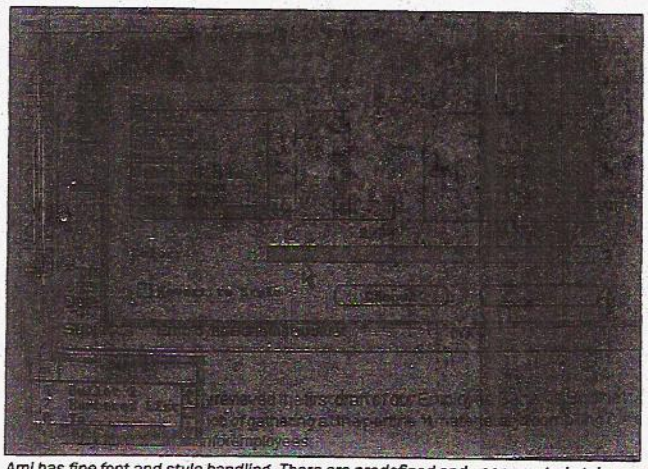
REVIEWS



Ami has fine font and style handling. There are predefined and user-created styles as well as a choice of screen fonts (including typeface, color, and styles).

Windows-Based Samna Ami Takes WYSIWYG Approach

Executive word processor especially useful for people who need reasonably fancy formatting.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

For those of you who have waited patiently for useful applications to run with Microsoft Windows, your prayers have been answered — at least in word processing — with Ami. This executive word processor from Samna bears no resemblance to its parent company's ponderous office/professional word processor, Samna Word 2.02, fitting instead into Microsoft Windows with elan.

This review is based on scoring and testing criteria established in our September 26, 1988, product comparison of executive word processors.

FEATURES:

Something like a cross between Windows Write and Microsoft Word, Ami does about 80 percent of what an executive word processing product should do and does it with a WYSIWYG vengeance — showing fonts, graphics, and actual line endings (unlike Windows Write). The program takes advantage of the Windows interface to provide a word processing environment in which all possible formatting information is displayed on the PC graphics screen. Much like the preview functions in such products as Wordstar Professional 5.0 or Word Perfect 5.0, the Ami screen indicates type style, size, and enhancements just as they appear on paper. Unlike those products, however, Ami word processing functions can be performed on the preview screen, which has several zoom levels. Formatting is completely dynamic, with every change reflected on-screen as it takes place.

The concept is terrific and the execution quite good, but you'd better have a fast computer to make Ami perform at a reasonable speed. On an 8-MHz 286, the program is very slow in the graphics (layout) mode; there is, however, a draft mode that temporarily strips out formatting for significantly faster text entry. In layout mode, though, even a modestly proficient typist can run way ahead of the display screen, and editing the document can be tedious. While full mouse support is available (as with all Windows applications), Ami works fastest with keyboard keys.

Ami has a standard Windows-style menu for accessing program functions such as fonts, editing functions, the spelling checker, and file management. Several DOS functions, such as deleting and renaming files, can be performed from the main Ami menu. Style sheets can be accessed from a tear-off menu, and a stack of icons on the left-hand side of the display lets you access frequent operations such as the Undo command and the Print menu (although these can be accessed in other ways as well) by the click of a mouse.

Ami imports a variety of formats and handles fonts with great facility. Graphics compatible with Windows can be imported and included in a document with ease. Curiously, however, there is no way to get a Microsoft Word document into Ami without removing all formatting information in the process.

Ami's graphics system uses frames, which are variously sized boxes inserted into the middle of the text and expanded to the desired size. Regular text can flow around the frame or the frame can be overlaid on the text. Frames contain either text or graphics data, and you can import a number of graphic file types into the frame for resizing.

Although the product lacks mail merge, a serious omission for office use, and has few of the enhancements related to complex document preparation, such as indexing, footnotes, tables of contents, sorting, math, and similar functions, its admirable formatting capabilities earn it an important place as one of the first serious Windows word processing systems.

