

# Say Goodbye to Your Bird Cage Liner:

Computer technology has revolutionized the production of independent art, from digital sampling and MIDI synthesizers to the "desktop publishing" used by this magazine. But there are still new worlds to explore. The possibilities of electronic art have only begun to be imagined. One such area is in true electronic publishing—using PCs not just to create words and pictures but to disseminate them, in formats that keep them "alive" and dynamic, as opposed to the frozen quality of ink on paper.

The first "disk magazines" were packages of short computer programs for file management and other "utility" operations. In the past three years, though, more creative minds have worked in the medium. One such person is Jaime Levy, an ex-Seattle native, now in New York. She's released the first edition of *Cyber Rag*, a quarterly Macintosh disk filled with bizarre pictures, sounds, animations and words. She made it with HyperCard, a popular Macintosh program that easily combines these and other elements.

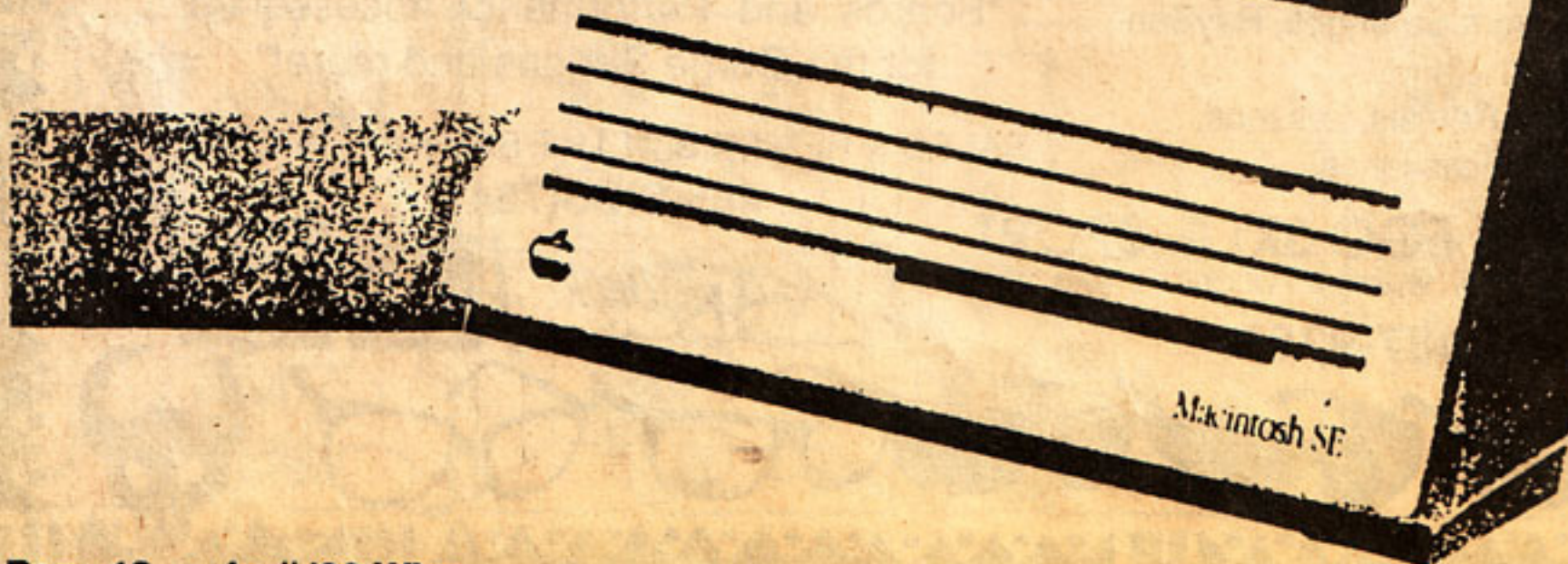
In an editorial, Levy explains what she feels are advantages to having art and reading on disk. "The first would be the millions of beautiful trees that would not have to be chopped down. Paper is wasted too much on bad novellas and seedy magazines these days... Then I considered how the

format of reading will change. The table of contents can be the interface and the information can be enhanced with sound, animation and graphics. There could be scanning options for readers who want the first paragraph and footnote buttons for those who want reference to more information."

Here's what you get on Levy's disk:

- **GAMES:** Take a brief quiz on the life and times of computer mogul Steve Jobs, the most successful executive to have ever lived on an all-carrot diet. Relive last December's follies with "Noriega Tag," chasing an ever-moving Manuel-face across the screen.
- **WORDS:** Read two brief pieces about people who break into computer and phone networks, and who

# A New Way To Read All About It!







By Clark Humphrey

defend their electro-piracy as a counterattack against monolithic control of information ("My crime is one of curiosity"). There's also a short essay by Tom Savage wondering if God was really an acronym for "Guaranteed Overnight Delivery" and, if so, what's being delivered where.

• **GRAPHICS:** Watch two impressive animated sequences and a collection of inventive still pictures, all computer generated, some involving "found images" digitally scanned and altered. The main menu screen shows the face of a baby with steely eyes, determined to stare you down until it gets what it wants. The most dramatic image is Levy's own "Nuclear Family," in which the baby picture shares the screen with a digitized photo of a male private part. Levy may be contrasting our society's love of children with its continuing shame/fear at the process of making children.

• **SOUNDS:** Every time you move to another part of the program, you hear a funky piece of industrial-sounding noise. Most of the sounds were taken from spoken words or musical samples, then altered or degraded.

These individual pieces add into a coherent whole, something most print magazines strive for but few achieve. Like the wicked baby on its menu screen, *Cyber Rag* is bratty but in a loveable sort of way. It's available from Levy at 622 E. 11th St., #17, NY, NY 10009. Levy has not officially charged money for it, but a \$1 donation will pay for disk and mailing costs.

Other alternative disk magazines include *Hyperzeen* and *Hardcopy for the Common Good* (for the Macintosh), and Scott Alexander's *Technoir* (for the Amiga); they're available for "downloading" on computer bulletin board systems and information services.

Unfortunately, most personal computers, especially the cheaper ones, are of the MS-DOS variety, which don't handle graphics and sound as well as the Mac and Amiga. New software such as Guide and Microsoft Windows may help make more sophisticated computer art available to MS-DOS users. More information on the possibilities of computer art and writing is in Ted Nelson's entertaining book *Computer Lib* (Microsoft Press).

—Clark Humphrey

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