PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

BellSouth Cellular/IBM Release Simon PDA

The Simon™ Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) is a departure from the electronic note pad approach of previous models in the market. As Bill Lempesis, editor and publisher of PenVision summed up, "What executives really want is a cellular phone, a pager, a notebook computer." In this context, Lempesis described Simon as the "first implementation that consciously takes all the gadgetry of the modern business executive and puts it into one unit."

Simon's pen-based screen interface is nestled inside a cellular telephone, and includes two-way wireless fax, paging, and E-mail capabilities for mobile communication. Other features included in Simon are a calendar, appointment scheduler and address book, calculator, and note pad/sketch pad. In conjunction with the pager, the PDA can be used to return calls from pages by the push of a button. Faxes can be annotated on-screen directly using a

The Simon PDA

E-mail through appropriate E-mail post offices that support remote dial-in.

Simon takes advantage of a standardized operating system: the device is powered by an Intel-compatible microcomputer chip, and its underlying operating system is DOS, with an additional icon-based graphical user interface to help the user move through applications quickly.

In addition, Simon uses a standard Type II PCMCIA slot, which allows a standard card, coupled with appropriate software, to be coupled with the Simon PDA. Some possible capabilities include alphanumeric paging, E-mail retrieval from most types of public networks, a direct PC interface for up/downloading data, and expanded memory.

The Simon PDA measures 8 x 2.5 x 1.5 inches, and weighs 18 ounces. Rollout has begun in several areas of Florida and is expanding into other BellSouth Cellular markets; the release program is scheduled to bring the PDA into nationwide distribution by April 1994. Price is expected to be under $1000.