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# CTW

**9.1.89 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 218**

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## Spectrum welcomes Parkfield

The Spectrum Group has reacted enthusiastically to the purchase of nearly a third of its shares by Parkfield — owner of distributor Lightning.

The engineering and distribution conglomerate — boasting a turnover of around £200 million a year — has bought up over four million shares previously belonging to Guy Cramer of Cramer Holdings.

Cramer resigned as a non-executive director of Spectrum in July. Prior to this he had become involved in the Barlow Clowes financial scandal.



MacGILLIVRAY: Receptive

Although Cramer's stake in Spectrum at the time of his resignation was 29.9 per cent, Parkfield has only attained a 28 per cent share in the firm — as Spectrum has issued more shares in the half-year since July. Parkfield's Spectrum shares are worth around £2 million.

"We've known Spectrum for nearly two years and we've kept close contact with them. We made an offer for the share-  
Continued on back page

# Microdealer fills CBM gap

In an unexpected shake-up of its leisure distribution network, Commodore last week dropped longtime partner Hugh Symons and added Microdealer International.

Although it carried the Sega console throughout the Christmas period, the addition of CBM leisure product is by far Microdealer's biggest ever step into hardware. It expects to be able to start shipping product this week, having despatched staff to Commodore's Maidenhead base last week for technical training.

Whilst Commodore was pitching the split with Hugh Symons as a "mutually decided" parting of the ways, the Poole based distributor candidly offered that it had

been effectively dropped.

"Commodore decided that was the way it should be and obviously we're disappointed. We weren't achieving the objectives that Commodore wanted us to achieve. It's a very competitive market," commented Hugh Symons director Kenneth Abrahams to CTW.

Hugh Symons only dealt with Commodore's leisure products and it seems that any replacement account is more likely to be in the business market. It currently has deals with Atari, Amstrad, Acorn, Samsung, Citizen and Cambridge Computer.

"We really want distributors who are putting a lot of their energy — if not all — into Commodore product," commented Commodore's UK marketing manager Dean Barrett to CTW. "Microdealer are giving us

the sort of commitment we want from the distributors of tomorrow. With Hugh Symons we both thought it was best to go our separate ways. Things were okay, but not fantastic."

Both Microdealer and Commodore are confident that the new partnership can take CBM machines into new outlets rather than tread on the toes of existing distributors. The timing of the deal seems to indicate both that the two firms were too busy to finalise any deal in the midst of the Christmas season, and that Commodore wished to make a clean break from one firm to another on the leisure side.

"The deal means more one-stop shopping for the dealer," began Microdealer boss Lee Ginty to CTW. "At the end of the day the guy buying his soft-

Continued on back page



Microdealer's Ginty and CBM's Pleasance seal the deal

## Mordecai in primary move

Erstwhile Amstrad software sales manager Mike Mordecai launched his own firm last week, whilst insisting that he was not made redundant.

Speculation grew that Mordecai had been asked to leave Amstrad just before Christmas as the firm implemented eight redundancies. Mordecai left the firm at the same time, but claims that his leaving to form a new company is the official explanation

from both sides.

AV Marketing has been set up by Mordecai as a primary distributor selling Amsoft product and similarly priced business software to distributors.

"I'm going to do outside of Amsoft exactly what I did inside. The way I read it is that they want me to take away the hassle. They will take orders if they have to, but I'll be actively selling product on to distributors," Mordecai told CTW.

AV has already opened up

several accounts and is currently negotiating with other software producers. Mordecai noted that as far as he knew the Amstrad redundancies had only affected "secretaries and people like that".

This was backed up by Amstrad itself which was keen to stress that no middle or senior management had departed.

"It was just supplementary staff. This company prides itself on being very lean and our profit per employee is very

high. People had been recruiting when it just wasn't necessary."

It also emerged last week that Amstrad may be planning to bundle the original version of Lotus' Symphony integrated package with the PC2000 range. This would be worth about £195 in real value despite the fact that it originally retailed closer to the £500 mark.

On this Amstrad, as ever, would not confirm or deny such a move.

## EA loses its Accolade



MOTT: Less deals in future

After much speculation Electronic Arts and Accolade have finally decided to part company.

EA had been licensing Accolade product in the UK for the past eighteen months, but that agreement expires on January 31st and will not be renewed. Accolade's next move will be either to go about establishing itself in Britain or enter into a new deal with an already established firm — the most likely contender being MicroProse.

Rumours surrounding the two options are equally strong, but for now Accolade's president Alan Epstein is non-committal. He offered to CTW: "We are very much keeping our options open and evaluating several possibilities."

He continued: "Basically Accolade has grown quite significantly since the deal was made and so circumstances have changed. There comes a

point when although at the time it was a good marriage and things are still going pretty well it is best to part company."

At Electronic Arts, senior vice president Tim Mott told CTW that the parting was part of the process of concentrating more on its own publishing and less on distribution, a tactic first outlined last year by the firm's president Trip Hawkins (CTW December 5th).

Mott commented to CTW: "I'd much rather we didn't talk about this as a split, that's such a loaded word which implies dissatisfaction and unhappiness. I'd rather describe it as the natural evolution of two companies."

"You must realise that what made sense at one time doesn't necessarily make sense now. It's certainly been a profitable relationship for both of us but EA has always had its own publishing activities as its main focus."

Continued on back page

## Gold seals Jacko deal

US Gold was claiming something of a scoop last week after tying up a licensing deal for the latest Michael Jackson film *Moonwalker*.

A deal was reached in conjunction with US firm Key-punch, which negotiated the film rights. Gold had been tracking the reclusive pop star since its deal with Pepsi last year — Jackson himself was previously sponsored by the soft drinks company.

"Pepsi certainly got us on the Michael Jackson treadmill, and he was our first choice when it came to the music and video for *Thunderblade*, but it fell through. This latest deal is great. Jackson's charismatic power is unparalleled and the industry needs this kind of product and personality to maintain itself as an art form", offered Gold's operations director Tim Chaney to CTW.

The game is set to be released simultaneously in both the US and UK in the autumn, and Gold is already planning extensive marketing. "Really there are so many options, with music, videos etc that it will become obvious as things develop."

In the past Gold has sold product to Key-punch, but this will be the first joint venture between the two firms. The present deal is only for the *Moonwalker* film, but Chaney is not ruling out the possibility of further Michael Jackson ties.

Moonwalker is claimed to

Continued on back page

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Two years ago Frontline was among the loudest voices urging dealers to set off on the trading up trail. CTW looks at just how far that process has come and the role a certain firm called Amstrad has played in the whole affair..... 9

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# Industry charity appeals for payment as pledges top £15K

Organisers of this year's industry charity have applauded the pledging of some £15,000 on its launch night – but have pleaded with firms to make sure they pay up.

Throughout 1989 monies will be raised by the games industry for the National Autistic Society. A target has been set at £50,000 with the bulk of this expected to come from a charity compilation on both 8-bit and 16-bit machines.

Considering the lack of response last year to an appeal on behalf of the NSPCC and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (with no compilation released as yet) organisers of the 1989 charity were amazed by the industry reaction this time around.

After the new charity was launched at the recent Industry Dinner in London, over

£15,000 was pledged with eight firms promising £1,000 each and one (Audiogenic) offering £2,200 in all.

"It went fantastically, but I'm a bit reticent after the last time. For the NSPCC in 1986 people pledged £20,000 but we only ever collected £12,000 and the NSPCC, naturally, were very upset," commented charity spokesman and Mediagenic's European boss Rod Cousens to *CTW*.

"Some firms that have pledged money are notorious for not paying their bills. Let's just hope that everyone can remember the spirit of the night concerned and pay promptly. We're simply not geared up to be a debt collecting agency."

The industry witnessed several impromptu money raising stunts with donations being offered variously for Domark director Mark Strachan to

remove his kilt, Ocean boss David Ward to impersonate Mick Jagger and Croftward's Jerry Howells to impersonate Tom Jones all were carried out to a degree, at least.

Cousens also offered a special commendation for Audiogenic, which surprised many by the size of its donation and paid up almost immediately.

Titles are being sought for the charity compilation, with the emphasis on time the quicker everything can be put together, the quicker the games can be released.

An industry Day Of Action has also been pencilled in for May 4th, with the plan being for as many firms as possible to make some fund-raising effort that day.

Unpaid donations should be paid either to The In Din or The National Autistic Society, care of Mediagenic.



COUSENS: Pay those pledges

## Database swaps three for one in Focus deal

Database Publications has sold off three of its official Amstrad titles to Focus Magazines, whilst gaining *ST Update* as part of the deal.

The magazines are *Amstrad Computer User*, *Amstrad Professional Computing* and *Amstrad PCW Magazine*. All three titles formed the subsidiary company Avralite, of which Focus is now the major shareholder.

Database is claiming that the pressure on its production department was hindering the

growth of its other titles, and that it had subsequently taken the decision not to renew its licence with Amstrad with regards to the three titles.

"It was the appropriate moment to sell the company, as Focus will now have time to establish a relationship with Amstrad. And by gaining *ST Update*, which will now become part of *Atari ST User*; the changes have only been beneficial. Hopefully *ST Update*'s readership will come across to us and the combined titles will make the magazine stronger" offered Database

director David Hirst to *CTW*.

Meanwhile, Focus is hesitant to reveal its plans for the three acquired titles although it is likely that *Amstrad PCW Magazine* will now be merged with its own title *Your Amstrad PCW*.

"Before we do anything we will be meeting with Amstrad to discuss their ideas, as obviously it's important that we keep in with them. I suspect that a merger of the two PCW titles will take place to create a leading force in the market", commented Focus director Paul Costa.

Currently *Amstrad Computer User* is claimed to have a circulation of around 40,000, whilst the other two titles are closer to 20,000. *ST Update* is believed to sell less than 20,000, although Database claim that with its own distribution activities such figures are irrelevant.

Both firms are claiming that all staff on the four titles involved have been offered new contracts with either company, and as yet it appears undecided who will be editing the Amstrad titles, although *ST Update* editor Mark Evans looks likely to be taking on editorship of one of the magazines.



ACU: Moving into Focus

## Frontline opens in Ireland and promises £50 million

Frontline distribution has begun the new year by opening an Irish office and making bullish predictions about its imminent financial figures.

The new office opened on January 3rd and is being run by Fina Murphy in Dublin. At the moment the Ireland branch is

"just a small sales office" but marketing director Nigel Rix is promising a recruitment drive in the new year.

"We saw a good market and a growing market out there and figured the best way to service the Irish dealers is to actually have a presence out there ourselves," Rix offered to *CTW*.

Meanwhile, Rix was also

predicting a turnover of £50 million to be announced when the firm's financial year ends on January 31st. Last year the firm posted a figure of £29 million.

Rix refused to be drawn on what sort of profit the firm would take from such a turnover offering only that it would be "extremely profitable".

## Console drives on as Konix picks 3.5 inch

The much touted – and still well hidden – Konix games console will arrive featuring a 3.5 inch disk drive, *CTW* can reveal.

This comes after several other reports over the past few weeks that the British-built machine will run three inch software – like the Amstrad PCW range.

Konix, however, has decided that it will use 3.5 inch disks and currently has a shortlist of three firms with which to sign an OEM deal for the drive.

"We've looked at all the possibilities – 5.25, 3.5, 2.8 and two inch," began Konix boss Wyn Holloway to *CTW*.

"But we want to keep things as cheap as possible and 3.5 inch means that the software can stay nearer the £15 mark.

The £149 console will be shown privately to potential customers at the British Toy Fair in London later this month. The first public unveiling of the machine, however, will take place at the *CTW* sponsored European Computer Trade Show in April.

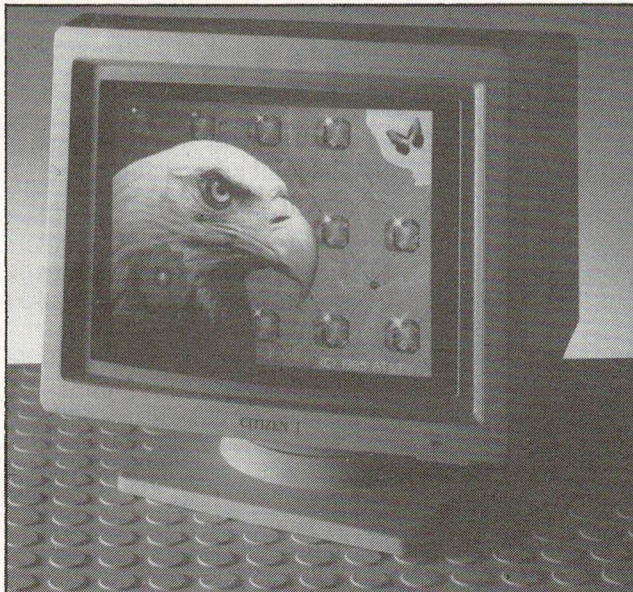
## Citizen cuts and pushes in VGA monitor market

Citizen has cut the price of its PC-compatible colour monitor, the CCM 104, and its graphics display board the PCG 1000, in an effort to tap more heavily into the enhanced VGA monitor market.

