

04-1996 [A-2465] CXG - Sphinx Comet

CXG Sphinx Comet, item number 'CXG 902', has caused a lot of confusion since his first appearance. In 1992 National Telecommunication System in China started to produce chess computers. On the manual and on the bottom of the Sphinx Comet clearly is imprinted 'copyright 1992', so many people assumed that the Sphinx Comet came on the market in that year. Actually a logical thought, but unfortunately a wrong conclusion! From the familiar literature it showed that the Sphinx Comet appeared on the commercial market shortly after the announcement of the 'Nürberger Spielwarenmesse'.

**Only at the inner of the machine a "902 code" can be seen,
see:**

902-1004-A



CXG Sphinx Comet (photograph: Luuk Hofman)

In the past decade I have had many requests for clarification on this mysterious chess computer. So now I am happy being able to make time for this special item!

The body of the Sphinx Comet is unrecognizable, because there is no model name or model number on it. Every time someone gets his hands on such a machine (without manual or packaging) he/she asks himself what model it is. And because there are not that much of these chess computers around, it continues to be a little mystery every time! In addition, the name "Comet" is not only used for this chess computer. Indeed, there is also the travelmodel Krypton Comet and the identical Excalibur Comet. This travelmodel has nothing to do with the CXG Sphinx Comet, because the Krypton /Excalibur Comet has a stronger program (1800 Elo rating) from programmer Gyula Horvath, where the Sphinx Comet must do with the 4 kb program (1350 Elo rating) of Kaare Danielsen.

Kaare Danielsen

By some collectors, including the well known and great collector Hans van Mierlo, I had been tipped off that the CXG Sphinx Comet could have a chess program strongly related to that of the CXG Enterprise S (1984)! At first one would be reluctant to accept this, because the CXG Enterprise S features 16 levels of play, and CXG Sphinx Comet has no less than 64! Yet both programs could well be almost identical, because the CXG Sphinx Comet's 64 levels are divided in 4 playing styles, each having 16 levels.

Initiative Test

I have played a few test games with both machines. And these show that the CXG Sphinx Comet plays about 85% to 100% the same moves as the CXG Enterprise S. Of course, because of the random generator, you do not get always the same moves. The computer chooses an arbitrarily move (also depending on the chosen playing style) from a set of moves that have an equally optimal evaluation value. The CXG Enterprise S obviously has a fixed program with a standard playing style. Which "playing style" that is, I tried to find out by an initiative test. It is a well known test where White always moves, while Black may not move at all!

CXG Enterprise S - Level 4 = 10 seconds per move

1. e4 (and as indicated, Black lets it's turn pass everytime)
2. Pf3
3. d4
4. Pe5
5. Pc3
6. Lc4
7. Lxf7 (mate)



In just 7 moves the CXG Enterprise S has shown a very active (or aggressive) style!

Sphinx Comet (level 4 = always 10 seconds per move)

The Sphinx Comet showed with playing style 'random' (level G4) to also be able to quickly move to mate, in only 6 moves. With style 'normal' (level A4) Black was mated in 15 moves. With style 'aggressive' (level C4) it was mated in 14 moves. With style "defensive" (level E4) something remarkable happened! With this setting, the program will actually not attack or checkmate at all! It needed no less than 28 crazy moves to force Black to surrender! My final conclusion with these two chess computers is that the 'random' style of play of the Comet comes closest to that of the Enterprise S. But anyone who owns both computers also can go and try out for themselves. Please let me know about your experiences and of course your test reports!

Rochade Europa (1996)

Hans-Peter Ketterling: Only a compulsory exercise? Computer Chess on the Nuremberg Toy Fair

... The machines of the brand Sphinx from manufacturer National Telecommunications (CXG) from HongKong have since long been introduced in this country, even though the market share is not particularly large. After all, some of the more simple Sphinx machines were available all the time via the mail-order. In the meantime former CXG representative Siwek has abandoned the chess computer business, but the company Tasco, which is active in the Netherlands and Belgium, jumped into this breach. In 1995 Tasco sold in Holland about 20,000 and in Belgium still 10,000 machines.

