

JiffyDOS

Disk Drive
Replacement System

Jiffy Dos



Can the Jiffy defeat the dolphin?

By S. Garton

The combination of C64 and disk drive has often been described as a lumbering hippo, the reason for this being that disk access is extremely slow. A good indication of just how slow a C64 drive is, is that many games load quicker from cassette than from disk - silly, isn't it?

There are a variety of options available to disk users to help speed up disk access and loading time. These are:

Software fast loader

Cartridge Replacement DOS

The first method of disk speeding is OK when it works. But often, clashes between the customary used by a fast loader and the program you're trying to load prevent such a speed up system being used. Another problem is that a fast loader for one make of drive will not necessarily work on a different Commodore drive.

A cartridge-based fast loader usually gives a better chance of loading a program than the software method, since many cartridges take up little or no user RAM. However, there are no problems. Firstly, you have to plug them in to your machine when you want to use them, and, despite warnings, many people have damaged their

computers by plugging in or unplugging cartridges while the machine is switched on.

Secondly, some cartridges require you to load fast load software into them, so by the time you've loaded the software in, you may as well have loaded the program in slow mode anyway. Still other cartridges require that you format, or copy, the program. Unfortunately, not all programs can be cloned.

The third method of disk speed-up is, in my mind, the best. A replacement DOS system usually requires you to open up both your disk drive and C64 or C128, remove some chips and add new ones containing the new disk access software. Two such systems are currently available. Firstly, there is Dolphin DOS, which has been around for some time. Now there is a new system on offer called Jiffy DOS.

I've been using Dolphin Dos for some time now, and am particularly happy with it. Dolphin DOS not only replaces chips inside the computer, but a new lead is used for communication between drive and computer. However, this lead plugs into the user port at the rear of the computer, which is a real inconvenience at times, since I use this port for other things, such as my modem.

Since I'm so pleased with Dolphin Dos, I was at first reluctant to try out the new replacement DOS system from Financial Systems Software - Jiffy DOS. However when I did, I was pleasantly surprised by what was on offer.

What You Get

One great problem with Dolphin DOS is that it will only work with my 1541 disk drive. I have a second drive, but this is an Excelsiorator, and I've been unable to find a fast DOS system to work with this. Until now that is - Jiffy DOS is available for all of the following computers and disk drives:

C64, 64C, SX-64, C128, C128D, 1240, 1240C, 1240-II, 1271, 1281, PSD-1, PSD-2, Excelsiorator+, Excel 2001, as well as some others.

The fact that you've probably never heard of some of these disk drives will probably indicate to you that Jiffy DOS is of American origin. The originators of Jiffy DOS in the States are Creative Micro Designs Inc. As you can see from the extensive list above, this replacement DOS is available for a much wider range of systems than any other system available.

The first thing that I noticed about Jiffy DOS was the lack of parts to it

-gates are the complicated boards and leads that I associate with my Dolphin DOS. If you have a C64, you simply get two chips with switches attached. If you have a C128, you get three chips, two of them connected to a single switch. One of these chips is the replacement ROM to go inside your disk drive. The other chip (or chips), is a replacement ROM for the KERNAL chip (or chips), inside your computer.

Installation of the new chips is both quick and simple - all that is needed is a screwdriver and a little common sense. Clear, step by step installation instructions are included in the package.

What It Does

Jiffy DOS is designed to speed up all disk operations, including LOAD, SAVE, FORMAT etc. The package claims increases of up to 15 times the speed of a standard drive. A DOS wedge is included in the new chips. This adds 14 new commands to Basic which give you much quicker access to your disks. Single key LOAD, SAVE, and directory commands are also added.

If you have a C128 then the DOS works in both C64 and C128 modes. Rather than spending on about all of the commands that are offered by Jiffy Dos, I've listed all of the new commands in Figure 1.

If you want to see just how well Jiffy DOS performed, then you should check out Figure 2. Please note these figures are for a C128 with an Excelsior disk drive. Other combinations may give different results.

How Was It?

So what did I think of Jiffy DOS? The lack of a parallel cable was the first good point I noticed. I could have my drive where I wanted it, serial cable allowing, rather than wherever a short parallel lead dictated I have it. Secondly, the ability to use a smaller Excelsior drive rather than my bulky 1541 was of great benefit.

On the software side, I found that most programs that I tried worked without any problems, though some heavily protected software would not load without me disabling the new DOS.

Disabling the DOS simply required that the switches mentioned be turned off. Jiffy DOS can be switched in and

out while the computer is still on. This has the advantage that should a program not load while the DOS was turned on, I could simply switch it off. Once the program had loaded, I could turn the DOS back on in order to speed up any further disk activity.

Dolphin DOS prevents C128 owners with a slight problem - if the C128 Kernal is replaced, then you lose the ability to load software from cassette tape. If you should ever need to use tape in C128 mode, you'd have to open up the machine and put your old Kernal back in. Flipping the Jiffy DOS switch turns the DOS completely off, and tape use is then allowed, a great benefit for C128 users who require tape.

Of course Jiffy DOS isn't all a bed of roses, and there are a number of areas where I feel Dolphin DOS has the edge on it. For starters I did miss being able to access the monitor that's built into Dolphin DOS. The machine code monitor that Dolphin DOS

provides may only be a simple one, but it does come in handy at times.

Dolphin DOS is quicker than Jiffy DOS, and having used Dolphin DOS for some time, I did sometimes find myself waiting for something to load. The cheaper price of Jiffy DOS and its ability to work with just about any system configuration does make it an excellent product. Dolphin DOS offers a few more facilities, but does limit you to the type of disk drive you own use.

Being a C128 user who quite often needs to use a cassette recorder in 128 mode, using the rear port for plugging a number of items into the computer and requires quick disk access, Jiffy DOS does everything that I require, and would be my choice over Dolphin DOS, even if it isn't quite so fast.

Footnote:

JiffyDOS Dos Supplier F.S.S.L.
18 High Street, Peckham, Waverley
W9 1JG, Tel: 0181 853115. Price
£54.95.

Command Summary

Standard DOS 3.1 Wedge Commands

D	Load the disk drive case changed
DC: command filename	Copy a file on the same diskette
DD	Initialize the disk drive
DD: command, ID	Format (NEW) a diskette
DD: command	Show NEW
DD	Disable the JiffyDOS commands
DD: command filename	Remove a file
DD: filename, filename	Search a file for files
DD	Reset the disk drive
DD	Validate a disk
DD	Display the disk directory
DD: command	Use the diskette test number
DD: command	Load a BASIC program
DD: command	Load and run a BASIC program
DD: command	Load an ML program
- DD: command	Save a BASIC program

Additional JiffyDOS Commands

DD	Disable/enable the 1541 head unit
DD: filename	Load a BASIC program from disk
DD	Disable/enable the function keys
DD: filename	Load/Save a file
DD: filename	Load an ASCII file from disk
DD	Use NEW a BASIC program
DD: command	Load an ML file (two pointers)
DD: command	Load an ML file (two pointers) test
DD: command	Load and run an ML file
DD: command	Verify a file
DD: filename -DD: filename	Load a run file program on disk
DD: command	Screen dump
DD: command	Re-enable the JiffyDOS commands
DD: command, C:128 mode	Re-enable the JiffyDOS commands
DD: command, C:128 in C28 mode	Re-enable the JiffyDOS commands
DD: command -DD	Default drive setup