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27-6-88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 192



SEE INSIDE FOR THE RETAILER PROMOTION OF THE YEAR

CBM man departs

Commodore's regional sales manager David Hill has quit the firm, apparently abruptly.

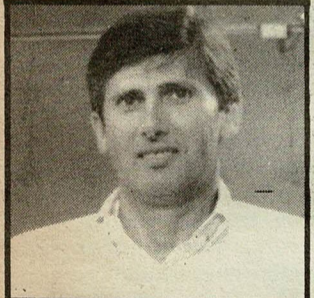
It is not clear whether his departure is related to a change of policy away from multiples and towards independents as sources have indicated. Commodore is saying that there were no major arguments and is playing down the issue's significance.

CTW was told last week by one figure close to Commodore that the firm would be making "significant" moves away from the chainstores in favour of its distributors. In part, this is said to be motivated by Dixons' price cuts on the C64 last autumn, when the would be £169 bundle was cut to £159 and then £149 by the store.

Independents are increasingly being seen as more lucrative and more committed to Commodore all year round than the chains.

INSIDE:

THE TEXAS CHAINSTORE MASTERPLAN



Bill Hayden kicked off CompuAdd five years ago by flogging peripherals from the back of a Chevy in Houston car parks. This year the firm hopes to turn over \$250 million. Its mail order business takes up the bulk of that but there's also a string of stores and a branded PC. Eyes are being turned from the Southern US states to Europe with the UK priority number one. CTW investigates..... 10

TAKING DIRECTIONS

The ins, outs, ups, downs and everything else involved in direct selling. This, the first in a two part analysis, sets out to explain the history of the market and questions the need for distributors..... 12

THE SHOW GOES ON

Despite doubts and pull outs from various would be exhibitors the PC User Show has managed to attract a respectable crowd of hardware and software representatives. A preview of this week's happenings..... 14

SOFT OPTIONS 17/LETTERS 18

Amstrad autumn attack

Amstrad is lining up a two-pronged leisure market assault for the autumn, CTW can reveal.

In an effort to stave off the threat posed by Atari with its ST and Commodore with the Amiga, Amstrad will be launching a new 16-bit machine at the PC Show. It will also be offering two quite extraordinary-sounding bundles on the Spectrum +2 and +3.



+3: Big bundle looming - as is a new MS-DOS machine

The new machine will be branded Spectrum, but at this stage appears unlikely to be called the +4 as has been touted, since it will run MS-DOS rather than Spectrum games. Well placed sources within Amstrad indicate that the machine will be priced at £299.

Effectively, it will be a stripped down version of the PC 1512, which has a single drive entry level price of £399. Given the nature of the

1512 and the continuing chip shortage, Amstrad would appear to have little room to manoeuvre on price.

This in turn points to the new machine being sold without a monitor. Though this would conflict with Amstrad's policy on all its own machines - from CPCs, through PCWs to PCs - it would be in line with the way all the various Spectrums have been sold in the past.

Amstrad is known to have been talking with Mastertronic, and a software bundle from the firm is thus on the cards. In some respects, it will mean a recognition from Amstrad that the attempt to reposition the 1512 as a home/entertainment/small business machine has not proved wholly successful. More positively, it will act as a fillip to those software houses with MS-DOS leisure plans and/or back catalogues.

The main problem with pitching the 1512 as a games machine has been its display

and to a lesser extent its price. If Amstrad does not include a monitor with the basic price, it is almost certain that one running with enhanced graphics will be readily available.

As for the price, Amstrad appears mindful of the existing success of the ST and Amiga, and the strong likelihood of the ST being re-priced at £299 for the autumn.

Amstrad's other thrust will be on its two Spectrum machines. These have been over-shadowed for some time by Atari and Commodore's offerings, and the +3 has never really taken off. Having ruled out any prospect of a sub-£100 Spectrum console, the firm is planning to beef up their appeal by providing huge bundles of games at the current prices.

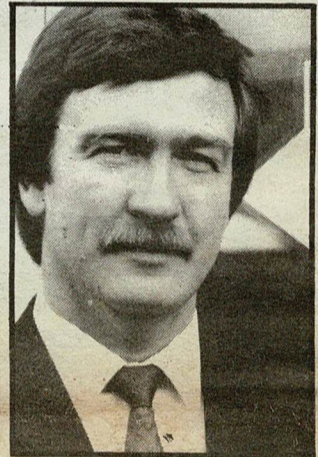
Though difficult to believe, CTW has been told by a previously reliable source that the intention is to offer 100 (as

Continued on page two

Centresoft ties Tandy

Centresoft last week signed a deal to provide a full software back-up system for Tandy's 50 Business Point stores.

Currently Tandy outlets only stock around a dozen sub-£200 packages. The Express Service catalogue provided by Centresoft will give managers 24-hour access to 80 products costing anything up to £700.



ROSSER: Catalogue tie-up

"If someone sees one of our systems but is not sure about the software available they can now get something else. We've been losing sales," commented Tandy's marketing manager Richard Rosser.

"Centresoft are clever enough to see that if we start selling, we start selling lots."

Tandy is hoping that the catalogue can also be offered to the claimed 90 non-owned dealers that take its machines. Centresoft has no plans to offer the service to its own independents, however, claiming that they already have 24-hour access.

ZCL ties SBC deal

ZCL (Zappo) has been appointed as the Spectrum Group's first ever distributor.

In a deal signed in the middle of last week, ZCL will be adding the full SBC range of PCs and printers to its current line-up of Amstrad and Commodore. Two other ZCL distribution accounts - "with very major players" - are said to be in the offing.

Spectrum currently sells to 231 dealers. Only about 10 per cent of these are on ZCL's 2,000-strong dealer list. "ZCL is our first distributor but it won't necessarily be our only one," Spectrum chairman Mike Stern said. "We're not in negotiation for any more at the moment, but there could be later on."

ZCL gaining the Amstrad
Continued on page two

Disk drought worsens

Shortages of 3.5 inch disks are causing distributors margin headaches and could have the same effect on software houses in the near future.

The prices of the disks have been rising steadily for the past four or five months. Already bulk disk prices are between 25 and 30 per cent up on their year start levels.

This is largely affecting the bulk trade as opposed to blank disks bought through

the retail sector. Distributors supplying software houses and duplicators with unmarked disks are therefore feeling the pinch.