Now Tasco intends to engage also in Germany, where it focuses on customer-friendly prices. The product range is well known and includes the Granada, Sierra, Galaxy, Legend, Concerto, Spirit, Alicante, Madrid, Accolade, Seville, Super Crown, Chess Voyager, PortaChess 2 (PortaChess II) and Star Chess. In addition also some new chess computers have been announced which are the Comet, whose program corresponds to that of the Madrid and offers about 1350 Elo, and therefore is suitable for beginners, while Mars with only 1150 Elo, 16 game levels, pressure sensory board and battery operation is likely to be for absolute beginners. The price information has been announced, but is still not available. ...

Source: Rochade Europa, Juli 1996, Hans-Peter Ketterling: Nur eine Pflichtübung?
Computerschach auf der Nürnberger Spielwarenmesse 1996, Teil 2.
(A summary report.)



The CXG Sphinx Comet has 64 different levels which are organized in the following way...

LEVEL NUMBER	APPROX. TIME PER MOVE	NORMAL STYLE	AGGRES-SIVE STYLE	DEFEN-SIVE STYLE	RANDOM STYLE
1	BEGINNER	A1	C1	E1	G1
2	3 sec.	A2	C2	E2	G2
3	5 sec.	A3	C3	E3	G3
4	10 sec.	A4	C4	E4	G4
5	20 sec.	A5	C5	E5	G5
6	30 sec.	A6	C6	E6	G6
7	45 sec.	A7	C7	E7	G7
8	1 min.	A8	C8	E8	G8
9	2 min.	B1	D1	F1	H1
10	3 min.	B2	D2	F2	H2
11	5 min.	B3	D3	F3	H3
12	10 min.	B4	D4	F4	H4
13	30 min.	B5	D5	F5	H5
14	24 hours	B6	D6	F6	H6
15	MATE LEVEL	B7	D7	F7	H7
0	MULTI MOVE	B8	D8	F8	H8

A mate level in 4 different styles??



Programmierer / Programmer

- Kaare Danielsen (!)

Baujahr / Release

- Erste Erscheinungsdatum: April (!?) 1996 (!)

Technische Daten / Technical specifications

- Mikroprozessor: Hitachi HD6301V1 (!)
- Taktfrequenz: 1,8 MHz (7,2 MHz Quarz) (!)
- Programmspeicher: 4 KB ROM (!)
- Arbeitsspeicher: 128 byte RAM (!?)

Spielstärke / Playing strength

- Spielstärke: DWZ/Elo 1350
- Bewertung: Am besten geeignet für Anfänger und Gelegenheitsspieler

Verwandt / Related

- CXG Enterprise S (black and silver edition)
- CXG Enterprise S (brown and silver edition)
- CXG Star Chess (= CXG Enterprise S - black and silver edition)
- CXG Star Chess (= CXG Enterprise S - coloured edition)
- CXG Madrid (= CXG Enterprise S in a cheaper housing)
- Mephisto Merlin 4K (= CXG Enterprise S in a cheaper housing)
- Multitech Enterprise (= CXG Enterprise S in a cheaper housing)
- Nestler-matho 25 (= CXG Star Chess coloured edition)
- Rexton Harmony (= CXG Enterprise S! - no further information available)
- Schneider Enterprise S (= CXG Enterprise S)
- ??

Sonstige Merkmale / Other characteristics

Input: 220V ~50Hz

Output: Adaptor DC 9 Volt/100 mA

Battery: 1,5 V x 3/15 mA (AAA)

Spiel / Example Game

<http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/schaakcomputers/CXG/chess1.php?item=22&merk=CXG>

(Example Game: CXG Comet - Luuk Hofman)

Internet

http://www.spacious-mind.com/html/sphinx_comet.html

(CXG Sphinx Comet)

Translation author: Paul Wiselius

First Published on May 6, 2015