

PARTIV:

# Build the PIXIE Graphic Display 

Adding one chip to the Elf provides complete video interface and animated graphics capability for less than $\$ 25$.

I1 you own an Elf microcomputer (see Popular Electronics August 1976) or are planning to build one soon, the addition of a single IC and a handful of support components, and a change in the crystal frequency, can give you Pixie graphics. The entire graphics system is built into the new CDP 1861 LSI chip that sells for tess than $\$ 20$ trom RCA
parts distributors. (A complete kit is available; see Parts List.) The two other IC's in the optional add-on system are for a crystal oscillator that allows the graphics IC to generate the correct TV horizontal and vertical sync pulses.

The photo at the top of this page illustrates what can be done with the original 256 bytes of memory in the Elf when the

Pixie graphics system is added, In this article, we will show you how to install and program the Pixie system to produce this type of graphics.

Some Details. The unique Pixie graphics system employs the direct memory access (DMA) capability built into the 1802 microprocessor in the Elf



Fig. 1. Memory addresses of
bytes mapped onto TV
screen in sample program.
to work in conjunction with the new graphics IC. This allows you to display any 256 -byte segment of memory on a CRT monitor or TV receiver. The outpul of the new chip is a 1 -volt composite video/sync signal.
The selected segment of memory appears on-screen as an array of small squares that represent individual memory bits. If a memory bit is a 1 , the appropriate square will be white, while if a bit is a 0 , the square will be dark. Changing the bit pattern within the memory will change the pattern that appears onscreen. You can store several different bit patterns (pictures) in memory and,

TABLE I-TEST PROGRAM

| Label | M | Bytes | Comments |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Start | 0000 | $90 \mathrm{B1} \mathrm{~B} 2$ | R $1.1, \mathrm{R} 2.1=00$ |
|  | 0003 | B3 84 | R3, $0 . \mathrm{R} 4.0=00$ |
|  | 0005 | F8 2D A3 | R3.0 $=$ (main) |
|  | 0008 | F83FA2 | A2. $0=$ (stack) |
|  | 000B | F8 11 A1 | A1. $0=$ (interrupt) |
|  | O00E | D3 | $\mathbf{P}=3$ (go to main) |
| Return | 000F | 72 | restore D, R2-1 |
|  | 0010 | 70 | restore XP.R2+1 |
| Interrupl | 0011 | 2278 | H2-1, save XP (\% M2 |
|  | 0013 | 2252 | R2-1, save D (i) M2 |
|  | $0015$ | $\mathrm{C} 4 \mathrm{C} 4 \mathrm{C4}$ | no-op (9 cycies) |
|  | 0018 | F800 B0 |  |
|  | 001B | F800 A0 | $\mathrm{RO}=0000$ (refresh ptr) |
| Retresh | 001E | 80 E 2 | $\mathrm{D}=\mathrm{RO} 0.0$ |
|  |  | — | 8 DMA cycles ( $\mathrm{R} 0+8$ ) |
|  | 0020 | E220A0 | $\mathrm{FO}-1,90 \cdot 0=0$ |
|  | - | - | 8 DMA cycles ( $\mathrm{PO} 0+8$ ) |
|  | 0023 | E220A0 | RO-1,R0.0 = |
|  |  | $\underline{\square}$ | 8 DMA cycles (RO-B) |
|  | 0026 | E2 20 AO | RO-1, RO. $=$ = |
|  | - | - | 8 DMA cycles (R0 + 8) |
|  | 0029 | 3C1E | go to refresh $(E F 1=0)$ |
|  | 0028 | 300 F | go to return (EF1 = 1) |
| Maın | 002 D | E2 69 | $\mathrm{X}=2$, furn TV on |
|  | 002F | 3F 2F | wait for IN pressed |
|  | 0031 | $6 C A 4$ | sel MX, O,R4.0=loggles |
|  | 0033 | 3733 | wait for IN released |
|  | 0035 | 3F 35 | wait for IN pressed |
|  | 0037 | 6 C | set MX, $=$ toggles |
|  | $0038$ | $5414$ | $\operatorname{set} M 4=D, R 4 \cdot 1$ |
|  | 003A | 3033 | go to M33 |

using software, display them successively onscreen to produce animation eflects. Low-resolution alphanumerics can also be created.

Since the basic Elf has only 256 bytes of memory, we will show how to display the entire memory on the screen. The memory is mapped as shown in Fig. 1, in an array of 64 spots wide (eight bytes with eight bits/byte) by 32 spots high to make a total of 256 bytes.

The byte at $\mathrm{M}(0000)$ is displayed at the upper-left of the screen; each row on the screen is equivalent to eight memory bytes. Byte M(00FF) appears at the bot-tom-right of the screen.