The CCM-104 is now priced at £640 while the PCG 1000 now retails at £380. The firm claims the products are now

targetted at two distinct markets – PC users looking for a VGA display and PS/2 system users looking for "superior image quality".

The firm's senior product marketing manager Anthony Odhams offered: "Both the VGA and enhanced VGA market places are expanding rapidly and have become extremely competitive. If we want to succeed we need to be competitive with the products most people want to buy."



CCM 104: Slashed

# CTW

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## CBM picks Apple man

Commodore International has appointed a new general manager for its Scandinavian operations in the form of ex-Apple man Erik Schale.

Schale's appointment is claimed to be part of Commodore's worldwide strategy to increase its presence in business, government and education markets.

Former vice president of sales for Apple Computer's Swedish operations, Schale will be responsible for Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and will be based in Stockholm.

This news follows the recent UK signing of The Quadrant Network Group, which will now be supplying the Amiga to the audio-visual market, in a bid to extend Commodore's specialist presence further.

Quadrant hopes to establish a client base for the Amiga among small production companies, in-house production teams and government bodies.

"We've always known that the Amiga has got a role to play at the professional user end of the audio-visual market. Our deal with Quadrant is yet more proof of this," offered Commodore's national sales manager for specialist markets, Barry Thurston.

**SPEAKEASY**

# Poll re-positioning

These are the top selling seven computers at Microsnips - who were not consulted in the recent CTW Christmas Poll (CTW December 12th):

|                    |       |                              |         |
|--------------------|-------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Spectrum Plus 2 | (60%) | 5. Amiga 500                 | (2%)    |
| 2. Spectrum Plus 3 | (20%) | 6. VCS 2600                  | (0.75%) |
| 3. Commodore 64    | (15%) | 7. Sega                      | (0.25%) |
| 4. Atari ST        | (2%)  | I bet we're nearer than you! |         |

Paul Zabudow  
Microsnips  
Wallasey  
Merseyside  
- Many apologies for not contacting Microsnips for the inau-

gral (and very well received) CTW Christmas Poll, but obviously we can't contact everyone. The idea was just to get a snapshot of dealer opinion and unearth a few trends about what was selling through independents.

Microsnips may well be closer to the actual national picture on machine sales, with the Spec-

trum coming out on top. The fact that only 4 per cent of dealers contacted predicted the Spectrum as their best-seller was something of a shock, but it must be said that it is very, very unlikely that the Spectrum will have picked up 80 per cent (Plus 2 and 3) of Christmas sales amongst independents.

And considering reports coming from just about everywhere else in the market, the Sega figure of 0.25 per cent from all machine sales seems just a tad low too. But if that's how it is at Microsnips, that's how it is.

# Atlantic crossing

Hi there again. You know our great new acronym coined last time for your amusement, YAACP. In case you missed the last episode it stands for: Yet Another Amstrad Compatibility Problem.

So what has the company we love to hate done to us this week you may ask in fear and trepidation yet again?

Well, it seems that I was underestimating the great man in accusing him of a pre-emptive strike on 1992. We were complaining about him unloading surplus German 8512s on us in case you didn't notice. (A Schneider 8256 had a brief sojourn in our offices as well).

The latest largesse to arrive is of Trans-continental parentage. Certainly - I can't find a place called Northbrook, Illinois in my Ordnance Survey Gazetteer of the British Isles.

Yet again you will have the exciting prospect of explaining to your punters why they can't fit an interface to the back because of the totally different socket you will find there.

Being of a somewhat technical mind I also worry what he's done to the power supply. I'm not interested enough to open it up to find out (we are just sending it back) but there are two options - a new UK power supply or a bodge (sorry, modification). You can find out for yourself which it is.

I'd ask for my 250 quid back

only I kind of forgot to send it. (Shame ain't it).

On a more serious note one can understand how the Schneiders got back to the UK but one wonders why Amstrad has shipped PCWs back from the US (it doesn't sound a very profitable thing to do with such a cheap and bulky item - and allow for the modifications on top).

Makes me glad I'm no longer an Approved Amstrad Dealer. (Trouble is ADL won't listen).

Peter Winterbottom  
Honeysett Computers  
Hereford

This one could run and run. Latest reports claim that a shipment of PCW 8512s are currently heading towards Hereford courtesy of Amstrad's plant in Upper Volta. Then there's the ones from Iceland, Sierra Leone, Cuba...

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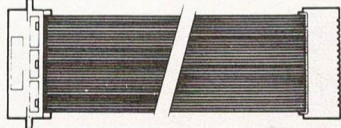


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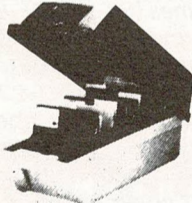


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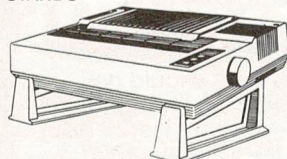
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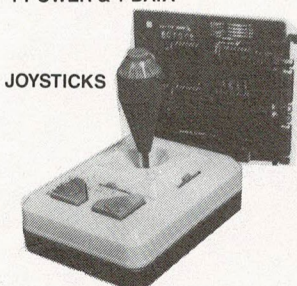


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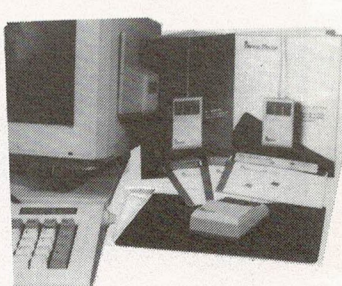
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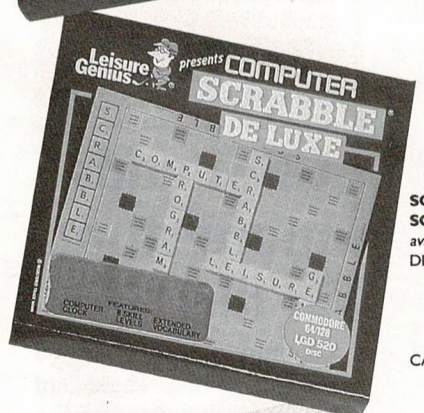
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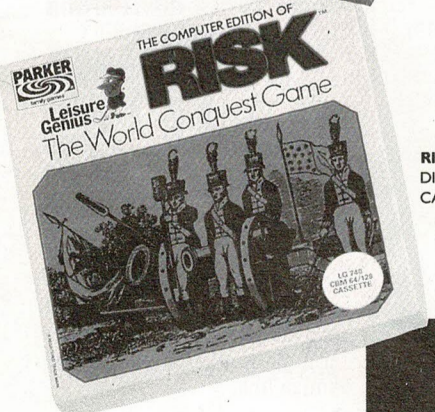
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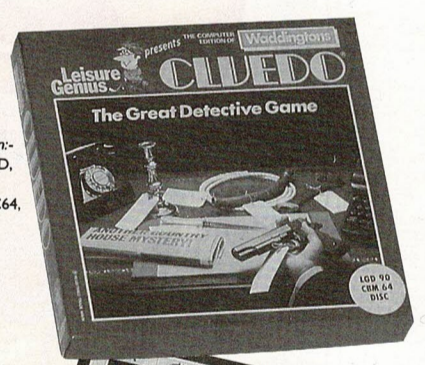
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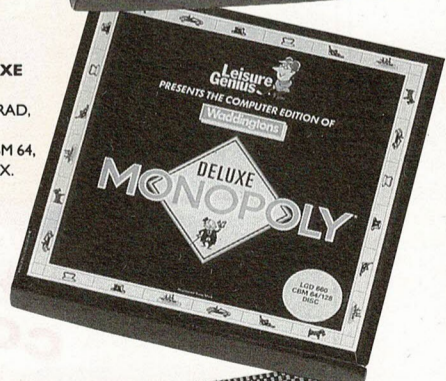
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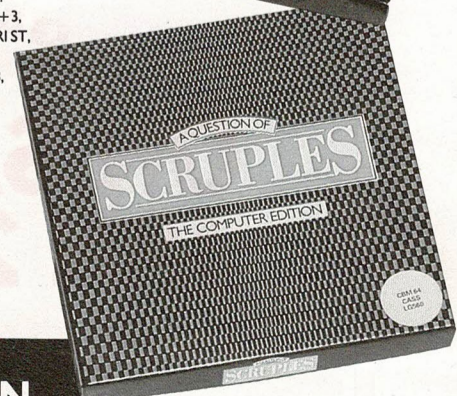
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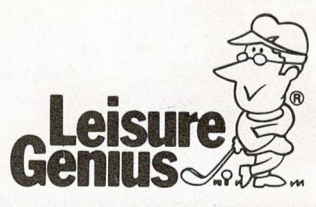
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# Hewson brand bound for US market debut

Hewson is set to sign a licensing deal with a major US publisher in a bid to launch the firm's own label in America for the first time.

In the past the firm has licensed its products to individual publishers - with firms such as Mindscape (*Uridium*) and Epyx (*Nebulus*). The firm is now keen to establish its own brand name in the US, and

whilst it is refusing to name the publisher involved in this latest deal it is claimed to be one of the major players.

The first products to be launched on the Hewson label in the US will be *Eliminator*, *Netherworld* and *Zenon*. "Obviously it's going to take a big effort to achieve any significant market presence in the US, and we're well aware of that. Nothing's going to happen overnight, but in the long

term I think it's possible to establish our brand name," offered the firm's boss Andrew Hewson to CTW.

Hewson ended 1988 with a press launch to unveil its products for the first quarter of this year and these not only include the three games destined for the US, but also *Custodian* (STAg), *Astaroth the Angel of Death* (STAg) and *Stormlord* (STAgSpAm64).

Meanwhile Hewson has

signed up a distributor for its Rack-It budget range in Australia and New Zealand.

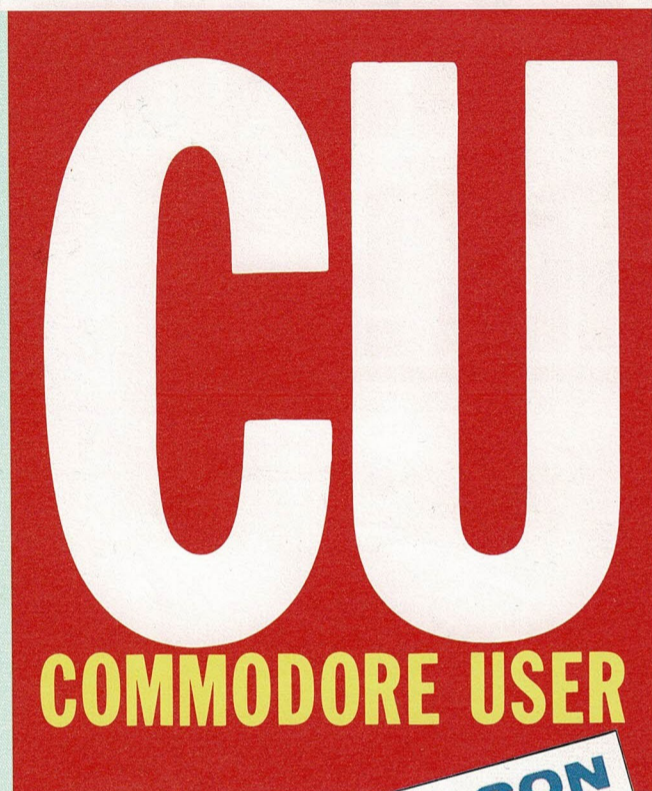
21st Century Software, which already handles Interceptor's product amongst others, will be handling artwork and duplication itself.

"We chose them mainly because they're not as big as the other software companies, so they'll specialise more on us," commented Hewson's budget sales manager Caroline Fonseca to CTW.

The Collaroy, near Sydney, based firm will be selling the budget product at a price higher than the exact UK equivalent due to Australia's tax rates. Hewson's re-release label Rebound, however, is not included in the deal.



