—————COMPUTER SOFTWARE REVIEWS—————

R:BASE‡

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R:BASE is a powerful and easy-to-use database management program that helps you manage important information. The menus in R:BASE can be used to store, modify, and quickly retrieve the information you need.

The developers of this software at Microrim have made a real effort to help the inexperienced user learn how to use the program. The software package includes an online tutorial disk, which provides a useful introduction to the various features of R:BASE. This database management software package is supported by good documentation. Four manuals are provided:

- the Learning Guide manual explains how R:BASE can be put to work
- the User's Manual provides detailed information about all aspects of the R:BASE database management system
- the Building Applications/Command dictionary is two manuals in one
- the Utilities Manual is a collection of four guides to the utilities and error messages

This documentation describes all the capabilities and the power that R:BASE brings to database management.

In the Building Applications manual are instructions for building an R:BASE application system with R:BASE features such as Application EXPRESS or with R:BASE commands and Code Lock, the R:BASE file convertor. The package provides additional support, for example, when starting R:BASE, unfamiliarity with the system can be alleviated by the system's ability to describe the command currently in use. Sometimes, following all the steps can become a nuisance and the very useful Command Mode makes this unnecessary. The Command Mode offers an alternative approach to working with a database and allows the user to instruct R:BASE as to the desired commands. Experienced users will find the R:BASE Command Mode to be flexible, powerful, and fast. Beginners, however, will find it easier to use Prompt by Example, which allows them to build and execute R:BASE commands by choosing a series of appropriate options from menus. The system can be used without having to remember complicated commands, and this is a very nice feature.

Information is vitally important to every organization and R:BASE, with its feature Definition EXPRESS, helps store information in such a way that it can be accessed and manipulated efficiently. An R:BASE database can contain as many as 80 tables. Columns in a table may be keyed, thus facilitating retrieval of information from the table. Keying columns can be especially useful when working with long tables containing many rows. The data in a table is stored in rows, and the number of rows is limited only by disk capacity. With R:BASE, the information in a table can be displayed in various ways.

An important feature of the R:BASE database management system is that it permits reorganization of data in any way desired. It is also very easy to update tables. When an organized report based on the data in a table is required, a powerful and flexible report generator called Reports EXPRESS does the job, assisting in the organization and presentation of data in an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand format.

Adding data to a database can be very slow and difficult work, but with R:BASE's Forms EXPRESS one can quickly create a form customized for data entry. The data entry form simplifies entry and editing of data in a table. Modification of the structure of a table can be done quickly and easily with R:BASE's Definition EXPRESS.

These are the main features provided by the R:BASE database management system. I feel it is very useful and easy to use for those who are used to computers, and for inexperienced users, it is a very friendly software package. In summary, I would recommend this software package for scientists whose work involves a lot of data.