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TERRY KEPNER'S

portable 100

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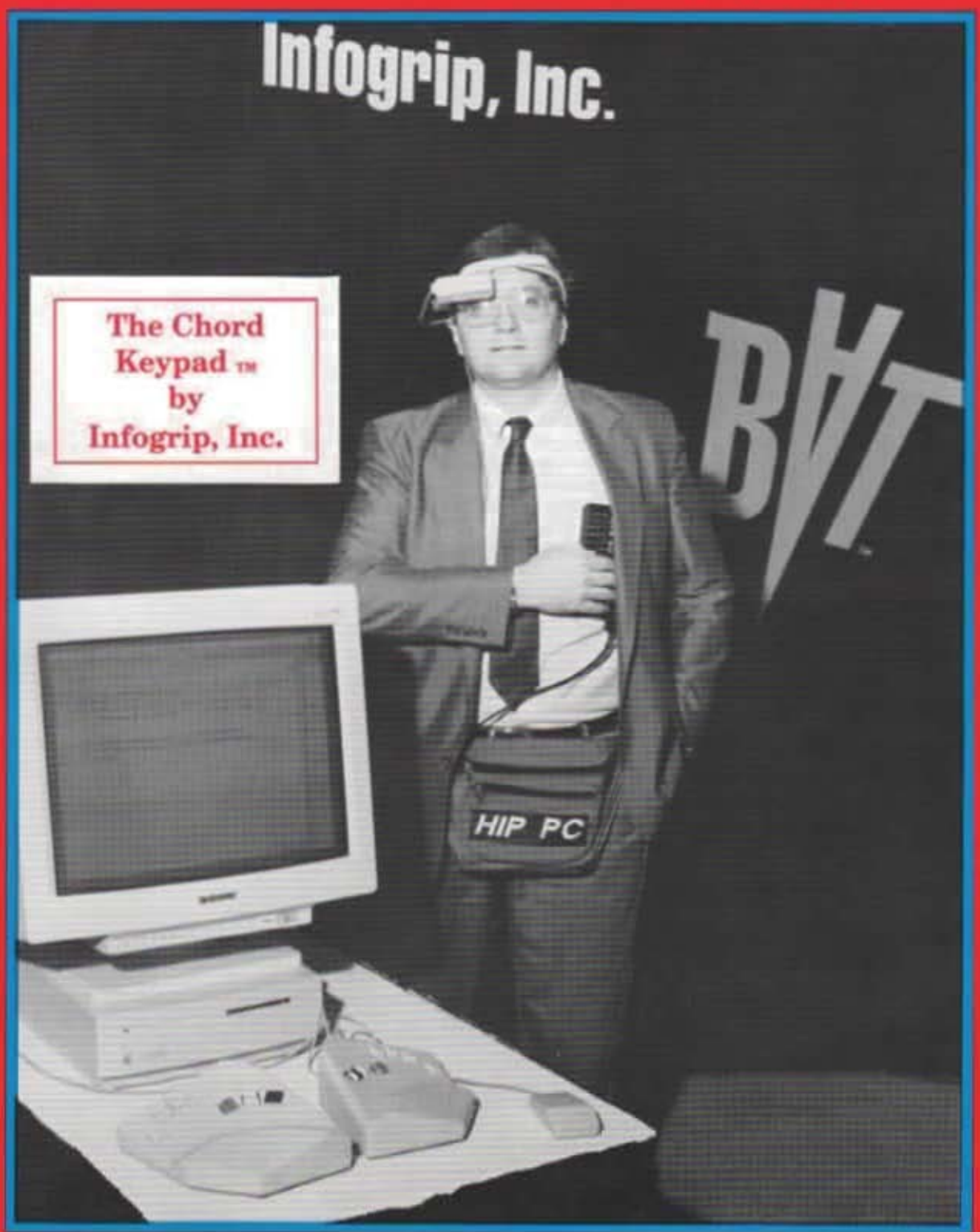

COMPATIBILITY: MS-DOS computers.

BAT-ting Your Way To Efficiency

The BAT keyboards let you type quickly and accurately with one hand. They're perfect for situations requiring one hand off the keyboard.

by Terry Kepner

The bane of the typist is trying to type with one hand wile doing something else with the other. Such as inputting spreadsheets, transcribing copy, or working with a mouse. Especially working with a mouse. Now, there's a frustrating situation. Sometimes it is easier to use the mouse, other times it is faster, much faster, to type on the keyboard instead.