The traditional feeling amongst leading manufacturers has always been that bulk disk sales are less lucrative compared with blank disk sales to the public. As such, the shortage has not affected that sector.

Disk distributor SJB's boss Steve Burke commented: "There seems to have been a shift in end user attitudes to-

ward recognized blank label disks. It's because of the end-user." He argued that this mini-boom in the retail sector coupled with shortages had caused lower supplies of bulk disks.

Reasons for the disk drought have also been attributed to everything from PS/2 to the continuing success of the ST and Amiga. For the moment most distributors are maintaining their prices and absorbing the extra costs.

However, the capacity to do cannot feasibly last for too long and software publishers

may soon be forced to dig deeper into company coffers. Sources argue though that retail prices of games will not increase due to healthy margins on ST and Amiga software and settled 16-bit price points.

Shortages seem to be limited to the recognised manufacturers with "low quality" disks still widely available. However, the claimed unreliability of these products have caused distributors, software houses and duplicators to steer clear on the whole.

Clonesoft claim clouted

The complexities of monitoring the clonesoft sector were highlighted last week following latest figures released by research firm Context.

Amstrad, Gem Distribution and Migent - each of them major players in the low-cost business software market - all strongly disagreed with figures claiming that the total market through dealers was worth £2.4 million in the first quarter of this year.

Context also listed each clonesoft publisher's market share by value. These figures have been confused due to some markedly idiosyncratic methods on the researcher's

part. Amsoft failed to register in the market share table due to its products being attributed to the original software producer. For example, sales of WordStar 1512 were deemed to be sales for MicroPro.

The research covers sales of sub-£200 packages through specialist computer dealers and multiples. Mail order and direct sales do not register, but still the £2.4 million figures appears somewhat off target.

"It's simply not feasible that a level of sales that low could support the number of dealers trading in the sub-£200 market," commented Gem director Paul Donnelly.

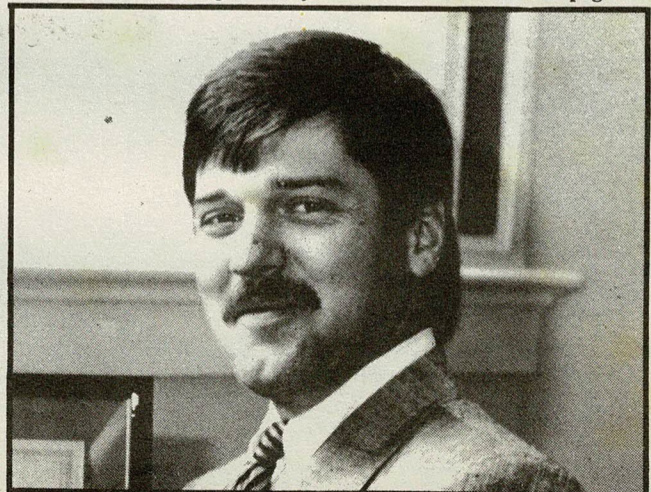
Migent's UK distribution manager Richard Hamilton agreed. "Given that I have

some idea of the number of IBM PCs clones shipped and the number of users who decided to use integrated software, I find that figure very

low," he said.

In Context's defence, the clonesoft market has always been notoriously difficult to

Continued on page two



HAMILTON: "Very low"

Martech turns to Ireland

In what is believed to be the first arrangement of its kind, Martech's parent company Software Communications has signed a deal with the Irish Development Authority to establish a software origination firm.

Based in Waterford on the southern Irish coast, the new venture is being headed up by current Datasoft/Intellicreations European general manager Mike Dixon.

He will retain his job with the US firm.

The new firm is called Emerald Software. It will be writing for third party software houses as well as for Martech, with the first products due before the end of the year.

The IDA's funding is based on employment levels and will run "well into six figures," according to Martech boss David Martin.

"We were attracted to the whole idea because Ireland is rapidly becoming the computer capital of Europe. There are more computer companies there - including IBM, Wang

and Digital - per head and in actual total than any other European country. Ireland also has a very young population - the youngest in Europe.

"Together, the two factors mean that the place is just bursting with talent. It really is amazing. Normally, many young Irish have to go off to the UK or to the US: we're helping some of them to stay," Martin said.

As yet, Martech is not naming the "leading software houses" that have been approached. But US Gold is understood to be amongst them.



X MARKS THE IRISH DEAL: Back row - Liam Kinsella, Sharon Scally and David Hardegan (IDA); front - John Barry and David Martin (Martech directors)

Amstrad

Continued from front page in one hundred) games on cassette or disk. Again, discussions have been held with Mastertronic, and also with Ocean.

Others indicate that the eventual total of games will be closer to 50. Even so, though it evidently provides a strong motive to purchase a Spectrum - despite the appeal of 16-bit machines - the prospect is likely to send shivers up the spine of the trade. Faced with such a fistful of games, few users are likely to have much of an immediate requirement for new titles.

Against this, as has been shown with bundles in the past, games supplied 'free' have lower perceived value. So there are those who argue that the threat to new software sales will prove less real come the autumn.

ZCL

Continued from front page account in part prompted the Spectrum move. "We've known Don Carter (ZCL's boss) for some years and we know that he's got great strength in the retail sector. This will allow us to concentrate on the top end and to attack aggressively the systems houses," Stern added.

For his part, Carter said that his own market research had indicated strong support for the SBC range from dealers. "The product offers exceptional value for money, is extremely well made and allows higher margins than most other PC firms at around 25 per cent.

"We regard it as an enormous compliment that with the vast number of distributors out there, many with a higher profile, they have come to us - as have others."

ZCL discussed the deal with Amstrad prior to going ahead. The Amstrad line was said to be that the firm prefers to deal with broadly-based distributors, and thus had few qualms.

Clonesoft

Continued from front page monitor due to the number of 'new' business dealers that have sprung up since the Amstrad 1512 launch in 1986. Historically, these haven't been tapped effectively and neither has the multiples' combined presence.

"I can't say anything except that these are the figures that we're picking up through a statistically proven method," offered Context director Jeremy Davies.

"I don't think there's any error involved. It just depends on how you define the market."

Davies further argued that a large proportion of clonesoft is sold mail order. This was firmly refuted by Gem and Amsoft, with Migent claiming that up to 80 per cent of its sales are through dealers.

