

MIRAGE IMAGER
USER'S MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

The Mirage Imager has been designed as an easy way for anyone to transfer any CPC464/664/6128 program to tape or disc.

All operations are menu driven with full prompting and error trapping.

Program transfer is as simple as pressing a button, selecting Save and entering a filename.

Display width, start address and colour can be easily changed if required by using functions from the Imager menu.

The Imager can be used on the CPC464 without a disc interface if required, the tape routines include both slow (1000 baud), fast (2000 baud) and turbo (3000 baud) speed operation.

All saved programs are compressed to ensure that they use minimal room on tape or disc.

A program can be stopped and saved at any time during its operation, when loaded back it will continue from the same point. This can be useful for saving your position in a game, allowing you to restart at any time.

The Imager must be connected to the computer in order to load a program back. This ensures that the entire contents of the computer memory can be restored before a program is run.

The Imager will save up to 128k bytes of memory and restores the correct RAM paging mode and interrupt system timing before running a program.

CONNECTING THE IMAGER

Ensure that the power to your computer is switched off, then plug the Imager into the expansion port. A short connecting lead is required for the CPC6128. Other peripherals can be plugged into the expansion port at the rear of the Imager. Check that all connectors are clean and pushed firmly home.

USING THE IMAGER

The Imager does not affect the normal operation of the computer until it is activated by pressing the red push button, before this programs can be loaded and saved to tape or disc in the usual way.

When activated the Imager takes control of the computer and prints a copyright message at the top of the display.

Press [ENTER] and the Imager will display a menu. The functions can be selected by typing the first character of the command followed by [ENTER]. The [RETURN] key may be used on the CPC6128.

INITIALISING

The New function in the Imager menu re-initialises Basic and clears the additional 64k RAM of 128k computers with the option of disabling expansion ROMs.

Disabling expansion ROMs will restore the free RAM to the maximum, making it possible to load very large programs from tape which would not work with the disc ROM present.

To disable expansion ROMs activate the Imager by pressing the red push button. Press [ENTER] to display the menu, then select the New function by pressing N followed by [ENTER]. Press Y followed by [ENTER] and Basic will initialise without the external ROMs.

For 128k computer owners it is important to clear the additional 64k RAM before loading a program to transfer, this ensures that the saved program size is as small as possible.

To clear the additional RAM activate the Imager by pressing the red push button. Press [ENTER] to display the menu, then select the New function by pressing N followed by [ENTER]. If you want to disable expansion ROMs press Y followed by [ENTER], otherwise press N followed by [ENTER]. Basic will re-initialise and the additional RAM will be cleared.

SAVING A PROGRAM

Load the program to be transferred in the normal way, ensuring expansion ROMs are disabled if necessary (see initialising).

At any time after the program has been loaded activate the Imager by pressing the red push button (the lower part of the display may look odd at this point). Press [ENTER] to display the menu, then select the Save function by pressing S followed by [ENTER].

Type the filename and press [ENTER], then select drive A, B or T for Tape, followed by [ENTER].

If you are using tape select either slow, fast or turbo speed by pressing S, F or T followed by [ENTER]. Press [REC] and [PLAY] on the tape recorder then [ENTER]. Slow speed is more reliable but programs saved using the fast or turbo speeds will load in a much shorter time.

The Imager will clear the display while saving the program and return to the menu when finished. To continue running the program from the same point select Run by pressing R followed by [ENTER].

LOADING A PROGRAM

Activate the Imager by pressing the red push button. Press [ENTER] to display the menu, then select the Load function by pressing L followed by [ENTER].

Type the filename and press [ENTER], then select drive A, B or T for Tape, followed by [ENTER].

If you are using tape press [PLAY] on the tape recorder then [ENTER], the speed is automatically determined from the tape.

The Imager will clear the display while loading the program and return to the menu when finished.

To continue running the program from the point at which it was saved select Run by pressing R followed by [ENTER]. The program will start as soon as you release the [ENTER] key.

DISC CATALOG

For your convenience a Cat function has been included in the menu for disc operation. Drive A or B can be selected although any program in memory at the time will be lost.

To select Cat from the Imager menu press C followed by [ENTER], then select the drive by pressing either A or B followed by [ENTER]. The catalog will be displayed and control will return to the menu.

Programs saved using the Imager will have a filename extension of '.IMG'.

The Basic CAT function can be used to catalog programs on tape.

