Interactive 3-D graphic design made possible for micro users

The Space Tablet/Space Graphics 3-D CAD system from Micro Control Systems, Inc., promises to make CAD affordable to microcomputer users at a fraction of the cost for larger systems, according to the company. Unlike other digitizing systems that allow coordinates to be plotted and recorded on a two-dimensional plane only, the Space Tablet lets Apple II and IBM PC users select and record any point along the z axis as well.

The Space Tablet consists of a $13.5 \times 16$-inch clear plastic tablet with an aluminum and delrin robotlike arm mounted on it. Potentiometers with a linearity of 0.5% monitor the arm's movement. The resolution of each axis is approximately 1300 distinct states over an angle of 320 degrees.

The standard Space Tablet, for Apple II users, has three axes of rotation. A professional model Space Tablet features an additional fourth axis of rotation (a fourth degree of freedom) that provides greater flexibility for reaching points in space. It is available for either the IBM PC or Apple II computers.

The menu-driven Space Graphics software included with the system allows interactive manipulation and editing of points on all three axes. Models can be scaled, rotated, and moved about any axis. Users can "pull" and "push" points and all associated lines from one location to another in 3-D space. Numerical editing provides complete file listings for $x$, $y$, and $z$ coordinates for each file point and the endpoints of the line. Other graphics capabilities include perspective views, composite drawings, coordinate system movement, color/text, and screen dump.

Advanced Space Graphics software (which, in addition to the system requirements needed for Space Graphics, requires an RS-232 interface and a modem at each terminal) permits real-time transmission and interactive manipulation of 3-D drawings between microcomputer users. If both users have the complete system with advanced software, interactive editing of points in 3-D space is also possible.

The standard three-axis Space Tablet/Space Graphics system for Apple IIIs is $795$; with advanced software, $1100$. The four-axis Space Tablet/Space Graphics system is also $795$; with the advanced software, $1165$.

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