According to Context, Sageoft has the largest total market share with 13.5 per cent followed by MicroPro (6) and Digital Research (4.6).

On this Amstrad's software and peripherals development manager Peter Roback told CTW: "It isn't MicroPro or Computer Associates who've made those sales - it's us. We've bought the licences, we've marketed the products and we've sold them under our name."

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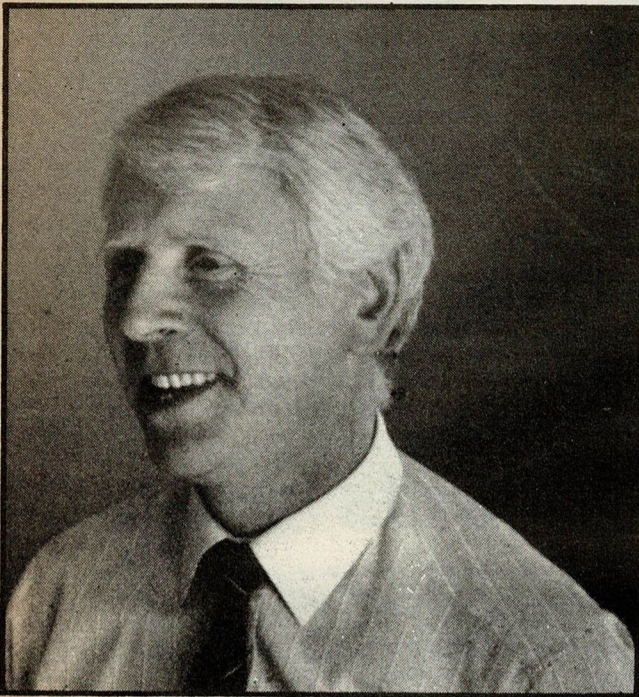
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Wilding notes PC hold-up



NEWLAND: Amstrad shortages

Wilding last week claimed that Amstrad PC shortages were behind the recent levelling out of its computer business growth.

Over the past two years the office equipment chain has seen computers make up an ever growing proportion of its business. However, whilst posting its latest half-year financial figures last week, it revealed that computers currently account for around 35 per cent of sales - the same as they did six months ago.

"I think the answer is that this is the first month this year that we've had proper Amstrad stock. They haven't been making enough to fulfill demand. If we hadn't had the shortages the computer figure would be higher," commented Wilding director Pe-

ter Newland to CTW.

He added that with the Amstrad 1640 Wilding had only ever had full stocks of one particular model at a time throughout the year. PPCs have been in plentiful supply since the new year bottleneck, but sales have apparently been "a bit slow" for the 52-store chain.

It also emerged last week that Wilding's promise of acquisitions is soon to come true, possibly within the next couple of weeks.

"Since we went public we've always had a yearning to make some sort of acquisition, but nothing has been suitable. We've got some thoughts on a couple at the moment and one is in the late stages of negotiation," added Newland.

The first acquisition is likely to be a northern office equipment firm which only

deals minimally in computers.

This would aid the chain's hope of breaking out of the South East. Its first Midlands outlet was opened in Birmingham some months ago.

Sales during the six months ending March 31st 1988 totalled £20.6 million, an increase of 30 per cent over the same period last year. Profit before taxation showed a 38 per cent increase to £1.4 million.

Earlier this year boss Terry Wilding announced that following a well publicised move by Dixons, his firm was "actively considering" applying for IBM dealer status.

This has not yet happened, but according to Newland it also hasn't been forgotten. "We still see it as a possibility, but it's just that we haven't yet felt the need. We've never been people for taking big risks or big leaps."

CTW

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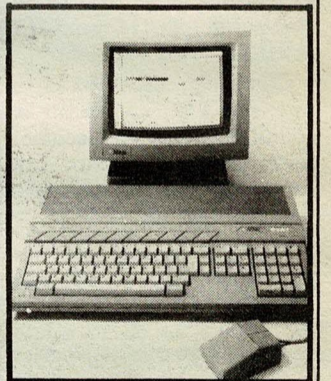
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NEXT WEEK:

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



Due to circumstances beyond our control etc, the evaluation of the Atari ST as a business machine will now be appearing next week rather than this. CTW will be sizing the ST up and gaining insights from the major players in the business arena. How far can the ST claim to be an alternative to the PC?

BOOMSOF OR DOOMSOF?

In a Dealer Focus special the retailers are asked whether or not they still have confidence in the clonesoft sector. Some business software houses are edging their way upmarket and market research doesn't appear to value the market too highly (see front page). And what of the great predictions of yesteryear?

Mindscape buys up MH remainder down under

Mindscape took another significant step forward in its attempts to become a major force in Australia last week by acquiring Software Licensing and Marketing (SLM).

In effect, this was the part of Melbourne House left when Mastertronic bought the rights to the publishing firm and its stock last year. SLM acted in Australia as both distributor and pub-

lisher, with the latter area being headed up by erstwhile Melbourne House boss Alfred Milgrom.

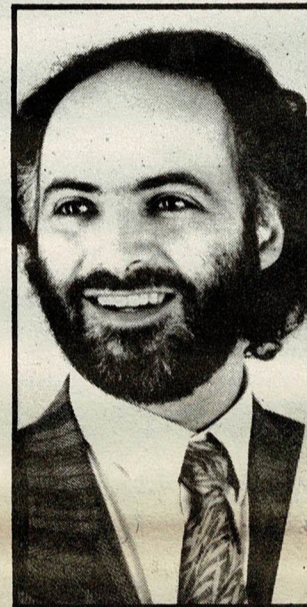
The firm was acquired for an undisclosed sum by the Mindscape subsidiary YPA Software Distribution Services in New South Wales. YPA was established only at the beginning of this year, and with this SLM deal it is now claimed to be "the fastest growing player in the Australian software distribution and marketing business".

Currently, YPA has exclusive distribution agreements with Mindscape itself, Thunder Mountain (its budget label), Cinemaware (which is handled in the US by Mindscape) and Channelmark (the US business software publisher). By securing a deal with SLM, YPA can thus handle all firms' product on a general distribution basis much like its British counterparts.

To complete matters, SLM also has exclusive distribution deals with a number of UK

publishers. However, this does apparently not include Mastertronic - despite the infamous time last February when Mastertronic circulated a press release describing a new deal with SLM in great detail, only to deny all knowledge of it when nothing happened (CTW February 15th).