PERFORMANCE:

Ami's editing capabilities include an easy copy/cut-and-paste feature that uses the Windows clipboard (which lets you exchange data with other applications) and easy mouse or keyboard cursor movements. Four types of tab stops are easily defined, and the screen display shows page numbers. However, the program requires practically everything to work with the pre- or user-defined styles; for example, there is no indent tab other than what is included as part of a defined style. The search-and-replace feature is reasonably quick but was occasionally inconsistent in replacing words. Other attractive items include a revert function for returning to a pre-edit version of a file, multiple document views, and a superior layout function that handles complex layout chores, such as columns, easily and visually. If you like, you can balance columns and modify line and paragraph spacing independently. Ami lets you display the current or system date. We rate correspondence features very good.

The spelling checker integrated into Ami is quite large with 130,000 words. It checks spelling only from the cursor to the end, so if you want to spell check the entire document you have to move the cursor to the beginning before starting. The dictionary contains several words not in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (thens, whsle, whse, scil, whinsey); presumably several of these "words" are actually typos or abbreviations. Still, it would be better to let the user add any abbreviations to the custom user dictionary rather than placing them in the main, uneditable dictionary.

There is no thesaurus.

While you can skip each word or all occurrences of a word, add words to the dictionary, and get a count of number of words checked, there is no spelling check of words inside a text/graphics frame. You have the option of replacing one time or all occurrences, but the choices for substitute words are often strange or obscure (such as thegn, thane, churchly, churl, scollop). Limited by these problems, we can rate the spelling checking features no higher than good.

As expected with a Windows product focused on formatting and layout, Ami has fine font and style handling. There are predefined and user-created styles as well as a choice of screen fonts (including typeface, color, and styles). The Modify Style menu makes it easy to change typefaces and add enhancements.

A wide selection of fonts is available with and handled by the Windows operating environment. Soft fonts such as Bitstream Fontware or HP Type Director/CG Fonts can be used with Ami, and the draft and layout modes let you get the best of free-form text entering and editing and WYSIWYG layout and styles. You can store a style containing information such as a letterhead or a memo form, and you can use that style with or without the contents. Ami supports a variety of printers through Windows, including Postscript and the HP Laserjet, and can print all or part of a document in reverse or collated order. We rate fonts and styles excellent.

Graphics integrate well into Ami, either through a direct import of file types such as PCX and TIFF or through Windows clipboard imports. Frames for holding either text or graphics introduce an additional element for text construction easily used to prepare interesting and complicated documents. Ami will draw lines with fill patterns between columns or around pages, and you can select line styles and color; you can print in color if supported by the printer. The layout mode permits the user to see an exact replica of the frame graphic. These features earn Ami a very good rating for graphics.

All this good stuff comes at the price of speed, unless you are working in the draft mode, which is quite fast. While Ami is relatively fast at reformatting text, it is very slow when you manually scroll through the document in layout mode and during spelling checking. The program also makes heavy use of disk files and, as a result, disk speed can have an impact on performance. Ami's speed score earns a satisfactory rating.

Ami imports and exports ASCII text files plus a number of standard word processing formats, including Wordstar 2000, Word Perfect 5.0, and, of course, Samna Word. In addition, the program will import several graphics formats. We rate compatibility very good. Unfortunately this version of the product does not import IBM Document Content Architecture (DCA) format files. Additional formats will be made available in the future.

DOCUMENTATION:

Several nice manuals provide basic information needed to operate Ami. The user's guide offers a basic guide to major program functions and a reference guide based on menu items that appear in the dialog boxes. The explanations are very nicely presented, with good examples and

ALSO IN THIS SECTION

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clear explanations. While the technical information available on the product is minimal, the user's guide is comprehensive.

A style-sheet guide helps clarify Ami's concept of style sheets with many examples and illustrations showing how to use the predefined style sheets. These offer an impressive demonstration of style-sheet power and effectiveness. Finally, a small guide to Windows helps users who only use the run-time version of Windows delivered as part of the Ami package. It does not serve as a substitute for the full Windows system manual but does guide users who need only what is required for Ami. On-screen help is extensive and effective, including context-sensitive help in addition to an indexed help system.

