

Just for Your
Tandy MS-DOS
and Portable Computers

PCM

The Premier Personal Computer Magazine
for Tandy® Computer Users

Vol. VII No. 5
November 1989

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A first look
at Tandy's new
1100 FD portable

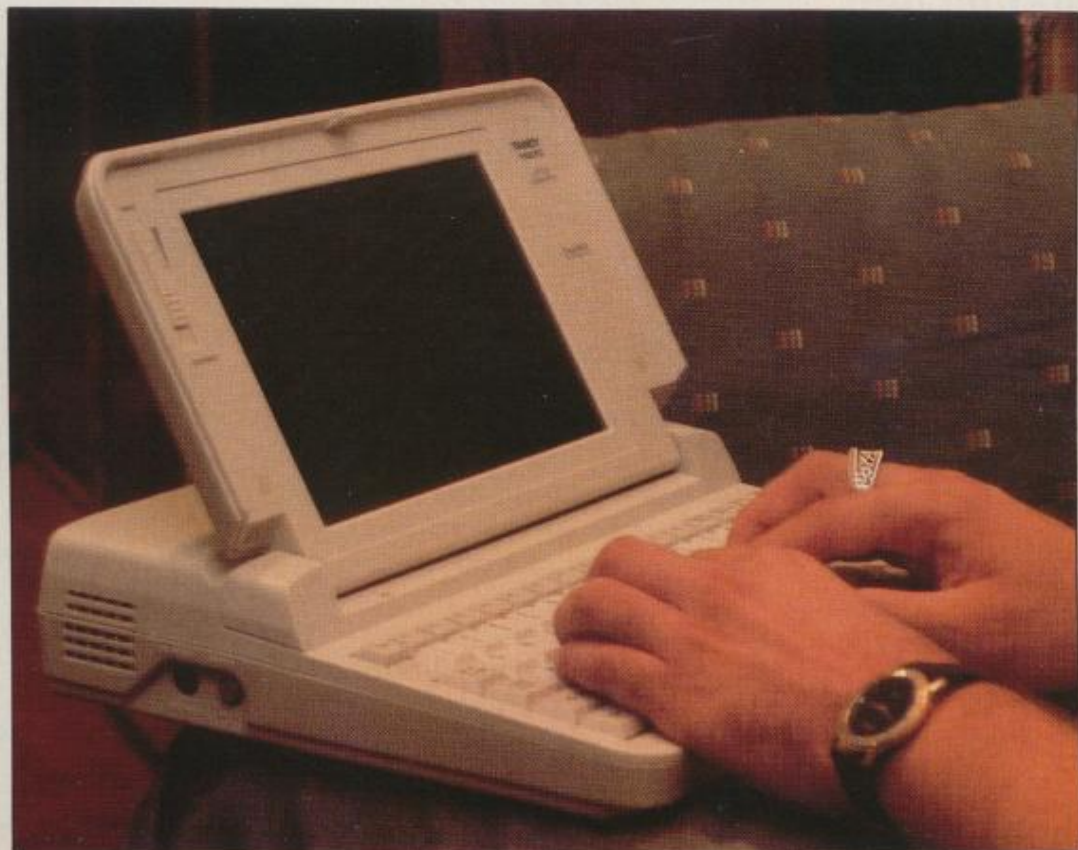
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"Up, up and away" with Tandy's new ultralight

The 1100 FD — It Really Flies!

by Gregory Shultz
Technical Editor



With all the hoopla lately about portable computing, it only makes sense that Tandy, having marketed portable computers since 1983, should now introduce its first true MS-DOS portable. Weighing in at just under 6½ pounds, the 1100 FD packs quite a wallop when it is compared to its predecessors.

The Tandy Portable Family

Each of the 1100's long line of predecessors has certainly been a winner in its own right. Tandy has been making portable

journalists. In 1985 Tandy introduced the Model 600. Although still not an MS-DOS-compatible machine, it was a portable that was loaded with many features. Unfortunately these features had one major drawback: they made the 600 a very heavy portable. This computer was followed in 1986 by the Model 102, an upgrade to the Model 100.

In a departure from the book-sized portable computer, Tandy introduced its first laptop, called the 1400 LT, in 1987. This evolution in portability brought with it an equal evolution in power and versatility, with the most significant improvement being a move into the MS-DOS realm. The 1400's other exciting innovation was in its screen. The 1400 used LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) technology, making its backlit, dark blue-on-gray display very impressive. Still a champ in its own class, the Tandy 1400 laptop computer has been upgraded with the introduction of the FD and HD models.

So just what is it that makes this new portable such a winner?

Light but Powerful

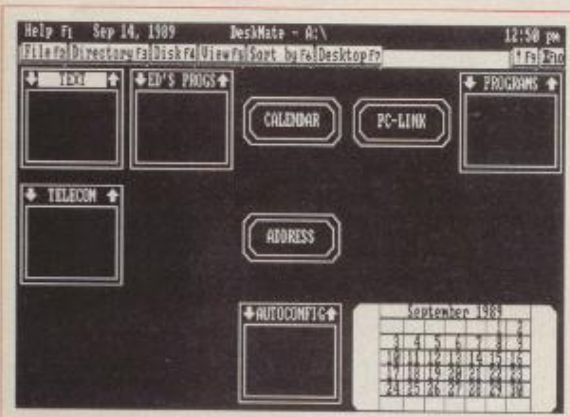
One of the first things you notice about the 1100 FD when you actually pick one up is its weight. Although it is light, it is far from being a lightweight.