One further effect of the deal will be to allow Milgrom to concentrate on his own publishing activities with the SLM offshoot Beam Software, which is also included in the agreement.



MILGROM: New deal

PST pitches hardware destroyers

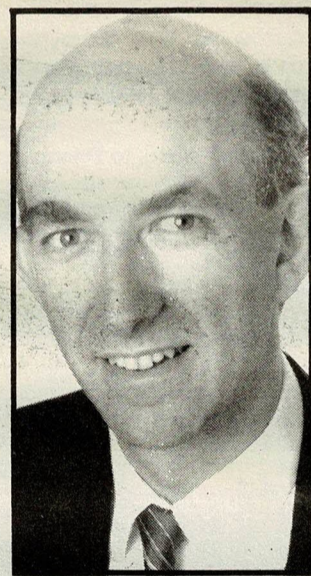
Some manufacturers are destroying machines in the thousands rather than releasing them on the export market, claimed an incredulous PST last week.

The export firm also hit out at "Arthur Daley" trading companies which have caused nervousness amongst manufacturers by not guaranteeing that machines find their way out of the UK market. It is being argued that some hardware companies are "missing the boat" in their attempts to make room for new machines.

In the past, says PST, unwanted computers have been staying in the UK rather than ending up in the markets desired.

"Some manufacturers don't want to take chances and so they are destroying their stocks," commented purchasing director Henry Padolsey. "They've had bad experiences in the past."

Padolsey went on to say that too many "two telephones and a fax machine" companies had made destruction of backstocks the only alternative for wary manufacturers. "We won't give them any nasty surprises," he claimed. "If they don't want



PADOLSEY: No nasty surprises

product sold in Italy or Germany or China then we won't.

"From our point of view it's no problem and we're looking for more and more manufacturers. Many have become fussy because of those bad experiences."

Discounter lashes business mark-up

The "unjustified" price differential between most UK and US business software has been blamed for the arrival of yet another heavy discounting mail order firm.

Software Rack has been set up to provide both standard and offbeat business applications at half their recommended retail prices. By importing direct from the US, products such as Lotus 1-2-3 and Word Perfect V are being offered at just £199.

The firm is a spin-off from the system mail order outfit Computer Deal which currently turns over around £2.5 million a year. It is pitching corporates, private users and dealers.

"There's an artificial price difference between the States and here. Products such as Ventura retail for £695 in the UK and \$675 in the US," said

Software Rack director Murdoch Mactaggart to CTW.

"I don't think that's justified and I see no reason for it. We buy in the States at much lower prices and pass the savings on to our customers."

Software Rack currently offers around 1,000 different packages and hopes to have a 3,000 product catalogue available later in the year. It is aiming for a first year turnover totalling around £500,000.

Mactaggart is unworried by any prospect of complaints from the software houses themselves, claiming that an attempt to restrict his firm's importing activities would contravene both US and EEC laws.

Dinamic goes alone in UK

Spanish publisher Microdigital Soft has terminated its licensing deal with Ocean in favour of launching itself in the UK.

Microdigital, trading as Dinamic, provided several

Ocean games last year such as *Army Moves*, *Game Over*, *Freddy Hardest* and *Basket Master*. Dinamic will be launched as a brand in its own right at the PC Show, Earl's Court this September.

"After a year with Ocean we've decided to go on our

own," commented Microdigital's international operations director Michel Angstadt to CTW. "It was a very good deal and it was the best we'd ever done in the UK, but we've realised our own production capacity and we're going to try and get a higher income."

Dinamic's first release will be *Game Over II* on Spectrum, C64, Amstrad and MSX. It will be backed by some £20,000 worth of marketing spend.

Before the game reaches the UK public in September, Angstadt is hoping to have signed

up an exclusive distribution deal with either a UK distributor or publisher. The difference to the Ocean deal will be that Dinamic will ship finished product and artwork.

The label hopes to be releasing four to six original titles a year once it is fully operational.

Gold unveils summer dealer push

US Gold last week unveiled its much-touted summer retailer promotional scheme.

Essentially, it works on the principle of every new release from July 1st until the end of September from the firm carrying a token which retailers can redeem against certain prize incentives. Dealers are being supplied with 'Treasure Trails' - a little bit like the *Blue Peter* appeal charts of yore - to gauge how well they are doing.

Prizes include the likes of golf trolley, barbecue sets and Panasonic zoom lens cameras.

Additionally, batches of tokens are being distributed at random to dealers as an extra fillip, and there will be tokens given out at the PC Show in exchange for a business card as a boost at the end of the campaign.

"We reckon we've spoken to the vast bulk of the independent retailers - perhaps 90 per cent of them all - and they're all very positive about this," US Gold's sales manager Sharon Gordon said.

"We'll be running it through all new US Gold product sold by all distributors, and then applying the prizes direct by ourselves. The other distributors won't have to get involved in any of the admin."

Gordon added that it was difficult both to estimate the future success of the scheme and then to monitor how well it has gone once it's finished.

"We'll have nothing to compare it with. The titles may have sold just as strongly without the tokens as they

will do with them. All we can say is that at this stage of the summer, we're 50 per cent up on last year's sales."

The move comes as no great surprise from Gold. It has been one of the more marketing conscious of the software publishers in the past, and this new scheme fits in with the growing trend towards such promotions. Recent weeks have seen dealer pushes from EA and Microdealer, as well as the just announced Thalamus end user drive (see below).



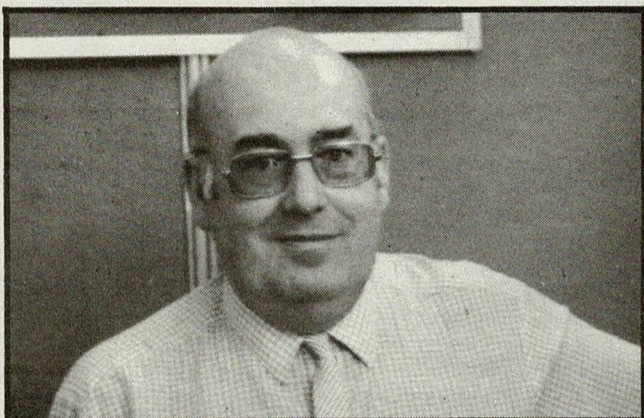
GORDON: Summer push

Acorn eyes musicians

Acorn will become the first ever computer manufacturer to exhibit at the British Music Fair next month via a joint venture with Electro-music Research.

