 3.0 can help you manage your Apple II files and copy certain ProDOS applications to a hard disk, minimizing disk swapping. The program, a Macintoshlike desktop in appearance, is a valuable utility that makes life much easier. Copy-protected.

SUMMARY

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price, \$99. (31/2-inch version \$34.95 if purchased with Apple Unidisk 3.5). Version tested (3.0) available for Apple IIc or enhanced IIe. Requires ProDOS 1.1.1, 128K RAM. For use with Apple Unidisk 3.5 or hard disk drive, Mouse recommended. Quark Inc. 2525 W. Evans Ave., Suite 220 Denver, CO 80219; (800) 543-7711 or (303) 934-2211 in Colorado

PRODUCT BETAILS

Mouse Desk puts a Macintoshlike interface on the Apple II, helping you manage files and copy applications on a mass storage device. Despite inadequate documentation, the program is easy to use and, at its \$10 direct-mail price, a great value. Copy-protected. PRODUCT DETAILS

List price \$39.95; \$10 until March 31, 1986. Version tested (1.0) available for Apple IIc and IIe. Requires ProDOS 1.1.1; 128K RAM. For use with Apple Unidisk 3.5 or hard disk drive. Mouse recommended. International Solutions Inc., P.O. Box 35417, Saratoga, CA 95070-1541; (408) 773-0443.