Anyone who is trying to use *Windows* or CAD/CAM programs knows that using a mouse to hunt down through three pull-down menus is much slower than typing the two-key combination that does the same thing. But, having to type with one hand is not easy on a standard QWERTY keyboard. If you have small hands, some key combinations are impossible with one hand (try *ALT SHIFT +*). Which means you must release the mouse and type with a finger from each hand. Not very efficient.

Or, if you are one of those who can actually touch-type, then it's worse. You can't type one-finger from each hand. First, you have to position your hands on the home-row, then type. When you have to type in lots of labels on a diagram, you're lucky to move at a snail's speed, what with all the switching between the keyboard and the mouse.

CORDING TO THE RESCUE

The BAT keyboards are based on a simple principle: you can press more than one key at a time with your hand. Any pianist will tell you so. It's called "cording."

And it looks scary. Most people see the simple seven-key keyboard and panic. They find a QWERTY keyboard imposing, and the sight of seven unmarked keys makes them turn and run. Or a typist will look and say, "It took me weeks to learn speed typing on QWERTY. I'm not going to repeat that."

What a mistake. The keyboard is so simple in concept and so easy to use, that the non typist can learn enough to proficiently type in only one hour, and to reach a fast speed in only a few more. Much better than he could do with a QWERTY keyboard. The touch-typist can pick up the system even faster.

THE BAT

The BAT system is really two separate keypads of seven keys, five white, one red, and one blue. Installation is simple and fast, just run the installation program on the distribution disk and plug the keyboards in place. As mentioned above, you can either use the parallel port or the serial, depending on which model you order.

The two keyboards are attached to the port and to each other with a simple phone-cord type cable with similar plug-in connectors. You don't have to use both units, but to use the left unit requires that both units be attached.

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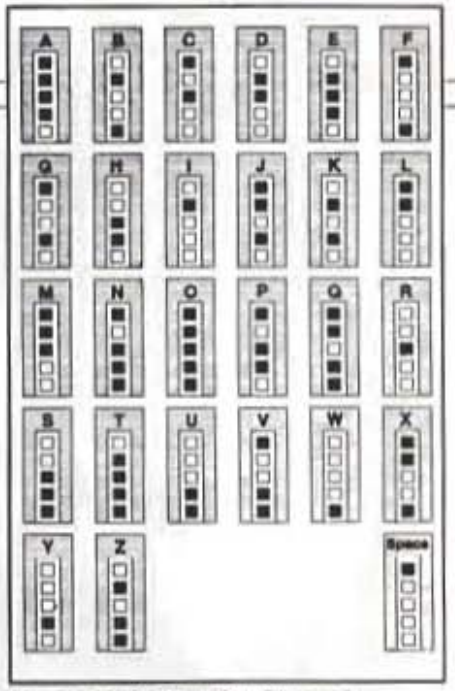


Figure 1. The basic set of BAT key cords.

The BAT keyboards are sculpted to match the way your hand is most comfortable. They are angled a bit steeper than most keyboards, but the built-in palm rest makes all the difference. After several hours of hard work, your fingers are tired from the activity, but your hands are not fatigued. No carpal tunnel syndrome because your hands are in natural positions without the strenuous side to side motions that bring on such afflictions.

The five white keys provide all the cording combinations you need for the alphabet, see figure 1 for the BAT character chart. Don't let the chart scare you, it's simplicity itself. The five keys rank thumb at the top, index finger next, middle finger, ring finger, then little finger. Thus, according to the chart, to type the letter "a", press down with your thumb, index finger, middle finger, and ring finger. The letter "b" requires pressing with your index finger and little finger. Space bar is simply a thumb press.

The blue key is used as the *Shift* key. Press it once, and the next letter you type is a capital. Press it twice to lock capitals. Press it again to return to unshifted characters.

Pressing the blue key while pressing one or more of the white keys provides special characters like the comma, period, apostrophe, backspace, and so forth. The arrow keys are also tied to the blue key. See figure 2. Function keys one through twelve are accessed by pressing the blue thumb key, the index key, and the ring finger key followed by the appropriate number from the red shift set.

The red key ties you into the numbers, *ALT*, *CTRL*, and other special functions, see figure 3. Most important among these other special functions is macros. That's right, you can assign special meanings and phrases to special key combinations and quickly retrieve them.

