

MicroReview

Editor: David L. Hannum/AT&T Information Systems

Some water for the *Fire in the Valley!*

Fire in the Valley, Paul Freiberger and Michael Swaine, Osborne/McGraw-Hill, 1984; \$11.95.

Siliconconnections, Forrest M. Mims III, McGraw-Hill, 1986, \$16.95.

Many of you have either read or should have read the *Fire in the Valley* by Paul Freiberger and Michael Swaine. This book dealt with the beginnings of the "personal computer" as we know it today. It recounts the research of the forties and fifties and builds on the stories of Altair and MITS in the sixties and early seventies.

In an easy-to-read, well-documented commentary the authors bring the pieces together and let the chips fall where they may. We might even call this book *Fire in the Valley: The Modern History of the Micro*.

Whereas this book seems to be a fairly accurate and well-written account of the developments before and after Apple, a new book in my possession seems to be an expansion of the MITS and Altair movements with heavy emphasis on how much the author contributed to the modern-day PC development. It is apparent from the tone of this book that the author could have eliminated the many references to "I"—whether factual or not (and most statements appear to correlate with the facts in the *Fire in the Valley*)—and come out with a much more readable manuscript.

While I am not questioning the accuracy of the account, I do think that the book should be called *The Autobiographical Sketches of Forrest M. Mims III* rather than *Siliconconnections* by F. M. Mims III.

Siliconconnections is a very readable account of Mims's activities, the many projects that were the forerunners of the Apple, and an expansion of the information available on the MITS project and Altair, the first "home computer." My previous statements should not deter you from reading the book with some nostalgia, particularly if you were present during the period pre-PC or pre-Apple. It will not only be a memory jogger for some but a real education for others that are new to the micro field.

I would recommend that this book be taken with a dose of *Fire in the Valley* to get a real perspective on the personalities and developments that were and, in some cases still are, integral to the "PC revolution."

Really, both books are worth a look.

Newsletters on the IBM PC

The Newsroom, Springboard Software; \$59.95.

Clip Art Collection I, Springboard Software; \$29.95.

Clip Art Collection II (for business), Springboard Software, anticipated release date: March 1986

Two new products are available for the PC user, The Newsroom and its associated Clip Art Collections. And yes, the results from these programs will delight youngsters, please your employees, and even stimulate communication between people.

The Newsroom helps you design, write, edit, and publish your very own newsletters. The popularity of the newsletter in business and volunteer activities such as Scouts, charities, and churches is growing by leaps and bounds. The need for communication in these activities often goes unanswered, however, because of the general difficulty inherent in producing a newsletter with the proper layout, art, and color.

The Newsroom is a real and inexpensive substitute for the many people nor-

mally required to do this publishing. If you have the facilities or are sending to a very few readers, you can make use of the color incorporated into the design.

The Newsroom comes with a clip art collection of some 600 art pieces in a variety of subjects: cats, people, religious symbols, and many more. In addition, two other clip art collections are available, Clip Art I, an expansion of the original, and Clip Art II for business.

This set of PC programs is easy to learn, easier to use, comes with an editor, allows you to lay out text and graphics, and lets you add art and color if you like. The instructions are simple if not always clear, and the design allows children, educators, and adults to use this system for personal and business use.

The Newsroom is both fun and useful, all in one package. It might even spark someone in your audience who previously had a hard time to try communicating with others. It might en-

hance employee morale; it might just make you feel good.

I give this offering a solid 9.5 rating. I have yet to see a package at this price, \$59.95 list, that offers so much. If your question is to be or not to be, definitely, BE your own creator and try this package.

As always, keep the cards and letters coming; we are here to provide you with the input YOU can use.

Reader Interest Survey

Indicate your interest in this department by circling the appropriate number on the Reader Interest Card.

High 177 Medium 178 Low 179