

an error on my part. For instance, if you delete an account number from the chart of accounts without creating a replacement category with the same number, you'll get a BASIC error message if any of your revenue or expenses use that category.

One related problem will occur, if you have power fluctuations or disk drive malfunctions. Sometimes when *Insta-ledger* is writing a file to disk, the file doesn't get written properly. This can happen when you are doing a sort or other disk maintenance. In most cases, this means the file doesn't get written at all.

This could be a terrible situation, but *Insta-Ledger* comes prepared. From the moment you begin creating data disks, *Insta-Ledger* expects you to create a backup. After formatting your data disk, it prompts you to format a backup. When you choose the quit option, the backup data option is listed first in the menu. It is always prudent to make backup copies of data. *Insta-Ledger* gives you no excuse not to.

With three and a half years of accounting data entered, I have never had to re-enter expenses or income once they were saved to the disk. I've had drive errors and made stupid mistakes, but the backup disk always had the latest information because I do a backup after every save.

Besides creating reports of income and expenses, *Insta-Ledger* will also graph your figures. You can compare categories of expenses to see where your money is going, or look at your income and see what enterprise generates the most bucks. These graphs can be sent to the screen or to a printer.

Despite my misgivings, *Insta-Ledger* turned out fine. All the best features have been kept, including the bell sound that accompanies disk swaps and input commands. Yes, the error buzzer is truly obnoxious, as it should be. The slight improvements have made it an even better value than before, and the drop in price is better yet.

In its original incarnation, I had no qualms about recommending it to any small business person who doesn't quite need a double entry ledger system. Now I'd recommend it even more highly. C

Fast Load

Computer: Commodore 64

Publisher: Epyx

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Sunnyvale, CA 94089

Medium: Cartridge

A number of companies have created products to increase the speed of the Commodore 1541 disk drive. One device, a utility program, is said to speed the loading process by 300%. By why waste time loading a disk in order to load a second disk more rapidly? Another device involves hard-wiring the computer and disk drive, thereby voiding your warranty. Even then, this device may not work with certain commercial copy-protected software. But now there is *Fast Load* from Epyx. It is on cartridge so it can be left in the computer at all times—except, of course, when you're playing cartridge games.

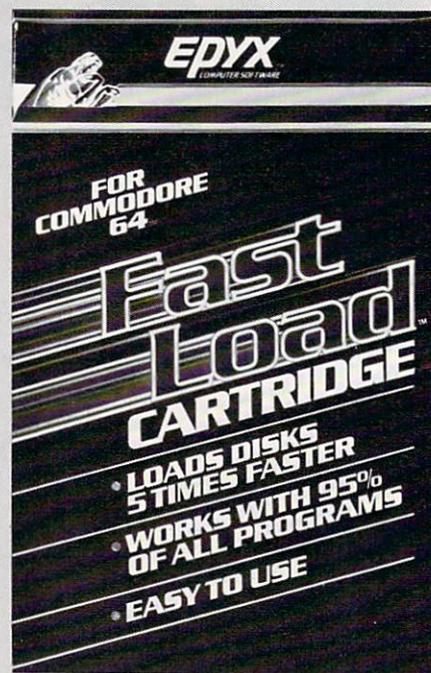
Besides being a load utility, *Fast Load* provides a DOS wedge. You may list a disk directory without erasing the program currently in memory by typing "@" Load a disk by depressing the Commodore key while pressing RUN/STOP. Load a BASIC program by typing "/(name of program)." Load machine language files by typing "%(program name)."

You may also send commands to the disk drive by typing "@(command)" rather than the old, familiar "open (command) close" sequence. And when your drive flashes the red light to signal trouble, you may read the error channel easily.

Fast Load also contains copy programs—one for BAM copy, another for file copy and one to copy the entire disk.

Copying a disk is incredibly quick. Using the "Copy Entire Disk" routine, only three passes are needed to duplicate a disk on which 66 blocks are filled. The three passes added up to 2:05 minutes read time and 6:45 minutes write time. BAM copy of another program, 558 blocks long, took a similar amount of time and passes.

You may also format a disk from the *Fast Load* menu, a task which took one minute, 25 seconds to perform. Not bad. But does it load fast? C



The following table represents loading times of some of my favorite software.

Disk	Normal	Fast Load
<i>Blue Max</i>	2:45	2:15
<i>Sky Travel Manager</i>	2:45	1:30
<i>Easy Script</i>	2:15	2:00
<i>F-15 Strike Eagle</i>	1:03	:57
<i>Unguard</i>	3:07	:45
	:50	:27

As you can see, the gain with many commercial disks may not be worthwhile, although others show significant time savings.

Sky Travel posted not only a good gain, but had an added bonus. Because of its complexity, this program must constantly access the disk as new routines are called. Speed of access and the writing of new screens was noticeably improved. Remember the name only for as long as it takes you to buy a copy. Forget the package blurbs promising five times faster loading. Think of it as a hard-wired DOS wedge and a fast and easy-to-use copy utility, then take the sometimes-fast disk loading as an added bonus. Thought of that way, *Fast Load* is definitely a worthwhile addition to your library. C