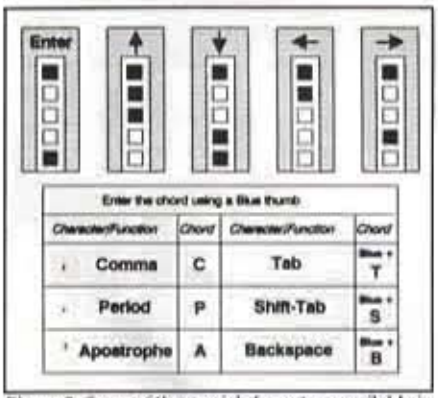


Figure 2. Some of the special characters available in combination with the blue key.

Thus, you could assign the phrase "Very truly yours," to the "i" macro key and call it forth by pressing the red thumb key and ring finger key followed by the cord for the letter "i", the index finger key.

The keyboards can be used separately or together. If you use only one hand, you are limited to a top speed of around thirty-five to forty words per minute. If you decide to use them both at the same time, you can get up to eighty words per minute by alternating keystrokes between your hands. This is weird, at first, but you quickly adapt. The true beauty is that no matter whether you are left or right handed, after only a little effort, you can type with both hands equally well.

CUSTOMIZATION

To make it easier for you to learn and use the system, you can have the BAT software display a keyboard status display. the status display tells you when you have *CAPS*, symbols, function, or macro keys enabled. Very useful when you are beginning the system. It even manages to work in *Windows!*

You can also have the system install its online help file (requires 7K of RAM), the BAT tutorial (98K, only when used), and the BAT macro editor (60K, also only when used). The system software, by itself, uses just 28K of RAM.

Additionally, the entire BAT keyboard assignment system can be redefined to your convenience. All you need

Any time you need to work with one hand while typing with the other, the BAT is the perfect remedy.

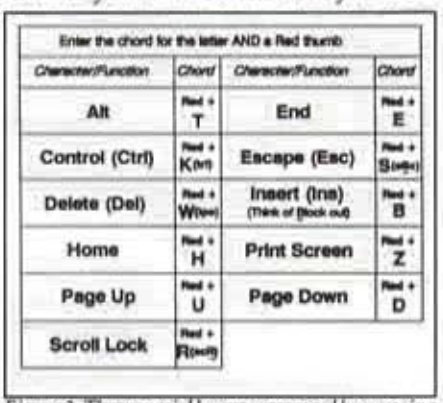


*Figure 3. These special keys are accessed by pressing the red key and the cord for the appropriate letter. Not shown are the special cords for the numbers zero to nine and the related characters (+, -, *, %, #, =, etc.).*

is a word processor. So, if you don't like that the letter "a" requires pressing the thumb, index, middle, and ring finger keys, you can change it to just the index finger. Or anything else. I've redesigned the keyboard to exactly match the key assignments of the mini-BAT.

Customizing the key assignments is not complicated, but the numbering system used is odd. For flexibility, they designed the system to use octal (base eight), decimal (base ten), and hexadecimal (base sixteen) counting systems. Rather unexpectedly, the system actually used is in octal. For anyone wanting to make changes, it takes a little thought to realize that although the list is running 01, 02, 03, . . ., the 010 is actually eight in octal. With this understanding, though, it quickly becomes easy to use.

THE MANUAL

The manual, while it does explain in full all the features, is not complete. It needs an index so you can quickly find answers, and it needs a complete listing of the definition table used by the BAT, with an explanation of the special symbols used. This would make it much easier for the lay person to see what was happening and to look up unusual key combinations, especially when you want to assign a few new codes for your requirements and want to know what's not assigned.

The manual, by the way, is a seven by nine spiral-bound booklet of seventy pages.

IN SUMMARY

Any time you need to work with one hand while typing with the other, the BAT is the perfect remedy. The keyboards, while bulky, are light, weighing less than one pound each. They work equally well through the parallel port or the RS-232 port.

Their light weight makes them perfect for in-the-field applications where large amounts of data must be entered essentially one-handed (an accountant at the office of a client, entering figures and comments; transcribing data where you have to follow the information with one hand while typing with the other; and any graphics work where keyboard controls can speed up your work).

As a bonus, should you be so unlucky as to injure one hand or the other, you can still accurately type with the BAT system, something that is next to impossible with the QWERTY keyboard.

The BAT is Macintosh and PC compatible.

PRODUCTS SPECIFICATIONS & SUPPLIERS

BAT – $495.00 (Dual Key Pads)
$295.00 (Single Key Pad)

Requires 256K RAM; MS-DOS 3.1 or later; COM1:, COM2:, or LPT1: ports; and an IBM PC/XT / AT compatible computer.

