

Software Review by: G. Rathmell

12/15/81

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The Machine Language Manager from the Bit Fiddlers is an EPROM plug-in software package for Z80 machine language program development on the Bally Arcade.

The package consists of a user manual, plug-in cartridge, and keypad overlay.

The user manual is excellent. There are nine chapters that in a concise and easy-to-understand way, cover the concepts of machine language programming, use of the manager and its utility routines, and some good sample programs.

The manual also includes a complete source listing of the Machine Language Manager, as well as the Z80 instruction set in alphabetical order. The user manual is great, and one of the best features of the Machine Language Manager!

Using the Manager is easy. After reading the user manual once, all that is required is an occasional glance at the quick reference command list on page 8-1.

The first obvious difference from using Bally Basic is the small character font. The small font allows up to 15 lines, and 39 characters per line. At first it looks a little strange especially N and Q, but it is certainly readable and allows about twice as much information to be displayed than Basic. Punching in machine code is simple if you don't make mistakes. Fixing mistakes is a little tedious since the address is shown only every eight bytes. The insert and delete are somewhat difficult to use because you must keep track of the address of the last program opcode.

The reset function is like the halt command in Basic. Pushing reset returns control to the manager without changing memory. Memory is only cleared during power-up.

The Machine Language Manager is a useful tool for those into machine language programming. Some future additions that would make it better include a search function that would scan a memory range for a specified byte or string of bytes, and an assembly function that would generate op-codes from mnemonic source codes.