BLAST ROCKETS YOUR DATA

By Alan Southerton

It's excellent for connecting remote sites, but merely average for bulletin boards

Whether you will get a blast out of Blast by Communications Research Group (CRG) depends on why you need a communications package. If you want to connect remote sites using different operating systems, Blast is one of the best packages available, outperforming UUCP and the public-domain Kermit software. But if you want to exchange files with bulletin boards and public databases, Blast merely is an also ran.

•

•

•

For this review, Blast was tested on a 386 system running SCO XENIX, a Sun 386i running SunOS, and an 8088 PC running DOS. In general, its file transfer rate at both 1200 and 2400 baud was approximately twice as fast as its Xmodem protocol. A noisy line —one with an intermittent short in the phone cable—was also introduced into the test configuration and Blast's error checking performed without flaw.

•

•

•

•

[NON-EXEMPT COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL]

•

•

•

•

In tests, Blast recorded speeds up to twice as fast as Xmodem and Zmodem in routine data transfers.

The heart of Blast is its proprietary protocol. Instead of performing error checking by calculating a checksum after transmitting a data block, Blast continues to send data and checksums along with it. Meanwhile, it receives acknowledgments from the receiving system via a full-duplex link. This full-duplex link also allows Blast to send and receive files simultaneously.

Blast's edge over other protocols is it never has to resend data that the other system already successfully received.

Blast's edge over other protocols is it never has to resend data that the other system already successfully received. Of course, on extremely noisy lines, Blast's speed drops off accordingly, but even in tests with artificially high noise levels—such as jiggling an attached receiver and even briefly removing the phone line from the wall jack—Blast maintained its connection and managed to transfer the current file intact.

Alan Southerton is this magazine's Product Reviews Editor.