Circuit Operation. The entire schematic diagram for the Pixie graphics display system is shown in Fig. 2A. It consists of five components: the 1861 chip, a phono jack for the video output, and three resistors. The circuit shown in Fig. 28 may be used to replace the original crystal used in the Elf microcomputer. This is necessary because. to use the graphics display, the original crystal frequency must be changed to approximately 1.760640 MHz to generate the correct TV horizontal and vertical sync pulses. Crystals of this frequency may be expensive. The Fig. 28 circuit uses a

(8)

Fig. 2. Video display chip connections are shown at (A). Optional circuit to replace original Elf crystal is at ( $B$ ).

All resistors $\%$-wath, $10 \%$ tolerance:
RI, R6- 10.000 ohms
R2-2000 ohms
R3-1000 ohms
R4.R5- 470 ohms
XTAL-3.58-MHz crystal
Mise-Printed circuit or perforated board: IC sockers (one 24 -pin. wo 14 -pin): spacers: machine hardware; hookup wire solder: etc. Note: The following are available from Neronics. 333 Litchfield Rd. New Milford. CN 06776: kat including all of above Pixie components except those under "Misc." at \$24.95: complete Elf 11 kit (basic Elf plus Pixie components and hexadecimal keyboard), including pe board. keyboard support IC's and expansion bus at $\$ 99.95$, plus $\$ 3.00$ shipping. Connecticut residents, add $7 \%$ sales tax
high-order position of the first byte on the line.

The 32 lines of the display can be moved up one line by incrementing the starting refresh address by eight between refresh cycles. Decrementing register 4 (R4) allows the display to be rolled down. Hence, varying the frequency of shifts or rolls varies the animation speed of the displayed image.

Control of the speed is via the Elf's conventional input switches. Setting all switches to zero and depressing the input pushbutton causes a hex 00 to be read into location 13 (stack), in which case, there will be no movement of the displayed image. Loading any nonzero bit through the input switches will animate the image. Any bits loaded are compared to the bits in the low-order byte of register 5 (R5), A shift or roll routine is initiated whenever there is a match between the bits of the low-order byte of R5 and the bits in the byle read into location 13. Register 5 is used to count the refresh cycles and is incremented by one every interrupt cycle.

readily available $3.58-\mathrm{MHz}$ color-TV crystal and frequency divider to generate 1.789773 MHz , which is close enough for the 1861 chip to perform properly.

The 1861 chip uses the same clock as the $1802 \mu \mathrm{P}$ chip to trigger internal counters to provide the TV-like composite sync at pin 6 . The graphics display is directly refreshed from the memory 60 times each second, accomplished by an interrupt request sent to the 1802 at the same rate.

When the 1802 receives the interrupt request, it temporarily stops the program it is executing and immediately branches to the interrupl routine previously stored in memory. This branch occurs when $P$ is automatically set to 1 and $X$ is set to 2. The interrupt routine program counter is always R1, which must be set to the address of the interrupt routine before the 1861 is activated and starts sending interrupts to the 1802. A puise from NO is sent to pin 10 of the 1861, permitting this chip to start sending interrupts. A 69 instruction can be used to generate the 1861 activation pulse. The 1861 is always turned off
when the Elf is stopped with the RUN switch down.

In the program shown in Table I, R1 is set to the address of the interrupt routine at $M(0011), R 2$ is set to the address of the work area (or stack) used subsequently for byte storage, A 3 is set to the main program starling at $M(002 \mathrm{D})$, and setting $P=3$ causes a branch to M(002D) with R3 as the program counter. The main program permits entry of the bytes al any time via the Elf's toggle switches. This permits you to see what is happening to the CRT screen as memory bytes are changed. The program loops on itself until an interrupt signal is generated by the 1861, activated by the 69 instruction at $\mathrm{M}(002 \mathrm{E})$.

Exactly 29 machine cycles after the initiation of the interrupt routine, the 1861 requests eight sequential memory bytes by pulling down the DMA-OUT (pin-2) request line for eight bytes (eight machine cycles). This automatically causes eight memory bytes, addressed by RO, to be sequentially fetched and transferred to the 1861 via the data bus. Note that the C4 instructions at $M(0015)$ are special no-op instructions that re-