HEWSON: US hopes

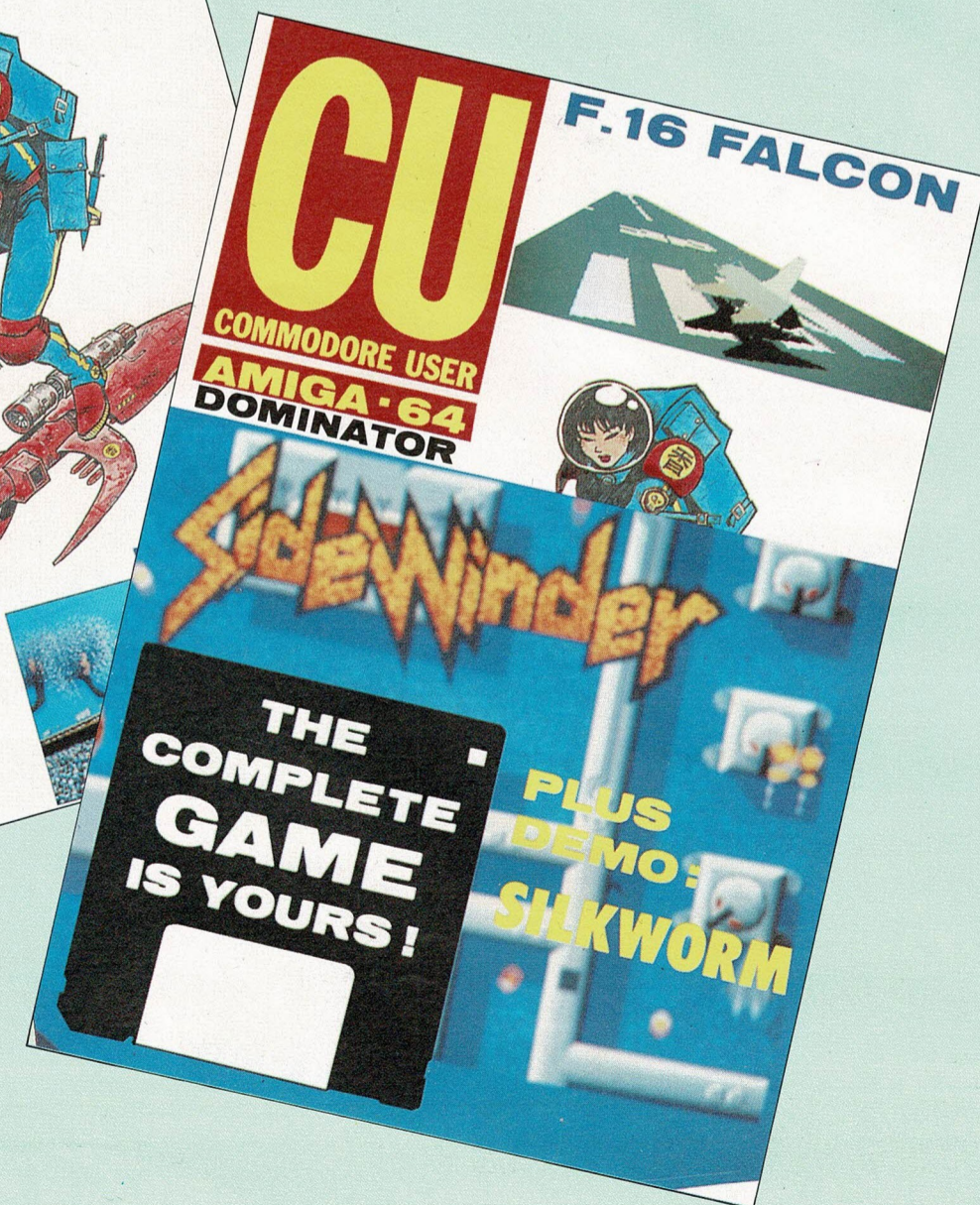


## TWO CAN PLAY AT THIS GAME

February's issue of *Commodore User* is special. It comes with a new logo and design. More importantly it comes with a double-edged gift which proves no other magazine is better placed to cover the Commodore games market, be it 8 bit or 16 bit.

There are two versions of *CU* (as it's now called), one comes with a free cassette carrying a complete game and playable demos, the other comes with a disk containing the complete game of *Sidewinder*, Mastertronic's award-winning shoot 'em up, plus more demos.

Who says you can't please all the people all the time?



ON SALE  
JAN 26th

## Bright Sparks set to fly out

A new mail order educational software firm called Bright Sparks has been set up by two ex-teachers concerned at the confusing state of the present market.

It will produce two catalogues every term containing lists of around 30 educational software. One of the catalogues will cover all formats and is aimed at parents, the other is for schools themselves and will concentrate exclusively on the Acorn BBC machine.

Director Rosemary Lawy commented to CTW: "One major benefit to customers is that we are a single source supplier so teachers won't have to go sifting through mounds of different material which they just don't have time to do."

The catalogues will be split into three sections covering the 3-5, 6-9 and 10+ age ranges.

## Computers move into the arts

Channel 4's weekly arts programme *Signals* is to feature a look at "the implication of the growth in the computer game industry" in its January 18th edition.

The programme's publicity describes computer games as "a strange artificial world". It will be looking at the ever increasing quality of music and graphics in games and their significance to the arts.

The programme is broadcast between 9.15 and 10.15pm.

## CBM adds more stores in the US

Commodore has added another seven chains of stores to its distribution network in the US.

In total the seven chains give Commodore an extra 450 new stores. Among the new high street partners for the firm are Software Etc, which has 230 stores, and Electronics Boutique with 140.

Commodore claimed last week that the new chains would support the majority of its products, but with particular attention being paid to the Amiga line.

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# SNIPPETS

A recent survey by the *Sunday Times* claims that Amstrad chairman Alan Sugar was one of the few British millionaires to increase his fortune during 1988. The value of his stake in Amstrad apparently went up from £283 million in January 1988 to £430 million in January 1989. This increase compares rather well with Robert Maxwell, whose stake in Maxwell Communications is now worth £599 million rather than £777 million in January

last year. Maxwell has always maintained, however, that the bulk of his stake is not his personally but is owned by the Maxwell Foundation, registered in Liechtenstein...

Diminutive budget outfit Zeppelin has landed its first major licence, with the signing of Scottish international darts player Jocky Wilson. The resulting title, *Jocky Wilson's Darts* has just been released on Spectrum and C64 at £2.99.

US Gold has signed a deal



Zeppelin Staff parade new signing Jocky Wilson (second right)

with Intergalactic Development Inc. of Davenport, Iowa for the worldwide distribution of the follow-up to the successful *Universal Military Simulator*. The original *UMS* was marketed in the UK by Rainbird, but *UMS II: Nations At War* is due out on Gold's SSI label towards the middle of 1989. Gold has also gained the Australian and Asian rights to *UMS I*...

After less than four weeks Database Exhibitions has sold

50 per cent of the space available at this year's European Computer Trade Show. Among the takers so far are Microdealer, Electronic Arts, SDL, and Konix with more big names expected shortly...

**Software Product International** has announced the appointment of Deryk Randell as sales manager for the dealer division. He joins after three years with Victor as sales manager...

**Millbank's System Peripherals Division** is to distribute **GoScript** in the UK under an agreement with the exclusive European importer **Graphic Sciences**. **Go Script** gives full **PostScript** capability to Laser, Dot Matrix, and Ink Let printers. It retails at £195...

German based **Rainbow Arts** has announced the appointment of Martin Gatsch, Heinrich Lenhardt, and Boris Schneider, all of whom were previously editors and reviewers for the magazine **Power Play/Happy Computer**. Their jobs are to work in collaboration with the programmers to tune the games to optimal playability.

Publisher **Prentice Hall** has signed a contract with **VLSI Technology** to publish and market a family data manual on the Acorn-designed ARM RISC chip set. The firm's college division plans to distribute the book to colleges for course work. It will also be sold in bookstores...

Following the release of its **Speed King PC Joystick** in the UK, **Konix** has now launched two more - bred in the States by **Kraft**. The first, **Kraft Premium II**, retails at £24.99 and the second **Kraft Premium III** - offering the excitement of an extra fire button - retails at £29.99. **Konix** also supplies a games card with two ports. If purchased with a **Konix joystick** it retails at £9.99, otherwise buyers must fork out an extra tenner...

**Toshiba** now resides in Weybridge in Surrey, however its operations facilities and training centres still remain at the Sunbury location...

**Lyn Barley** has joined **Borland** as dealer support representatives from **General Parametrics**, where she was responsible for dealer/distributor sales and marketing support...

The UK activities of **Diconix** have been incorporated into **Kodak** to form The **Kodak Personal Printer Products Group**. This operation is headed by Alan Pickering, previously sales manager for Northern Europe at **Diconix**. **Epson** is branching out, it's moved premises to Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire and there are three other new investments in the shape of an automated warehouse at Langley, Buckinghamshire, a research and development division in Milton Keynes, and a 100,000 sq ft factory on 55 acres in Telford. A fifth Epson initiative was recently taken in Denmark when **Epson Danmark A/S** was formed...

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# LEADING FROM THE FRONTLINE

As First Software the now established Frontline Distribution was instrumental in helping many dealers "trade up" from solely home machines to Amstrad PCs. Two years on, Frontline is now helping to take those very same dealers into even more unknown territories — the lands of networks, 286s and 386s (with a little help from Amstrad, of course). DAVE ROBERTS spoke to Frontline marketing director Nigel Rix on how it's done . . .

1988 was a year of change for Frontline. There was the formation of a board of directors, a doubling of turnover, all the divisionalisation and of course change of name. Last year the firm was known as First Software. Now there is nothing wrong with that, it's really quite a nice little name, but for a firm obtaining 65 per cent of its turnover from hardware sales it was just a

touch misleading. So Frontline was born and according to its marketing director Nigel Rix that name is now firmly established with First Software being no more than a pleasant but fading memory. The divisionalisation process has been rather more complicated and may still not be over. So far it has resulted in seven separate sections of Frontline. There is Power Pro-



**RIX: promising progression**  
ducts, Apple Products, Communications and Networking, Printers and Peripherals, Software, Intel Division and Tecmar Division.

Rix explains the thinking behind this segregational process: "We were growing at a very rapid rate and we found we were losing the focus that we had always tried to maintain, so we came up with the idea of divisionalisation to give different focal points to different groups."

He claims that all the divisions are now run very much on individual lines, almost as companies within a company, only coming together now and again for a "cross fertilisation of ideas and concepts" — which presumably means talking to each other.

For now seven divisions is enough, but Rix does not rule out the prospect of more being added later this year. He believes that the process becomes increasingly necessary as the firm grows so that certain product areas get the attentions of a small firm but with the resources of a big one. Without it Rix opines Frontline could become "just another big, flabby company".

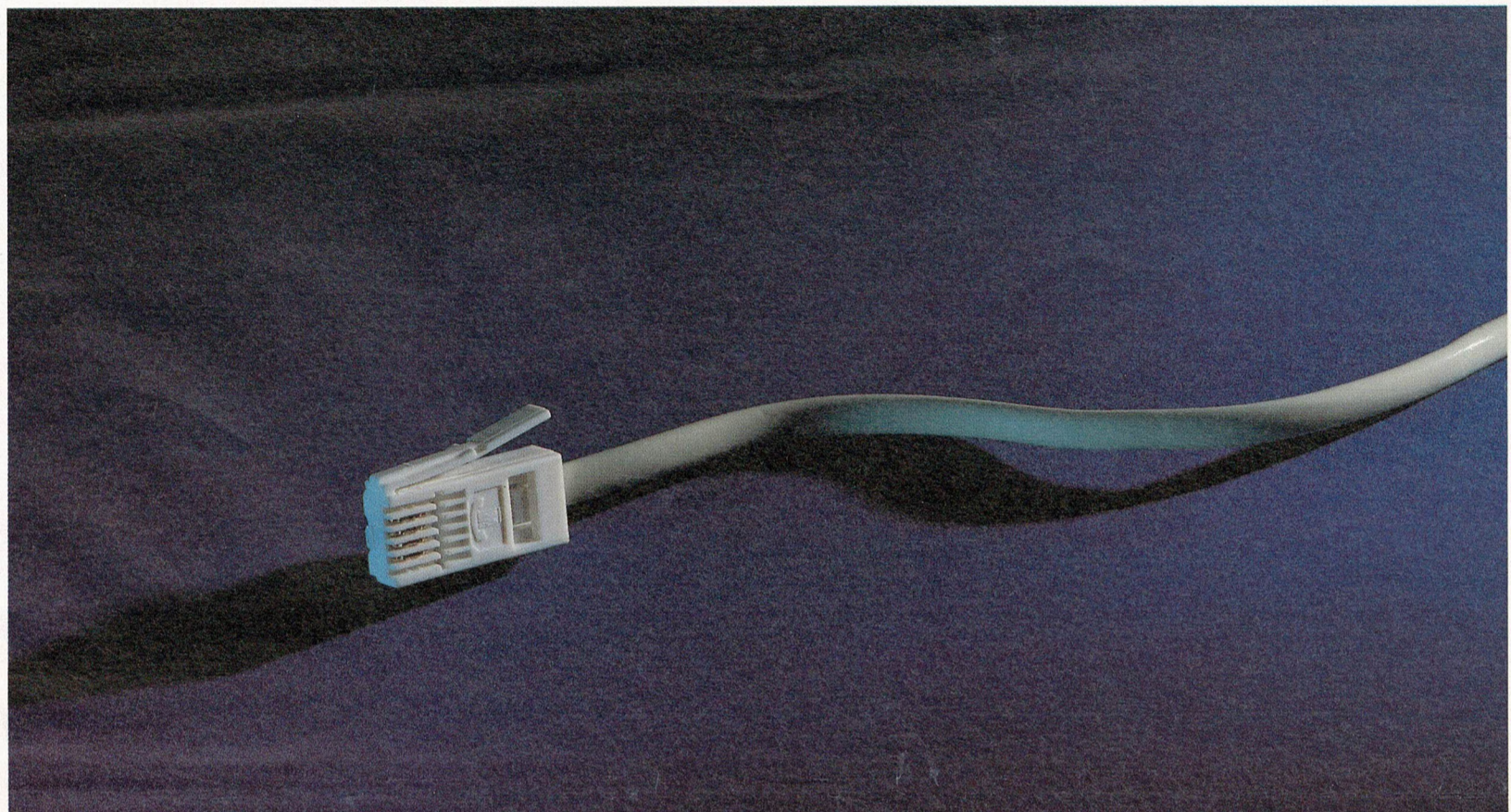
The growth to which Rix constantly refers is undeniable. In 1985, its first year of existence, the firm had a turnover of £8 million, in '86 it doubled to £16 million, '87 saw a jump to £29 million and the firm hopes its '88 figures will be in excess of £50 million. The staffing levels have enjoyed a similar growth with the three originals in '85 now swelling to 150.

