

ATARI ST DISKZINES

The Internet is a wonderful place that provides us with unlimited access to almost every piece of software or information that we need. But there was a time before the Internet where we had to rely on Magazines and Public Domain Libraries (PDLs) for Atari ST/STE-related software and information. I would often look forward to buying the commercial Atari ST Magazines such as ST Format, ST Review, and ST User and eagerly check out the contents of the cover disk that graced the front page. I would sit on my comfy armchair in the peaceful surroundings of my bedroom and enjoy reading the magazine from cover to cover, checking out the latest PD (Public Domain), Freeware, Shareware, Licenceware, and Commercial software reviews as well as the useful tutorials and articles.

The magazines would advertise the many PDLs that provided PD, Freeware, Shareware, and Licenceware software on a floppy disk for between one to three pounds. The PDL Ads only offered a small selection of software in their listing but they would provide you with a disk-based or paper catalogue listing their full software library. The great thing about PDLs is that they allowed you to access software written by bedroom programmers that you would never find in the stores. For a programmer like me, they were a useful resource for things like source code, fonts, sprites, music files, and pictures. They also provided issues of various diskzines such as Stosser, Power, ST Plus, Atari Times, and Maggie.

WHAT IS A DISKZINE

A diskzine is a collection of documents on a floppy disk that can be viewed using a piece of software referred to as a "shell". The shell would list the names and descriptions of all the documents on the disk which would be displayed in the form of articles, reviews, and tutorials as well as other various items of interest such as advert pages, someone's ramblings, and contact lists. The shell would have its own built-in document displayer which would load each document, format it, and display it with the option to change fonts and music. Later versions of document displayers would display pictures along with the text such as the popular Stosser Doc Displayer by Tony Greenwood. Some diskzines would also provide free software known as giveaways such as the Stosser Diskzine – also by Tony Greenwood. Diskzines would sometimes be referred to as "diskzenes" or "diskmags".

HOW DOES A DISKZINE BENEFIT ME

Diskzines can offer content on basically any subject. Stosser diskzine covered articles and tutorials related to the STOS Basic programming language whilst Atari Times covered everything Atari ST related. Another diskzine known as Power provided practically everything you could dream of, even strange things like the entire script to the popular Terminator 2 movie. Diskzines are also free unless you purchase them from a PDL. You can distribute disks to your friends and contacts for free and they can do the same for you – therefore you can get a lot of software and information for free rather than pay for the commercial Atari ST magazines I mentioned above. Diskzines allow you to meet other computer users with the same interests as you who you can swap stuff with. Some might even have a problem page where you can get a quicker response to questions than from commercial magazines.

WHO WRITES THE CONTENT FOR THE DISKZINE

The general idea behind diskzines is that the readers write the content and share it with their fellow readers. Stosser and Power were two diskzines that relied heavily on contributions. The main people behind the diskzine were the ones who put it all together including the editing and the creation of the shell. There may even be someone who runs a regular page such as the problem page. Diskzines usually have a few people who become regular contributors to each issue every month whilst a few bits trickle in from the odd reader or two. Software is also contributed and is a great way to guarantee the mass distribution of your work.

WHERE CAN I DOWNLOAD THE DISKZINES

Try Exxos Atari Pages for a selection of the best diskzines.

http://www.exxoshost.co.uk/atari/STOS_index.htm