TABLE II-SPACESHIP PROGRAM

| M | Byte Sequence |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 040 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 048 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 0 |
| 0050 | 78 | DE | DB | DE | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 0058 | 4A | 50 | DA | 52 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 0060 | 42 | 5E | AB | D0 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 0068 | 4A | 42 | 8A | 52 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 070 | 7 B | DE | 8A | 5E | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 78 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 0080 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 07 | E0 |
| 088 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 00 | FF | FF | FF | FF |
| 0090 | 00 | 06 | 00 | 01 | 00 | 00 | 00 | 0 |
| 98 | 00 | 7F | E0 | 01 | 00 | 00 | 00 |  |
| OOAO | 7F | C0 | 3 F | E0 | FC | FF | FF | FE |
| A8 | 40 | OF | 00 | 10 | 04 | 80 | 00 | 0 |
| B0 | 7F | C0 | 3 F | E0 | 04 | 80 | 00 | 00 |
| B8 | 00 | 3 F | DO | 40 | 04 | 80 | 00 | 0 |
| 00C0 | 00 | OF | 08 | 20 | 04 | 80 | 7A | 1 E |
| 00C8 | 00 | 00 | 07 | 90 | 04 | 80 | 2 | 10 |
| 00D0 | 00 | 00 | 18 | 7F | FC | Fo | 72 | 10 |
| 00D8 | 00 | 00 | 30 | 00 | 00 | 10 | 42 | 10 |
| OOEO | 00 | 00 | 73 | FC | 00 | 10 | 78 | 0 |
| OOE8 | 00 | 00 | 30 | 00 | 3F | FO | 00 | 00 |
| 00F0 | 00 | 00 | 18 | OF | C0 | 00 | 00 | 00 |
| 00F8 | 00 | 00 | 07 | FO | 00 | 00 | 00 |  |




The numbers in the program flow chart (right) refer to the line numbers in the program. The program can be set up to shift or roll, or shift and roil. The program is loaded into locations 78 through F7. (Try using the program for the starship shown in Table II of the Pixie article.) Only the data loaded into 78 through F7 is shitted, but the entire area from 00 through FF is rolled.

Loading the program exactly as it is listed here will enable the shift routine only. Loading a 38 (SKP instruction) in location 5F (line 111) will enable both shift and roll routines. Loading 3061 (BR ROLL) in locations 3C and 3D (line 82 ) will enable only the roll routine,

After loading and running the program, animation of the display will begin after any nonzero byte is loaded via the input switches and operation of the input pushbutton. By varying the input bit pattern, you can control the speed of the animation.

If you have never seen a stack in "motion" when a program is running, take a look at displayed location 13. Then vary the speed.


Fig. 3. Diagram showing how to create your own display. This one is for parts of five lines of Spaceship Program.
quire three cycles for each execution. These are used only to provide the delay required between the beginning of the interrupt routine and the first eight-byte DMA request generated by the 1861 display circuits.
Each of the eight display refresh bytes requested by the 1861 is internally converted to a bit serial form and used to provide the luminance (brightness) pulses that come out of the 1861 at pin 7. The actual raster display consists of 262 horizontal lines for each frame, and there are 60 frames per second, Each
display spot is four raster lines high, which means that each eight-byte display row must be repeated four times. With the interrupt routine, RO is initially set to $M(0000)$, which means that the first DMA request causes the eight bytes from $M(0000)$ to $M(0007)$ to be fetched and displayed. The time of each raster line is exactly 14 machine cycles to permit the transfer of eight bytes (eight cycles) plus the execution of three twocycle instructions during each raster line time. Following the eight DMA cycles required to refresh the first eight bytes, RO

is restored to its original value so that it remains pointing at the same eight bytes.

The E2 20 A0 instructions at M(0020), $\mathrm{M}(0023)$, and $\mathrm{M}(0026)$ are used to occupy six machine cycles between the DMA requests and to restore RO to its initial value before incrementing it by eight during the eight-byte DMA request. The 20 instruction decrements R0.1 back to its initial value if a 256 -byte page boundary was crossed during the preceding eight DMA cycles.

After the first group of eight bytes has been displayed for four raster line times, RO is permitted to advance to the next group of eight bytes to be displayed. This process is continued until 32 groups of eight bytes each ( 256 total) have been displayed. At this time, the circuits in the 1861 chip cause line EF1 $=1$ (at pin 9) and the interrupt routine terminates.

Other Considerations. The raster refresh involves the display of 32 groups of eight bytes, and each row of eight bytes is repeated on four raster line scans. This means that the display refresh ties up the $1802 \mu \mathrm{P}$ for slightly more than 128 raster lines ( $32 \times 4$ ). Since there are 262 raster lines per frame, the $\mu \mathrm{P}$ spends about $50 \%$ of its time performing the display-refresh function.

Since the 1802 and 1861 clocks must remain synchronized, none of the threecycle instructions described in the 1802's user's manual should be used in programs that run concurrently with this display. The only exception is the use of the C4 instruction in the interrupt routine.

