import PCX graphics created in other programs.

In addition to these basic operations, Easyest LX supports the creation of sequences that work as subroutines. To see how this feature works, consider that the simplest kind of sequence is execute Step A, then B and then C. However, LX allows Steps A, B and C to consist of calls to other sequences. Hence you can divide a complex task into many simple tasks, create a sequence for each one and build an overall outline sequence that ties them all together. Further, one sequence can call another many times.

Easyest LX provides two capabilities to help you create the exact sequence desired. The first is the capability of viewing a sequence flowchart (Fig 2), a diagram with each step described in a box with lines connecting them to indicate the order of execution. A quick look at the flowchart helps you immediately determine if it's what you intended. If not, another capability makes it easy to correct a sequence by editing it as a text file instead of going through the process of regenerating it completely. For example, if you accidentally reverse two steps in the sequence you can simply move the function calls. Manual editing also means you can combine several sequences by appending text files and quickly create sequences based on saved files. LX comes with a built-in text editor for this purpose or you can use any other text editor.

Finally note that although LX doesn't have a runtime version, operators needn't be familiar with the development environment because they can execute a recorded sequence directly from the DOS prompt.

All very fine but...

Until now we've discussed the package's good points, but no program is perfect. In this case, unlike many programs, Easyest LX doesn't provide an automatic installer program. A thorough description of the process in the manual would help, but installation isn't well documented, either. In particular, the procedure for installing various hardware and software components consumes about two pages in the manual—most of which is references to other manuals. What's needed is for Asyst to consolidate some of this extra material into the LX manual. Another limitation is that LX doesn't access extended memory. This trait allows the program to run on 8088-based machines, but given that the program's performance tends to dictate at least an AT-class machine, why bend over backwards to maintain compatibility with a computer that's going to be frustratingly slow?

Next, LX isn't multitasking and so any task monopolizes the computer's resources. To intersperse two concurrent tasks you must embed both operations in one loop—but then the application is no longer modular and maintenance could become complicated. In addition, multitasking created in this manner only allows tasks to either execute at the same rate or a multiple of the same rate. For example you could create code that only executed every third iteration of a loop. A related problem is that you can only nest sequences three deep. The "fix" is to manually copy the text of the called sequence into the calling sequence—again, whither modularity?

Finally, while Easyest LX allows you to edit waveforms, the interface is cumbersome. To extract a portion of a waveform you work with start and end cursors that you must move to enclose the data of interest. Unfortunately, to move the cursors you must press on-screen cursor arrows with the mouse. A better way of handling this process would be to simply allow you to drag the cursor directly to the desired location.
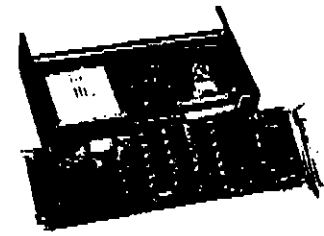
However, putting these quibbles aside, I still feel that Easyest LX is an excellent choice for many moderately-sized applications. In particular, the program's user interface performs well and the program as a whole gives excellent value for the money.

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