The manuals do not, however, offer much help with printers, and information on fonts is minimal at best. This is partly a result of relying on Windows to handle printer and font chores, but for some users the absence of printer and font information could be confusing. Error messages are informative and helpful. Overall, we rate documentation very good.

EASE OF LEARNING:
Ami takes about 30 minutes to get installed and running; another 20 minutes or so will get you working effectively with the product. The WYSIWYG user interface and excellent styles make it very easy to produce work immediately. If you're not the type to read a manual cover to cover, basic information needed to get started is easy to locate. For users with any Windows experience, Ami will be even easier to learn. Other users may take somewhat longer to learn the Windows conventions for mouse behavior and the relationship of the various parts of a Windows screen. Perhaps what takes longest to learn with Ami is its style-sheet approach to word processing, which is logical once you grasp the concept. Nonetheless, the good documentation and on-line help and the Windows interface earn this product a very good ease of learning score.

EASE OF USE:
Further familiarity with Ami makes styles even more effective, since you can create your own with exactly the right appearance and content. Frames can easily be created, sized, placed, and changed, and the extraordinary capability to apply styles all over the document to get any desired effect greatly enhances ease of use.

REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

Ami

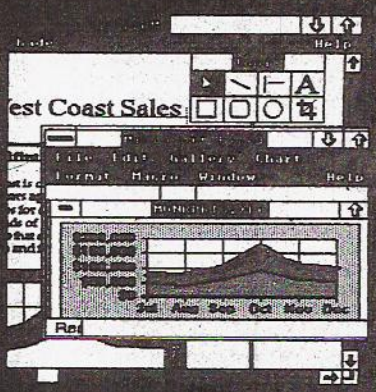
VERSION 1.0

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Correspondence	(150)	Very Good
Spelling Checker/ Thesaurus	(75)	Good
Mail Merge	(25)	N/A
Fonts & Styles	(25)	Excellent
Graphics	(25)	Very Good
Speed	(50)	Satisfactory
Compatibility	(50)	Very Good
Documentation	(100)	Very Good
Ease of learning	(125)	Very Good
Ease of use	(125)	Very Good
Error handling	(75)	Good
Support		
Support policies	(50)	Very Good
Technical support	(50)	Satisfactory
Value	(75)	Good
Final score		**6.8**

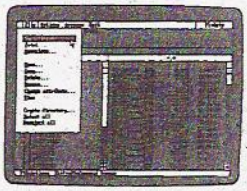
PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Samna Corp., 5600 Glenridge Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342; (800) 831-9679.
List Price: $199 ($149 until March 15).
Requires: IBM PC AT (a 286- or 386-based computer is recommended); IBM CGA, EGA, VGA, or Hercules card compatible; MS-DOS 3.0 or higher; 640K of RAM; one 1.2-megabyte floppy drive (3½-inch floppy version or 360K on 5¼-inch floppy version available); hard drive; Microsoft Windows 2.0 or higher recommended (a run-time version of Windows is included).
Pros: Easy to learn and use with superior formatting and layout capabilities; strong style, graphics, and font handling; unusually effective WYSIWYG editing and formatting interface; takes full advantage of Windows 2.0.
Cons: Slow, especially in layout graphics mode; requires expensive hardware support; no mail merge or footnoting; dictionary appears to have typos.
Summary: A superior Windows-based executive word processing program, Ami offers an outstanding WYSIWYG approach in a format that is easy to learn and use. The program is especially useful for people who need reasonably fancy formatting and prepare their own memos and documents. Its strong font support and effective styles compensate for slow speed and absence of some features. An especially appropriate choice if you're already a Windows user on a 286 or 386 IBM PC or compatible.