"One of the reasons we've enjoyed such growth is that we've always taken on the right product at the right time — the most notable of which has been Amstrad. Amstrad has been a phenomena that has fuelled this company's growth and many others besides. They really have bought computers to the masses."

## The phase that launched a thousand dealerships

Frontline's association with the boys from Brentwood goes back two years and right from the off it realised the importance of the firm. Back then all talk was of trading up with many virginal dealers taking their first tentative steps into the world of PCs with

Continued on page 15



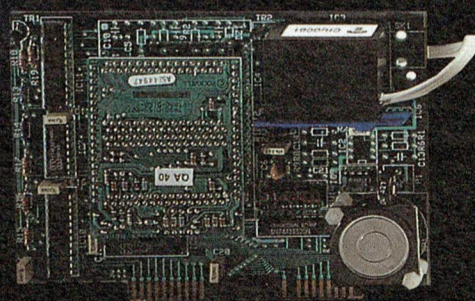
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| Log of Transmissions                 | yes      | yes      | yes       | yes        | yes       |
| Unlimited Phone Directory            | no       | no       | yes       | yes        | yes       |
| Receive Fax                          | no       | yes      | yes       | yes        | yes       |
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KEY: S/W = Software H/W = Hardware

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# THE REVOLUTION TWO-STEP

The budget market has been dancing to a different beat over the past couple of months. In that time sundry labels have announced either more product at £2.99, new £2.99 labels, or experiments with full-price releases. Everyone appears to have realised at the same time that it is harder than ever to make money with £1.99 product. Budget specialist DAVID LESTER looks at the reasons.

While Nigel Lawson is trying his hardest (with debatable success) to combat the scourge of inflation throughout our nation, most of our very own industry's budget software houses are trying hard to raise prices.

Budget began in 1984, with Mastertronic and Atlantis selling games for the then scandalous price of £1.99, and a now defunct firm called ACE selling product at £2.99. As we now all know, the £1.99 price-point not only stuck, but became a tremendous success, and breathed new life into the computer games market just when it was most needed.

Be that as it may, ever since there have been sundry attempts to try to repeat the "pocket money" success in terms of sales volumes, with a

higher price-point - usually £2.99 (although Firebird Silver tried for ages to get the market to accept its £2.50 price).

Budget ranges at £2.99 have come and gone ever since, often dubbed as "gold" or "extra special" in some other way - the prime example being budget king Mastertronic's Mastertronic Added Dimension (MAD) range.

The market, though, has firmly resisted every such attempt to boost prices... until this year, when Zeppelin had considerable success (with Gallup chart topping hits on both Commodore and Atari (8-bit) with £2.99 range. More significant was the entry this autumn of the second US Gold/Gremlin empire budget label - Kixx, and Elite's Encore label (also a second foray into the budget arena).

With a back-catalogue stronger than anyone else's can ever be, Kixx kicked off with such guaranteed successes as *Gauntlet* and *Ace of Aces* - all priced at £2.99. Encore has shared chart dominance with Kixx, using such mega hits as *Commando* and *Bomb Jack* to carve out market share.

## Profit prophet

Since this unprecedented success (now most of the budget titles in the top ten are £2.99 games) there have been announcements from Code Masters, Mastertronic, and most recently Softek/Micro Selection, to the effect that these budget labels will be shifting the emphasis more towards £2.99 product from now on. Code Masters has gone further than any of the others, so that from now on all of its new releases will go out at the higher price.

Bruce Everiss explains the move: "Costs and distributor margins have both been rising for a long time now. Code Masters have been harder hit than most since we have a policy of not selling re-releases, which means that our programming costs are much higher than most other firms'. Although we also probably have the lowest overhead base, we have wanted to make the move to £2.99 for a long time."

The move is justified by Everiss as the natural result of inflation - and by the expected blather about Code Masters' quality being so much higher than everyone else's, so that the kids buying the games will still be getting better value by buying Code Masters...

The reason for the move by all parties is pretty obvious: money. The margins offered by a £2.99 product are clearly a lot higher than those offered by the £1.99 ranges. Since the production costs don't change at

all, the extra income contributes directly towards the bottom line (and possibly to programmer royalties, depending upon the programmers' deals).

This situation has always been the case. Now, though, the need for such a mass price increase is more severe due to pressure from two sides the rising costs are now squeezing margins more than ever, such that publishers' gross margins are smaller than ever, and secondly competition has never been keener.

Furthermore, the tidal wave of ex-full price releases and the increased use of professional programming teams for budget titles has meant that the quality required for a budget game is at an all-time peak - and still climbing.

In the absence of higher sales volumes (unlikely due to the increased competition) this must be offset by higher margins if the publishers are to continue to trade profitably.

One year ago in an article for *Popular Computing Weekly* I wrote of the increasing competition in the budget sector, and of the potential problems it would bring. Since then, of course, there have been several major newcomers - notably Encore and Kixx, but also "one-hit wonders" Gamebusters (with *Ace*) and Martech's budget offshoot.

The pull of the back catalogue titles these have brought to market has meant that competition has increased substantially. No longer does any one budget publisher have the hold and influence over the market which Mastertronic had two years ago.

My predicted outcome in that original article was a fall-out, with some of the smallest budget players collapsing. This has happened to a degree - Powerhouse having fallen, and

Pirate having shrunk in size, while Bug Byte was withdrawn pending its relaunch (new-look games now in the shops. But the far larger effect is only now being seen rises (which twelve months ago were inconceivable to the degree that is now being seen).

Budget publishers have in some ways got a lot to thank US Gold and Elite for. The repeated failure of attempts to make a £2.99 price stick implies that something has happened this year to persuade the consumer to adapt.

In my opinion (others will no doubt dispute it) that factor has been the re-release of such mega-hits that have been dominating the charts for the last few months.

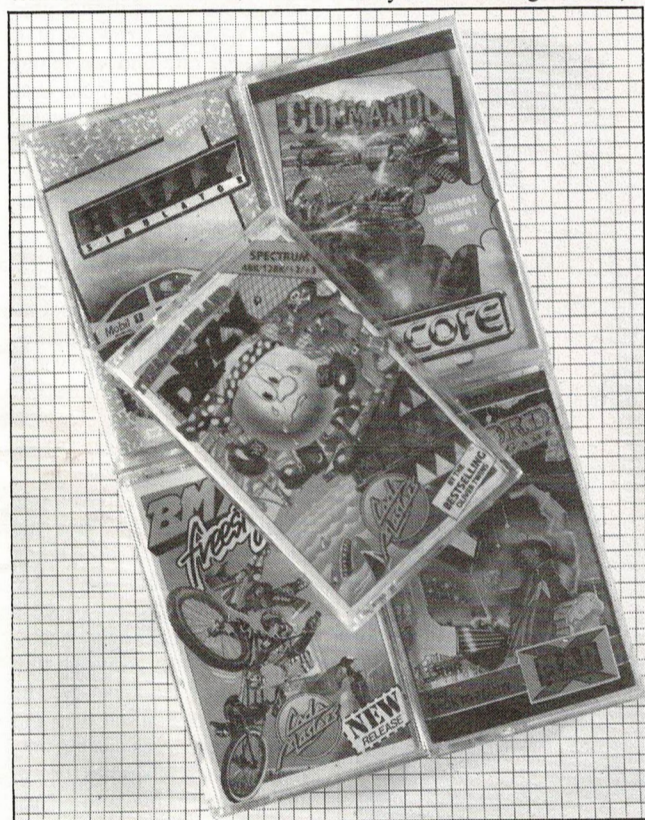
Without the joint entry at £2.99 by US Gold and Elite with the might of their back

catalogues, the moves recently announced by Code Masters *et al* might have met the same fate as the now classic £2.99 Classics range.

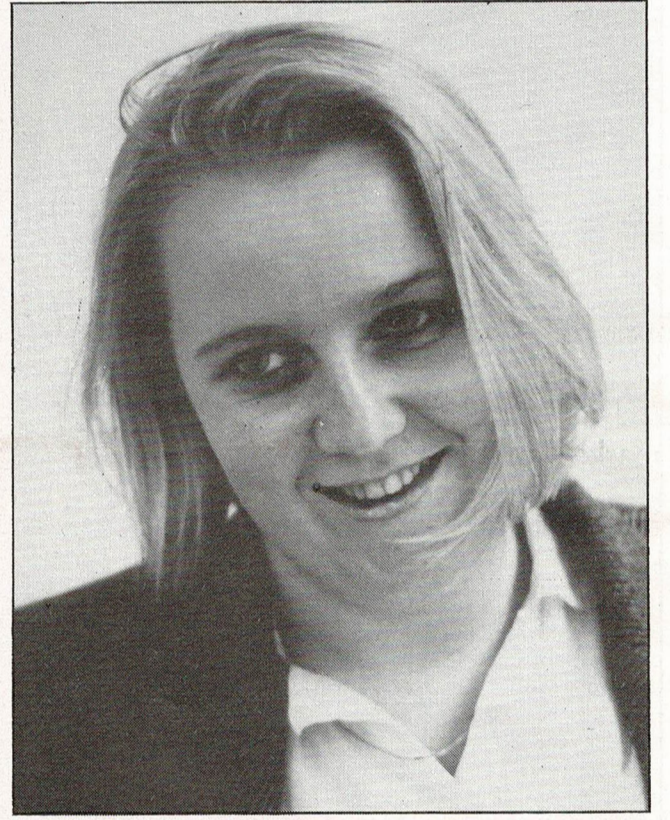
## Daddy I'm a big boy now

The budget sector is indeed undergoing significant change at present. Not only are the main players (no pun intended) nudging price-points up by a pound - but there is no longer a leading budget software house which does not have some full price representation.

Mastertronic was the first to make the move, with its strategic acquisition last year of Melbourne House. Since then, Alternative has announced *Again Again*, it



BUDGET: How much longer has £1.99 got?



BYRNE: BT sticking with £1.99 - but less of it

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## OLD BORES ALMANAC — 1989 PREDICTIONS

### January

CTW increases advertising rates to cover the cost of pre-Christmas celebrations. Audiogenic release *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* for Spectrum.

### February

Gallup charts reveal that *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* is the top selling football program. Three Audiogenic staff are thrown out of the Royal Oak after celebrations get out of hand. Audiogenic appoint new PR agency.

### March

PR agency put out release about Audiogenic's new 16-bit game, but say it has lots of bugs. Audiogenic fire PR agency and explain that the game is actually about insects.

### April

Domark announce that they have signed up Edwina Currie for an Easter Egg game. CTW fails to notice that the press release is dated April 1st.

### May

Gallup charts show latest Audiogenic release at No. 1; Audiogenic give Sales Manager large bonus.

### June

Gallup realise they were holding the charts upside down. Audiogenic fire Sales Manager. continued Page 94

*Amongst all the small companies trying to make the big time, there's one that just has to be taken seriously.*

Grow with us.

**AUDIOGENIC**

own full-price label. Code Masters has just made the jump to full-price and Zeppelin has set up Kognito. Silverbird is of course, part of the Telecomsoft empire. Players is part of the Interceptor Group and the newcomers mentioned earlier are all budget off-shoots of full-price labels. Powerhouse, too, I understand, was to have launched a full-price label, had it still been around, this Autumn.

This second revolution (Zeppelin, Code Masters and Alternative's moves all having been made independently within the last three months) is obviously not unrelated to the move to £2.99.

What sundry industry pundits have been predicting for the last eighteen months or so is the demise of a full-price market on 8-bit. This has evidently not happened yet, and there is still profitable business to be done supplying full-price games for 8-bit micros. Meanwhile, many full-price houses have expanded down into the budget sector such that the comfortable, if unexciting, profits to be had there have been shaved a hit.

