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6-6-88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 189

Coin-ops to house ST games

The prospect of ST games appearing in arcades took a step further last week — ironically at the Commodore Show.

East Midlands Leisure was showing off its ST converted into a coin-op machine on Microdeal's stand. *Leatherneck* its latest game is the first to have made the transfer from computer product to arcade game.

The coin-ops will house between three and four games each and will work in much the same way as a jukebox. They will be placed in traditional coin-op arcades, cafes and such.

The likes of Novagen and US Gold are apparently in negotiation with East Midlands for the rights to *Backlash* and English Software's *Leviathan*.

"There are thousands of sites all round the country which will take these machines," offered East Midlands' Alan Nelson. "The games we want will be as good as other coin-ops. I think *Leatherneck* is even better than the original *Commando*."

However, he estimated that 80 per cent of ST games currently on the market would not be suitable. The talks with Novagen appear to be nearing a conclusion although Nelson said that the Gold tie up had "not come to anything yet".

INSIDE: MAG ALOOF

The consumer magazine publishers have never had a great deal of time for one another. Squabbles and scraps are forever cropping up between companies which should know better. There are now though serious decisions to be made — the readership is slowly changing. 16-bit orientated mags are appearing now but how does this affect the bastions of 8-bit publishing? *CTW* talks to all and sundry on the future of the mag scene 10

CBM'S RUSH

An exclusive interview with Commodore's UK boss Steve Franklin and its vice president for Western and Northern Europe Kristian Andersen. Here the problems of the past few years are discussed at length as the firm prepares for what it claims will be an uncompromising comeback. Naturally, the Amiga comes under scrutiny but also that old stalwart the 64. For all things Commodoric. 16

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CBM confirms cut

To nobody's great surprise, Commodore has finally announced that the £100 price cut on the A500 will be happening from July 1st after all.

And it has outlined its promotional pushes for the summer and autumn, which include new bundles for the C64 and the prospect of in-store demos on the Amiga.

(See feature beginning on page 16.)

Despite vehemently ruling out any notion of a cut just two weeks ago (*CTW* May 23rd), the new price was



A500: Finally, officially cut to £399

agreed in time to allow certain retailers to sell the A500 at £399 at last week's Commodore Show.

Commodore is maintaining that the cut was made to allow it the time to alert the trade directly, though few seem to have been taken in at the time.

And it now believes that at £399 the machine will sell as a mass consumer item: for the first time, the Amiga is priced at the same level as Atari's ST, though it lacks a software bundle.

"We kept quiet about the move because there's a lot involved in what we're trying to do in the UK in our next financial year from July. Commodore corporately has decided to make a massive investment in the UK, both in the consumer and PC markets. The first sign of that is

the A500 at £399," Commodore's UK boss Steve Franklin told *CTW*.

In the past, what has hindered Commodore in cutting the price is the probable effect it would have had in its more lucrative European markets. The firm has suffered badly in recent years from grey exporting to Germany.

Now it maintains that with a newly-instituted individually numbered quality control system, tight checks can be made on where the stock ends up. Thus the UK can gain the price advantage for which its management team has been lobbying hard.

The C64, meantime, is being cut down to £139 from next month. An as yet unannounced Olympic theme of bundled software will be included, with two other bundles due in the autumn.

Continued on page two

Ad blast bolsters 1640 pack

Amstrad last week confirmed that the details of its PC1640 summer promotion are exactly as exclusively revealed in last week's *CTW*.

It has also emerged that the firm has budgeted for a £650,000 marketing spend to back the offer. This includes Amstrad's first ever move on to radio, costing £100,000.

The promotion — dubbed the 'Amstrad Office' like last year — includes a PC1640 double drive mono, the DMP 4000 dot matrix printer, *WordStar 1512*, *SuperCalc 3.1* and *AccountsMaster*.

The bundle comprises a total value of £1,188.64 (exc VAT) but will retail for £899 (exc VAT). Thus, there is a saving of £289.64 (exc VAT) which will be publicised heavily in Amstrad's advertising.



COLLINS: Summer deal

The promotion will begin at the end of June and is scheduled to end on August 31st. Ad support running throughout the whole period will begin on the week commencing June 27th.

Amstrad has put the bundle together in an attempt to stimulate the market during a normally slack period. It also follows on from the similar promotion ran last year.

"We put together a campaign to sell the simple idea of a complete solution for general office needs. This promotion exceeded even the optimists' wildest expectations," commented Amstrad's joint national sales manager for business products Keith Collins.

The £550,000 press campaign equates to 22 insertions in the national press and 15 in the business and computer press. The 60-second radio commercial will run 112 times in 'drive time' spots on LBC.

The summer bundle has been planned since January. Amstrad has also predicted that supplies of its PCs in general should "show some improvement" in the next few weeks.

Printer firms fight on

The EEC has come under further fierce attack following its provisional decision last week to go ahead with extra import duties for Japanese dot matrix printers.

Market leader Epson and competitor Fujitsu both balked loudly and publicly at

the prospect of a 33.4 per cent levy coming into action possibly as early as this autumn. They have a month to respond to the EEC and are hoping that hard lobbying can stop the ruling becoming law.

The EEC has taken action following European printer manufacturers' complaints that Japanese firms are selling their products cheaper in Europe than in Japan.

Epson's UK general manager Don Pinchbeck made a lengthy statement defending his firm's European strategy. He stressed Epson's commitment to setting up production plants in Europe, denied that its products are "dumped" and predicted that it would be only the user who would ultimately suffer.

"Levies are an invitation to slow down investment or to

disinvest entirely. Epson has to consider the £20 million it has so far invested in the UK on employees, buildings and training and the further £20 million spent on building its brand name," said Pinchbeck.

"Levies belong in a dangerous world of us and them. And bear in mind that "them" — Japan — is Bri-

Continued on page two

Microdealer's token effort

Leisure firm Microdealer is unveiling what is claimed to be the first distributor to end user promotional push via retailers.

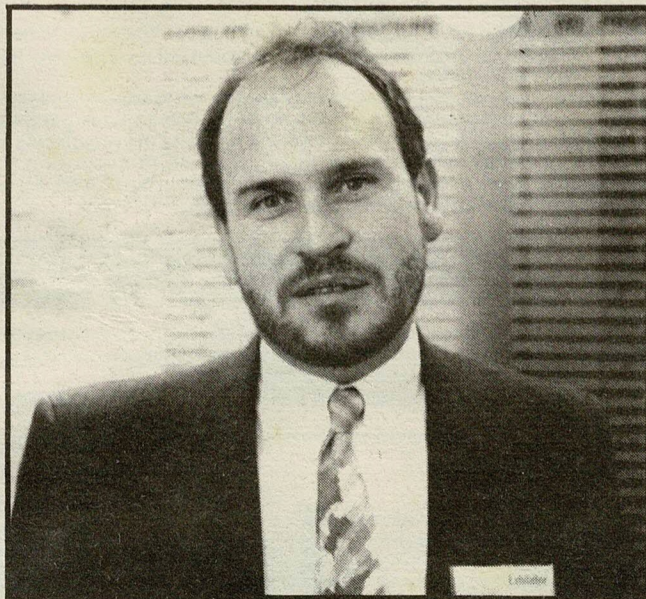
The scheme is twofold. Firstly, the company plans to sell specially stickered games which gain collectable tokens redeemable against sundry computer products. Secondly, it will shortly be selling software houses' T-shirts to retailers on an exclusive basis.

The push is being backed by Microdealer with ads in the consumer monthlies published by EMAP and Newsfield. The intention appears to be threefold: to expand the firm's share of the leisure independents' market, to increase business through the relatively lean summer months, and to show that Microdealer can be a proactive distributor at a time when several software houses are said to be eyeing the prospect of selling direct.

"Currently, the way that the market works, the software houses spend a lot on ads in the mags hoping to attract the consumer," Microdealer's boss Lee Ginty began. "On the other hand, publishers expect the distributors to buy their product and then push them. What hasn't yet happened in this market is both sides working in tandem to push products at the same time."

Though he acknowledged the 'summer factor', Ginty added: "Many people have a strange view of the summer that says nothing will sell well at this time of year — so they don't release anything strong. Yet the experience of games like *The Way of the Exploding Fist* and *The Last Ninja* in the past has shown that the really good titles will sell. All we're trying to do is help sales along."

At this stage, no figures are being disclosed about the size of the promotional spend, nor the levels which Microdealer needs to reach for the push to



GINTY: Tokens and T-shirts

be deemed a success. Both the T-shirt and token offers are expected to run until after the PC Show in September, and can be extended thereafter.

On the tokens, Microdealer is stressing that though the software houses had been expecting a pitch for co-

funding, all software will be bought at the normal rates. Retailers will be supplied with a roll of tokens, to be passed on one at a time for each £5 worth of purchase. Tokens collected can then be exchanged for such as joysticks,

Continued on page two

Mastertronic's curious talk of rationalising . . .

Budget sector leader Mastertronic has acknowledged that it is looking to "rationalise" its activities over the next few months.

Though talk of rationalisation usually presages some sort of significant cut-back by a company in financial trouble, this Mastertronic announcement is an altogether more low key affair.

It is being explained in terms of the firm's relationship with Virgin Games. Back in the autumn (CTW October 26th, the Virgin Group acquired a 45 per cent stake in Mastertronic for around £4 million.

Now the latter is eyeing the prospect of merging some of the joint activities. But it has denied that there is any prospect of Virgin moving all its software business over to Mastertronic, or that Richard Branson is seeking a full 100

per cent holding in the firm.

"It is true to say that we are looking to rationalise certain areas. We're both doing similar things in a similar marketplace," Mastertronic director Geoff Heath told CTW.

"We're not denying that we've had conversations about working together in certain areas. We reckon that we could help each other with programming: they've got a substantial in-house team, and we haven't. Ditto with sales and marketing."



HEATH: Rationalising

One option would appear to be drafting in help in the latter area to replace John Mearman, who quit Mastertronic

recently. Heath said merely that that was a thought, and that nothing has as yet been decided.

CBM

Continued from front page

In all, Franklin says that the UK promospend will be around £4 million, a curiously conservative figure given that well-placed sources suggest it is actually £8 million.

Part of the spend will fund in-store third party demos on the Amiga. Commodore is currently in negotiation with two firms for the deal, one of them believed to be Bullet.

The firm is also keen to pump up its business volumes and will be attempting to woo upmarket PC distributors. "If we just had the distribution, our PC products would be selling as well as anyone else's," Franklin claimed.

Targets for the next financial year include having between five and seven PC distributors - including Lighting - and 60-80 dealers to be supplied direct. "If we achieve that in one year, then we've done a bloody good job."

Printer firms

Continued from front page

tain's sixth biggest export market."

Fujitsu is arguing that the EEC should have made its decision from figures provided by the manufacturers themselves rather than any other source.

"Due to the methods used, we do not know in detail what kind of measurements they took. We're saying that those measurements are unreasonable," commented Fujitsu's UK marketing director Nobuhiko Hara to CTW.

Both firms argue that the effects of any levy would be felt by distributors, dealers and users just as much as the Japanese manufacturers. It is also claimed that there would only be a "negligible" effect on the EEC manufacturers' sales.

Epson first voiced its disagreement with the proposed levy back in April via six full-page ads in the *Financial Times*. At an estimated cost of £130,000 these depicted a Japanese geisha being transformed into Margaret Thatcher, claiming that it would only be the British tax payer who pays for the new law.

Other major manufacturers such as Citizen, Brother and Seikosha are also threatened. Eight firms - including Star and Oki - would have to implement smaller hikes.

Microdealer

Continued from front page

mouse mats and free games.

On T-shirts, Microdealer claims that it has tied up exclusive rights for logos until the end of 1989 from six publishers, with another four due. No names are being given as yet. The firm is working on a £200-odd retailer starter pack, with dealers having the option of selling the products at normal rates or using them as "purchase incentives".

In announcing the deal at this stage of the year, Microdealer says that it is confident no other distributor will be able to gain the ads in the summer editions of the monthlies to mount their own equivalents.

Support is said to have been gained from the likes of Ocean, US Gold, Elite, Telecomsoft, Activision and MicroProse.

REPTON - THE TIME TRAVELLER

Where did Repton come from? Does he have an Egyptian mummy? Is he the real Jack the Repper? Where is he now? Where is he going to? We have been inundated with these and many other questions about our lovable hero. Now all is revealed in 40 new screens that vividly reveal Repton's evolution from prehistory to the future.