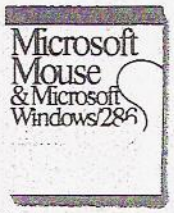
Push your software to the limit.



If you want to get the most out of today's new, high-powered software applications, we have a few words of advice:
Use a Microsoft® Mouse.



The Microsoft Mouse gives you easy access to all the powerful features today's software has to offer.



It looks innocent enough here, but wait until you see how the Mouse makes your software scream.

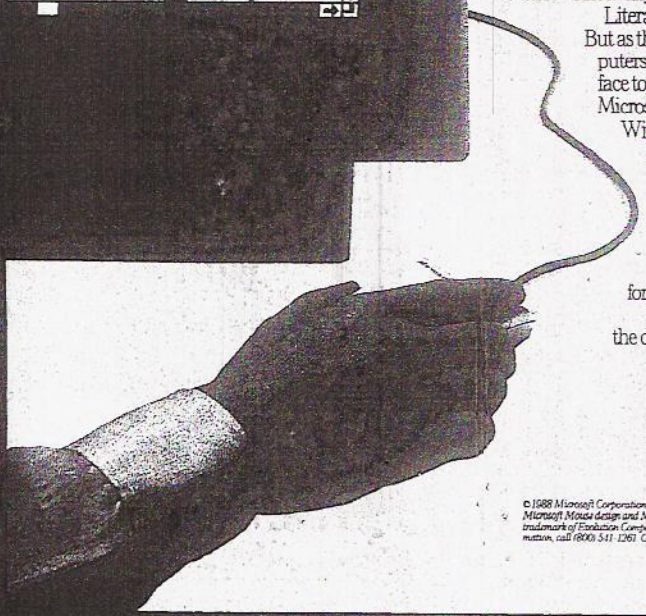
The Mouse can unleash your software—and take full advantage of the features intended to make your work easier.

With the Mouse you can effortlessly manipulate menu-driven applications without taking your eyes off your screen. You can pull down menus. Highlight text in one fell swoop. Copy, cut and paste formulas in spreadsheets easily. And move things from here to there without any command-key mumbo jumbo.

Literally hundreds of applications support the Mouse. But as the leading software developer for personal computers (and one of the first to bring a graphical interface to PC screens), we've gone a step further: Microsoft Windows/286 with PC Paintbrush® for Windows, Microsoft Paintbrush or EasyCAD™2 actually come with the Mouse (or vice versa).

Already, the Microsoft Mouse has made its way into the hands of over one million personal computer users. And that number is sure to grow even faster. After all, graphically oriented software is the driving force behind improved productivity.

But it's the Microsoft Mouse that puts you in the driver's seat.



Microsoft
Making it all make sense.

© 1988 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft and the Microsoft logo are registered trademarks and the Microsoft Mouse design and Making it all make sense are trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. EasyCAD is a trademark of Evolution Computing. PC Paintbrush is a registered trademark of ZSoft Corporation. For more information, call (800) 541-1261. Customers in Canada call (416) 673-7638, outside North America, (206) 882-8661.

Furthermore, the menu of icons on the left-hand side of the screen makes it very easy to access common tasks.

Many people prefer the keyboard to the mouse, however, for word processing. Ami's facilities for keyboard operation are as full and sometimes more effective than the mouse interface. Slowness is a serious impediment in layout mode, and you'll find yourself using the draft mode — even if you don't want to — to get sufficient speed to edit effectively. We limit ease of use to a very good score.

ERROR HANDLING:
Simple errors are handled with aplomb, and the program supports a single-level undo that will undo backspace deletions and formatting changes. File save options are various, and the program protects users from exiting without saving. In addition, there is a revert function that cancels changes made in an editing session and confirms that you really want to abandon the changes. You can save under a new name or attach a different style sheet. There is no timed backup.

Overall, we rate error handling good.

SUPPORT:
Samna offers update information and one year of free support on a regular telephone number for registered users. There is a special $100 rebate for an upgrade to Ami's professional version, which will contain more advanced features, although it is not yet available. There is a newsletter, BBS support, and a money-back guarantee good for 30 days. We rate support policies very good.