The two firms are hoping to convince the music world that Acorn's flagship Archimedes can make its mark as a low-cost high powered sampling system. This is an area that in the past couple of years has become dominated by the Atari ST.

"The ST has gained a foothold in the professional world simply because it's got a MIDI interface on the back and a number of US and German packages are available," commented EMR's managing director Mike Beecher to



BEECHER: Backing Acorn CTW.

"I think that anyone serious about music, in ultimate control terms, should use the Archimedes. It wins hands down."

Beecher is currently involved in the production of some 20 musical packages for

the Archimedes, some not set to appear for a couple of years yet. Electromusic Research also produces programs for the ST and other formats.

The British Music Fair takes place on July 19-24 at the Wembley Conference Exhibition Hall, London.

Tronic projects oldies

Following its recent spate of successes with re-releases, Mastertronic has secured deals for three Software Project titles and CRL's *Tau Ceti*.

And the firm has also strongly denied suggestions from the trade that it is experiencing difficulties with paying other software houses.

Jet Set Willy, *JSW II* and *Manic Miner* comprise the Projects' trio. Though evidently not in the first bloom of youth, Mastertronic points out that *Ghostbusters* (1984) and *Fist* (1985) have both spent many months in the top ten as budget re-releases. The titles will start appearing at £1.99 on the main 8-bit formats from about

six weeks time.

Mastertronic director Geoff Heath thumped the corporate tub by stressing that the firm has once more returned to the overall publisher top spot according to Gallup. "There's only been a week with that little Alternative lot at the top. That makes 24 weeks out of 25 for us - even if Code Masters are still saying that they're number one!"

Meantime, voices have been raised in the trade about alleged late payment by Mastertronic for software it has supplied into multiples. "Life seems to go on very smoothly here. We've had no complaints at all from anyone and we're not late on any bills," Heath offered.

Others, however, point out that Mastertronic has never been the speediest of payers,

with one figure saying, "It's called being prudent".

The whole (non-)issue may be related to the difficulties which Code Masters has been experiencing in recent weeks with its charity title *The Race Against Time*. This has flopped badly, leaving a possibly contentious matter of how unsold stock should be handled. Mastertronic supplied all of Woolworths stores with the title - including those which customarily do not stock software - and the vast bulk are due to be shipped back to Code Masters.

Given the degree of friction between the two firms in the past (CTW *passim*), it is not wholly inconceivable that this is somehow the source of the 'Mastertronic not paying bills' allegations circulating throughout the industry.

CBM nixes switch bundle

Commodore appears to have all but ruled out the prospect of bundling a modulator with its newly price cut A500.

Currently, users have to buy the £25 modulator in addition to the £399 machine. Otherwise, the machine can only run with a separate monitor, and not a TV.

Though Commodore has not ever included a modulator - at whatever price level for the A500 - to do so would have the advantage of bringing it into line with the Atari ST. Atari said last week that it had long recognised the need to have a single unit needing no extras.

But a Commodore spokesman countered by saying that there was no evidence of any demand for such a move, and that at the new lower price, users would have no qualms about paying an extra £25.

Commodore distributor SDL echoed this comment. Marketing controller John Arundel said: "I can see that there might be some discomfort for end users and at the retail level, but it won't affect sales. We've no plans for any bundle along these lines, though others might. The floor is open."

Tandy arrives at DTP party

Mirrorsoft's *Fleet Street Editor* DTP package has been taken on by Tandy for its 50 designated business outlets.

In a reciprocal deal, Mirrorsoft will show *FSE* running on Tandy systems whenever it is featured in photographs, shows and the like.

"We've taken the product on because it is at the right level for our stores and it's something that the market needs. If we'd taken on a DTP package a year ago we'd have been crusading," commented Tandy UK's marketing manager Richard Rosser to CTW.

Fleet Street Editor currently retails at £109.95 as a stand-

alone PC package, but it is "almost certain" that it will help make up a specific Tandy DTP system akin to the word-processing and accounting bundles already offered using Sage software.

"We've got the backing of a forward-looking company which is obviously intending to do a lot of work and, like us, is very aggressive," offered Mirrorsoft's marketing director Pat Bitton.

Meanwhile, Mirrorsoft is also currently linking up with Adverkit International, a firm which provides layouts for the bulk of UK freesheet newspapers.

"We're advising them on the use of computers to provide disk based artwork," added Bitton.

Epyx fit for Olympics pitch

Giant US leisure publisher Epyx has won the exclusive US Olympic team licensing rights.

After beating off the challenge of several other US publishers and the payment of a no doubt sizeable but undisclosed sum, Epyx gained the right to use Olympic designations on software, packaging and advertising.

As a result, Epyx has two games based on this year's Olympics lined up for sum-

mer release. *The Games: Winter Edition* features speed skating, downhill skiing and the luge. *The Games: Summer Edition* features diving, gymnastics and the hammer throw. Both games will be marketed as normal by US Gold in the UK.

The publicity surrounding the licence has already begun with *Commodore Magazine* in the US lining up a major feature on the games themselves as well as the deal for its July issue.

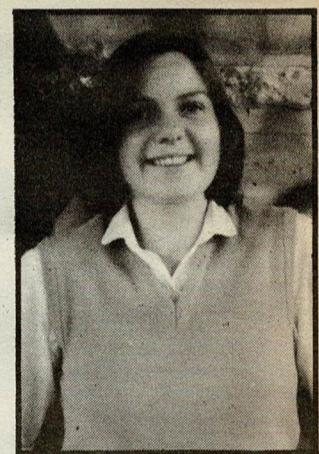
Virgin loses Mitchell

Virgin is playing down the significance of the departure of its product manager Patricia Mitchell.

Mitchell moves to Palace at the end of the month after four years with the company. As yet no replacement has been found. Her leaving is being seen by some in the context of Mastertronic's curious talk of "rationalisation" (CTW 6th June) - which hinted at cutbacks in activities common to both Mastertronic and Virgin.

This though is being denied by Mitchell. "It's a purely personal decision. I've been here for four years and that's long enough for someone so young," she said.