The PREHISTORIC screens with their caves, mountains and volcanoes, have Repton battling against pterodactyls and dinosaurs to collect edible berries. In EGYPTIAN times, Repton chases around pyramids and sphinxes collecting scrolls and meeting a mummy or two! Amidst the smog and grime of VICTORIAN times, Repton collects gold coins - but can he avoid the police and the gallows? PRESENT DAY Repton has even greater dangers to face as he rushes around the city's jungle of parking meters and skyscrapers, looking for cans of cola. If the gangster's machine gun doesn't get him, the traffic wardens will. Amazingly Repton may make it to the FUTURE. As he zooms through space collecting crystals, the Martians give chase. Will he succeed or disappear forever into the infinite depths of a black hole? Only you can help Repton Thru Time!

Each copy of Repton Thru Time includes:

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- the Repton 3 editor and
- the 40 new game screens.

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 BBC Micro 5 1/4" Disc.....**£7.95** BBC Master Compact 3 1/2" Disc..**£9.95**

(Compatible with the BBC B, B+ and Master Series computers).

The screen pictures show the BBC Micro version of the game.



THE SCREEN EDITOR



THE CHARACTER EDITOR

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Atari trumpets promo push, eyes own show

As if to counteract the advertising and promotional splurge announced by Commodore, Atari was last week trumpeting its own autumn marketing push.

Thus far, a claimed minimum of £1.2 million before Christmas has been allocated to advertising the ST on television, with another £800,000 due to be put behind the XE and consoles. And the prospect of Atari running its own show – and thus by-passing Database – is looming.

The ST campaign is a straightforward repeat of last year's offering, which is said to be up for a number of awards. This time round, it is due to run nationwide: last year, Atari had limited exposure in the London, TVS and Central TV regions. The advert itself is said to have

proved so effective that Atari UK has exported it – as it were – to other European subsidiaries.

Beyond that, Atari is planning "to further upweight their current main media activity to create an increasingly heavy presence in the computer press," according to a spokesman. Loosely

translated, this appears to mean more ads in the computer mags.

Currently, Atari is running a co-op effort with four leisure publishers. Other such deals look likely for the autumn, possibly including the firm joining in Woolworths' annual Christmas advertising excrement.

Not to be outdone by Commodore's talk of a third party merchandising team aiding demos of the Amiga, Atari has produced its own, more modest dealer aid. This is in the form of two merchandising units: one a free standing unit for the ST, and the other a four feet high, three shelf units on either side, six feet long software and peripherals display cabinet. Both are free.

In-store demos on the ST have been lined up for the larger department stores, some toy outlets and "a few of the big independent computer dealers". The spokesman added: "Full blown demos across the land are for the complicated sell, but not for the ST."

Meantime, Atari is deflecting the low level complaints about its recent trade forum being "boring" and "not relevant to the leisure market" by offering: "They would say

that, wouldn't they? This was an attempt a chance for Atari to show that it has a broad-based strategy covering everything from very cheap consoles through to the ST and PC and up to the Abaq and including robotics. We had over 100 dealers, more than 60 software developers of all sorts and 54 journalists. We're pleased with how it went."

On the prospect of next year's equivalent being thrown open to consumers, CTW was told: "That's very contentious. It's true that Mr Tramiel has said that he would like to see all Atari's activities vertically integrated, since it's easier to control your own activities. You can draw your own conclusions.

"But we're well used to running our own computer shows. We used to do them when we were called Commodore."



ST: TV ads repeated this autumn

Monthlies clash on trend for freebies

As more and more deals are tied up, the current trend for cover mounted software has divided the games monthly publishers.

Newsfield director Franco Frey last week criticised rivals' persistent use of free software, claiming that it is harming publications' content.

He argued that consumers are now expecting freebies with virtually every issue. Thus, even Newsfield's own *Crash* will feature a demo of two new games on its next issue.

"I think it's bringing down the standard of the publications. The more money that's

invested in the promotion the less value is put into the magazine. The cost of it comes out of the budget for that issue," Frey told CTW.

He added that whilst the appeal of cover mounts is unarguable, there is subsequently very little reader loyalty for issues without free software.

Virtually all the major monthlies have started using the same marketing aid. After the last set of ABC figures were announced in February, EMAP reluctantly announced that its *Sinclair User* title would be "joining the tape on the front brigade" following poor results.

It is generally agreed that Dennis' *Your Sinclair* has been the most active in this

area, with six cover mounts appearing since May last year and another planned for July. This heavy promotion has coincided with a marked circulation increase.

YS publisher Kevin Cox firmly defended his publication's policy. "Freebies do not sell things on their own. They get people to sample a product but to make them come back it has to be a good product. It doesn't matter how many plastic roses you get free with Daz it still has to get clothes clean," he told CTW.

Without wishing to disclose too much, Cox also noted that such promotions were not necessarily that expensive. Frey, however, estimated that

YOUR SINCLAIR
No. 1 FOR SPECTRUM GAMES
WIN A STUNNING VHS CAMCORDER!! Worth £600!
JUNE 1988 NUMBER 30
£1.50 with full-price game!
PEOPLE FROM SIRIUS
PSYCHO PIG
EXCLUSIVE WITH PEOPLE FROM SIRIUS
WIN A STUNNING VHS CAMCORDER!! Worth £600!

YOUR SINCLAIR: Freebie supporter

a single issue could have £20-40,000 added to its promotional budget on a print run of 100,000.

Frey defended the decision

to run a free demo on the cover of *Crash*, offering that previews are "an extension of editorial" whereas free unreleased software is not.

Gallup charts the changes

The large American leisure software publishers are beginning to make their presence felt in the UK market, largely due to 16-bit sales.

That's one of the findings of the first Gallup monthly analysis of leisure market sales.

The leading trio of US firms all show significant increases for market share by value for sales in February (the most recent month surveyed by Galup). MicroProse is up sixth place with 3.7 per cent of sales, Activision rises to 3 per cent, and EA moves to 2.4 per cent. Stateside full price brands and 16-bit from all firms accounted for 13 per cent in February – which matches the value achieved by the top three budget labels. Unsurprisingly, the budget leaders' volume share is much

higher, at 37 per cent.

The value chart is headed by US Gold, with 14.8 per cent. Close behind is Ocean (with 13.7 per cent), and then come Mastertronic (7.9 per cent), Telecomsoft (all labels, budget and full price: 7.4 per cent) and Code Masters (4.4 per cent, for all its claims about being Britain's number one software house).

Amongst other factors to emerge:

●By volume, the three main machine formats accounted for 85 per cent of software sales. By value, this dipped to 73 per cent, indicating the increasing strength of the 16-bit machines.

●16-bit and MS-DOS machines during February had software sales together of 19 per cent, within striking distance of the declining C64's 22.7.

●The Spectrum recorded the largest drop – down 11 points to 36 per cent – though it

remains the most popular format.

●Only three budget games are in the value chart Top 50, with the frontrunner – *Kik Start 2* – appearing at number 36.

●15 out of the Top 20 Spectrum chart by volume are budget titles. The C64 is proving marginally more reliant to budget overtures: 14 out of 20 are cheapies. In CPCland, it's even worse: just four are full-priced.

●On the really minor formats (ie Atari, C16, Electron, BBC and MSX) Alternative leads the volume share with 49 per cent, though Superior heads the value chart with more than 56 per cent.

●On the ST, Gallup notes that Mirrorsoft "appear to be rather low, given their increasing commitment to this side of the market", though it notes: "Rapid improvement is expected".

The figures and analysis are derived from Gallup's weekly

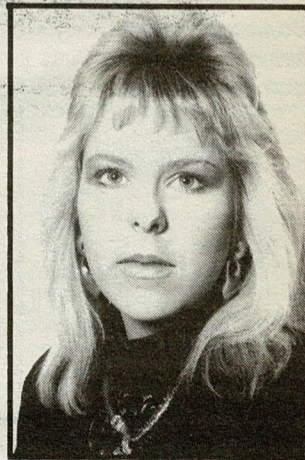
Charttalk, part of which appears in CTW each issue. The full monthly version is available to subscribers, who can contact Gallup on 01-794 0461.

TOP 20 BY VALUE, FEBRUARY

TM	LM	Title	Mc Publisher	Market Strength
1		PLATOON	SP OCEAN	1.00
2		PLATOON	CO OCEAN	0.92
3		OUT RUN	SP SEGA-US GOLD	0.86
4		STEALTH FIGHTER	CO MICROPROSE	0.56
5		GUNSHIP	ST MICROPROSE	0.53
6		MATCH DAY 2	SP OCEAN	0.45
7		OUT RUN	AM SEGA-US GOLD	0.44
8		OUT RUN	CO SEGA-US GOLD	0.43
9		MINI OFFICE PROF.	PC DATABASE	0.40
10		BLACK LAMP	ST RAINBIRD	0.37
11		GARFIELD	SP THE EDGE	0.37
12		ROAD WARS	AG MELBOURNE HSE	0.37
13		MAGNIFICENT 7	SP OCEAN	0.35
14		TEST DRIVE	ST ELEC ARTS	0.32
15		COMBAT SCHOOL	SP OCEAN	0.32
16		U.M.S.	ST RAINBIRD	0.31
17		FOURTH AND INCHES	CO ACC'DE-US GOLD	0.31
18		GUNSHIP	SP MICROPROSE	0.29
19		XENON	ST MELBOURNE HSE	0.29
20		720	SP US GOLD	0.28

* The Market Strength figure shows the relative earning power of the charted titles. For example, for every one pound earned by the Spectrum version of 'Platoon' in the Open Market, 16p was earned by the Amstrad 'Elite Collection' at no. 50.

NEXT WEEK: GALIC TONES



French publisher and distributor Loriciel has been here in the UK under the guidance of Elite since the beginning of the year. Although the firm has enjoyed moderate success here it claims that it will have made its mark by Christmas. International joint boss Laurant Weill and UK boss Nikky Penny proffer some views on the notoriously stubborn UK market

TOKEN EFFORT

A Dealer Focus on Microdealer's decision to lure the youngsters into stores with T-Shirts and Green Shield-type stamps. How will such promotion help software sales?

Provisional success claimed on renting

As predicted in CTW two weeks ago the computer industry's troubled fight against software renting appears to be within sight of being over.

Following intense and often contradictory lobbying by various trade bodies, the clause in the Copyright, Designs and Patent Bill which established the right to rent 12 months after release, has been thrown out. This was the infamous clause 63, which appeared to threaten the business software community by undoing all the good of clause 18 - which included computer software in the copyright section.

What it means is that software should be covered by the existing laws of copyright, once the Bill has passed through Parliament. This could happen before the summer recess, and it would mean

that copyright is retained by the author's estate until 50 years after his death.

Yet for a notoriously complicated issue, there is just the possibility that an additional enabling law from the government could at some later stage allow software to be rented out in much the same way as videos.

Bob Hay of the Federation Against Software Theft (FAST, one of the principal lobbyists) told CTW: "There are still some minor hiccups before we can all celebrate. We're still pressing for it to be wholly satisfactory."

FAST is keen to have instated a clause which will outlaw anti-spoiler devices, which help punters break copyright. That has now been tabled as an amendment, the committee stage, and seems certain to be included in the final Bill.

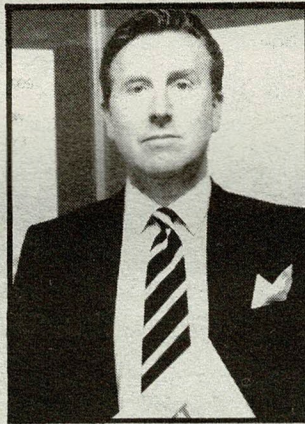
One other problem is the blank tape levy. The govern-

ment is opposed to it, but has agreed to look again. The computer industry in general is against the levy, arguing that it legitimises piracy.

On the overall battle, Hay offered: "The industry is made up of a number of disparate groups and we all accept that. What that means is that occasionally there will be conflicts. But in the main there has been a consensus of agreement, even if our methods have not been quite the same."

"In the end, both FAST and the BMF wanted the same thing: protection of copyright. And people in the trade should now feel much more confident."

Meantime, aside from parliamentary lobbying, FAST has been continuing its more customary job of policing the industry. Following a raid on a software pirate in conjunction with the police and trading standards officers last



HAY: Lobbying successful
October, Jeffrey Batty of Orion Software was last week found guilty on 10 charges relating to copyright infringements.

He was fined a total of £4,400, plus £100 costs. A confiscation order was made at Clacton Crown Court for 3,000 leisure software programs on disk said to be in his possession at the time of the bust. The original complaint had been made by US Gold.

"It's a satisfactory result, though through his lending library records we were able to establish that he'd made £6,000 in six months from renting out software," Hay said.