ALSO MACINTOSH COMPATIBLE

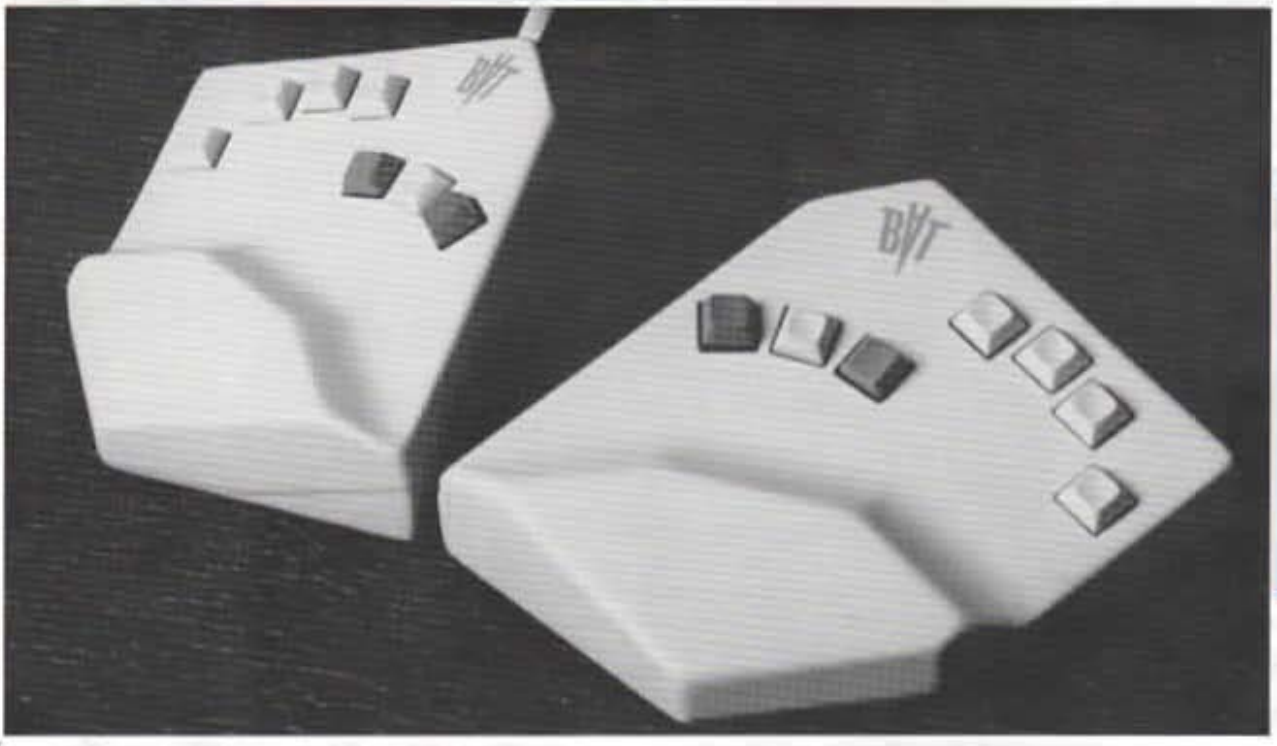
Infogrip, Inc.
5800 Perkins Place 5-F
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
(504) 766-8082
(504) 766-4228

INFOGRIP
Chord Keypad
"the BAT"

A completely new way of entering data into a computer

You enter letters, characters and symbols by pressing a combination of keys much like playing a chord on a piano. Your eyes remain on the screen, not the keyboard.

The **BAT** *lets you create a library of words, phrases, and macros that you enter with a single chordic keystroke.*



Dual Key Pads $495

Single Key Pad $295

Features

- **Scientifically designed for easy learning and retention.**
- **Two 7-key keyboards, one for each hand.**
- **Each keyboard has all the functions of a standard 101-key keyboard.**
- **Keyboard is angled and wrists are supported for maximum comfort and health.**
- **Characters are entered by pressing combinations of keys much like playing the chords on a piano.**
- **User can assign chords to words, phrases and macros.**

Advantages

- **Quick and easy to learn.**
- **User does not have to look down at the keys and can keep eyes on screen.**
- **Ergonomic design minimizes strain, fatigue.**
- **Keyboard is angled and wrists are supported for maximum comfort and health.**
- **Users can use one or both hands to enter data (ideal for CAD users...one hand on the mouse, one hand on the BAT).**
- **User can enter words, phrases, macros with a single chord.**
- **Does not interfere with standard touch-typing skills**

The BAT is Macintosh and PC compatible.

Infogrip Information

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"Incredibily easy to learn. I was typing, quickly and accurately, in less than an hour!"
Says Terry Kepner, PORTABLE 100 magazine.