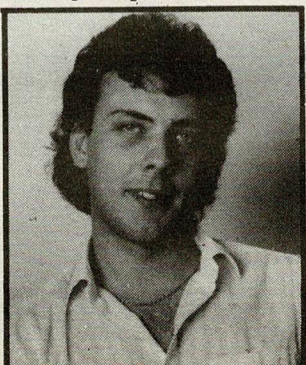
On the talk of Virgin working closely with Mastertronic she said: "We haven't been affected by then at all - they just pop in and out sometimes." Asked whether her leaving had anything to do with rationalisation she said "absolutely not, the only change is that I'm leaving." She joins Palace as software producer.



MITCHELL: No significance

Thalamus drafts 'Gold Rush' promo

A prize promotion is being employed by Thalamus in the hope of bucking up sales of future games and raising the profile of the company.



COOPER: Novel promo

Three special gold tapes will be randomly included in ship outs of its next title *Hawkeye*. Kids who buy one of those games will win an Amstrad Studio 1000. Also, six yellow cassettes will go out worth a ghetto blaster to the purchaser. Those dealers who sell the coloured games will receive free bottles of champagne.

The promotion is likely to gain a high profile because of its similarity with cult book and movie *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in which children buying a chocolate bar with a gold ticket insert win a major prize.

Thalamus boss Paul Cooper denied any knowledge of the book saying "People keep pointing out the connection to

me but I had really never heard of it. I'm going to watch the video though.

"It's exciting for kids because they can win straight away. Some promotions are misleading because you need to buy eight or so games before you have a chance of winning anything."

Advertising based on the 'Gold Rush' promotion will be appearing in the consumer press and future Thalamus games will be backed by a similar venture.

On whether such a temptation would affect youngsters' buying decision Cooper noted: "I don't know about that but they'll see the Thalamus game. They know that if they buy it and they're lucky, they'll win a prize."

C64 Olympic Pack

IN STOCK NOW!

OLYMPIC PROMOTION

SDL take great pleasure in introducing Commodore's latest promotional offer for the C64, the Olympic Challenge Pack. The pack has been designed to take full advantage of the excitement created by the 1988 Olympics to be held in Seoul.

A WINNING COMBINATION

The combination of Commodore, manufacturers of the best selling home computer, the C64 and 'OCEAN', the UK's leading games software house, has proven to be an unqualified success. It is this union which has resulted in the creation of the very exciting Olympic Challenge Pack, an outstanding combination of hardware and software with a sporting theme.

THE PACKAGE

The Commodore 64 now comes complete with 'TEN' Top sports simulations incorporating best sellers as well as brand new releases. In addition to the superb software, a high quality Quickshot II autofire joystick and 1530 datassette unit are also included. The C64 featured in the pack has a new slimline casing, with sloping front.

A LOT MORE FOR A LOT LESS

The total value of the goods offered FREE with this promotion amounts to £143.44. These extras are included at no additional cost to the customer - in fact, the reverse is true. The entire system is now priced at a mere £149.99, £20 OFF the old RRP and, with a Dealer Margin of 17½%, no one loses out. The C64 also has a whole lot more to offer, including a vast network of software support. It features one

of the largest games software libraries available, with new releases being added all the time. In addition to those specifically written for the C64, the machine also benefits when titles written for powerful 16-bit computers are ported over to C64 format. The new Olympic Pack is a complete offering, with no 'extras' required before play commences!

THE MAIN ATTRACTION

The C64 Olympic Challenge Pack is supplied in a bright, full colour box showing a screen shot of each game. This attractive point-of-sale packaging is effective in delivering the message to your customers, and its built-in carrying handle, makes it easy for your customers to collect.

PHONE SDL TELESales NOW!

Ensure your position on Commodore's 'Olympic' Team as they begin another successful summer promotion. Call SDL Telesales immediately and secure your requirement.

FREE!

10 TOP TITLES

Each of these ten titles has previously achieved popularity with existing C64 owners at a retail price of £8.95 each.

- 1) **BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING** SRP £8.95
Battle to earn a crack at the champ.
- 2) **BASKET MASTER** SRP £8.95
Head-to-head basic basketball, one of the fastest sports around.
- 3) **DALEY THOMPSON DECATHLON** SRP £8.95
The decathlon's ten gruelling events faithfully reproduced.
- 4) **DALEY THOMPSON SUPER TEST** SRP £8.95
Challenge the computer in each of eight events.
- 5) **HYPER SPORTS** SRP £8.95
Swimming, skeet shooting, archery, long horse, triple jump, and weight lifting.
- 6) **MATCH DAY II** SRP £8.95
Head, volley and kick your way to victory in this sequel to the best seller, Match Day.
- 7) **MATCHPOINT** SRP £8.95
Join the singles competition at the world's most famous tennis championship.
- 8) **SNOOKER** SRP £8.95
A simulation featuring supersmooth cue control.
- 9) **TRACK AND FIELD** SRP £8.95
Test your skill to its limits. Includes multiple player option.
- 10) **WORLD SERIES BASEBALL** SRP £8.95
The all-American sport, captured to perfection in this simulation.

DATASSETTE UNIT

A 1530 Datasette unit has also been included to ensure all data is loaded and stored simply and with efficiency. SRP £44.99

JOYSTICK

To round off a fantastic package, Commodore have included a high quality Quickshot II autofire joystick, tough enough for even the most vigorous player. SRP £8.95

TOTAL SRP
NORMALLY £143.44



NEW LOW PRICE

In addition to the top quality software bundle Commodore are offering, they have succeeded in making this outstanding pack even more attractive by reducing the RRP of the Commodore 64 by £20. The entire system now costs just £149.99! With a Dealer Margin of 17½% the C64 is better value now than ever before.

C64 OLYMPIC PACK PRICE

£149.99

INCLUDING VAT

DEALER PRICE: £107.60

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Position:

Company:

Address:

Postcode: Telephone:

I am interested in Commodore 64

I already stock Commodore 64



SNIPPETS

Advertising giants Saatchi and Saatchi, Leo Burnett and Ogilvy and Mather are all believed to be pitching for the **Microsoft** account. The firm has earmarked some £1.5 million for advertising in the Sunday supplements. This will be Microsoft's first advertising spree outside of the trade and specialist press. **CRL** has parted company with its PR company Barrington Harvey and has appointed Christine Spears as in-house press liaison. CRL was one of the original clients of Barrington Harvey – then Headlines – when boss Simon Harvey took over last September . . .

