

PRAVETZ-8D

Compilation de quelques e-mails, par André Chéramy

C'est le scoop du moment, comme vous avez pu le constater dans vos derniers Ceo-Mag, ainsi que lors de la visu du 8 juin. Ayant remis la main sur quelques e-mails de 1998, il m'a semblé intéressant de regrouper ces informations en espérant que les questions soulevées trouvent enfin leur réponse.

From Ivan Naydenov <ivann@mobikom.bg>

Can somebody please provide me with detailed information on all of the Oric Disk Operating Systems? Here in Bulgaria there is only one such system, compatible with the Apple II file/diskette format, and I see the system Sedoric mentioned in the sites is not Apple II compatible. Above of that I can't read my Apple II compatible diskettes with the READDSK utility. Anybody help? Ivan

From Ivan answering to Jean Boileau

Now to the question, Oric (in original with all the original floppy disk drives) really cannot read Apple II disks. But: In the mid 80s in Bulgaria started manufacturing of the Pravetz 8D computer (a mot a mot copy of Oric Atmos, but with added cyrillic and internal power supply:). So the machine was marketed as is and people had to cope with all these cassettes. Meanwhile the local Apple II clones (Pravetz 82, 8M and 8C) were «having great time» with their floppies and their DOS 3.3. So a Bulgarian engineer name of Borislav Zahariev fitted an Apple II floppy to the Pravetz 8D (Oric Atmos) and the file exchange was ok (you couldn't transfer directly Basic programs or machine code, but you could transfer text and that was great). Now however both of the machines (Pravetz 8D and 82) are forgotten. I have a Pentium PC with a 5 1/4 drive and I want to read (and mainly WRITE) my Pravetz-8D diskettes on it. That 's the way the things are. About the Apple emulator, if it's the same I have it works with disk images. No utility to create the images, though having only a 5 1/4 drive I mean. There were tons of wise thoughts how to transfer them trough Macintosh or via a serial interface. I personally tried to connect the cassette I/O of my Pravetz-8D to the SoundBlaster card of my Pentium machine and the result was burning the Pravetz. So I had to buy a new one, but here if you can find one at all it's very cheap (like US\$5). Maybe I'm the only live fan of this machine :))) so tell me if you can something (I tried to read a Sedoric disk created with the writedsk.exe utility, but there was absolutely no success :)) Ivan

From Laurent Chiacchiérini <laurentch@compuserve.com>

You're not the only live Pravetz 8D fan! We have at least two other known Bulgarian Oric fans hanging around: Alexander Radev <alsof1@hotmail.com> (who supplied the Pravetz 8D ROMs for downloading) and Vladimr Anguelov <vangelov@vmei.acad.bg> Maybe they can help you...

From Alexios Chouchoulas about forgotten machines

Not really! They weren't even unknown in the Eighties, believe it or not. A very prominent Greek magazine of the era once ran a lengthy article on computers of the then «eastern block». They even had (small, black and white, unfortunately) pictures of most of the hardware which had been brought into the country for an exhibition of sorts. I remember reading about the Pravetz series, though the only photo they had was of the Pravetz 82 (which they also tested that month). The only other series of computers I remember seeing was the (German?) Robotron series, probably exported. Alexios

From Jean Boileau

WRITEDISK was written because Sedoric is the most used and powerful OS for Oric's. May be Fabrice will be pleased (!) to write a Pravetz writedisk utility (hem) if you send him a disc controller (hem, again) Perhaps, someone could send you Oricdos/V2.2dos/Jasmindos formatted 5.25 discs to try and read them ?

From Ivan again

I can give my spare disk drive to Fabrice if he agrees to visit me here (I don't trust the local mail services). Also I could think about buying a more compatible drive, but I wouldn't spend more than US\$20 for that. About the disks ok. I can try them on my drive. But the Bulgarian drive is proven to be Apple II compatible I said why. The local BOBY DOS written by Borislav Zahariev is also Apple compatible. So the disks meet all Apple requirements, same sector sizes and location, same structure. I'm not the Great Programmer type I'm rather a user I need my machine to visualise on a TV screen graphics created on PC and converted for the Atmos/Pravetz-8D. I'll try to write the graphics conversion software. That's it. Simple at prima vista. Maybe I'll write a fine addition to Jonathan Haworth's book «The Bulgarian Trace» dedicated to the Pravetz 8D clone, but I'll have to dig up some information. It was very interesting here too :))) That was the only computer one was allowed to buy during the communist regime :))

From Marko Mäkelä <msmakela@cc.hut.fi> about Apple requirements

I've read that the Apple II disk drive uses GCR (Group Code Recording), similar to the 4:5 coding used in the Commodore disk drives, but yet different enough so that Commodore drives cannot read Apple II disks without hardware modifications. (Commodore uses 10 or more consecutive '1' bits as a sync mark, and this pattern can occur in normal Apple II disk sector data.)

