ASHTON-TATE ON THE WARPATH

Finally getting some respect, A -T is making some sharp moves in its quest to become the second biggest PC-software publisher.

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Stewart Alsop II
P.C. Letter

Ashton-Tate is on the warpath. In the past few months, the third-largest software publisher has gone on an acquisition, alliance, and development binge that would make a corporate raider like T. Boone Pickens envious.

Their goal: Become the second-largest publisher, eclipsing Lotus and nipping at the heels of Microsoft.

"Ashton-Tate is no longer the Rodney Dangerfield of the software industry," said industry analyst Stewart Alsop II. "dBASE IV is like a dream land. They've done everything right."

The new version, which the company is taking pains to tell everyone was developed internally, features improved report writing and user interface.

Dealers will be able to stock both the new version, due in July, as well as dBase III Plus for some time to come. That will pull the rug out from under dBase cloners hoping to pick up sales should A-T leave the older marketplace.

If the long-awaited revision to the world's most popular database manager were the only feather in the cap of chair-man and president Edward M. Esber, Jr., that might be enough to soothe the hungers of some. But A -T has a big appetite.

In the past few months, it's announced an affiance with Microsoft to market the Standard Query Language (SQL) Server, a relational database server software product for local area networks.

A-T has also entered the Macintosh market by acquiring Ann Arbor Softworks' FullWrite Professional and FullPaint, a graphics program. In addition, A-T has developed a Mac spreadsheet called Full Impact and is marketing dBASE Mac RunTime, a database management program.

To continue its assault on dBASE contenders in the IBM marketplace, A-T acquired FrontRunner, a dBASE language development tool, and there are reports that A-T is looking to enter the DEC world as well.

'What may happen, if Ashton-Tate has its way, is that it may become one of the larger presences in the Mac market," said Jeffrey Tarter, publisher of the Soft*Letter. "I suspect that's significant because there have been very few large Macintosh software companies."

— Dan Janal —
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