Vouchers redeemable at Victoria Wines, Thomas Cook and the Next fashion chain are being offered to dealers purchasing the **Informix Smart** software package from **Softsel** . . . A user group has been set up by **Incentive** for users of **STAC** – its adventure creation program for the ST. The group provides a bi-monthly magazine featuring ideas for adventures . . . Despite losing director Steve Smith to his markets in Brick Lane and Poplar, East London distributor **A&S** has announced that it won't be changing its name. The firm was called A&S after the first names of Smith and co-partner Alf Payne.

"Obviously a limited company doesn't change its name just because a director's left," said Payne. This means the firm won't be calling itself just A in future . . .

Following its European sales and distribution tie-up with Strategic Studies Group, **Electronic Arts** is making available the wargame publisher's **Run 5** magazine. It provides game updates, letters, technical and design data and extra game design scenarios for the SSG titles. **Run 5** is published quarterly with the ninth issue currently available from EA at £2.50. **Artic's World Cup**, which was jazzed up, re-named and argued over two years ago when it appeared as US Gold's **World Cup Carnival**, has bounced back again. It recently came back into the C16 charts as a re-entry at number seven – two places ahead of US Gold's recent Americana re-release of **Beachhead** . . .

Logotron has made an Archimedes version of its **Logo** software – called **Archimedes Logo** – available for Acorn's flagship machine. It has also published four **Logo**-related publications called **Talking Turtle**, **Islamic Patterns**, **Playing Floor Turtle** and **In Control with Logo** for £6 each . . .

"The beginning of a new era in desktop communications" is upon us once again according to **Micropro UK** boss John Speller. His excitement coincided with the launch of **WordStar Messenger** – a messaging system which allows users to write and edit message on screen before sending them. It retails at £200 (exc VAT) . . .

Commodore's third party maintenance contractor **DPCE** has won a lucrative contract to look after the DHSS' computer kit. It will

be supporting some 4,500 items of equipment comprising PCs, printers, plotters and peripherals . . .

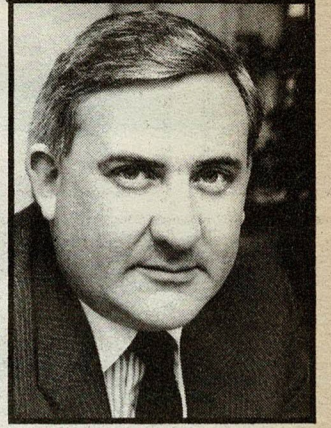
Melanie Weaver and Jez Thorpe have won the questionable accolade of being the first couple ever to wed after accessing each other through a multi-user computer game. Both are users of **Telemap's Shades**, in which players exist in a "fantasy world of castles, wizards and buried treasure". Bucking the current trend for new portables, **IDS** has come

up with a portable hard disk instead. The **Traveldisk** is available in a 10, 20, 30 or 45Mb subsystem which is packaged in a metal case only slightly larger than the disk drive itself. Prices start at £575 . . .

Gem Distribution joined in by donating £200 . . . Following its recent "strengthening of links" with Zenith, **Norbain** has started plugging the US firm's new line of 286-based PCs. These comprise the Z-248/12 and the Z-286LP with various

optional extras . . . Disk manufacturer **Cumana** has appointed Mark Whittlesea as area sales executive for the midlands. We will be responsible for customer contact and stocklist liaison . . .

Northamber has taken on **Hitachi's** range of CD-Rom disk drives . . . Jack Bennett has been promoted to the position of senior vice president at **Citizen Europe**. He was formerly vice president of sales and marketing . . .



BENNETT: Citizen promotion

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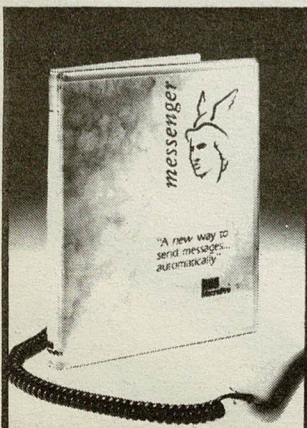
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Micropro's latest **WordStar** addition

The Atari ST



NEW - SUMMER PACK

*** 520ST-FM WITH 1Mb DRIVE**
*** £400 OF SOFTWARE - FREE!**

We are pleased to announce the 520ST-FM Summer Pack from Atari. This pack includes a 520ST-FM with a 1Mb disk drive built in, plus a spectacular FREE software bundle. Contained in the pack is a CX40 joystick as well as over £400 worth of top entertainment software. That's a total of 22 game titles on 15 double sided disks, incorporating best sellers and brand new releases from many of the UK's leading software houses. The Summer Pack is priced at only £399.99 (inc VAT), trade price £278.26 (exc VAT), and is wrapped in a bright, full colour sleeve which shows a screen shot of each of the 22 games. This attractive point-of-sale packaging really delivers the message to your customers.

£399.99 INC VAT
 DEALER PRICE: £278.26

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Enduro Racer	Activision	£14.99
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Leviathan	English Software	£14.95
Marble Madness	Electronic Arts	£24.95
Mouse Trap	Micro Value (Tynesoft)	£14.95
Plutos	Micro Value (Tynesoft)	£14.95
Q Ball	English Software	£19.95
Rampage	Activision	£14.95
Ranarama	Hewson Consultants	£19.95
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Supersprint	Electric Dreams	£14.95
Tetris	Mirrorsoft	£19.95
Trail Blazer	Gremlin Graphics	£24.95
Warlock	The Edge	£14.95
Winter Olympiad '88	Tynesoft	£19.95

TOTAL: £413.98

1/2Mb 520ST-FM - LAST FEW IN STOCK!

Atari's recent price increases have meant that the RRP of the 520ST-FM with 1/2Mb drive has now gone up to £399.99. However, SDL have a limited number of 1/2Mb FM's in stock which you can sell at a retail price of only £299.99 (inc VAT). With a Dealer Margin of 15%, the trade price of the 520ST-FM is just £221.73 (exc VAT). In addition, SDL can offer a 1/2Mb 520ST-FM and SM124 Mono Monitor to retail at just £399.99 (inc VAT), with a dealer margin of 15%, trade price is only £295.65 (exc VAT).