US deals set up Databyte growth

Databyte is lining up the release of some 50 titles by the end of the year, following tie-ups with no fewer than six US software houses.

Digicorp, Design Star, Miles Computing, MindsCap (sports products), First Star and Infinity Software all recently signed up to Databyte for the first time or reaffirmed links.

The UK label will be launching the products into the UK over the coming months, but has severed its sales and marketing deal with Active.

"We really need the control of handling our sales in-house," commented Databyte boss Tim Holland to CTW. "We're too big now to be using an outside agency."

At a time of much expansion for the label, Holland has opened up a three-strong programming team in Germany to back up its five UK

authors. The UK developed product is hoped to be marketed in the US within the next six months following the setting up of an office there.

"We're producing product with an American look to it. American product tends to sell well here but a lot of UK product doesn't sell well in the States. That's because it doesn't look right or have the right strategies."

Databyte plans to launch 15 Amiga, 20 ST, seven PC and eight C64 products in the UK by the end of the year.

Forthcoming titles include the ST version of *Indoor Sports* (released on 8-bit by Advance) and ST and Amiga versions of *Superstar Ice Hockey* at £24.95 each.

Meanwhile, Active has soothed the pain of losing the Databyte account by signing up the moderately obscure French software house Lankhor. A number of mainly 16-bit titles are lined up for release throughout the year.

Confusion avoided as Samsung merges

Samsung has undergone an internal restructuring of its computer related operation in order to relieve any confusion.

Formerly, the firm had been composed of Samsung Electronics Corporation and Samsung Semiconductors and Telecommunications. The former contributes around 80 per cent of the Korean giant's income and traditionally deals with all the mainstream consumer products. The latter concentrates on the likes of components and D-Rams but also markets computers - the S300AT and the S500XT.

In effect the changes mean

that all will come under the same roof - that of Samsung Electronics Corporation. "It's a merger effectively," said recently promoted marketing manager Steve Hannam. "Basically it was decided that it wasn't a good idea to have two companies selling the same products."

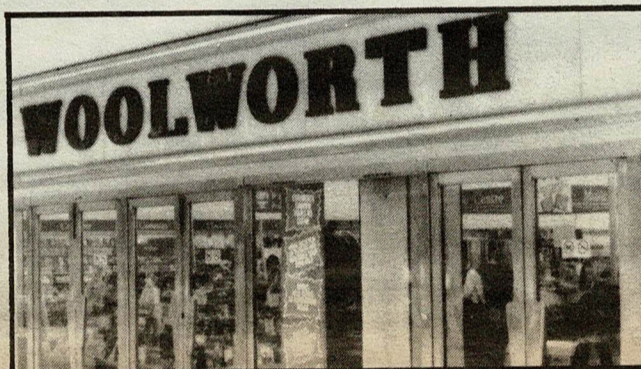
"There's been no confusion really," he added. "It's a question of rationalising the operation." It hasn't been decided yet whether or not the defunct arm's machines will be sold in the UK or phased out. In the past they have been largely sold direct to the corporate sector with only a few passing through retail outlets.

Woolies clears games

Chainstore Woolworths has added leisure software to its six-monthly 'clear-out sale' of entertainment products for the first time.

The nationally advertised sale began on last week's Spring Bank Holiday and will run until the end of next week. Games are being sold off for as little as 99 pence along with several specially put together value packs.

"It's a cyclical thing that we've done on records for three years now and videos for two years," explained Woolworths' buyer of non-recorded music entertainment products Peter Smith.



WOOLWORTHS: Games sale

"It's really a case of us getting rid of the industry's problems. It's often good stock that just didn't sell through that well."

The decision to add software apparently followed suggestions to do so from Mastertronic. The value packs in-

clude five separate Gremlin games or five separate US Gold titles sold together for £9.95 in their original packaging.

These home-made compilations are likely to continue throughout the summer at least, according to Smith.

Addons adds on hardware

Recently appointed Commodore distributor Addons is set to turn its hand at hardware merchandising in the next few weeks.

Although prices are yet to be decided, a number of low-cost expansion items for the PC1 and Amiga are being lined up for UK launch along with the possibility of a £200 accelerator for Amstrad PCs.

The products are currently on their way over from the Far East and will either be badged as Addons' product or marketed under a separate brand name.

"In essence, we have products in certain areas that will be very useful. The reason why machines like Commodore's PC1, Atari's PC and Zenith's Eazy PC haven't sold is because they're non-expandable," Addons' sales and marketing director Victor Unt told CTW.

Expansion boxes, 3.5 inch drives, 5.25 inch drives and a second drive for the Amiga are all being lined up. A 60Mb hard drive for PC compatibles is also promised.

"There's been a lot of interest in Commodore's PC1 since the price came down. There will be even more when we can say here's the bolt-on for it," added Unt.

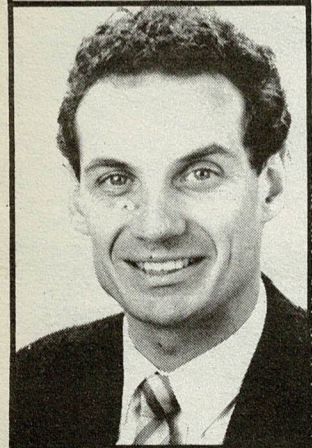
Addons is also currently "considering" the possibility of selling its homegrown lines on to other distributors.

Meanwhile, both Addons and Hugh Symons are remaining extremely tight-lipped about the recent High Court dispute over Unt's recent switch between the two firms.

It is understood that Symons tried to block the move in some way, and that Commodore was also involved. Addons boss Grant Ross offered that "as far as we're concerned it's dead and buried", whilst Symons refused to comment at all.

Virus killer drafted

Cascade has kicked off its business software plans with a program aimed to combat the alleged virus "epidemic".



STEVENS: Medical analogy

PC Immunise, the firm claims, can protect PCs from most of the known viruses by "taking a snapshot" of a disk's memory. However, with these viruses apparently becoming more cleverly disguised, Cascade admits that the program cannot be fool-proof.

"The virus problem is growing and getting nastier. Some can switch all the Os and Is around in your data which is catastrophic," commented managing director Nigel Stevens.

The firm is consciously us-

ing the language of government warnings against AIDS to publicise the product: "I use the medical analogy to get the message across that there is a simple cure."

"It's a low cost product (£19.95) because people aren't prepared to spend too much on the safety of their data, just as they don't like to spend a great deal on personal safety."

He added: "It's a toe in the water for us. The predominance of the PC format here and in the States makes the business market attractive to us and *Immunise* is a nice product. We can't guarantee that it'll stop all viruses but it'll be able to handle a lot."

Primary deal seals CRL supply route

CRL has re-organised its distribution process by signing an exclusive primary distribution deal with TBD.

Although TBD won't be 'finishing' CRL's product it will be shipping it to various distributors. Also, TBD will

be delivering CRL product to its multiple accounts Smiths and Menzies.

This comes as confirmation that CRL has re-jigged its distribution operation after the acrimonious demise of its agreement with EA. Although some distributors were less than pleased with the manner

in which CRL switched to EA last year it doesn't appear to have had many problems reasserting itself.

TBD has long expressed a desire to concentrate on primary distribution. Last March it signed a similar deal with Code Masters and flagged the notion that more would be on the way.

CRL's boss Clement Chambers told CTW: "We went with TBD because they are good at distribution. They'll just be shipping our boxes..."



Commodore and Atari agree about so few things that it would be unfortunate to miss the opportunity of passing on one of them. Both think it a shame that Chelsea were relegated from Division One last week. Commodore's line is more obvious. It announced an expensive sponsorship deal with the team last autumn (just prior to Chelsea's one win in 27 games nosedive that caused the fall) and so would have preferred to have been associated with success. But instead of entertaining the trade and important business clients at prestigious home matches against Liverpool and Man. United, it'll be more modest bashes against the likes of Hull and Shrewsbury.

And Atari? Natural sympathy for a fellow computer firm suffering the "It's a funny old game" syndrome with a vengeance? Not a bit of it. Atari argues that had Chelsea stayed up, Commodore would've had to have paid out more in sponsorship...



WHO'S BEHIND BRITAIN'S CHEAPEST PC?

SNIPPETS

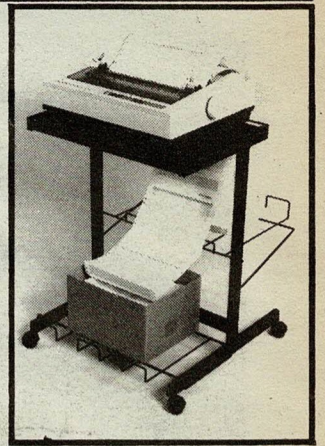


IBM's marketing operations manager Roger Gadsby presenting the Quality Award to Quest's boss Colin Coxon

A quality award has been given by IBM to retailer Quest Computers. This is the second year running that a Quest Group dealership has won an award. Quest Computers is based at Chandlers Ford near Southampton . . . The forthcoming *PC User* Show is staging a Database Challenge. Contestants will be given a sealed envelope prepared by the British Computer Society which will reveal the specification for a database application. The programmers from various

companies will then begin beavering away. Companies involved include Migent, Borland and Microsoft . . . London based fanzine *Commodore Kingdom* appears to have graduated to a more respectable level of achievement. The paper has reached its third issue – a feat the majority fail to do. The current issue includes colour inserts. "Our advertising has really taken off," said joint editor Robert Corradi . . . Atari's laptop won't be appearing until the November CES in the US. It probably

won't be seen in the UK until next year's *Which Computer?* Show . . . Paperback Software has released a typing drill instructor for the PC called *Touch 'N' Go*. It retails at £24.95 . . . Tandy is to sponsor Bruce Forsythe, Georgie Fame, Richard Branson, Barry Gibb and other media faces at this year's Pro Celebrity Tennis Tournament in aid of muscular dystrophy. It will be held at the Royal Albert Hall on 17th June. Muscular dystrophy has been Tandy's



BULLDOG'S STAND: A winner?

nominated charity for a number of years . . . A printer stand with twin wheel castors and height adjustable paper catcher has been unleashed on the market by Bulldog Computer Services. Costing £69 the 80 column printer stand is apparently "sure to be a winner" . . .

Rod Cousens – UK boss of Activision/Mediagenic – made a fleeting (as in five second) appearance on television recently. He donated £5,000 and a number of freebies to Independent Television's 24 hour charity *Telethon* . . .

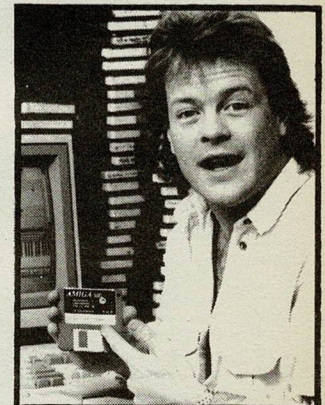
CTW now has a new fax number: 0438 741247. The old number 0438 310001 is still in use but it is generally considered that the new addition is much more useful. PR firm *Headlines* has now changed its name to *Barrington Harvey*. Barrington is the middle name of the firm's boss Simon Harvey. The intention is to make the company weightier, more upmarket and altogether more sombre . . .

Software Limited is giving dealers a free T-Shirt with every purchase of a main line Ashton-Tate purchase. Meantime, Software Limited has been appointed as a distributor of *IdeAssociates* accessories . . .

Dixons has been granted a share listing on the Tokyo stock exchange . . .

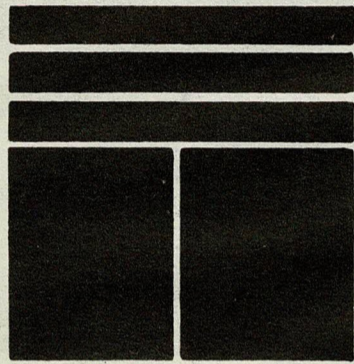
Software house and peripheral marketeer *Britannia* is apparently on the verge of tying up a US deal for its *Phaser One* joystick. It will involve "a large software house" and should be similar to Konix's deal with Epyx of two years ago . . .

Radio One DJ and all round motor mouth Bruno Brookes was due to make an appearance at the *Commodore Show* at the end of last week. Other famous faces on show were javelin thrower Tessa Sanderson, Adam Faith and some members of the recently relegated Chelsea football club. Apparently all will be trying their hands at games on the Amiga . . .