In addition, one of the most frequently quoted reasons for companies pulling out of not venturing into the full-price market has been the cost of creating and maintaining a brand name and presence.

By making a name in budget, the costs of "up-grading" are significantly reduced, since the consumers already know the brand name of the parent company.

And, what could be a better medium to advertise new full-price titles than on the packaging of a popular budget game?

### Don't look a gift market in the mouth

Retailers, too, can rest assured that the new label is already streetwise as regards software. Meanwhile, distribution channels will largely be in place already. (This could of course kill of a new label from the word go if the budget range's reputation is somewhat less than good!).

Then there is the added bonus of a self-perpetuating supply of back-catalogue titles for future re-releases on budget, and possibly even some new budget customers who have been so impressed by the publisher's full-price titles that he will risk one of their budget games as well.

But perhaps the biggest point of all is the advent of 16-bit, in which all games publishers now wish to get a foothold.

Selling a 16-bit version of a £1.99 game at £9.95 seems a bit of a cheek - but to sell it at £14.95 is ludicrous (at least in the consumers' eyes), and since the 'budget' price of a tenner for 16-bit games is unacceptable to the distributors and retailers of this beloved industry, £14.95 is the lowest one can charge for a 16-bit game and still expect to get reasonable distribution.

This makes all 16-bit publishing effectively full-price - and if a company publishes full-price games on 16-bit machines, why not churn out 8-bit versions at the same time? After all, many of the costs of a release will already have been incurred, and the good reviews of one version may well pull up sales of other formats.

Other reasons for a move from budget to full-price range

from the fact that the Christmas market is dominated by gift purchases which will only ever be full-price games - so why shouldn't budget publishers try to gain their own slice of that market segment, too?

"The customers want it. We have done loads of research, which tells us that kids want to buy full-price games as well as budget as a market-led company we aim to give the kids what they want - which means full-price value-packs as well as budget games," is the Code Masters argument.

Seems to make sense, doesn't it? Well, yet to the publisher. Any consumer who stops to think about it, though, would soon ask questions

which might prove hard for the publishers to answer satisfactorily.

"Why, if your budget games are full-price quality, are you now charging full-price for other games as well as selling your budget range?"

Mastertronic answered this question earlier this year with the retort that the budget games were as good as other full-price labels' games, while their full-price games - phew, they really were something! Somehow, I can't see that one cutting much ice when everyone is in both markets anyway!

Code Masters' spokesperson Bruce Everiss tries a different tack: "But first full-price

title is a compilation of four full-price quality games, each of which we could easily have sold on its own for £2.99: all four would have cost the customer £11.96, which is more than one full-price game." Ergo, Code Masters' full-price is better value, even, than its own budget games.

The answer for most other labels is to accept that a market differential does actually exist, and that full-price product needs "added value" somehow - albeit perceived value rather than necessarily actual value.

In other words, the same game might well be sold at full price as at budget, if it has the bonus of a big box and a film or coin op licence attached, or if it

represents some new dimension in programming achievements I dread to think how many dimensions the programming world has now - but it must be several hundred at least, if marketing persons are to be believed!). And after a year or so, of course, the very same game will be sold as a budget title anyway.

Most budget labels have opted to create a new brand name. Otherwise, kids could well (but probably wouldn't) question the philosophical arguments behind selling games for both budget and full-price.

Alternative has now chosen Again Again, Mastertronic bought and relaunched Mel-

bourne House, Zeppelin is using Kognito, and so on. The exception seems to be Code Masters, which is doing what Firebird tried initially - namely having "gold" or "plus" ranges.

Time alone will tell how successful each is. But the trend is certainly amusing given the battle fought by most budget labels as to the viability of top quality games at budget prices.

But this is of course no more ironic than the humble pie eaten by ex-budget-critics such as Nick Alexander - the head of Virgin Software, now owner of budget pioneer Mastertronic.

Budget software revolution? A revolution indeed.



## Cereal Printing

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will ensure that you won't be eaten out of house and home, or rather office and business!

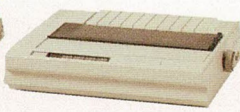


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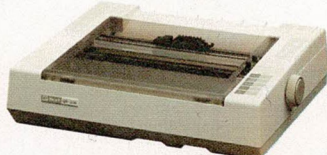
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Compatibility: IBM/Epson  
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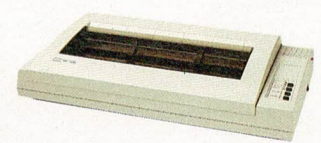
**MP165+**  
This new styled NLQ printer offers the user the very best in low cost matrix printing.  
Speed: 190cps draft, 32cps NLQ.  
Columns: 80  
Compatibility: IBM/Epson.  
Price: £189 RRP



**MP200+**  
This 80 column, 40cps, NLQ printer offers the best value in the market place. You can't buy better. A range of font cards are available.  
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Compatibility: IBM/Epson.  
Price: £299 RRP



**MP480**  
This fast, high performance line printer is a unique buy, which combined with its outstanding capabilities makes it a real winner.  
Speed: 480cps draft, 74cps NLQ. Columns: 80.  
Compatibility: IBM/Epson.  
Price: £329 RRP



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This top of the range new styled line printer offers exceptional value for money and is well established in today's printer market.  
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Columns: 136.  
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# SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Times may have steadily got harder for shoestring games developers, but there is still the odd new company taking the plunge - and many more thinking about it. RICHARD KNIGHTLY, boss of small production company Design Maker, runs through the prospects and pitfalls...

The minimum staff requirements for producing an original game area top games programmer and a highly talented computer graphic artist. A top computer games programmer's IQ is likely to be extremely

high and he could be quite young and/or difficult to handle. I estimate the occurrence of such a programmer who is available for games computing to be upwards of 1 in 50,000 of the population. Talented artists are not rare

in the UK but familiarity with computer graphics on several computers and knowledge of how games programmes are written is essential to reach the top. I roughly estimate the availability of such staff to be 1 in 50,000 of the population.

A good commercial manager needs to have the ability to work with staff on games designs, marketing aspects, playtesting, personnel, recruitment, equipment supply and repair, and many other more menial tasks such as buy-

ing pizzas and clearing away mountains of empty coke cans and sweet wrappers.

Our policy is to pay top staff a large percentage of all money received, in order to keep them safe from poachers, and to minimise cash flow problems

whilst maximising incentives and reducing the risk of non delivery. Before the introduction of the new payments scheme, poaching was threatening to cause me to default on contracts and giving me sleepless nights.

## Risky business

The risks of the business are very large in proportion to the current returns to independent developers in the UK market. This mitigates against large volumes of world beating products being produced here, which is a shame, as ultimately the health of the publishing industry in the UK will depend on its ability to source home grown quality software for the future world markets.

As many publishers know to their cost, 99% of a highly complex machine code game's programme is worth nothing if the missing 1% is not forthcoming. During the long development period of a top game many thousands of pounds are paid to staff who may or may not produce a saleable product.

For example, a programmer of ours who was working on a top arcade conversion decided he wanted to get out of his contract a few weeks before delivering the product. We didn't argue with him for obvious reasons.

Will the game be ready in time? This is a seasonal business and a top product ready for delivery in November is more saleable than the same product in April. High penalties for late delivery are common.

Will it sell, and will the publisher market it correctly? Where possible, it is necessary to select a publisher who will push the product and give it a fair chance of catching on. The current boom in the budget market is partly due to the enduring value of some products which never made it as full price games due to poor marketing, but are still good value as budget despite being outdated.

Will the payments for the game arrive? In the past, several companies have got into financial difficulties and have been unable or unwilling to satisfy contracts. Contrary to popular belief, no contract dispute is an open and shut case, and long drawn out court proceedings and their associated costs can drive a soundly managed company to the brink, and over, unless they have understanding creditors.

Large publishers are the only people who can seriously threaten legal proceedings with some confidence that they are going to come out better off.

Royalties are a problem for developers, for as a publisher is the only person with true sales figures to hand, it can be difficult to dispute them. Careful reading of contracts is very important as it may be that little or no royalties are payable if a game is sold on to a third party, or repackaged as a compila-

Continued on page 15

# The Release Schedule

Software information Services

9/1/89  
WEEK 1

New leisure Software

## AMIGA

|                              |       |             |
|------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| 20000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA  | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| AMIGA GOLD HITS 1            | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| BAAL                         | 19.95 | EARLY JAN   |
| BARBARIAN II                 | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| BATMAN - THE CAPED CRUSADER  | 24.95 | MID JAN     |
| BILLIARDS                    | 19.95 | MID JAN     |
| CALIFORNIA GAMES             | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| CAPTAIN FIZZ                 | 14.95 | EARLY JAN   |
| CIRCUS GAMES                 | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| COSMIC PIRATE                | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| CRAZY CARS II                | 24.99 | IMMINENT    |
| DARK FUSION                  | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| DELUXE PAINT II/DELUXE PRINT | 69.95 | OUT NOW     |
| F-16 FALCON                  | 29.99 | OUT NOW     |
| FREEDOM                      | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GALACTIC CONQUEROR           | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GALDREGON'S DOMAIN           | 19.99 | MID JAN     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS      | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GAUNTLET II                  | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| HELLBENT                     | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| HOTBALL                      | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE  | 24.99 | END JAN     |
| INTERNATIONAL KARATE+        | 24.99 | MID JAN     |
| KENNEDY APPROACH             | 24.95 | JANUARY 17  |
| MANHATTAN DEALERS            | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| PURPLE SATURN DAY            | 24.95 | JANUARY 7   |
| SUPER HANG-ON                | 24.99 | IMMINENT    |
| SUPERMAN - MAN OF STEEL      | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                    | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TEENAGE QUEEN                | 19.95 | JANUARY     |
| THE MUNSTERS                 | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TIGER ROAD                   | 24.99 | JANUARY 13  |
| TRACK SUIT MANAGER           | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TV SPORTS FOOTBALL           | 29.99 | OUT NOW     |
| ULT. SOUND TRACKER           | 39.95 | OUT NOW     |
| WANTED                       | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH          | 24.99 | JANUARY 12  |
| ZERO GRAVITY                 | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |

## AMSTRAD CPC

|                                   |         |             |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| AFTERBURNER                       | D 14.99 | IMMINENT    |
| AFTERBURNER                       | T 9.99  | IMMINENT    |
| BARBARIAN II                      | D 14.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| BARBARIAN II                      | T 9.99  | JAN/FEB     |
| CHUCK YEAGER'S ADV FLIGHT TRAINER | D 14.95 | EARLY FEB   |
| CHUCK YEAGER'S ADV FLIGHT TRAINER | T 8.95  | EARLY FEB   |
| CRAZY CARS II                     | D 14.99 | IMMINENT    |
| CRAZY CARS II                     | T 9.99  | IMMINENT    |
| DARK FUSION                       | D 14.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| DARK FUSION                       | T 9.99  | FEBRUARY 7  |
| GALACTIC CONQUEROR                | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GALACTIC CONQUEROR                | T 9.95  | OUT NOW     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS           | D 14.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS           | T 9.99  | FEBRUARY 14 |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE       | D 14.99 | END JAN     |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE       | T 9.99  | END JAN     |
| MINI OFFICE 1                     | T 2.99  | OUT NOW     |
| R-TYPE                            | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                         | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                         | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| THE ARCHON COLLECTION             | T 8.95  | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS                      | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS                      | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| TOMCAT                            | T 1.99  | MID JAN     |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH               | T 9.99  | JANUARY 12  |

## AMSTRAD PCW

|       |       |         |          |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| FISH! | 24.99 | END JAN | RAINBIRD |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|

## ARCHIMEDES

|       |       |         |          |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| FISH! | 24.99 | END JAN | RAINBIRD |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|

## ATARI ST

|                                    |       |             |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| 20000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA        | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| BARBARIAN II                       | 19.99 | IMMINENT    |
| BATMAN - THE CAPED CRUSADER        | 19.95 | MID JAN     |
| BILLIARDS                          | 19.95 | MID JAN     |
| BISMARCK                           | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| CAPTAIN FIZZ                       | 14.95 | EARLY JAN   |
| CIRCUS GAMES                       | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| COSMIC PIRATE                      | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| CRAZY CARS II                      | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| DARK FUSION                        | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| F-16 FALCON                        | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| FREEDOM                            | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GALACTIC CONQUEROR                 | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GALDREGON'S DOMAIN                 | 19.99 | MID JAN     |
| GAME OVER II                       | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS            | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| HELLBENT                           | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| HOTBALL                            | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE        | 19.99 | END JAN     |
| IRON LORD                          | 24.99 | LATE JAN    |
| MANHATTAN DEALERS                  | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| NIGHT HUNTER                       | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| PURPLE SATURN DAY                  | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| SPITFIRE 40 & STRIKE FORCE HARRIER | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| SUPERMAN - MAN OF STEEL            | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                          | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TEENAGE QUEEN                      | 19.95 | JANUARY     |
| THE MUNSTERS                       | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TIGER ROAD                         | 19.99 | JANUARY 13  |
| TRACK SUIT MANAGER                 | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| WANTED                             | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH                | 24.99 | JANUARY 12  |
| ZANY GOLF                          | 24.95 | LATE JAN    |
| ZERO GRAVITY                       | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |

## BBC

|                   |         |         |
|-------------------|---------|---------|
| FOOTBALL DIRECTOR | D 12.99 | OUT NOW |
| FOOTBALL DIRECTOR | T 9.99  | OUT NOW |
| MINI OFFICE 1     | T 2.99  | OUT NOW |

|                     |       |             |
|---------------------|-------|-------------|
| COKTEL VISION       | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| U.S.GOLD            | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| PSYGNOSIS/PSYCLAPSE | 19.95 | EARLY JAN   |
| PALACE              | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| OCEAN               | 24.95 | MID JAN     |
| ERE/INFOGRAMES      | 19.95 | MID JAN     |
| EPYX/U.S.GOLD       | 24.99 | OUT NOW     |
| PSYGNOSIS/PSYCLAPSE | 19.95 | EARLY JAN   |
| TYNESOFT            | 24.95 | OUT NOW     |
| OUTLAW              | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| TITUS               | 24.99 | IMMINENT    |
| GREMLIN             | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| ELECTRONIC ARTS     | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| MIRRORSOFT          | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| COKTEL VISION       | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| TITUS               | 19.99 | END JAN     |
| PANDORA             | 19.99 | MID JAN     |
| GREMLIN             | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| U.S.GOLD            | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| NOVAGEN             | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| SATORY              | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS     | 19.95 | END JAN     |
| SYSTEM 3            | 19.99 | MID JAN     |
| MICROPROSE          | 19.95 | JANUARY 17  |
| SILMARILS           | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| EXXOS               | 19.95 | JANUARY 7   |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS     | 19.99 | IMMINENT    |
| TYNESOFT            | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GREMLIN             | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| INFOGRAMES          | 19.95 | JANUARY     |
| AGAIN AGAIN         | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| CAPCOM/U.S.GOLD     | 19.95 | JANUARY 13  |
| AGAIN AGAIN         | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| CINEMAWARE          | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| E.A.S.              | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| INFOGRAMES          | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| MELBOURNE HOUSE     | 19.99 | JANUARY 12  |
| E.A.S.              | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |

## ACTIVISION

|                 |       |             |
|-----------------|-------|-------------|
| ACTIVISION      | 19.95 | IMMINENT    |
| ACTIVISION      | 19.99 | IMMINENT    |
| PALACE          | 19.95 | JAN/FEB     |
| PALACE          | 19.99 | JAN/FEB     |
| ELECTRONIC ARTS | 19.95 | EARLY FEB   |
| ELECTRONIC ARTS | 19.99 | EARLY FEB   |
| TITUS           | 19.95 | IMMINENT    |
| TITUS           | 19.99 | IMMINENT    |
| GREMLIN         | 19.95 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| GREMLIN         | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| TITUS           | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| TITUS           | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| GREMLIN         | 19.95 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GREMLIN         | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS | 19.95 | END JAN     |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS | 19.99 | END JAN     |
| SUMMIT          | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| GREMLIN         | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| GREMLIN         | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| ELECTRONIC ARTS | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| AGAIN AGAIN     | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| AGAIN AGAIN     | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| PLAYERS         | 19.99 | MID JAN     |
| MELBOURNE HOUSE | 19.95 | JANUARY 12  |

## COMMODORE 64/128

|                               |         |             |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| ACTION SERVICE                | D 14.95 | JANUARY     |
| ACTION SERVICE                | T 9.95  | JANUARY     |
| CIRCUS GAMES                  | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| CIRCUS GAMES                  | T 9.95  | OUT NOW     |
| DARK FUSION                   | D 14.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| DARK FUSION                   | T 9.99  | FEBRUARY 7  |
| EXPLODING FIST +              | D 12.99 | OUT NOW     |
| EXPLODING FIST +              | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| FISH!                         | D 19.99 | END JAN     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS       | D 14.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS       | T 9.99  | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT            | D 14.95 | LATE JAN    |
| GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT            | T 9.95  | LATE JAN    |
| HOSTAGES                      | D 14.95 | MID JAN     |
| HOSTAGES                      | T 9.95  | MID JAN     |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE   | D 14.99 | END JAN     |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE   | T 9.99  | END JAN     |
| IRON LORD                     | D 19.99 | LATE JAN    |
| IRON LORD                     | T 12.99 | LATE JAN    |
| JORDAN VS BIRD: ONE ON ONE II | D 14.95 | LATE JAN    |
| MINI OFFICE 1                 | T 2.99  | OUT NOW     |
| PROJECT FIRESTART             | D 14.95 | EARLY FEB   |
| R-TYPE                        | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| ROCKET RANGER                 | D 14.99 | JANUARY     |
| SERVE AND VOLLEY              | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| SERVE AND VOLLEY              | T 9.95  | OUT NOW     |
| STARRAY                       | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| STARRAY                       | T 9.95  | OUT NOW     |
| STREET GANG                   | T 1.99  | MID JAN     |
| SUPERMAN - MAN OF STEEL       | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| SUPERMAN - MAN OF STEEL       | T 9.95  | OUT NOW     |
| T.K.O.                        | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| T.K.O.                        | T 9.95  | LATE JAN    |
| TANK ATTACK                   | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TANK ATTACK                   | T 12.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                     | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                     | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| THE DOUBLE                    | T 2.99  | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS                  | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS                  | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| TOMCAT                        | T 1.99  | MID JAN     |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH           | D 19.99 | JANUARY 12  |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH           | T 9.99  | JANUARY 12  |

## ELECTRON

|               |        |         |        |
|---------------|--------|---------|--------|
| MINI OFFICE 1 | T 2.99 | OUT NOW | SUMMIT |
|---------------|--------|---------|--------|

## IBM PC & COMPATIBLES

|                             |          |       |            |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|------------|
| 20000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA | 5.25     | 19.95 | OUT NOW    |
| ABRAMS BATTLE TANK          | 3.5+5.25 | 24.99 | EARLY FEB  |
| BATTLECHESS                 | 3.5      | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| BATTLECHESS                 | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| BILLIARDS                   | 5.25     | 19.95 | MID JAN    |
| CIRCUS GAMES                | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| CRAZY CARS II               | 5.25     | 24.99 | IMMINENT   |
| F-16 COMBAT PILOT           | 5.25     | 24.95 | LATE JAN   |
| FAST BREAK                  | 5.25     | 24.95 | LATE JAN   |
| FREEDOM                     | 5.25     | 19.95 | OUT NOW    |
| GALACTIC CONQUEROR          | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT          | 3.5      | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT          | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| HALLS OF MONTEZUMA          | 5.25     | 24.95 | EARLY JAN  |
| HOSTAGES                    | 5.25     | 24.95 | MID JAN    |
| MANHATTAN DEALERS           | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| RACKETEER                   | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| SPEEDBALL                   | 3.5+5.25 | 24.99 | JANUARY    |
| STAR GOOSE                  | 3.5+5.25 | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| STARRAY                     | 3.5+5.25 | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| STRIKEFLEET                 | 3.5      | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| STRIKEFLEET                 | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| THE BARD'S TALE I           | 3.5      | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| THE BARD'S TALE II          | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| THE TRAIN                   | 5.25     | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |
| TIMES OF LORE               | 5.25     | 24.95 | JANUARY 17 |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH         | 5.25     | 24.99 | JANUARY 12 |
| WASTELAND                   | 3.5+5.25 | 95    | EARLY FEB  |
| ZANY GOLF                   | 3.5+5.25 | 24.95 | OUT NOW    |

## MACINTOSH

|       |       |         |          |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| FISH! | 34.99 | END JAN | RAINBIRD |
|-------|-------|---------|----------|

## MSX

|              |        |         |             |
|--------------|--------|---------|-------------|
| THE MUNSTERS | T 9.99 | OUT NOW | AGAIN AGAIN |
|--------------|--------|---------|-------------|

## SPECTRUM

|                             |         |             |
|-----------------------------|---------|-------------|
| BARBARIAN II                | T 9.99  | IMMINENT    |
| EXXOS                       | T 9.95  | MID JAN     |
| CIRCUS GAMES                | T 8.95  | OUT NOW     |
| DARK FUSION                 | T 7.99  | FEBRUARY 7  |
| EXPLODING FIST +            | T 7.99  | OUT NOW     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS     | T 7.99  | FEBRUARY 14 |
| INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE | T 9.99  | END JAN     |
| MINI OFFICE 1               | T 2.99  | OUT NOW     |
| SKATEBALL                   | T 8.99  | OUT NOW     |
| STREET GANG                 | T 1.99  | MID JAN     |
| SUPERMAN - MAN OF STEEL     | T 8.95  | OUT NOW     |
| TANK ATTACK                 | T 12.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TECHNOCOP                   | T 7.99  | OUT NOW     |
| THE DOUBLE                  | T 2.99  | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS                | T 9.99  | OUT NOW     |
| WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH         | T 9.99  | JANUARY 12  |

## SPECTRUM+3

|                         |         |             |
|-------------------------|---------|-------------|
| BARBARIAN II            | D 14.99 | IMMINENT    |
| CAPTAIN BLOOD           | D 14.95 | MID JAN     |
| DARK FUSION             | D 12.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| FISH!                   | D 15.99 | END JAN     |
| GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS | D 12.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| MINI-PUTT               | D 14.95 | LATE JAN    |
| SKATEBALL               | D 14.99 | IMMINENT    |
| TECHNOCOP               | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |
| THE ARCHON COLLECTION   | D 14.95 | OUT NOW     |
| THE MUNSTERS            | D 14.99 | OUT NOW     |

|                  |       |             |
|------------------|-------|-------------|
| COBRA/INFOGRAMES | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| COBRA/INFOGRAMES | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| TYNESOFT         | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| TYNESOFT         | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| GREMLIN          | 19.95 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| GREMLIN          | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 7  |
| FIREBIRD         | 19.95 | OUT NOW     |
| FIREBIRD         | 19.99 | OUT NOW     |
| RAINBIRD         | 19.99 | END JAN     |
| GREMLIN          | 19.95 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| GREMLIN          | 19.99 | FEBRUARY 14 |
| ACCOLADE/EA      | 19.95 | LATE JAN    |
| ACCOLADE/EA      | 19.99 | LATE JAN    |
| INFOGRAMES       | 19.95 | MID JAN     |
| INFOGRAMES       | 19.99 |             |

# ALLFORMATSTOP40

| TW | LW | WK | Title                   | Publisher       | Formats           |
|----|----|----|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1  | 1  | 4  | OPERATION WOLF          | OCEAN           | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 2  | 2  | 2  | ROBOCOP                 | OCEAN           | SP CD AM          |
| 3  | 3  | 4  | AFTER BURNER            | ACTIVISION      | SP CD AM ST       |
| 4  | 4  | 5  | DOUBLE DRAGON           | MELBOURNE HOUSE | SP CD ST AG       |
| 5  | 6  | 3  | THUNDER BLADE           | US GOLD         | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 6  | 5  | 45 | GHOSTBUSTERS            | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM AT PS    |
| 7  | RE | 24 | EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE    | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 8  | 10 | 4  | GIANTS                  | US GOLD         | SP CD AM          |
| 9  | 9  | 12 | JOE BLADE 2             | PLAYERS         | SP CD AM BB EL ST |
| 10 | 6  | 10 | ADVANCED PINBALL SIM    | CODE MASTERS    | SP AM             |
| 11 | 17 | 8  | FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR  | KIXX            | SP CD AM C1 ST AG |
| 12 | 19 | 16 | BOMB JACK               | ENCORE          | SP CD AM BB       |
| 13 | 16 | 7  | COMMANDO                | ENCORE          | SP CD AM BB EL    |
| 14 | 12 | 17 | GAUNTLET                | KIXX            | SP CD AM AT PS ST |
| 15 | 7  | 51 | LAST NINJA 2            | US GOLD         | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 16 | 53 | 8  | KIK START 2             | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM AG       |
| 17 | 18 | 10 | END ZONE                | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 18 | 17 | 8  | LEADERBOARD             | KIXX            | SP CD AM AT ST AG |
| 19 | 19 | 26 | AIR WOLF                | ENCORE          | SP CD AM BB ST AT |
| 20 | 6  | 7  | INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD             |
| 21 | 12 | 7  | PRO SKATEBOARD SIM      | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD             |
| 22 | 13 | 3  | KNIGHTMARE              | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM PS ST    |
| 23 | 26 | 3  | ACE 2                   | CASCADE         | SP CD AM ST       |
| 24 | 28 | 3  | R-TYPE                  | ELECTRIC DREAMS | SP CD AM ST       |
| 25 | 24 | 54 | FRUIT MACHINE SIM       | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 26 | 4  | 31 | YOGI BEAR               | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 27 | 27 | 26 | FOOTBALL MANAGER 2      | ADDICTIVE       | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 28 | RE | 1  | INTO THE EAGLES NEST    | PLAYERS         | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 29 | 28 | 22 | STUNT BIKE SIM          | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 30 | 26 | 2  | GAME SET AND MATCH 2    | OCEAN           | SP CD AM          |
| 31 | 25 | 28 | RALLY DRIVER            | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 32 | 21 | 2  | JET SET WILLY           | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM BB AT ST |
| 33 | 34 | 5  | PACMANIA                | GRAND SLAM      | SP CD AM PS ST AG |
| 34 | 20 | 47 | SUPER STUNTMAN          | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 35 | RE | 8  | RETURN OF THE JEDI      | DOMARK          | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 36 | RE | 1  | FOUR SOCCER SIMS        | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 37 | 54 | 25 | BIGGLES                 | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 38 | 31 | 4  | TURBO BOAT SIM          | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 39 | 32 | 8  | SKOOLDAZE               | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD             |
| 40 | RE | 35 | PRO SKI SIM             | CODE MASTERS    | SP AM             |

## SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

| Publisher       | Units sold (%) |           |           |            |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|                 | This week      | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| MASTERTRONIC    | 10.2           | 16.7      | 16.9      | 15.1       |
| OCEAN           | 10.2           | 10.8      | 3.1       | 4.2        |
| CODE MASTERS    | 10.1           | 5.8       | 11.2      | 8.5        |
| ALTERNATIVE     | 8.3            | 8.5       | 10.6      | 11.3       |
| FIREBIRD        | 7.4            | 6.1       | 8.3       | 8.3        |
| US GOLD         | 5.6            | 5.4       | 2.8       | 4.1        |
| ENCORE          | 6.2            | 3.8       | 5.9       | 3.1        |
| KIXX            | 4.9            | 3.9       | 4.5       | 3.1        |
| PLAYERS         | 3.9            | 2.8       | 4.2       | 2.1        |
| ACTIVISION      | 3.8            | 3.3       | 0.9       | —          |
| MELBOURNE HOUSE | 2.5            | 2.7       | 2.4       | —          |
| CASCADE         | 1.5            | 1.0       | 1.8       | 2.3        |
| GREMLIN GRPHICS | 1.5            | —         | 0.9       | —          |
| SEGA            | 1.4            | 1.2       | 1.1       | —          |
| DOMARK          | 1.3            | 1.0       | 1.4       | 0.7        |
| MIRRORSOFT      | 1.3            | 1.6       | —         | —          |
| BUGBYTE         | 1.2            | 0.8       | 3.5       | —          |
| SYSTEM 3        | 1.2            | —         | 1.5       | —          |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS | 1.1            | 1.1       | 0.8       | 0.9        |
| ELITE           | 1.3            | 0.8       | 1.0       | 1.4        |
| GRAND SLAM      | 1.0            | 1.0       | 1.2       | 1.0        |
| RACK-IT         | 1.0            | 1.0       | 1.4       | —          |
| ADDICTIVE       | 0.9            | 0.8       | 1.8       | —          |
| MICROPROSE      | 0.9            | 1.2       | —         | 1.0        |
| ZEPPELIN        | 0.8            | —         | —         | —          |

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

| Machine      | Units sold (%) |           |           |            | Titles sold (%) |           |           |            |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|              | This week      | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago | This week       | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| SPECTRUM     | 44.6           | 42.1      | 42.1      | 43.7       | 27.5            | 28.5      | 28.8      | 31.0       |
| COMMODORE 64 | 23.6           | 23.1      | 23.5      | 24.3       | 23.8            | 22.3      | 23.4      | 24.1       |
| AMSTRAD      | 16.6           | 15.1      | 17.0      | 17.7       | 17.9            | 17.2      | 18.2      | 18.6       |
| ATARI ST     | 4.6            | 5.5       | 5.9       | 4.6        | 8.6             | 7.5       | 6.9       | 7.5        |
| AMIGA        | 3.0            | 4.9       | 2.9       | 3.0        | 5.8             | 5.2       | 4.5       | 3.9        |
| BBC          | 1.4            | 2.3       | 1.4       | 0.8        | 3.1             | 3.6       | 3.5       | 2.5        |
| ATARI        | 1.1            | 1.5       | 1.4       | 1.2        | 3.5             | 3.9       | 3.8       | 2.8        |
| COMMODORE 16 | 1.6            | 1.1       | 1.8       | 1.7        | 2.3             | 2.3       | 2.0       | 2.9        |
| MSX          | 0.8            | 0.5       | 0.5       | 0.5        | 3.0             | 2.0       | 1.4       | 2.1        |
| ELECTRON     | 0.7            | 1.1       | 1.5       | 1.8        | 2.4             | 2.0       | 2.0       | 1.9        |

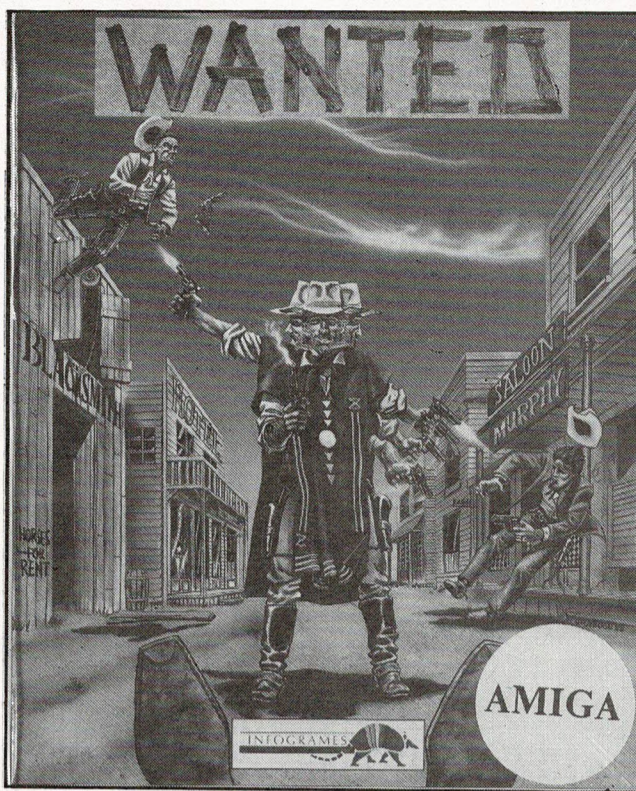
## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

| Units Sold |           |           |            |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| This week  | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| 185        | 129       | 86        | 77         |

All charts shown are the copyright of Gallup. The All Formats Top 40 and Share Of Sales By Publisher charts refer to the Total Market. Week ending December 17th 1988.

# Soft options

Soft Options carries salient details of leisure software just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software house wishing to be included should fax (0438 741247) or phone (0438 310185) through details prior to our publication date.



**△ MICRODEAL:** *Guardian Moons* (ST-£19.95) *Jug* (ST-£19.95), *Airball* (Ag-£19.95) The two latest ST releases from one of the more unsung independents are both shoot-em-ups, with *Guardian Moons* boasting the rather odd-sounding 'Ridiculous' feature — "a complicated and extensive demonstration of animated horizontal scrolling". *Airball* features the player as, you guessed it, a ball filled with air bouncing around all over the place. This was apparently some nasty wizard's doing.

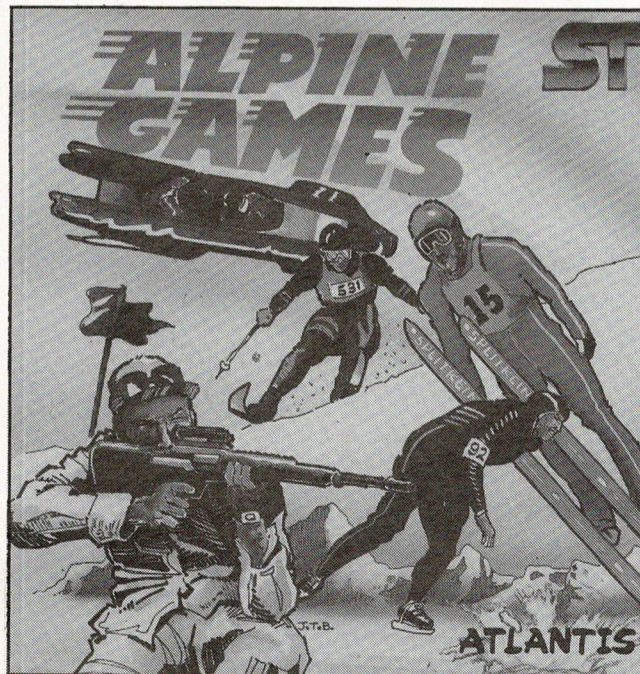
**△ SUPERIOR:** *Play It Again Sam 6* (BBC-£11.95) At this rate the *Play It Again Sam* series will soon be rivalling *Now That's What I Call Music* in the record market as the longest running compilation theme. This one features *Galaforce 2*, *Hunchback*, *Hopper* and *The Sentinel*. Altogether now, we want seven, we want seven...

**△ ATLANTIS:** *Alpine Games* (ST-£9.95), *ST Olympiad* (£9.95), *Shut-Down* (ST-£14.95), *Pothole Pete* (ST-£7.95) Veteran budget label Atlantis begins its own 16-bit experiment with four conversions of its more successful 8-bit releases. They're a strange mixture of pricepoints, but the two sports sims should do well being so cheap.

**△ US GOLD:** *LED Storm* (SpAmC64STAg-£8.99-£19.99) This Capcom biggie was announced as a Christmas leftover even before the big day had been reached. But with the mountains of stuff that was coming out in 1988's last few days *LED* is unlikely to have suffered much as a result.

**△ US GOLD:** *Gauntlet II* (Ag-£24.99) Just when you thought *Gauntlet* had danced to its last full-price tune, here comes another encore. There's little to say other than this is obviously a solid Amiga salescatcher.

**△ AUDIOGENIC:** *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* (Sp-£9.95) Just how the C64 version of this did so well when being backed by such an untrendy soccer has-been is beyond comprehension. But then, it might have had something to do with it being a damn fine game. Who says it's the licence that makes a title sell?



**△ OCEAN:** *Dragon Ninja* (SpC64AmSTAg-£8.95-£24.95) The promotion and advertising has already been done, the plan now is to clean up on Christmas money sales. But this year, quite a few others have cottoned on to the idea too.

**△ OCEAN:** *WEC Le Mans* (SpC64AmSTAg-£8.95-£24.95) Does anybody really believe that this is finally going to come out? The monthlies seem to have been going on about it in one form or another since before Dunlop's invention of the pneumatic tyre — well, up to a point.

**△ INFOGRAMS:** *Wanted* (STAg-£19.95) This cowboy shoot-em-up looks a bit like Capcom's old *GunsN'Guns* coin-op — and hopefully, it will do much better than Go's conversion of that.

**△ INFOGRAMS:** *Action Service* (Ag-£19.95) The ST version of this crash course in machine gun etiquette was pretty impressive with its speech, sound and video screen system — if a bit lacking in gameplay. The Amiga version should be just as impressive in a technical sense if nothing else.

**△ SILVERBIRD:** *Motocross Mania* (C64-£1.99), *International Speedway* (SpC64Am-£1.99) Coming up with the right sounding budget titles is becoming something of an art, perfected here by BT with two motorbike games which will sell on images alone.

**△ ZEPPELIN:** *Jocky Wilson's Darts* (C64Sp-£2.99), *Rally Simulator* (AmSp-£2.99) Like Silverbird, Zeppelin has come up with two titles that should do well by title alone. If the games are up to standard then they should do even better.

KEY: Sp = Spectrum; 64 = Commodore 64; Am = Amstrad CPC; ST = Atari ST; Ag = Amiga 500; +3 = Spectrum +3; PC = IBM PC/compatibles; PCW = Amstrad PCWs; C16 = Commodore 16; Mac = Macintosh; XE/XL = Atari XE console and 800XL; Sg = Sega console; Nn = Nintendo console; VCS = 2600 console; MSX = very unlikely.

**SPEAKEASY**

# Poll re-positioning

These are the top selling seven computers at Microsnips - who were not consulted in the recent CTW Christmas Poll (CTW December 12th):

|                    |       |                              |         |
|--------------------|-------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Spectrum Plus 2 | (60%) | 5. Amiga 500                 | (2%)    |
| 2. Spectrum Plus 3 | (20%) | 6. VCS 2600                  | (0.75%) |
| 3. Commodore 64    | (15%) | 7. Sega                      | (0.25%) |
| 4. Atari ST        | (2%)  | I bet we're nearer than you! |         |

Paul Zabłudow  
Microsnips  
Wallasey  
Merseyside  
- Many apologies for not contacting Microsnips for the inau-

gral (and very well received) CTW Christmas Poll, but obviously we can't contact everyone. The idea was just to get a snapshot of dealer opinion and unearth a few trends about what was selling through independents.