The disk controller in PC clones cannot handle any other formats than MFM. You will need a custom disk controller in order to read GCR disks. I know of one custom controller, Catweasel, but I don't know if the software that comes with it handles the Apple disks. The Catweasel home page seems not to exist anymore, but maybe you can find it with a web search.

But I think that it is easier and cheaper to make a cable connection, connecting the Oric to a PC's printer port, similar to what PRLINK (<http://www.hut.fi/Misc/cbm/xfer/prlink.html>) does to Commodore computers.

I really should add Oric support to that tool someday, but I have 1000s of other things to do, and there are only 24 hours in a day. But the source code is freely available, and contributions are welcome. Marko

From Fabrice Francès <frances@ensica.fr>

Just my \$0.02 unreliable contribution, because I'm not an Apple][expert. However, a friend let me use one recently, and if I remember well, the 5"1/4 disks were of the FM type (single density). The Microdisc controller used on our «western» Orics should be able to cope with both MFM (double density) and FM formats, there's a bit devoted for this selection in the interface. However, all Oric Disk Operating Systems I know of force the format type to double density, so a special routine should be written in order to check if the Oric is able to read Apple][disks... BTW, if you want to read/write Apple][disks with a PC, you have a problem, AFAIK the floppy controller on the PC doesn't allow the use of the FM format. So, I agree with Marko, it should be easier to use a transfer tool... Cheers, PS: Thanks a lot for the invitation 8) However, I may wait a little before visiting you, because it's a rather big distance from here 8)

More information from Ivan Naydenov <ivann@mobikom.bg>

I will give you any information you want about the local DOS as I wrote it's Apple][compatible format of diskettes (5 1/4, 140K, Single Sided, Soft Sector with tracks starting at different places because of the original Apple][drives which don't make use of the index hole on the diskettes. File types are using the same bits as Apple's but the letter for the type is changed (that's DOS's business the visualisation) it works well, the diskettes are also FM, not MFM (I digged that up in my Apple literature), so MAYBE the PC drives can't read/write those diskettes at all. Or maybe they can read them. But when I was reading about the local analog of Intel's 8272 chip (the disk controller used in IBM PC/XT) there was something mentioned about FM format. So if you have information on that I'll be grateful. Send questions to the reply address. I can give my paper mail (I call it so) or postal address too, but I just don't trust the local postoffices. DHL is more reliable, but too expensive :) so here's the address: BULGARIA Sofia, 1606 Skoblelev 60 Blvd, A, Apt.4 Ivan Naydenov. You can send any paper material to that address, but nothing else (they can steal it in the post office) Regards, Ivan

From Dimitar Serafim <savmit@yahoo.com>

Hello Oric maniacs! First, my English is not so gut, sorry! Me 27. My name is Serafim Tabakov. I'm Bulgarian and I'm an engineer of microelectronic's. I have a Pravetz-8D? It's a Bulgarian version of Oric and I really love it.

From George Dramcheff <jorodr@yahoo.com>

Hallo Oric World. My name is George Dramcheff and I am from Bulgaria. I am sorry about my bad English, but I hope you can help me. In the middle of 80's in my country there was a computer, called Pravetz 8D. It was Oric Atmos compatible, and I fell in love with him. Nowadays I have 3 of them. We were many young boys, who made all possible to make there home computer better. There was a man, named Borislav Zahariev, who made floppy disk controller, compatible with Apple Dos 3.3 format of disks. Even more. The Dos for this controller worked in high 16 Kbytes, and all RAM (every byte) was free for programs. Another thing that was made in Bulgaria was to add 16 Kbytes ROM extra. It was possible, because the ROM of the computer was EPROM 27128, and there was free space for second chip. We made only little changes of the original ROM and the motherboard. With small changes in the ROM, Borislav Zahariev made real RESET for Pravetz 8D. Maybe anyone will be interested to own natural Bulgarian Pravetz 8D with floppy controller and these changes. I want to change one of them for real Atmos with Microdisc floppy drive. Please help! Even if you can't help me, I think that we will be interested to contact each other. I have the scheme of our floppy disk controller, and the documentation of the changes I told you. I will be glad to give them to Oric world. I am sure that their authors will be glad.