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HOT CAKE

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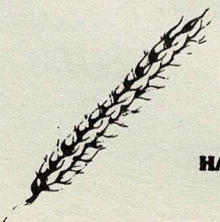
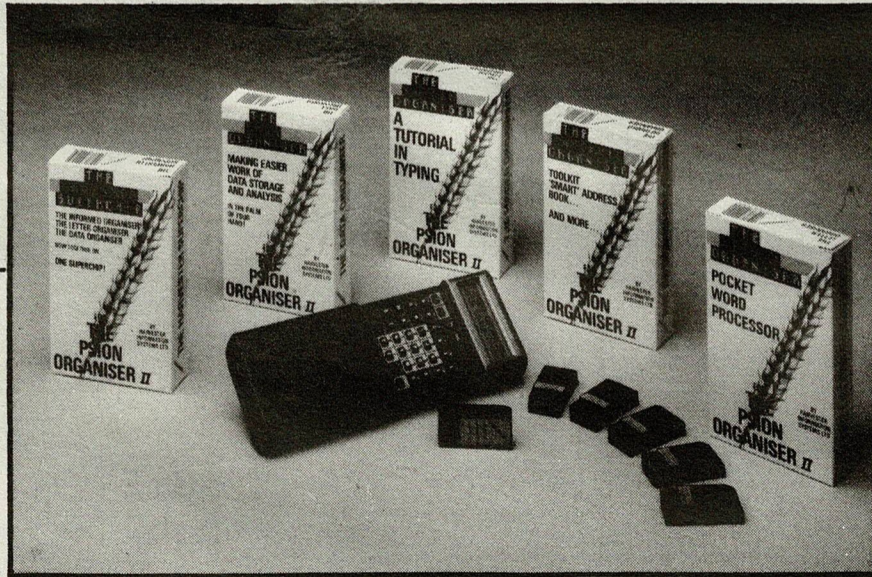
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THE PRESS GANGS UP ON OLD GUARD

The emergence of 16-bit formats such as ST, Amiga and PC has at last started to worry the magazines firmly rooted in the land of C64s and Spectrums, or at least it should have. The recent chart success of *Out Run* and *Captain Blood* on the ST has proved that there are a few machines out there after all. That base will grow as 8-bit machines finally start to show their age. How are the mainstream games mags coping with the threat? **STUART DINSEY reports...**

One can't help noticing the uncanny resemblance between the ins and outs of the games mag world and the actual leisure industry that it's a part of.

Persistent staff swapping, new launches, rumours of new launches, marketing plans and ABC virility symbols stir up enough intrigue and emotion to create a microcosm of the whole market.

As if all that wasn't enough, the mags are now just as embroiled as anyone in coming to terms with the gradual shifts in hardware and software buying habits that have come to the fore in the past twelve months.

A year ago with the ST struggling and the Amiga virtually non-existent, there was talk of new publications to back them. A year ago budget was looking more threatening than ever before and publishers were trying to predict what effect this would have on their business.

A year later the 16-bit mags such as *ST World*, *ST Action*, *ST User*, *Your Amiga* and *Amiga Computing* are here in their droves. There's also a couple of multi-format titles called *Ace* and *The Games Machine* and frequent 16-bit supplements just for good measure. Things would appear somewhat gloomy for the purveyors of 8-bit based reading matter. Exactly how gloomy depends on who you talk to.

The facts from ABC showed that the top six selling monthlies during the second half of last year were 8-bit titles; no surprise there. More interesting was the fact that despite soothsayers and bandwagon jumpers collectively calling the death of 8-bit, five of those six magazines saw their circulations rise. Those rises ranged from four to seven per cent, with *Your Sinclair* leaping up by 13 per cent.

The times certainly are a-changing but it isn't happening overnight. There were some 250,000 copies of Spectrum-only magazines sold between July and December last year. That's not including readers of *C&VG* and *Pop Weekly* who still own the ageing machine.

Menacing Dennis

The publishers will have to come to terms with evolution but Dennis, the firm behind *Your Sinclair*, isn't worrying unduly just yet. Its mixture of humour, snappy editorial and very heavy promotion has paid off well. *YS* took over EMAP's *Sinclair User* last year on sales, although it is still some 16,000 readers short of *Crash's* crown.

YS publisher Kevin Cox



The old guard mags are still more than holding their own against new rivals - but for how long?

has a quick blow on his own trumpet then tries to explain his mag's recent performance. "We try to pitch it so that it covers as broad a range as possible. *Just Seventeen* is read by 14-15 year olds and *19* is read by 17 year olds. We try to give our readers something which is along those lines, something that is sophisticated and can hold their interest. If it doesn't then the kids will watch the TV instead."

He argues that Spectrum owners are actually holding onto their machines longer these days despite the 'grass is greener' taunts from ST and Amiga mags. The games - full-price at least - have generally got better and the users have become older. Cox calls *YS* a teenage magazine rather than a computer magazine and that's the key.

"This is a teenage magazine that just happens to specialise in computers. That doesn't mean it's any less worthwhile or that it can't be funny. Before, mags would be telling kids about stocks and share and how to run a power station then review the games. *Your Sinclair* is written for teenagers."

Cox sees no reason to get despondent about *YS'* ultimate prospects. He claims that the 16-bit market is still far from big enough to enable mass machine specific mag sales, whilst the multi-user sector is already getting rather crowded.

There is no doubt that the Spectrum's grip on the market is slowly waning following the arrival of acceptably priced new technology and the dubious success of the +3. But the Sinclair name could live on, yet, if rumours of a 16-bit +4 or sub-£100 console are true. A simple nod of approval from Mr Sugar could well ignite a totally new market, but until then Sinclair mags will have to fret. Cox, for the moment is setting eyes on the seemingly crumbling position of *Sinclair User* and the traditional hordes that buy *Crash*.

"The long-term graph for us really is 18 months to two years. On *Country Life* it's more like 50 years," he jokes.

Freyed nerves

Newsfield director Franco Frey, however, is not so chirpy. *Crash* and *Zzap* both improved their positions in the last half of 1987 but he is not being fooled by any welcome blip. He expects 8-bit magazines' ABC figures to drop by 8-10 per cent this year. After all, 8-bit mag sales really should have gone up at the end of last year considering that autumn onwards is the peak software selling season and Spectrums and C64s were still being sold up and down the country.

The 8-bit magazines, also, were not then fully under threat from the sprouting ST and Amiga mags and fledgling

multi-user efforts, one of them being Newsfield's very own *Games Machine*.

Sales are claimed to be running at 50-60,000.

"We've gone from the low ebb after the launch and it's now rising by 10-15 per cent every issue. At this stage we don't know where it'll end or what effect it will have on our existing computer magazine readers."

Despite some scepticism about magazines covering all formats whilst concentrating on 16-bit both *TGM* and *Ace* appear to have done well. This, though, won't be ratified officially until the next ABCs are out in August.

Newsfield's decision to launch *TGM* was an indication that it could see trouble brewing for both *Crash* and *Zzap* in the face of new machines. The magazine is almost pitched as the trading up mag - the one kids buy whilst they still have a Spectrum or C64 and then choose which machine they want next. There is also a fair smattering of non-computer material and generally 'street cred' editorial.

"It is certainly 8-bit users looking forward to 16-bit who are buying it. They're not buying *C&VG* because it still has that stigma of 8-bit editorial."

Newsfield admits that due to the particular kind of loyalty its readers possess, a lot of *TGM's* sales are to second

Continued on page 12

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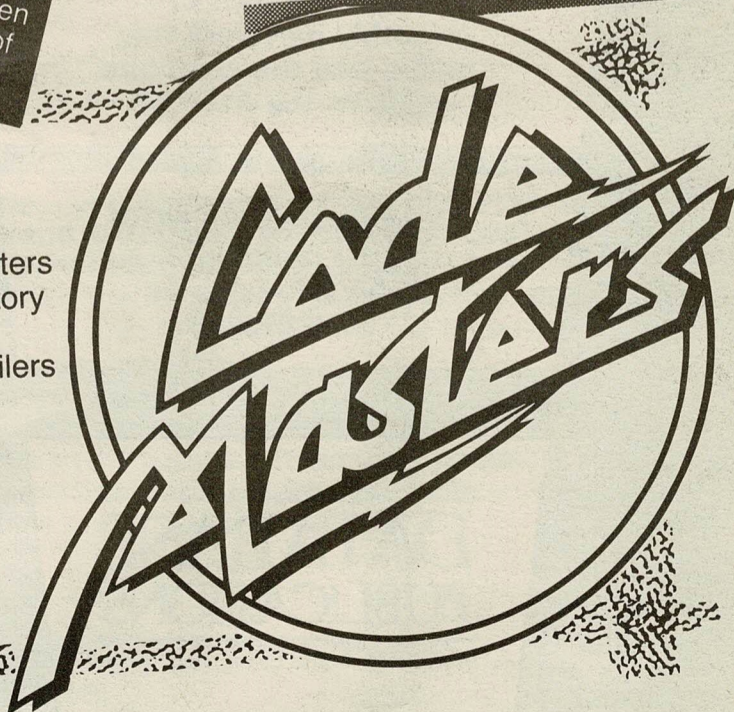


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THE PRESS GANGS UP ON OLD GUARD

Continued from page 10

purchasers. But the recently published Newsfield questionnaire has unearthed the statistic that *TGM* readers are, on average, 19 years old – way ahead of the usual *Crash* audience.

The question remains that surely someone who owns an Amiga doesn't really want to know what *Out Run* is like on the ST and vice versa? Thus, more satisfaction might be gained from a machine specific title.

Frey answers this by claim-

ing that as a sector such as Amiga games software is nowhere near as busy as the C64, *TGM* can adequately cover what's going on. The Amiga mags fill in the gaps with more technical or serious editorial, he argues. If true, one wonders how *TGM* will cope with its readership once the Amiga and ST, and PC for that matter, are further established?

Pop quizzed

Whilst each hardware development will

affect most magazines in a different way the veteran *Popular Computing Weekly* has to cope with them all. It has also had to cope with the change of ownership from Sunshine to Focus last autumn, and subsequent staff changes close on Newsfield proportions.

The weekly had undoubtedly lost its way before the move and has struggled to decide on any particular direction ever since. Revamped reviews sit alongside programming on the Electron one week, only to be all but ousted completely for the odd QL or PC supplement. The news pages are a mess, both in content and layout.

Focus seems to have realised that a publication aimed solely at the computer enthusiast will not achieve the sales or ads required, but at the same time it has not switched wholeheartedly to more commercial plains for fear of losing its backbone audience whilst not winning over readers from the monthlies.

Managing editor Brendan Gore claims that editorial and design alike were "beefed up" after the switch and is somewhat perplexed by observations that *Pop* is still far from fulfilling its potential.

"I don't get much of that feeling. Should we be selling

more? I'm quite happy with the sales we've got. Obviously if we had 100,000 extra I'd be pleased."

There has been talk of a rival weekly looming ever since Graeme Kidd, Gary Penn and Ciaran Brennan left Newsfield in what was dubbed 'the night of the long knives' last September. Kidd indeed is believed to have already registered the name *Games Week*, whilst Focus itself has been tinkering in its shed full of prospective titles. Dennis and Newsfield, however, have both ruled out any such move in the near future.

In fact, it seems more likely

now that audit king *C&VG* will be the mag to take games to the public on a more frequent basis. A fortnightly has been the subject of much EMAP thought but no decision has yet been made, or at least announced.

With its circulation over 100,000 and rising *C&VG* has proved to be the multi-user magazine that everyone else would like to emulate. In theory its name holds no limitations on editorial coverage and despite an obvious 8-bit leaning there seems little need at the moment for a more upmarket sister.

Ad nauseam

Of course, ads are just as important as readers and the 16-bit mags have to be confident that there is enough product out there to fill their spaces. *C&VG* ad manager Gary Williams believes it is this last point that has ultimately spawned so many new titles.

As one might expect, he sees no particular reason why the new mags should pose a threat. "It all depends what people want. A software publisher needs to reach the maximum number of games players. Why should someone buy *Amiga Computing*? How long is it going to last? It's only been launched because they hope there's a market for it, not a customer base."

These harsh words are evidence of the hard selling that goes on amongst the mags. And it's not surprising that throats are got at considering that the number of existing titles probably matches the number of independent publishers there are these days. Whilst the number of labels might stay the same there are ever fewer pairs of hands holding on to the purse strings.

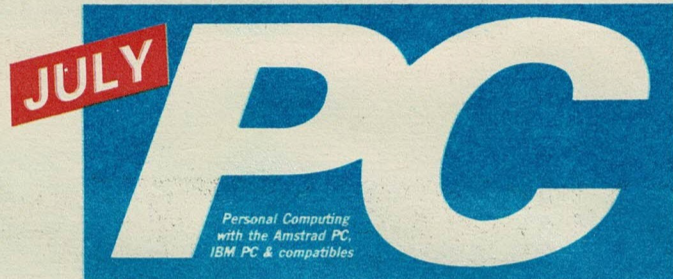
Williams admits that every firm which gains a review in *C&VG* gets an ad call "but only because of the size of the market". Collusion between advertising and editorial is of course anathema to both parties, but still it happens. It must do, everyone contacted said it did – but all said that it was the others who were doing it.