Technical support gave us quick and informed answers. We asked about the capability to edit documents of any size (no real limit on document size) and about importing MS Word documents. (Yes, you can import them, but you lose all formatting information as it comes in as a text file through the clipboard.) We rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:
Within the context of executive word processing programs, Ami is a good value at $199. (The price will be $149 until March 15 as an introductory offer.) Especially good with complex formatting and graphics inclusion, its ease of use and effective menu system make this a product of choice if you need an executive word processor and have the appropriate hardware. To some extent, the amount of hardware required for this product reduces its value, for Ami does not really have sufficient power to justify the expense of a fast 286 or 386 with a fast hard disk running Windows. Still, for users with powerful hardware purchased to support an application such as a database or extensive spreadsheet tasks, the addition of Ami to this environment could represent an excellent value. Overall, however, we rate value good. □

BENCHMARKS INFOWORLD

Executive Word Processors

	Ami Version 1.0	Professional Write Version 2.00	MS Windows Write Version 2.1
File			
Load	6	<1	2
Save & continue	4	<1	2
Import ASCII	13	7	5
Export ASCII	7	2	2
Import DCA	n/a[1]	14[2]	n/a[1]
Cursor movement			
Top to bottom	9	1	<1
Manual scroll	1:37[3]	28	1:00
Reformat	3	10	5
Search	3	1	2
Last word	3	1	2
Replace	5	3	2
Append document	12	1	6
Spelling checking	2:31	36	n/a[4]

All times in seconds, unless otherwise noted (1:00 is one minute).
[1]Does not support DCA. [2]Could not globally alter ruler. Each section had to be altered individually. [3]Scroll time using arrow keys in layout mode; using the mouse, time was 1:54. Using draft mode, scroll time will be significantly faster. [4]Does not include a spelling checker.

Hewlett-Packard Continues Laser Printer Market Reign

The Laserjet IID features two-sided printing, two paper trays, and an optional envelope feeder.

BY GREGORY SMITH
INFOWORLD TEST CENTER

Hewlett-Packard has, without question, shaped the PC-compatible laser printer market since the release of the Laserjet in 1984. HP has once again expanded this popular line of printers with the introduction of the Laserjet IID.

As the name implies, this laser printer is based on the Laserjet Series II. With similar (but enhanced) font capabilities and 300-by-300-dpi resolution, the Laserjet IID offers several improvements, including two-sided (duplex) printing, two paper trays, and an optional envelope feeder.

This printer is evaluated using testing and scoring criteria established in our October 3, 1988, product comparison of HP and compatible laser printers.

FEATURES:
HP designed the IID around an eight-page-per-minute Canon RX printer engine, similar to the Canon SX engine used in the Laserjet Series II. In fact, the Laserjet IID is 100-percent compatible with Laserjet Series II fonts (including the new HP Type Director soft font package) and HP's PCL language.

The most visible change in design is the addition of a second paper tray. Selected through software or the printer's front panel, you can direct the IID to automatically switch to the second paper tray when the first one empties — effectively doubling paper tray capacity to 400 sheets. The IID's design also allows an envelope feeder to be attached in addition to the two front-loading paper trays.

HP hopes that introducing duplex capabilities to the desktop laser printer market will be the Laserjet IID's coup de grace. The IID prints on both sides by printing the first side, flipping the paper, and then feeding it through the printer a second time.

Lightning Strikes Twice

Spectrum 3000 20 MHz $2229.00*

Spectrum 3000 25 MHz $3050.00*

System	40 Mb H.D.	80 Mb H.D.	[illegible]
20 MHz SPX 40/24	$2595.00	$2829.00	$600.00
25 MHz SPX 40/33.2	$3395.00	$3639.00	$600.00

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• Shadow System BIOS
• 12 month warranty or 15 month on site service available

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(800) 456-5080