

SUPER SNAP SHOT

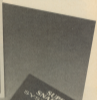
Supplier: F.S.S.L. Ltd
Price: £34.95

Whether you are an Expert or simply like Action Replays, this Canadian product is something to think about

By S. Wickham

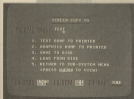
Home computers are like the motor car. Every so often a new model is released and everyone wants one. Initially there are numerous design and operating faults, but as time goes on these get sorted out and everyone is happy. Your basic model, once established, then starts getting refinements. First you may get reclining seats, followed by heated restoses and metallic paint jobs. Next comes cruise control and coded ignition.

The home computer is the same. The basic model is released and as time goes by, more and more features are added. This is particularly true of extra addons and software support. The one extra that nearly everyone buys is the good old cartridge. Super Snapshot '85 is one such piece of technological wizardry.



Options! Options!

So just exactly what can this cartridge do? What are the features that make it so special. Does it match up to the current market of available cartridges. If the number of options is anything to go by,



then Super Snapshot™ must surely be the ultimate. Just take a look at the list of facilities:

- Disk Copier's
- File Copier
- Parameter Copier
- DOS Support
- Door Sector Support
- Turbo DOS
- Screen Copy (with Spines)
- Games Monitor
- Machine Code Monitor
- Break and Sector Editor
- Drive Monitor
- Video RAM Monitor
- CPU Monitor
- Sound Sample Monitor
- Character Set Monitor
- File Reader
- Extra Basic Keywords
- 1571 Support
- DOS Support
- Cartridge RAM Expansion

Even the most sceptical amongst us has to agree that this is one heck of a list. It is fair to say that some of these facilities are



available from the supporting system disc. However, unlike the other products available, you do not have to program Super Snapshot V3 before you can use it.

Where to begin?

When assessing a product of this calibre, it is difficult to know just where to begin. You want to know all the capabilities, yet space prevents this. I have therefore selected what is, in my opinion, the more important aspects of the cartridge.



Monitors galore

The nucleus of any good cartridge has to be its ability to monitor what is happening inside the computer's memory. Not only to monitor it, but to alter and amend it as you so desire. To this end Super Snapshot V3 must be streets ahead of anything else. You have a Monitor for Code, Monitor for Spines, Monitor for Characters, Monitor for Sound. The Drive's internal memory can be Monitored as can the CPU (RAM Expansion Unit) and Video RAM.

I have to confess that my favourite option has always been the ML Monitor, no matter what utility or cartridge I am using. The

built-in, horizontal monitor on the cartridge is excellent. Teaching machine code is not the intention of the review, therefore I will not attempt it. Suffice to say that if you examine the following table you will be impressed by the commands available to you.

ML Monitor Commands

A	Assemble Code
BA	Set break point
C	Compare Memory
D	Disassemble Memory (Saddy looking on my Dolphin DOS)
F	Fill Memory
G	Go (to and execute)
H	Hunt through memory (Hex, Dec or ASCII)
I	Intercept Memory
IO	Display I/O Registers
L	Load File
M	Display Memory
O	Output (Screen, Drive or Printer)
B	Display Registers
S	Save File
SP	Disable Sprite Collision
SPO	Disable Sprite to Background Collision
SPS	Disable Sprite to Sprite Collision
T	Transfer Memory
X	Exit the Monitor



- (The way you entered)
- X) Exit to Basic
(No matter how you entered monitor)
- RM Exit the Sub-Items System
Modify memory
- Modify Registers
- Modify Disassembler
- Hex to Decimal Conversion
- Decimal to Hex Conversion
- Enable Decimal Entry
- Disk Directory
- Modify
- Read Error Channel
- Set Device Default
- Set Bank in PSU
- TV Accesses the C128 Video RAM

The Drive Monitor is essentially the same as the above. All one needs to do to access it is to put a 'n' (where 'n' signifies device number) in front of the command. The drive monitor is obviously very useful for transferring the contents of the buffers into the computer's memory, where you can examine, modify and then replace them back into the drive's memory.

Graphically Speaking

Sprite designing, like Character designing, has always been a laboriously long job, even for those of us that think we are OK, or, in other words, how profitable you are, there are no real quick methods. There are, however, ways of making the task a little easier. One of these is of course to pinch someone else's ideas. (Don't forget, you cannot pinch the design and incorporate them in your own commercially available programs). The Sprite and Character Monitors come to your aid. With these facilities you can examine, modify, add-to and generally play around

with any Sprite or Character you like. The onscreen representation of the character you are working on, is clear and full of the necessary information.

Sounds Great!

What surely must be a first from LMS Technologies is the Sample Monitor. I have to admit that I haven't come across one before. I also have to admit that if there is one field of computer usage I fall down in, it's Sound and Music. I know absolutely nothing of it, on the subject, so what exactly is the Sample Monitor.

A sound sample is a way of recording any sound as a series of numbers. It's the same method used in synthesizers and CDs. With the Sample Monitor you can capture these sounds and by using the PLAYER module on the system disk, you can incorporate them into your own programs.

The instructions in the manual make the job of capturing a sample, then saving it for later use in your own programs, relatively easy.

Picture This

One of the neat facilities offered by Super Snapshot V3, is the ability to freeze a screen and save it out to disk as a picture file. Various formats are offered for here including Koolz, Run Hires, Doodle, Glazing, Paddles.

Another good feature is that you can also save the sprites. Once you have the screen you desire in memory, you simply press the button on the cartridge and you enter a sub-menu. The screen type is displayed which includes one of five types:

- Standard for mapped.
- Standard Character.

Multi colour bit mapped.
Multi colour text or just text.

A large variety of printers are catered for in the dumps, including a few of the more popular colour printers. As an extension into the possibilities this feature offers, I tried the following:

I loaded one of my games into memory. I saved out the screen in question, including the sprites. I then ran the saved picture through a converter program, which saved out an Amiga 800 file. The sprites I then loaded into Dpaint III and converted them to brushes. From here I completely redesigned the original screen and repositioned the sprites. Finally, I removed the changed screen and converted it back to a C64 picture file. I then obtained a colour print out of my modified screen. All in all, a very satisfactory and rewarding aspect of this cartridge.

Round up Time

A lot of you will be disappointed that I haven't mentioned the Copies, Hobbies, Pacemaker Utilities and Backup programs available. The question of the morality and ethics of these options is one which will always be strongly debated upon. Suffice to say that if you do want to make PERSONAL backups then the facilities offered by Super Snapshot V3 are excellent.

In conclusion, I will say this. If you are thinking of buying a Cartridge to update your collection, or if you want to buy one for the first time, then Super Snapshot V3 offers excellent value for money. It would go so far as to say that if a C128 switching facility had been incorporated, similar to the Wtop25, then you would never need to remove the cartridge from the back of your machine.