Williams is philosophical about the contracting nature of software houses. "It's like the record industry with ten major players and lots of labels. It's not a problem: if Ocean bought up every company in the marketplace they'd still have to advertise."

All agree that the sheer quality of the magazines around these days has improved vastly. Those that embarrassed the reader even more than the publisher have, by and large, disappeared now. There is still room for the smaller concerns such as Hugh Gollner's *ST* mags, and Anthony Jacobson's *CCI* but all must keep an eye on what is really going on in the market.

Jumping on to the latest machine and adding *Your, User or Computing* simply won't do anymore. Publishers are growing up to the needs of its readers in terms of editorial and marketing and readers are becoming more demanding.

Considering that the top six mags are selling over 500,000 copies a month it really isn't time to start panicking. The writing's on the wall, sure, but it's still only in lower case.



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In recent times, the likes of Commodore, Atari, Tandy and Microvitec have all announced bids for the lucrative education sector currently dominated by Acorn and Research Machines. How should dealers best go about gaining a slice of the action? ANDREW SEAL offers some practical advice...

A dealer friend and I were talking a couple of weeks ago and he was asking how does a business like his get education contracts when they always seem to want something for nothing. I nodded and let the question go unanswered, but

later on my way home, I thought about the point he made and realised that his idea of the education market was flawed.

What the something-for-nothing educationalists want and get from suppliers is help — help to get the best value product to do the job they want, help to know the obsolescence factor, help to understand the standards etc. I do believe that many

small business dealers can and should supply the education market, but not with the obvious products and services one normally thinks of. A strong dealer needs the support of his distributor, and in this market place, education. There are very few experienced distributors, but having found one with a solid long term education supply history, stick with them. The strong dealer will then

be able to canvass for local supply business and quickly build up a confidence level in the customer because of his association with a good known distributor. The local business should be consumable and low price items at first.

But the most important service he can offer is to talk to the local school or college or university and understand the procurement problems they suffer from, and how the PTA fits in and supports the establishment.

From talking the dealer can then work out, from his range of products, which is more competitive against what is supplied direct and the ancillary requirements that stem from this. Because as I said before the most obvious items of equipment and software cannot always be competitively supplied by the dealer but they generate need for other items that the dealer can supply if he knows what the educationalists are going to use or be supplied with.

Furthermore by talking a degree of influence can be brought to bear in favour of *de facto* standards.

But talking to one side of the chain is not enough. Talking to the professional education distributor is a must as well, so that for example a local dealer can offer training on the products and support for hire of peripheral equipment.

Yes, why not hire equipment to schools and obtain the maintenance skill that can be employed after warranty on new products?

One friend of mine, an educationalist of many years standing, recognised throughout the world, said to me recently that portability of software product is essential for teachers as well as stability in hardware product availability. What he meant was just because a product is not the most recent model, schools are not wrong to purchase, dealers are wrong not to supply it, but it must have direct portability with the most advanced model and beyond. And why not sell second-hand refurbished equipment, so long as it has commonality with today's kit!

Dealers should become part of the local school establishment in that they open their doors to teachers on aspects of configurations, software development and the like, to dispel the attitude that many harbour about computers — which is not unlike many people's fears about the dentist.

Let's face it: the customer of the dealer in a couple of years from now, or even next year, is the pupil or student today. So make yourself known and let them know what they can and should buy next year, now! There is money in education for many years to come, but it won't come to you if it doesn't know you, nor will it come to you if teachers don't know how to use your product.

There could even be a hidden benefit. A dealer I know found one major benefit in education sales: a ready supply of affordable staff.

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CANDID COMMODORE

Commodore wants the world and his ST-buying friend to know that it has big plans to succeed in the UK in the coming year. Now that the UK management team headed by Steve Franklin has proved itself to the satisfaction of CBM's European bosses, there's a whole potful of cash to spend promoting the firm and its wares. GREG INGHAM ponders the plans . . .

Like the repenting sinner, Commodore is in the mood for confessing its faults. "Screwing" the trade, ropey deals, ignoring the business market, unwise advertising, poor management, bad decisions, incoherent - even non-existent - business plans: all are readi-

ly, unpromptingly acknowledged. In place of acts of atonement are pledges to spend vast sums of cash wisely, to act professionally, to work in close partnership with the trade and so on and so on.

An older, wiser, more sombre prodigal son has returned

and he's so sure that he can do better if the trade will but forgive his past misdeeds.

This, in essence, was the message of a couple of relatively candid hours spent with Kristian Andersen (Commodore's vice president for Northern and Western Europe) and its UK boss Steve Franklin. Whether anyone is convinced or should be convinced is quite another matter.

For what it's worth, I came away thinking that if ever Commodore could climb back to its pre-lapsarean days of UK significance, then 1988/89 provides some opportunity. The Amiga 500 is - at last - at a consumable price, the C64 is as bundleable as ever, the management team is now settled (and would appear to have the confidence of its European bosses), and Amstrad currently seems to have taken its eye off the leisure market.

Against that are two main factors. Firstly, Commodore has negligible standing in the sector where it needs the biggest growth, that of PCs. And secondly, it's starting from a very small base: Commodore UK has contrived to turn over less than its Danish equivalent in the last two years.

Additionally, whilst cash

has caché, the influx of apparently vast funds brings its own pressures. To screw up once is unfortunate, but to screw up twice with a whole fistful of dollars behind you really is some achievement.

The UK stripped bare

The UK for the time being and for the last two or three years has been very, very disappointing. Basically there's only been the Amiga and a few C64s. There's been a real lack of sales of PC 10s, 20s, 40s and high end Amigas. That's where most other countries have obtained their growth - in Germany and Switzerland more than 50 per cent of the business is with PCs," Andersen began.

"It's difficult to say exactly what went wrong since the days of '82, '83 when the UK and Germany were running head to head. But obviously the business style and the changing management all helped create a situation where the trade reacted with distrust. They'd been screwed so many times by Commodore, whilst at the same time the serious vendors - the Olivettis and the IBMs - were moving in and taking over the

PC market.

"The UK concentrated far too much on the low end sector and didn't have any serious business plans for business. Basically at one stage we were the only business vendor in the UK: all the distribution was ours, and we replaced the Pets with the PCs. But we threw it all away.

"And so we've been looking for a team in the UK that we could trust and invest money in. We've been kind of watching from the side this last year (since Franklin was appointed in June '87). In the old days, they did dirty things on pricing and had poor advertising, but now we think we have a good group with a very clean operation. It's all been cut down and cleaned out and we can go again.

"I think we can say that we will come back in style - if style is money."

Of course, in painting the past so black, there's an attempt to make the present and immediate future look that much lighter. And the charge sheet is ever so slightly biased against the UK in that it underplays the effects of the timing of Commodore's corporate financial horrors.

Just as CBM went into a tailspin, so in the UK Amstrad was launching. For sure

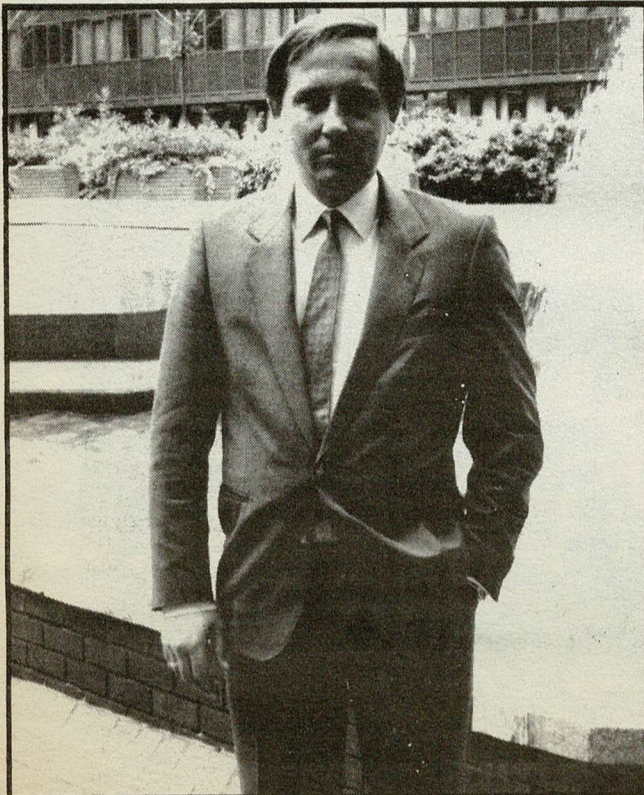
all the subsidiaries had to cope with the twin ludicrousnesses of the C16 and Plus/4, but the UK had the extra threat of the then remarkable CPC from the Brentwood Beastie Boys.

Still, it's easy enough to agree that Commodore in the UK had a fairly lousy '85, '86 and '87. By contrast, in the current financial year, which ends with this month, business has grown 25 per cent. This may not be much given the small base - and it's not been enough to bring the UK to profit - but it's sufficient to convince the European bosses to invest in Franklin.

When pressed, the latter says that some £3-4 million will be spent on advertising and promotion in the UK during '88/'89. By his reaction, Andersen knows the figure to be higher: double, according to sources.

Whilst it doesn't scale the Amstrad heights and is apparently unlikely to include TV ads as its great rival Atari has promised to do, it's a useful barometer of confidence in the UK.

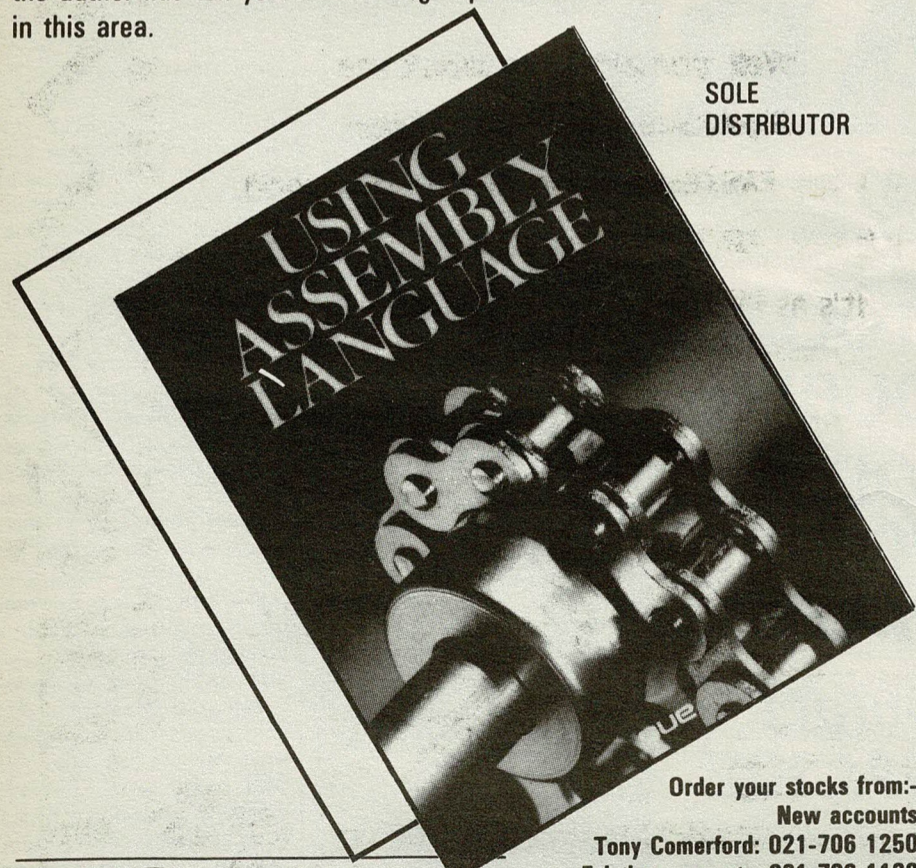
The bulk will be spent on the leisure market, mainly before Christmas. There'll be ads in the expected places, sporting tie-ups, big pushes at shows and so on. But the most



ANDERSEN: No holding back on UK faults

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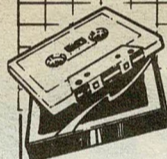
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interesting change will see CBM investing in in-store promotions.

The blah blah factor

Negotiations are beginning with two companies – one believed to be Bullet – for a merchandising/demonstration deal, which will be linked in with local advertising. The plan is for one, possibly two day demos in November in the 2-300 outlets that have ordered enough Amigas to qualify.