Microsnips may well be closer to the actual national picture on machine sales, with the Spec-

trum coming out on top. The fact that only 4 per cent of dealers contacted predicted the Spectrum as their best-seller was something of a shock, but it must be said that it is very, very unlikely that the Spectrum will have picked up 80 per cent (Plus 2 and 3) of Christmas sales amongst independents.

And considering reports coming from just about everywhere else in the market, the Sega figure of 0.25 per cent from all machine sales seems just a tad low too. But if that's how it is at Microsnips, that's how it is.

# Atlantic crossing

Hi there again. You know our great new acronym coined last time for your amusement, YAACP.

In case you missed the last episode it stands for: Yet Another Amstrad Compatibility Problem.

So what has the company we love to hate done to us this week you may ask in fear and trepidation yet again?

Well, it seems that I was underestimating the great man in accusing him of a pre-emptive strike on 1992. We were complaining about him unloading surplus German 8512s on us in case you didn't notice. (A Schneider 8256 had a brief sojourn in our offices as well).

The latest largesse to arrive is of Trans-continental parentage. Certainly - I can't find a place called Northbrook, Illinois in my Ordnance Survey Gazetteer of the British Isles.

Yet again you will have the exciting prospect of explaining to your punters why they can't fit an interface to the back because of the totally different socket you will find there.

Being of a somewhat technical mind I also worry what he's done to the power supply. I'm not interested enough to open it up to find out (we are just sending it back) but there are two options - a new UK power supply or a bodge (sorry, modification). You can find out for yourself which it is.

I'd ask for my 250 quid back

only I kind of forgot to send it. (Shame ain't it).

On a more serious note one can understand how the Schneiders got back to the UK but one wonders why Amstrad has shipped PCWs back from the US (it doesn't sound a very profitable thing to do with such a cheap and bulky item - and allow for the modifications on top).

Makes me glad I'm no longer an Approved Amstrad Dealer. (Trouble is ADL won't listen).

Peter Winterbottom  
Honeysett Computers  
Hereford

This one could run and run. Latest reports claim that a shipment of PCW 8512s are currently heading towards Hereford courtesy of Amstrad's plant in Upper Volta. Then there's the ones from Iceland, Sierra Leone, Cuba...

**SPEAKEASY**

CTW welcomes letters from all sectors of the industry on all subjects relevant to the trade.

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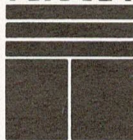
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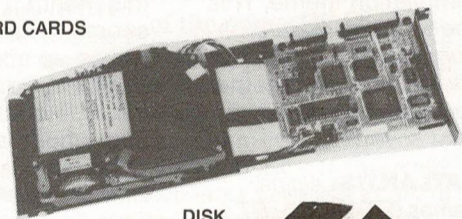
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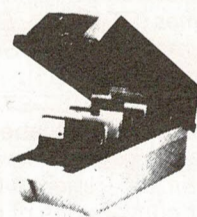


SURGE PROTECTORS

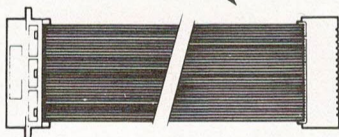
HARD CARDS



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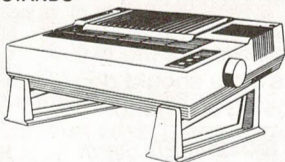


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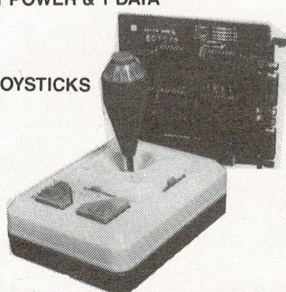


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## FROM THE FRONTLINE

Continued from page nine  
Amstrad's 1512 and 1640.

Frontline was one of the loudest voices urging retailers to come on in, the water really is lovely. It was an important time and one from which Frontline and many dealers have never looked back.

"From amongst the people that did trade up obviously there were some that have not been able to cope and have fallen by the wayside, but there are also a lot of extremely good dealers that have come out of it."

So where are they now these

daredevils of '86? Well not surprisingly they are just a few steps behind Amstrad. They are looking at the 286s and 386s with the same sort of hesitation and confusion that once greeted products they now take for granted.

"I think that certainly many of those dealers will be moving up as Amstrad moves up. The 2000 range is a great range, they are superb pieces of equipment and we're confident for them. Corporate users may be a little wary of buying a 386 with the Amstrad brand name but it's just a matter of time

before that is overcome. At the moment the only problem we have is supply, but we're expecting a lot in '89 and Amstrad usually fulfils our expectations."

### Steady as she grows

One point Rix is keen to stress is that as the dealers move up another notch Frontline will be there to help steady them on those first nervous steps. "Obviously when people move up the technical aspect becomes more and more important and so more support will be needed - dealers can't be expected to know everything."

But as with any move there

is bound to be problems. In this case the two main ones seem to be whether or not the sort of customers Amstrad are now aiming at will want to purchase from a dealer no matter how big and, more importantly, whether the corporate user will want to buy a sophisticated machine with the Amstrad brand name on it.

"There will be a lot of corporate users who are wary of buying Amstrad, but the range is technically very good and Amstrad machines are always pretty reliable so it's only a matter of time before they are convinced."

According to Rix then, Amstrad faces a rosy future to

match an illustrious past. So why did it have such a tough last three months of '88 in the City?

"I think the main problem is that Amstrad's image is far too entrepreneurial. Alan Sugar is very much seen to lead from the front and traditionally the City prefers a more corporate image with a wider share of managerial responsibilities."

Frontline itself could soon find itself susceptible to the whims of the market with its holding company Quartet planning a much talked about floatation. Quartet has three other interests which include The Presentation Centres, Reflex and CPC which sells

direct to corporate users and goes some way to explaining why Frontline can promise with such conviction that it will never take the direct route itself.

For the moment though "the market isn't being all that kind to computer firms" so that ambition will go on hold. Everything else, however, will move on at quite a pace according to Rix.

He promises more growth, more staff, that £50 million turnover and some "major announcements with some major firms". Of course he has to say that, he's a marketing man. But this time he may just be right.

## SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Continued from page 12

tion, for example. In addition, questions as to who owns the rights in foreign countries must be answered before signing a contract.

### Streets ahead

Games developing is challenging and exciting, and is comparable to the pop music and film industries in the early days. Fame and fortune are strong lures and they will always attract people of charisma and high ability who are great fun to work with. The immense pleasure for all those involved in producing an original game that will be sold in every high street in the land is reward in itself.

Unfortunately this is all the reward that some talented people achieve. Many potentially successful people are lost from the industry as a result.

Based on my previous allusion to the music and film industries, computer games, or should I say computer entertainment, will become integrated into the huge and ever growing worldwide entertainment industry. As a developed country with good education standards and high regional unemployment among the young, we are well placed to lead the world in this industry, given a fair and honest world market in which to work.

Finally, I wish to deal with the critics of the industry who tend to trivialise and denigrate the worth of working in computer games.

The first enormous benefit to everyone from the growth of the games industry, was the introduction of computers into thousands of households, and the consequent familiarisation of millions with their latent power.

As large markets developed for games computers, prices steadily fell, making them affordable to anyone for any purpose, whether for games, education or business use.

In addition, it seems clear that cheap, mass market games computers have directly led to cheap business computers. The games hardware market dramatically expanded the volume of sales of component manufacturers, helping to bring down unit costs for the whole industry and pressurising established international business computer manufacturers to reduce prices. They refused to be pressurised, and the clone manufacturers moved into the price gap created.

This recent dramatic change may not have come about as rapidly without the growth of the games industry, and the benefits to our economy of cheaper computers are clear to everyone.

**"A most interesting concept - and one that must surely provide major benefits for the industry as a whole" - Bob Gleadow, managing director, Atari UK.**

**"I think it's a good idea. Major players will be looking to get dealers and distributors on board. To recruit new ones - that will be the benefit for us" - Steve Franklin, managing director, Commodore UK.**

**"We've always wanted a trade only show and we're delighted that CTW and Database Exhibitions have got together to come up with the goods" - Lee Ginty, Microdealer International.**

**"This would be a real first for Europe. Before this we had to rely on the PC Show in London to do the business, but that has its limitations" - Isabelle De Batz, UBISoft, France.**

**"We intend to be there. To be honest, we have been looking for something like this. Of course we go to the PC Show but it is not the sort of event where you find enough time to talk to everyone in the trade you want to" - Jurgen Goeldner, Rushware, Germany.**

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### Microdealer fills

Continued from front page  
ware also wants to buy hardware. The major plus factor is that it takes out the hassle.

"It's about service and it's about supply. We're not out to give the best bundles and things like that. We're a strong European organisation and Commodore is far and away the biggest company of its kind in Europe. It all makes good economic sense for us to do business together."

Microdealer is undaunted by any learning curve the firm has to go through to be fully supportive of the CBM line in technical terms. It also feels that other previously software-led distributors will be looking more and more towards leisure hardware in the future.

The seeds of this have already been sown with other distributors such as Centresoft and R&R dabbling with consoles in the Christmas run-in. Microdealer itself looks likely to stick solely with Commodore product in the foreseeable future.

### Spectrum welcomes

Continued from front page

holding because we consider it a good investment for Parkfield," commented director Chris Davies to CTW.

"We do not intend to seek board representation or wish to take a majority stake in the firm."

Considering the sensitivity surrounding Cramer's position, Spectrum was very keen that his shareholding should be passed on to a desired party.

"We see the whole situation in a very, very positive light and are pleased that a respected company like Parkfield has become involved," commented Spectrum's joint managing director Alastair MacGillivray to CTW.

"Parkfield is a large and expanding group, and it has stated that it wishes to retain its shareholding with us as a long term investment."

Parkfield purchased the whole of Spectrum's photographic business at the beginning of 1987.

### Gold seals

Continued from front page  
have already done well in the US, and Chaney believes that its combination of sci-fi action sequences, Jackson's various transformations and dancing possibly even has the potential for a compendium of games.

As yet what music will feature on the game is still undecided, although *Smooth Criminal* looks like being an obvious choice.

### EA loses

Continued from front page

Mott also claimed that the increased concentration on its own publishing means that it will not be looking for a replacement for Accolade despite the fact that it has been arguably its most successful label.

He went on: "I have been told by them that they have not made any deals with any other publishers or distributors and I have no reason to disbelieve them, so if I were in their shoes I would be looking at coming over here myself."

Despite such assurances though, Accolade's future in Britain is not yet cut and dry and the announcement of either a deal of UK establishment can be expected shortly.

# Atari pleased with '88, new low-end PC in '89?

Despite the endless talk of shortages, Atari last week emerged from the Christmas break bullish about its 1988 performance in Europe.

The firm has also revealed that despite its decision to discontinue its low-end PC1 and PC2 machines, a low-cost PC could well appear later in the

year. A meeting was held amongst senior European and US Atari staff in Zurich, Switzerland just prior to Christmas to survey its current position in the European market — and it is already tempting fate by offering that shortages may not be the problem they usually are this year.

"It doesn't look like things are going to be as bad in 1989.

But last year was the best it could have been. All the way through our supply problems were well publicised. But we ended the year accruing sales very close to our initial target and had very empty warehouses," offered an Atari insider.

"The UK performed above expectations even though it had some stiff targets set for it. We're already looking at invest-

ing heavily into this year, allocating substantially increased funds for marketing and promotion."

Atari has just started shipping its PC5 386 machine which starts at £2,799 with mono EGA monitor. It has stopped selling its PC1 and PC2, meaning that its entry level 8088 machine is now the PC3 at £599.

But the firm is currently

"reviewing the low-end" and may launch a new low-cost machine later this year. "The low-end market turned into a consumer market very quickly, it's not a business market any more."

This could possibly mean the launch of a leisure/home-orientated PC along the lines of Amstrad's Sinclair PC200. But any such machine would have to be carefully steered away from markets already covered by the ST.

After another good season, Atari management is currently totting up sales figures in order to work out the current UK installed base of STs. This figure will be announced within the next few weeks.



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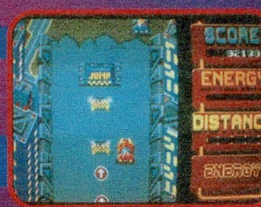
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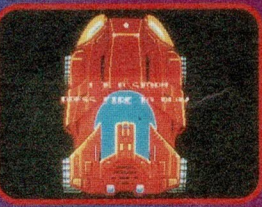
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