The sample program given in Table I was designed to run in expanded-memory systems as well as in the basic 256byte Elf. In the expanded system, just change the bytes at $M(0019)$ and $\mathrm{M}(001 \mathrm{C}$ ) so that R0 initially points to any 256-byte segment of the memory you wish to display on the raster. You can write any other main program to run concurrently with this internupt routine.

The 1861 chip can also be used to display any number of memory bytes from eight to 1024 by rewriting the interrupt routine. For example, change the byte at $M(0024)$ from 20 to 80 , and you will see 512 bytes displayed on the CRT screen as 64 spots horizontally by 64 spots vertically. If you have only 256 bytes of memory in your system, you will see the same 256 bytes repeated twice on the screen. When displaying 512 bytes, each spot represents half the
height of those displayed when 256 bytes are displayed.

One of the main advantages of mapping main memory directly into the monitor or TV raster is the ability to manipulate the display using the normal instruction set. In systems that employ an external frame buffer for refresh, specialized instructions are required to change buffer contents. The buffer memory also costs more money. With the refresh buffer approach toward animation, you must store two picture patterns in memory and alternately transter them to the buffer memory. Using the Pixie graphics display described here, you store the same two-picture patterns in memory but you need only change the initial value of R0 to alternately display them. Not only do you save the cost of a refresh buffer, you can greatly simplify the programming.

Construction. The Pixie circuit can be mounted on the original Elf board by relocating the crystal and two capacitors to the center of the board, Now, the 1861 IC goes on the upper left of the board, the resistors on the bottom of the board, and the output jack on the rear apron of the chassis.

Remove the crystal from the Elf and wire the Fig. 2B frequency divider to pin 1 of the $1802 \mu \mathrm{P}$. Then interconnect the two boards exactly as shown in Fig. 2A and $B$, including the power lines. Jack $\sqrt{ } / 1$ can be mounted on a small metal bracket and secured to the add-on board with No. 4 machine hardware. Also, mount R1 and R2 on the add-on board via "flea" clips because they may have to be changed for different-value resistors to suit the modulation requirements of the particular monitor you are using.

Sample Display Program. To test the Pixie, load the program given in Table I, starting at location $M(0000)$. When this program is run, a random spot pattern should be displayed on-screen. At this time, you may have to alter the values of $A 1$ and 82 to produce a tight sync lock and the desired modulation level of the spots. These are only level-adjust resistors and play no role in the actual sync or video production. The displayed pattern represents whatever is stored in the Elf's memory. The top eight rows represent the program given in Table I.

You can familiarize yourself with the new graphics ability of your computer if you visualize a grid of 64 boxes wide by

32 boxes deep, assuming a 256-byle memory. Bear in mind that the operating program given in Table I occupies the top eight lines. Since the program ends at memory location $\mathrm{M}(003 \mathrm{~B})$, load 00 into memory location M(003F) to complete that line.

Now, to display the spacecraft shown in the lead photo, load the programs given in Tables I and II in that order, starting the Table II program at memory location M(0040). Reset and switch to RUN.

If you wish to create your own display. Fig. 3 illustrates how to arrive at the correct hex digits. (In this case, the example used is for a small area of the program in Table il.) Use graph paper to "draw" your picture, shading in the "spots' you want to be white on the CRT screen. Then transfer the line bit pattern into the eight hex bytes per line as shown in Fig. 3.

Conclusion. The Pixie system described here adds video graphics to your Elf microcomputer at very low cost. So far, we have described how the Pixie system can be used to put simple, stationary images on-screen. Accompanying this article is a program that will put the graphics in motion.


## Electronic "Bell" for a TVT-II

## Lets you know when you are near the end of a line on a TV typewriter.

BY DENNIS J. DEUTSCH

Here is an add-on circuit for the computer hobbyist that will give his setup the effect of a bell ringing near the end of a line as it does on a typewriter. The circuit, as shown in the diagram, is for use with the Southwest Technical Products CT-1024 TVT-II terminal.
The CT-1024 produces 32 characters per line, for which access is required to bits $1,2,4,8$, and 16 on the CT-1024. These are located at IC35 and IC42.

The circuit as shown is set up to produce the tone on character 27. (Bit 4 is inverted in the 7404 IC so that it is "NOT'ed".) The character number trap consists of an 8 -input NAND gate in the 7430 and the single inverter (which can be a single transistor if desired). II you want to stay at character 27 , eliminate the inverter and bit 4.

Once the character is counted, the resulting pulse turns on the 74121 oneshot for a short period of time. The timing values of the one-shot can be altered by changing the circuit's time constant.

The one-shot triggers a 555 timer used as a tone generator to drive a small 8 ohm speaker. To alter the tone, change the value of the capacitor between pin 6 of the 555 and ground.