"The machine doesn't sell itself, yet when dealers do demos, customers buy it. That's honesty and I'm not just saying it because it's our machine. It's not blah, blah: it's true," Andersen offered.

Blah blah or not, it's worked in Germany to the apparent extent of 100,000 Amigas being sold in each of the last two quarters. (As ever with sales figures, only the company giving them actually believes them – and then not always. This German success claim was instantly derided by Atari, in much the same way that the world outside Railway Terrace, Slough scoffed at the notion of 100,000 STs being sold in the UK last year.)

What will aid the 500 this time round is the new price tag of £399. Whether or not "40-50,000" Amigas have been sold in the UK as Franklin somewhat unconvincingly claimed, it's apparent that at £399, it'll do immeasurably better.

Five years ago, a quid less than £400 worked wonders for Acorn and the Beeb; three years ago (and even now) Amstrad had a runaway hit with the same priced PCW 8256.

OK, so different machines, different times, but the trade has been lobbying for it for some many months.

There are only two real oddities about the move. Firstly that Commodore couldn't introduce it earlier, and secondly that it was still going through the motions of denying it just two weeks ago when everyone knew that it was happening. On the latter point, Commodore argues that it had to be kept quiet as long as possible for fear of damaging existing sales. Given that a number of dealers told CTW that they had already been informed, that scarcely stacks up.

What had been hindering the drop was its effect on the European – specifically German – markets. Andersen expounded at great length about the damage done by previous CBM UK managers who did deals which caused too many units to turn up on the mainland.

Candour has its limits, so he wouldn't name names. But he offered: "We were told that the UK would require special pricing because of the differences in disposable income and so on. But when I see product floating out of the UK, then I know that we had the wrong partners. Grey exporting was a very disturbing problem for us. People were just playing a damn game and we're not into that. Currently, none of our partners are doing that."

This, allied to all machines being individually numbered at the quality control stage, should prevent the problem occurring again, he believes. If it doesn't, Franklin warns that "within the law" dis-

tribution rights will be forfeited.

One side effect should be an improvement to Commodore's failure rate. "We're about the only country where goods are actually shipped. That means that they get shaken about in transport, so individual quality control will help us enormously," Franklin maintains.

The lingering death of the 64

Aside from the A500 cut, Commodore's other major move for the summer is its C64 pack. Something of an annual event, this year's offering will see the ancient, superseded, but still selling machine on the shelves at £139, replete with an Olympic theme of games bundled. Beyond that are two autumn 64 bundles: one games, one more upmarket probably including a monitor and presumably trying to address the sector that can't quite afford a PCW.

Commodore's reaction to the lingering death of the 64 has moved from mild irritation to shoulder-shrugging amusement.

Andersen again: "From the planning point of view, we've tried to kill the 64 so many times. But the damn machine is still moving. Incredible. Every Christmas it's an enormous seller for us even though sales are dropping away each time. It'll do well this year and I honestly believe it'll be big again for Christmas '89."

Nonetheless, in the harsh world of cash flows and forward projections, Andersen has little regard for the old

beast. "Whether we sell 100,000 or 400,000 64s I couldn't give a shit. It's PCs, Amiga 2000 and the new Amiga running Unix that we'll be looking to for our growth." And it's here, evidently, that Commodore faces its hardest battle.

Essentially, there will be a two tier approach to the PC market: direct to dealer and distributor to dealer. There'll be no conflicts of interest, insists Franklin, and the targets are obtainable. "On PCs in the next financial year, we're looking to have between five and seven distributors and probably 60 to 80 dealers that we'll supply direct. If we've done that in one year, then we'll've done a bloody good job."

And what's the current distribution network?

"We don't actually have one. We did have 150 dealers, but now we're down to about 10. For this next year, we won't be ignoring the top 20 dealers, but we'll be looking for our growth from the 20-100 sector. And that's because we have to gain credibility before they will like to come in partnership with us – and we'll do that through a lot of bleeding hard work."

What will probably also help will be some machines to sell. Following its financial disasters, Commodore is more cautious these days about the volumes it produces. Supply of PCs has been tight – also due, of course, to the chip shortage – and in any case, the more successful European markets have had first call on machines. Franklin says that the UK didn't really have any PCs until March.

"That's my apology to the

UK market," Andersen interjects. "We have more than 2,000 dedicated PC dealers in Europe, and we didn't have any PCs from October to December, so we didn't ship into the UK. Now it's different."

PC1 too many

One machine not in noticeably short supply is the PC1. Informed sources say that Europe pretty much rejected the no expansion slots, single drive machine, and that the UK has to shift some 14,000 as a consequence.

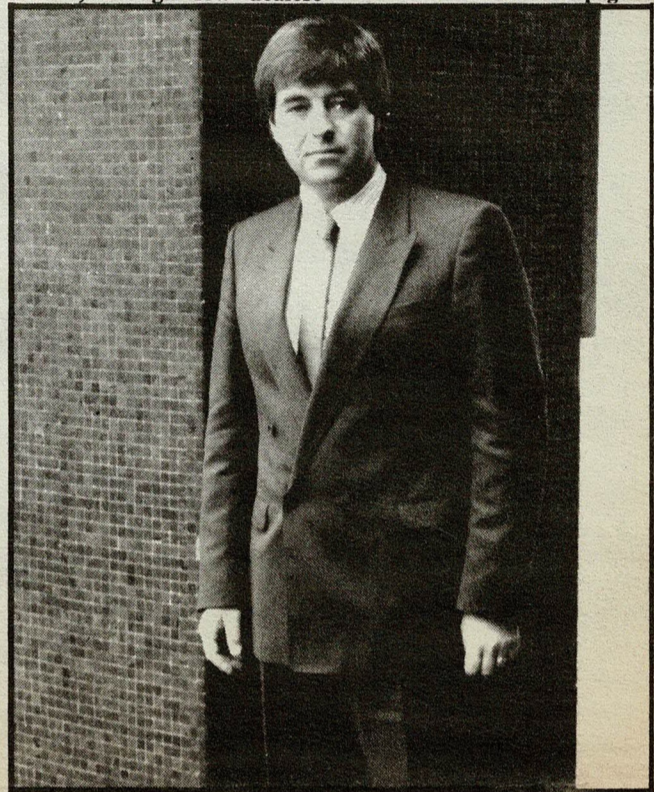
Franklin defends it on the grounds that at £369 "it's the cheapest MSDOS machine around and it's got to be good value for the small businessman", though few dealers

appear to agree.

The apparent overload of PC1s perhaps explains why CBM is using it as part of its educational push. A letter sent out on May 11th by its national sales manager for education Peter Talbot requests dealers to join in a "62,000 mailshot to educationists nationwide", backed by an ad campaign in the nationals.

The price? A firm order for 50 units at £228.73 – indicating a £299 final price – all to be taken within 30 days. It is not thought that too many outlets have been clogging the firm's Maidenhead switchboard with orders for £11,436.50 worth of a no ex-

Continued on page 18

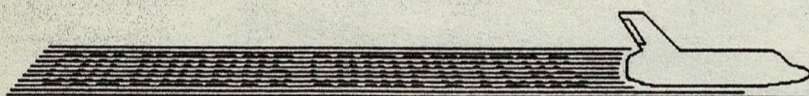


FRANKLIN: Distribution is all with PCs; CBM needs some

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CANDID COMMODORE

Continued from page 17

pansion slots, single drive PC. Still, it would be wrong to judge the range by one machine. The duo stress that the key to PC success is distribution, and when asked about the likes of Northamber coming aboard, Franklin says he hopes to have signed two or three "bigish" distributors by November. "I say 'we hope' because we haven't actually approached the P&Ps and Northambers. We haven't had anything to offer them - and I don't just mean product. Now though, we have and the package should

be interesting to them."

And what of the existing consumer products distributors? Lightning qualifies, but Franklin is cautious about Zappo, despite its recent deal for Amstrad PCs.

"I still believe that Amstrad computers are predominantly bought by a man for his family or by a one, two or three man band company. I simply do not believe that Amstrad is bought by the corporates - and 50 per cent of the PC market goes to *Times* Top 1,000 companies.

"What Zappo will have to do is to convince us that they

can fully support the machines. That's not the maintenance because that's covered through DPCE, but it's sales and technical support, support on the road, full back-up to corporate accounts and knowing about networks. Also, they should be prepared to have a sales force trained by us and . . ."

And he trails off, perhaps thinking that he'd said too much about a firm that he's due to join next Tuesday on a ten day joint dealer beano to Singapore and Bangkok.

"Look, the thing is we want a group of professional distributors, including a new group of people from the top end. Our MSDOS products are as

good as anyone else's, are cheaper than most and will be forming a bigger part of our activity than ever before. If we had the distribution, our product would be selling as well as anyone else's. We want close partners."

The credibility climb

As much as anything else, though, what Commodore needs is credibility - or, if you prefer, sustained credibility. How ever much Franklin may have turned it around and raised its profile and increased its sales and beefed up its management team, old impressions die hard.

When talking to one of Commodore's own distribu-

tors about Atari's curious semi-official leaking of the September price cut on the 1040 STFM, there came the comment: "How bloody stupid! It sounds like the sort of thing Commodore would do." And if that's what your friends say, even in jest . . .

Such thoughts are borne of sundry curiosities on the A500 since last summer. Though it may not in the literal sense be true, Commodore gave the impression of forever offering and then extending 'special deals' on the machine.

The result was that comments along the lines of "no more bundles", "absolutely definitely ends next week"

and "due to the success of the last deal, we've managed to come up with another one", were literally incredible. The firm denial of the price cut two weeks ago didn't much aid the process.

Elsewhere, the stripped margins of the A500 Business Pack did little to curry favour with the trade, either. Franklin acknowledges that this was something approaching a mistake.

"We did it for a purpose and no, that purpose wasn't to cut the margin. You could argue that we should've thought it through more. But it was done to give the Amiga impetus and also to see if it could be sold through the small business market. The answer to that was yes: we sold quite a few."

Detractors say that precious few leads were generated by an expensive ad campaign for a bundle on which Commodore's own margin was stripped; then again, detractors would say that, and Franklin is not quoting figures.

On the credit side - and despite the "bloody stupid" quote earlier - Commodore's distribution base is both larger and better disposed to it than a year ago. Entirely sensible people have been saying in all seriousness that Commodore is going to do especially well this coming year, citing in particular the much closer relationship with its European bosses. Certainly Andersen and Franklin do a decent impression of people who have a high regard for each other's abilities, and long gone are the sour comments of yesteryear about "the bloody Germans".

Also gone, for better or for worse, are the idiosyncracies of former UK boss Chris Kaday. Mention his name in Commodore circles away from Andersen and Franklin and there are sideways glances and warnings that "This is off the record". Franklin and Kaday are chalk and cheese; 'nuff said.

Cop out time

So is Commodore really back? Will the Amiga finally become a consumer volume seller? Will the PCs become sellers of any sort? Has Franklin put an end to Commodore's revolving door employment policy on UK bosses?

It's cop out time, I'm afraid. For all Franklin's enthusiasm about "people coming back to Commodore with confidence", talk of "re-establishing ourselves with credibility", determination "to see the job through", belief "that there's no reason why we can't be big again in the UK" and claims for "strong management, maintenance, strategy and direction", it's simply too soon to say.

Commodore UK is in a better position now than it has been for some time, though as Franklin and Andersen know only too well, that's not saying much. The real growth, they reckon, will come in Franklin's second, third and fourth years in charge. The first year has been all about building a platform, consolidation and such-like, and to that extent has been successful.