Packing such features as DOS 3.3.4 and *DeskMate* 3.03 in ROM, 640K RAM, and a 720K 3½-inch floppy disk drive into its trim frame, the 1100 is indeed a powerful machine. All this and more comes in a beige case measuring just 12 inches wide, 10 inches deep and two and three quarters inches high at its tallest point.

At just under 6½ pounds, the 1100 FD weighs no more than some books many of us have carried. Approximately one-sixth of this weight can be accounted for in the battery pack, but a mere 13 ounces is a small price to pay for up to five hours of computing time on one charge.

Long Time No Charge

The 1100 is able to get up to five hours of computing time due to several factors, including a new battery design. Since ac-



A *DeskMate* screen captured from Tandy Director of Marketing Ed Juge's 1100

computers since 1983, when the first Model 100 was produced. While limited in its real computing capabilities (compared to MS-DOS machines), the Model 100 was and still is a versatile little machine with a healthy following. The next generation Tandy portable — and the one from whom the 1100 inherits its looks — was the Model 200. Introduced in 1984, the 200 soon became the portable of choice for many

Greg Shultz recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin, where he studied journalism and computer science. An avid personal computer buff for the last five years, he couldn't be happier in his position as PCM's new technical editor.

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cessing the disk causes a big draw on the battery, having DOS and *DeskMate* in ROM is a definite power-saving feature. Studies at Tandy's laboratories indicate that, on the average, the disk drive is in use only 10 percent of the total five-hour time span. Another feature to help you get more power per charge is the screen blank power-saver mode. Using the setup utility, you can configure the screen to blank out at two, four, eight, 16, 32, or 64 minutes. You have the option of turning this feature off if automatic screen blanking bothers you. Pressing any key brings the screen back to life without altering anything on the screen.

When the 1100 begins to feel its charge slipping, it alerts you to this fact by flashing the combination charge/disk access light and issuing an intermittent beep. If you happen to be near an electrical outlet, simply plugging in the AC adapter allows you to recharge the battery pack while you continue computing at the same time. The 1100's battery pack can be recharged up to 300 times before it needs to be replaced.

Replacing the battery pack is a quick procedure as the battery compartment is easily accessible at the top of the computer. It is covered by a snap-release lid that slides off the computer and out of your way, and

```
A:\>C:
C:\DIR

Volume in drive C has no label
Directory of C:\

AUTOEXEC      BAT      20           7-14-89      1:00p
AUTOMEM       COM     1427         7-14-89      1:00p
COMMAND       COM    25644        7-14-89      1:00p
DESK          COM     9904         7-14-89      1:00p
DISKCOPY      COM     6264         7-14-89      1:00p
FORMAT        COM    11681        7-14-89      1:00p
RESTART       COM     212          7-14-89      1:00p
              7 File(s)              0 bytes free
```

Calling up a directory of Drive C reveals the files in ROM.

inch diagonal screen is a CGA emulation with a 640-by-200 resolution. With the contrast slide mounted right next to the screen and a display that can be tilted back approximately 120 degrees, adjustments to the screen contrast and viewing angle are a breeze.

Typing on the 1100's keyboard is sure to please all comers with its use of only 84 keys to truly emulate a 101-key keyboard. Twelve function keys are included, and the keys on the right side double as a numeric keypad when the NUM-LOCK key is used. While the keyboard appears to be packed into a small amount of space, taking up 11½ inches of the 12-inch-wide computer, measurements taken here at PCM indicated that from Q to P is seven and a half inches — the same as on an enhanced 101. Touch typists will like the tactile keyboard, which responds with a satisfying click as each key is pressed.

Opening another snap release lid on the back of the 1100 exposes the built-in parallel and RS-232 serial ports. Located above the two ports is a slot for an internal modem. The 2400-baud modem for the 1100 can be purchased separately for \$199.95. This adds a little weight, but think of the *power* it adds to this compact portable!

Software

When you look into ROM, accessed by changing to Drive C, it is apparent that not all of DOS or *DeskMate* is present. How-

ever, the 1100 comes with three 720K 3½-inch floppy disks that contain all the other files you need to use DOS and *DeskMate* to their fullest.

Given the emerging popularity of Tandy's *DeskMate* graphical interface, it is not surprising to see that the 1100 comes with the newest version of *DeskMate* in its ROM. Without inserting a disk into the drive, you can bring up the *DeskMate* desktop by pressing the F12 hot key. From here you are able to use the *Text* editor and the 90,000-word spelling checker through the new push buttons rather than the application boxes used with older versions of *DeskMate*. Inserting the appropriate one of the two *DeskMate* disks into the drive allows you access to the new help feature, which is context-sensitive. Using an AI Hypertext engine, the help feature is able to zero in on your last keystrokes and provide the exact information you need to solve your problem. Also included is the *Teach Me* tutorial program, which guides you step-by-step through all of *DeskMate*'s features.

Porting the Portable

A handle with which to carry the 1100 is not included, but the machine fits nicely into the standard briefcase. If that doesn't suit your needs, Tandy offers a choice of two carrying cases. As we go to press, the style and price of these carrying cases are undetermined, but you can be sure of at least one thing: After purchasing the 1100 FD for \$999, you will have enough left over to get a carrying case as well.



The snap-release lid slides off to reveal the 13-ounce battery pack.

you can install the battery in seconds by connecting the simple two-prong plug. The replacement battery pack costs only \$29.95. For roughly 1500 hours of computing time, that seems to be a small price to pay for portability.

I/O, I/O, It's Off to Work We Go

Releasing the slide latch on the front of the 1100 and raising the cover reveals a pleasing blue-on-green display. The nine-