ESCAPE KEY

During Imager operations the [ESC] key can be used to return to the main menu at any time. The key will need to be held down until the computer responds during load and save operations.

NOTES ON THE CPC DISPLAY

The Imager sets the display colours and size to the default values used by Basic. This may not be appropriate for some programs and it is not possible to determine the correct information directly from the computer hardware.

Some programs which do not use the default display values can be restarted by using the [ESC] key or other key sequence, in which case the colours and display size are usually restored. If this is not possible the Window, Address and Ink functions described below can be used to set up the display correctly.

The display set up information is stored within the Imager when a program is run to allow you to gradually build up the correct settings. When you are happy with the display size and colours activate the Imager and save the program. The display set up information will then be saved in the file so that the correct values will be used whenever it is loaded.

The Imager will change the display mode when activated, this may

make the lower part of the display look odd. The correct display mode will be restored when the program is Run.

WINDOW

The Window function can be used to set up the display width and height to suit any program. The width is normally set to 40 characters and the height to 25 lines.

If the width is incorrect the display will have a scrambled appearance when the program is run (try setting the width to 32 if this happens). If the height is incorrect the bottom lines may contain random dots. You may need to experiment with different values for width and height until the size is correct.

To change the width and height select Window from the Imager menu by pressing W followed by [ENTER]. Enter the display width (20 to 40 characters) followed by [ENTER]. Then enter the display height (15 to 25 lines) followed by [ENTER].

Select Run from the menu to see what effect the new width and height has had on the display.

INK

The Ink function can be used to modify the display colours. These are set up by selecting a pen number (0 to 16) and choosing the ink number (0 to 28) to be used by that pen. The border colour is set by pen number 16.

You may have to experiment to determine which pen numbers have been used for each part of the display. For information on the colour system and ink numbers refer to your computer manual.

To change a display colour select Ink from the Imager menu by pressing I followed by [ENTER]. Enter the pen number followed by [ENTER], and the ink number followed by [ENTER].

Select Run from the menu to see what effect the colour change has had on the display.

ADDRESS

The display address can be set to any of the four possible 16k RAM blocks (0, 16384, 32768 or 49152). The display is normally located at 49152 but may have been located in one of the other blocks.

If the display does not appear when you run a program try setting the address to one of the other values given above. If the display has been scrolled you may need to add an offset (0 to 2046) to the display address.

To change the display address select Address from the Imager menu by pressing A followed by [ENTER]. Enter the new address followed

by [ENTER].

Select Run from the menu to see what effect the address change has had on the display.

NOTES ON FILE SIZE

The Imager will save the entire contents of your computer's RAM in a compacted form. This will include the screen display at the point at which the button is pressed. If the screen happens to be blank when the button is pressed then the size of the saved file will be considerably reduced. You may find this information useful for putting more programs on each disc.

ERROR MESSAGES

The Imager includes full error trapping and may on occasion display any of the messages below. To return to the menu press [ENTER].

File not found

The program could not be found on the specified drive, try using Cat to look at the disc.

Disc is write protected

The write protect tab on the disc has been pushed in, pull it out and try again.

Disc full

There was not enough room to save the program on the disc, use Cat to see why.

New programs are initially saved with the extension '.\$\$\$', then renamed to '.IMG'. If a program of the same name appears on the disc it will be renamed with an extension of '.BAK'. In some cases there needs to be room on the disc for three versions of the program before the old '.BAK' is deleted!

Disc not present

The drive does not contain a disc, or the disc is not properly inserted.

Disc error

Any disc interface error not covered by the above.

Tape loading error

An error occurred while loading the program, rewind and try again. Check volume and tone settings when using an external tape recorder. Tapes saved at slow speed may be easier to load than

those saved at fast or turbo speed.

Tape saving error

An error occurred while saving the program, rewind and try again. This can be caused by having too many peripherals plugged into the computer's expansion port.

Wrong file type

The Imager will only load programs saved by itself. Any attempt to load other programs will produce this message.

Bad program

A loading failure or use of Cat will result in the program being corrupted. In this case you have to load another program or return to Basic by using New.

Not enough memory

The program was saved on a 128k RAM machine, there is not enough memory to load it into a 64k RAM machine.

Expansion ROM not present

The Imager checks that any expansion ROM which was enabled when the program was saved is still present. If the ROM is not found then you will not be able to Run the program. This will also happen with different versions of the Basic ROM.