

DataPhile

NeXT computers finally have a flatfile database!

The folks at Stone Design have managed to implement an awesome NeXTstep application sure to quench your thirst for a well designed easy-to-use database.

My copy arrived without a manual, a BETA version (V1 v79) dated January 17th 1992. The software is scheduled for release on February 28th. *(As a result of being a beta product I will not judge its speed or other minor flakiness that the program may exhibit. This package is clearly more than a month away from release and lots have been known to change at this stage).*

For those familiar with Macintosh products (I cannot believe I said that!), **DataPhile** will inevitably be compared to FileMaker. On the surface they both share the same simplicity. But that is all that they share. **DataPhile** is an excellent example of what NeXT applications feel like, and the advantages brought forth by NeXTStep make it dance around FileMaker. **DataPhile** could be simply described as a Multi-Media capable flatfile database. And that is nothing to sneeze at!

DataPhile is as intuitive as it gets for this type of application. I don't have a manual, besides some thin preliminary built-in help, most has been found by intuition and presumed functionality. The true tests of a great application, no need to read the fine manual to accomplish 90% of the functionality. Word of Mouth has it that Steve Jobs had a lot of input in regards to the interface. A Word of Caution: this simplicity should not be equated with trivial capabilities.

DataPhile database import features are among the best that I have seen. There is absolute control when importing data. **DataPhile** will present you with an inspector to allow you to direct the items to the appropriate fields. If some fields are missing on the receiving database, **DataPhile** will gracefully ask you if you want to create those fields in your current database.

A great thing about **DataPhile** is its richness. It's field types not only provide you with the expected data types, but also provide NeXT standardized fields for RTF, TIFF, EPS, and sound. Another interesting type is the "File Well" to which you drop your files into for a hyper-reference type application. On dropping a file the field becomes a "button" double clicking on the icon will launch the parent application and show you the contents of the file. Another bonus is the check boxes fields for boolean type data. Backgrounds can easily be imported into a layout. Just drag an image file from the Workspace and drop it in.

Its real advantage is that it is made for the NeXT and as such has features that other databases could only dream of. I was proud to see the product in its beta form, I am eager to see what will be added to it before it hits the market. I am also eager to see a manual.

As wish list items, I would like to see the ability to extract text from a file dropped into a scrollable field, the ability to cross-reference to another database. Another welcomed addition would be to have larger entry list fields. Current pop-ups are too small.

Just as a nit-pick thingy, I don't like the controls attached to the database window, I'd rather see them in a floating palette.

The software should be available for public consumption by March 1st, 1992 at a price of US\$800. While initially the cost may seem pricey, I guess I could tell you the cliché "you get what you pay for". Stone Design has put considerable effort into a top notch product. They deserve to charge for it. However, its high price will initially make a few people shy away from the product. But this one is sure to be popular, so pricing I am sure will change to reflect appreciation and perhaps get lowered into the more competitive \$400 range.

Good going Stone Design!!

You may obtain the goods from:

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