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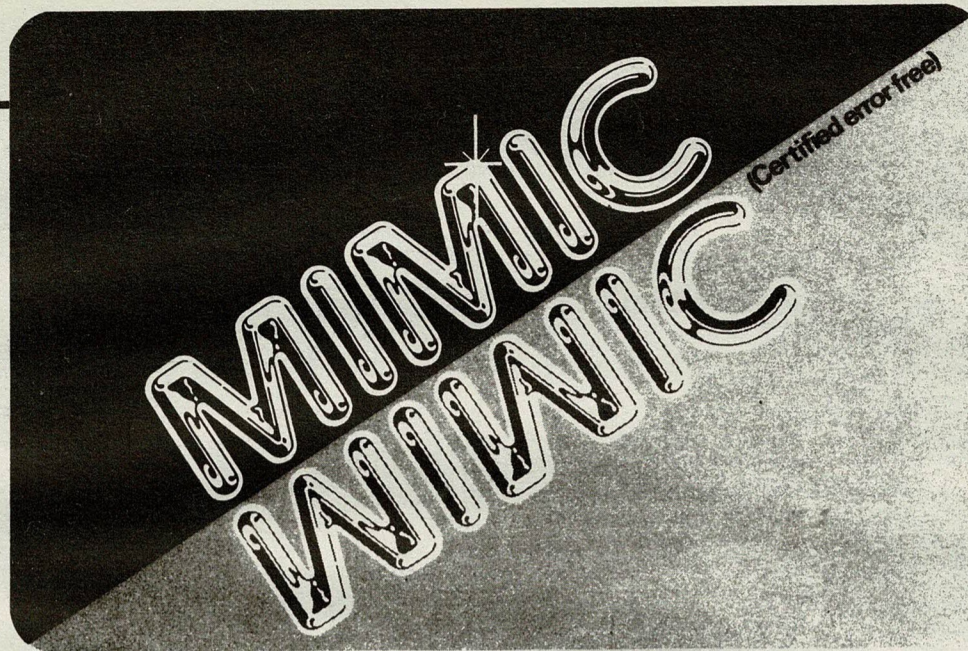
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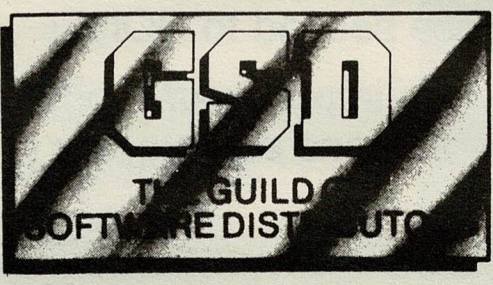
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Soft options

SPECTRUM TOP 20

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2	3	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
3	2	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
4	NE	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
5	11	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	5	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
7	13	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
8	12	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
9	22	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	21	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
11	15	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
12	8	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
13	16	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
14	NE	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	7.95
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3	2	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
4	20	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
5	8	NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
6	3	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
7	NE	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
8	RE	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	RE	SUPER ROBIN HOOD	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	13	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP£
1	1	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.99
2	2	CAPTAIN BLOOD	INFOGRADES	24.95
3	NE	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	14.95
4	4	DUNGEON MASTER	MIRRORSOFT	24.99
5	3	CARRIER COMMAND	RAINBIRD	24.95

AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP£
1	3	OBLITERATOR	PSYGNOSIS	24.95
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3	4	FERRARI FORMULA 1	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
4	NE	ROCKFORD	MELBOURNE HOUSE	19.99
5	NE	LEATHERNECKS	MICRODEAL	19.99

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
SPECTRUM	43.5	46.8	43.8	45.8	27.6	29.0	28.2	29.0
COMMODORE 64	21.2	20.9	22.7	24.0	24.9	24.8	25.6	24.5
AMSTRAD	18.7	17.0	17.8	16.1	20.4	18.8	18.0	17.8
ATARI ST	6.2	4.9	4.3	2.5	7.7	7.0	6.4	4.8
COMMODORE 16	2.2	1.9	2.3	1.9	2.7	2.9	3.5	4.0
ATARI	2.1	1.9	1.8	2.0	4.0	2.6	2.4	4.0
AMIGA	1.7	1.0	1.7	1.9	2.7	2.0	2.4	2.5
BBC	1.4	1.8	2.1	1.6	2.9	3.0	3.9	3.0
ELECTRON	1.0	1.3	1.6	2.1	2.2	2.8	2.8	3.5

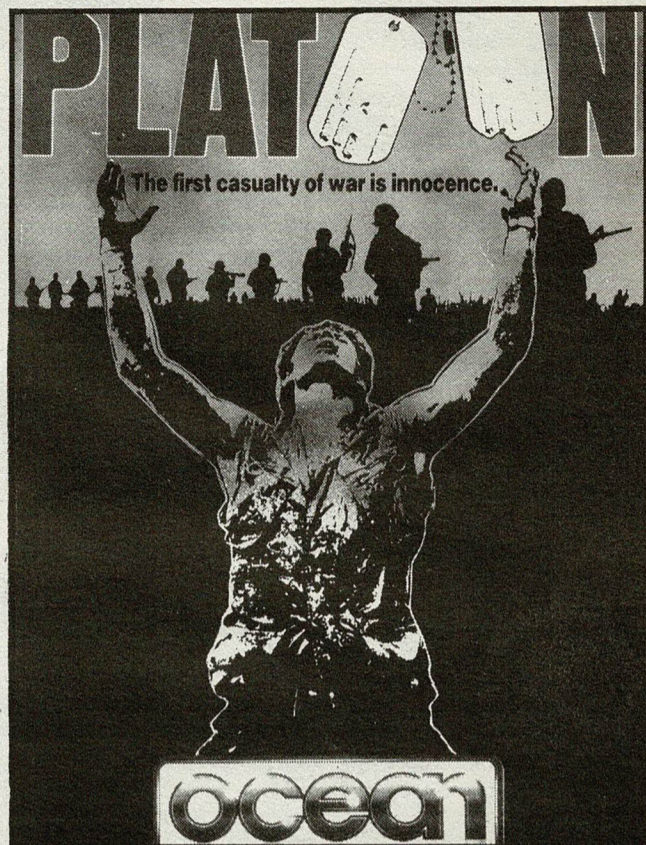
AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
83	78	98	97

SOFT OPTIONS carries salient details of leisure software titles just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software houses wishing to be included should fax (0438-310001) or phone (0438-310185) through details ten days prior to our publication date.

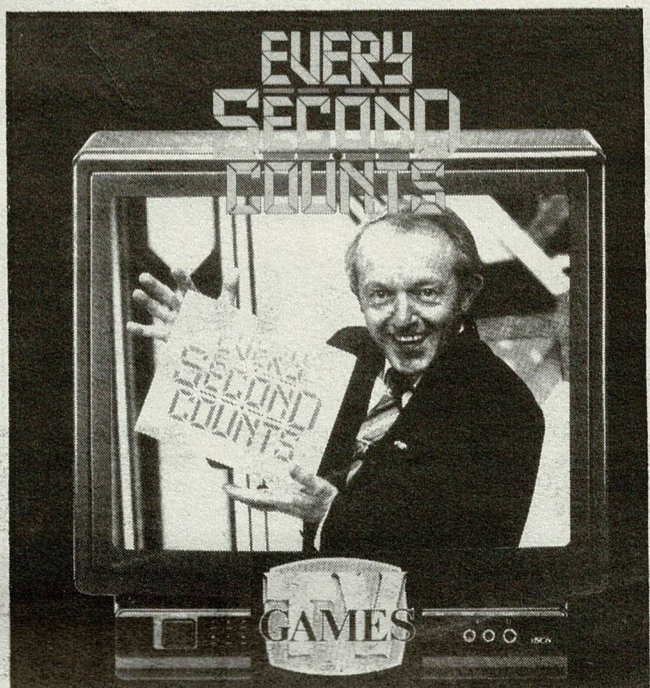
▲ ALTERNATIVE: *Cartoon Capers* (+3) A three game compilation for the +3 at £6.99 should go down well even if the games themselves never broke the 'entertainment technology barrier'. *Everyone's a Wally*, *Dangerous* and *Yogi Bear* make up the triumvirate. **▲ CODE MASTERS:** *Grand Prix Simulator*, *ATV Simulator*, *Fruit Machine Simulator*, *BMX Simulator* (64 disk - £2.99) Coders reckon this collection has sold around a million on all the various formats. But what's interesting is the low price point for a disk. Industry scribes reckon £2.99 is the lowest ever for a C64 disk. **▲ CRL:** *To Hell and Back* (64 - £9.95-£14.95) CRL's going through something of a bad patch with the split milk of the EA divorce still to be mopped up. It's been a while since the pearly gates of the Gallup chart were opened to CRL but word is that this will slip in.

▲ ELECTRONIC ARTS: *The Battle for Stalingrad* (Sp - £9.95) Epic war game on the Russian Front. The battle itself has long been pored over by strategy bores. This is one of the batch tied up in the recent Strategic Studies group deal. **▲ GRAND SLAM:** Peter Beardsley's *International Football* (STAg) Beardsley is surely the ugliest man alive but with the European Championships looming his mug will be all over the place. Footie games get a better shot at the charts than most and this looks to be the most promising soccer game for a while. Perfect licence. **▲ HEWSON:** *Maurader* (SpAm64 - £7.99-£14.99) Plain and simple shoot 'em ups seem to be what Hewson is best at. This one isn't much different from previous efforts and as such it'll be a hit with the younger blasters. **▲ IMAGINE:** *Green Beret* (PC - £19.95) The software



houses are still trying to transform PC users into games players. It may dawn on them soon that the majority are much more interested in spreadsheets than coin-up licences. The success of a big name game like this will be a barometer of the industry's endeavours. **▲ MARTECH:** *The Fury* (SpAm64+3) Furious shoot 'em ups have always been the staple diet of Brit gamers, but European and American tastes for more intelligent gaming inevitably takes its toll. This smacks of that sicko move *Death Race 2000* - a truly boggling killing and racing affair. No doubt that's exactly where Martech go its "inspiration". **▲ THE MICRO SELECTION:** *Star Ball* (64 - £1.99) *Bobby Bearing* (64 - £1.99) As a re-release *Bobby Bearing* has more than a fair chance. *Star Ball* doesn't ring any bells and it may not ring too many tills either. **▲ RAINBIRD:** *Legend of the Sword* (ST - £24.95) Mystical lands, evil wizards, magical swords, dark forces, weird

creatures. We're not talking originality here but what do you expect from an adventure? **▲ OCEAN:** *Aces High* (PC - £24.99) Good pedigree in this four pack - *Wizball*, *World Series Baseball*, *Top Gun* and *Arkanoid*. Whether or not PC gamers prefer boring flight sims remains to be seen. **▲ OCEAN:** *Platoon* (STPCAg - £19.95-£24.95) Blockbusting movie licence now on the 16-bit machines. It must cost Ocean a fortune to get hold of these licences but at least the firm is doing more than a credible job. The fad for Hollywood war movies may not last forever but it should see Ocean through the release of its next biggy - *Rambo III*. **▲ SILVERBIRD:** *European Five-a-Side Football* (SpAm64 - £1.99) Another game aimed to cash in on the millions who'll be spending most of their time oggling the telly soaked in European Championship fever. **▲ SUMMIT:** *D-Day* (SpAm64 8 £2.99) Alternative has always proclaimed that its £2.99 label leaves room for added value rather than simply being a vehicle for pumped up margins. Just to prove it this Summit offering - a war strategy game - has a 20-page booklet included. **▲ TV GAMES:** *Every Second Counts* (SpAm64 - £7.95-£12.95) Another TV show game from Domark's evergreen label. Paul Daniels is on the packaging but whether that's an advantage or not isn't clear. One for the grannies. **▲ US GOLD:** *Bad Cat* (Am64STAg - £9.99-£24.99) Part plan part sideview action title based on a frivolous cat. It might not sound too convincing but this manages to be amusing. A quality few games aspire to.



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 = Atari VCS 2600 console; MSX = very unlikely.

Piracy: it's the programmers

How about a different angle on the piracy question? From computing time immemorial dealers have been asked (quite rightly) to pass on any information that may come their way that would help copyright owners convict pirates. We have always had the policy, as responsible dealers, of taking this action and the reply has always been consistent: "Hard evidence to us or contact Bob Hay."

Is a pirate going to kill his golden goose by telling us his source? No. Result: no action taken and the pirate carries on copying.

This has become such a serious problem to us in the north that we consider the future with trepidation. 16 bit software is being killed at birth. What was an onward looking and healthy industry is being killed by selfish short-term cowboys.

What I have said above has been said a million times in a million different ways — and has no new interest to your readers.

The new angle, and the reason why I am writing, is that some software houses have seemed to finally grasp

the very painful nettle and have taken direct action. People have walked through our doors with pirated copies of software not yet released. When tackled for the source the answer has been "Oh, a programmer from ... has given it to me."

Indeed, not long back a customer came in with a soon-to-be-released game. When asked how he came by it he said a copy had been run off for him at the recent Atari show by a very well known, long standing member of the computer industry. It seems that software is getting out from the source. It has also been noticed that where software is not written in-house and third parties are contracted to write the program the financial incentive is not there to keep the program to themselves until release (i.e. locked away at night).

We have found that the source of pirated copies of 16-bit software has often been from programmers themselves — either by hacking other programmers' work and handing it out in a bid to stop revenue going to the competition or by trying to score a

goal against their professional colleagues by saying "look what I can do".

Software houses should start playing the game dirty, by spending time looking carefully who writes their programs and EXACTLY which magazines receives copies of their latest pride and joy.

This brings me to the reason I am writing — to congratulate Electronic Arts on their decision to try to infiltrate User Clubs and actively pursue lines of enquiry such as tip-offs from retailers or responding incognito to questionable adverts. As retailers we are known to the local computer-using market and so we find it difficult to follow up any lead we might get to obtain hard evidence.

Please software houses, join EA in stopping the flow of pre-release software getting into the market place. Look carefully at actively obtaining evidence yourselves. From what we hear and see it appears it is the people you trust who are letting you down.

Needless to say, we will report any piracy that comes to

our notice, but we rely on software houses to meet us half way by ensuring no product gets into the market prior to release date.

Regards,
Boadicea.
(Name changed at dealer's request due to continuing investigation of pirating matters).

— Very little seems to have changed in the games industry in the last few years. Software houses are still extraordinarily shortsighted about their own security and the need to ensure that games don't somehow slip out onto the pirate market.

There is still a legion of freelance "journalists"/programmers who regularly and easily obtain pre-production copies of games months before their commercial release. Whether or not they are the source of pirated games cannot be said for sure. But you very rarely see their bylines in the consumer press.

In their insatiable quest for publicity and coverage, some software houses are hitting themselves where it really hurts: in the pocket.

Modem ruminations

I agree wholeheartedly with your article "Amstrad defends modem" (CTW May 23rd) stating that Amstrad have sold more modem products than Romtec figures suggest.

However, your interview with an Amstrad spokesman was undertaken in May and the data related to February. As Romtec understand, volume shipments of Amstrad's modem did not start until the end of March.

For the sake of Amstrad's shareholders we hope that the company has managed since February to shift some product into channels of distribution. Over the next few months Romtec will be able to

accurately establish the success of dealers in selling the product to users.

Marek Vaygelt
Romtec
Maidenhead

— In the news piece, we said that the figures refer to February, a point which Amstrad appears not to have grasped entirely. It'll be no surprise to see that the MC2400 has leapt up the sales charts for March and April, even though Amstrad itself acknowledges that there have been shortages.

Still, it all goes to show that nothing has changed. Regular CTW readers will remember the old dictum: where there's a modem, there's bound to be a squabble.

Softtek & Spain: Erbe's response

With reference to your article "Softtek: Euro Switch", dated May 23, 1988, I must make the following points:

1. The article implies that Softtek was not happy with Erbe's performance and therefore looked for another distributor in Spain. The reality is quite different: Erbe made the decision to break the agreement with Softtek in Spain, and not vice versa. On Jan 26, 1988 we informed Softtek that, given the great difficulties in dealing with them, we did not wish to continue our business relationship.
2. The difficulties with Softtek were very much the exception that confirmed the rule: our relations with all the other UK software houses we represent in Spain have always been excellent.

3. Any of these software houses will confirm that business with Erbe in Spain has never been better: our sales in 1987 grew 7-fold in volume in comparison with 1986.

4. It is not Erbe's style to be drawn in a public debate or exchange: we work hard, promote hard, and sell hard, and let others indulge in idle talk and gossip. It would never occur to us to make a public statement regarding Softtek. However, since Softtek has taken it upon itself to publicly print a false picture which reflects negatively in Erbe, I feel obliged to set the record straight. We will make no further comment on this matter.

Yours faithfully
Andrew Bagney
Managing Director
Erbe Software, S.A. Spain.

Attacking the virus

Amiga virus precautions for duplicators and software houses.

Fact 1 — Duplication machinery such as MDC and Formasters does not spread Known virii from one master to another.

Fact 2 — Any duplication machinery will copy the virus from an infected master to the production run.

Fact 3 — Amiga virus is passed from one disk to another by not switching the machine off for a minimum of 30 seconds before loading another disk.

Fact 4 — Currently all known virii reside in the boot sector of the program.

This means the following procedure must be instituted

- 1) All incoming masters must be checked using either Vcheck 1.90, or if this is not available, use a disk sector editor and check in ASCII, the boot sector for messages e.g. virus by bugbyte or the like.

If using Vcheck 1.90 you have an option to remove virus. Do it (copy protected disks may act strangely) or request the customer to send a new master anyway.

- 2) Make one person responsible for signing off clean masters and make a rule that only signed off disks are used either in the duplication room or loaded into an Amiga.

- 3) Inform the customer immediately, so that they can

check their disks.

4) Make sure that the 30 second switch off procedure is followed rigorously (threat of a written warning to any staff without exception not following the procedure is a handy device).

5) Check that all Amiga masters held in library are checked and signed off.

6) In the case of MDC equipment check all product images held on hard disk.

This procedure should be adequate for currently known virii, however as the goal posts are being moved the whole time, vigilance is the only answer.

Unfortunately, there are now cases of virus on IBM PC, ST, and Mac.

If the writers of Vcheck 1.90 agree, we will make copies available to interested parties for a nominal handling charge.

David Hartley.
Discopy Labs
Northampton

— Does anybody know just how far this whole virus business goes? It makes for a great story (well, an OK one if you like that sort of thing), but has anyone suffered badly from it?

Given the vast number of conversations we've had with all sections of the trade since the virus story first broke, it's interesting to note that no-one has complained about the topic. Tends to make one a tad suspicious.

Newsfield torn off a strip

The latest issue of *The Games Machine* confirms all our worst fears about the direction the computer industry is taking. In it, Newsfield have chosen to print a colour picture of the final stages in a 16-bit *Strip-Poker* 'game'. This picture shows a naked woman, on her side and facing towards the viewer.

This type of imagery blatantly promotes the idea that women are sexually available and servile objects for men to gloat at and use. From nearly every area of the media this view is portrayed as correct and this sub-consciously conditions everybody. Rape and sexual abuse have often been linked to this view of sexual availability as has sexual harassment in all areas of life.

We are not suggesting that this country returns to sexual prudery, Victorian morals, and the doctrine of the Moral Minority, eg Ms Whitehouse, and her cohorts. We are suggesting that this imagery does nothing to further the interests of 52 per cent of the population, and often destroys the lives of women as a result of sexual attack.

Newsfield obviously don't seem to think that such imagery is dangerous otherwise they would have chosen not to print this picture. Yet in doing this they are indoctrinating their predominantly teenage male readership with views of female sexual availability and placing women in a position of second-rate citizens.

Magazines are seen by many to set the temperature in the industry about certain issues. Newsfield by their recent actions are promoting a new acceptability for the production of this type of 'game'. If there is no criticism this will only go on.

Newsfield should reconsider their policy about this and avoid their journalistic stan-



TGM: *Strip Poker* pic causing offence

dards diving to the depths of the *Sunday Sport* and similar pornographic scum.

Yours sincerely,
Jaron Lewis and Jeffrey Davy
Editorial team members
Bug Publications

— We've passed this over to Newsfield, whose reply is below.

But it's worth making a couple of points. Firstly — and against *The Bug* — there's no point in ruining a strong argument by emotive irrelevances. It's just plain silly to equate Newsfield with the *Sunday Sport*. However distasteful the use of the screenshot was — to say nothing of whetting the appetite by flagging it on the front page — one digitised

naked female in no way suggests that the whole publication is destined to be given over to sexist trash.

More importantly, though, Newsfield was simply wrong on this occasion. Would it have considered printing the last screen shot of some other strategy/simulation, and thus defeat the point of its readers buying the game and finding out what it ends like themselves? Of course not. Film reviewers tend not to reveal 'whodunnit' on much the same basis.

Most adolescent boys like nothing so much as looking at naked women. It can — but not necessarily — lead to an unhealthy view of womankind, as *The Bug* argues. Newsfield should have more sense. Public hair, even digitised, is just not on.

Newsfield's response

I can't help but feel that Jaron Lewis and Jeffrey Davy will make excellent CTW correspondents. It is an art to make a dramatic story out of insignificant and boring material.

The digitized display of an aesthetically pleasing lady losing at a game of strip poker can hardly be termed offensive. In fact, if I would follow their heavy interpretation of how pictures like these are instrumental in creating sexually perverted teenagers ready to go on a carnal rampage of rape and lust, I suspect that *The Games Machine* (TGM) will have averted a great many readers from festering hidden and perverted thoughts by displaying the beauty of nature openly to the world.

Surely Public School boys such as Jaron and Jeffrey must know what effect the suppression of sex and the separation of sexes in Public Schools can have on teenagers trying to get to terms with heterosexual relationships. To accuse TGM of treating women as second-rate citizens is totally unjustified, as TGM has provided more than enough coverage of the subject.

TGM is not sexist. Anco have promised a male version of the game and TGM will not in future shy away from baring all the facts.

I suggest that Jaron and Jeffrey revert back to reading *The Beano* if they find TGM offensive and stop bugging CTW's readership with pseudo-moralistic drivel. Who knows, perhaps then they might even pick up that essential sense of humour, which makes mankind able to survive in this turgid world of immorality.

Immorally yours
Franco Frey
Public (and Other) Relations
Department
Newsfield Publications
Ludlow

SPEAKEASY

In defence of compilations

With reference to the letter, from Clive Bishop, compilations in CTW May 23rd.

As Beau Jolly only releases compilations, we are very concerned, yet sympathetic to his attitude against this type of marketing. We have always been of the opinion that a compilation should only include titles that have had a "fair crack" as a single title release, but this obviously depends on the licensing label, and they and they alone can tell whether the title still has

any sales life.

The problem with compilations is highlighted as being one of returns for games failing to load, and single games titles being left on the shelf. With regard to the former complaint, games failing to load is very often a user problem rather than a tape problem, for on testing faulty returns we find that many do load satisfactorily, and we always exchange "faulty" tapes with no quibbles.

As far as single games titles included on compilations, it

has been found that this does not adversely affect the sales of the title and in many cases can improve them. Drawing a parallel with the record industry, including top selling singles on a NOW release does not mean that the record suffers and drops in the charts. And remember there could be another 19 top selling singles included in the compilation.

Surely, in order to extract maximum sales potential from a game, it would be far better for all concerned to go 1/ full price 2/ compilation 3/budget, with a sufficient gap in time between each. After all the

consumer is not stupid and he will soon become aware that a full price title will soon be available at a budget price.

Compilations are here to stay and consistently provide number one sellers, AT FULL PRICE and therefore generate good profit contribution per shelf footage. For a retailer to turn his back on this turnover, whilst it will no doubt reduce his returns, will also have an adverse effect on profits.

Colin Ashby.
Beau Jolly
Reigate

SPEAKEASY

Compiling problems

I am writing in reaction to the letter published in your May 23rd issue written by Mr Clive Bishop of Soft Spot Computers.

I wholeheartedly agree with his comments about compilation software being a problem item. I receive more faulty product back because of loading problems in compilation form than any other form.

But I would also like to whinge about the size of the packing, e.g. Elite's *Top Ten*

collection, or Ocean's *Game Set and Match*. Where can one display packages of this size? Don't reply to this question as customers have given me various ideas, most of which are unprintable because they suffer storage problems as well. Can you imagine the size of storage boxes the customer has on his desk if he wants to keep the original packaging?

I think it is about time that independent retailers/dealers got together to form a working association which could air all the problems created by the powers of our industry and create a voice loud enough to be taken heed of by those powers.

If anybody is interested in an association I would be delighted to hear from them at my business address.

Enough whingeing for now. Until the next time.

Yours sincerely
Vic Purnell
Computability
5/6 Market Square
Ebbw Vale
Gwent NP3 6HR

— There has, of course, been some movement on the compilations issue in recent weeks, with US Gold's change of policy. At least that helps two bad aspects of such collections: increasing the price and guaranteeing that no game will be compiled until at least nine months have passed.

But the other great irritant — cassettes or disks with more than one game on — still needs to be addressed. Consumers don't have the equivalent of loading problems with multi-track record albums: it's foolish to imagine that they'll put up with it for much longer with games.

Problems with outsized packaging have been aired before in CTW, usually around Christmas-time. A standard pattern has emerged. The retailers complain, the software houses say they'll take due cognisance of those complaints next time — and the boxes get even bigger.

The reductio ad absurdum of this will eventually be arrived at when some damn fool publisher markets a box too big to go through a retailer's door. Roll on the day . . .

Bullet praised

I was interested in the Bullet article a couple of weeks ago (CTW May 23rd) and would like to comment, as a retailer, what a good job they do. John Parker, Bullet general manager (pity he wasn't mentioned) I know, has worked hard over the past few months to gain the dealers confidence and respect both with displays and visiting regularly.

Keep up the good work John! This industry has lacked for so long in this area. Let's hope that more software houses sit up and take notice of what Bullet could do for them.

Clive Bishop.
Soft Spot Computers
Banbury and Daventry

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