£299.99 INC VAT
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With Mono Monitor **£399.99** INC VAT
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520ST-M PACKS

BACK IN STOCK SOON!

The 1/2Mb 520ST-M from Atari will shortly be back in stock and the popular SDL 'ST-M Packs' based around the 520ST-M will be available from the end of June 1988. All four packs are at lower prices than previously offered and come with 1st Word word processor and Spell-It! spelling checker. Order now to secure your requirements.

	RETAIL INC VAT	DEALER EXC VAT
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PACK 2 520ST-M, 1Mb SF314 DRIVE, MOUSE	£299	£208.00
PACK 3 520ST-M, 1/2Mb SF354 DRIVE, MOUSE, MONO MONITOR	£369	£256.70
PACK 4 520ST-M, 1Mb SF314 DRIVE, MOUSE, MONO MONITOR	£399	£277.57

1040ST-F

PRE-INCREASE PRICES

SDL is offering an opportunity to purchase the 1040ST-F at the pre-increase price of £499.99 inc VAT at the full 20% dealer margin (Dealer Price £347.82). The 1040ST-F fulfills the requirements in business and in the home, boasting a large 1Mb RAM memory and 1Mb double sided built-in disk drive. Our current stocks are our only remaining 1040's at the pre increase price of £499.99 and when these stocks are exhausted, we will have to implement the new £599.99 price point when we re-order new supplies.

£499.99 INC VAT
 DEALER PRICE EXC VAT **£347.82**

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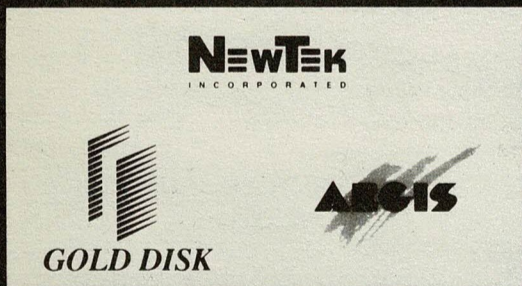
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ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION	Account	30 days	Various	Softline	130+	Timew
FIRST SOFTWARE	References/cash	30 days	30-45%	External reps; Product specialists; catalogue.	60	Lotus
GARWOOD	2 references and bank	28th of month following	30-50%	Catalogue, telesales, pre & post sales support	160	LocoS LocoS
GEM	References	Negotiable	Negotiable	Telesales; vansales	300	Ability
GREYHOUND	Immediate credit facilities	30 days	30% Up	Courier; telesales and in-house support	600	MAPN
HB MARKETING	References or cash	30 days	37-40%	Courier, rep telesales and tech support	200	ProSo Design for Am
HUGH SYMONS	References	28 days	35-45%	On-line support; technical back-up	130+	Super
LEISURESOF	References/cash	30 days	Negotiable	Telesales	300	Sage +
LIGHTNING	2 refs + bank	25th of month foll. supply	35-40%	In-house tech support	100+	Times
MICRO DEALER INTERNATIONAL	Cash and/or 2 trade ref	30 days	30-40%	Support via publishers	50	Sage Contr
NEW STAR/PAPERBACK SOFTWARE	References and CWO	30 days	30%-55%	Catalogue and Tele-sales	100	VP Pla
P&P	Cash and/or 2 trade ref	30 days	25-30%	Tech support; end user marketing	165	Lotus
PRECISION DISTRIBUTION	Yes	30 days	25-50%	Tele-sales and road support	250	Super
R&R	References/cash	20th of month following	40%	24hr courier	300	TopCo
SDL (UK) LTD	Cash with order/account	7th of month following	35%	24hr delivery; telesales	40/50	Maste
SOFTSEL	After credit check	30 days	35-40%	Overnight delivery; full SDR; twice yearly Softteach	309	Word
SOFTWARE EXPRESS	By arrangement	30 days	35%	Technical support	40/50	Magic
SOFTWARE LIMITED	2 trade ref + agency ref	30 days	35-50%	Tech support; POS; literature	100	Word

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 - 5000 Tokens - Chess, Backgammon and Darts Set.
 - 7500 Tokens - Tool Kit.
 - 8750 Tokens - Answer Phone.
 - 9500 Tokens - Yamaha Stereo Keyboard.
 - 10000 Tokens - Canon Sure Shot Supreme.
 - Over 10000 Tokens - Panasonic Compact Camera with Zoom Lens.
- PLUS MYSTERY BONUS - there will be 100 mystery tokens scattered on the trail that will qualify the lucky treasure hunter for a super bonus gift.

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Every new release from U.S. Gold in the period will have affixed to it a 'Treasure Trail Token'. Simply remove the token, fix it to your Treasure Trail Guide and watch your haul of booty grow as each purchase of U.S. Gold products is made. At the end of the period (all entries must be received at U.S. Gold no later than October 10th 1988) return your Treasure Trail to U.S. Gold, itemising which of the fantastic gifts you would like. (NOTE: A number of gifts can be selected as long as their total redeemable value is no greater than the number of tokens affixed to your Treasure Trail Guide.) Additional Treasure Trail Guides are available for those determined treasure hunters among you. When all entries are received then the fun begins... U.S. Gold will despatch your booty within 28 days and each participating retailer will receive one entry to an amazing Holiday Prize Draw. Everybody has an equal opportunity to win the Treasure Trail Holiday of their dreams.



THE TEXAS CHAIN STORE MASTERPLAN

CompuAdd is made up of a huge mail order operation, a moderately successful badged clone business and a fast growing retail chain. Recently its top men came over to inspect the marketplace. They went home satisfied that the UK market would be chicken feed compared with its exploits in the US. COLIN CAMPBELL listens to the distant rumblings . . .

A trio of CompuAdd's top brass descended on the capital to recon-

noitre the gateway to the golden common market to be — the UK.

It was a tentative move, mainly spent checking out possible competition prob-

lems, retail outlets and sites. And, of course, there was the press to be wooed. A mere PR

job though this wasn't. The suit clad Texans were just as interested to pick trade jour-

nos' weary minds as to obtain column inches.

When asked how much CompuAdd had thus far invested in the UK expansion one looked surprised and said: "Well, just this trip so far." A humble beach head for a firm which hopes "to do" sales of at least \$25 million here by the end of '89.

CompuAdd's business is simple. Essentially it's an Austin, Texas based mail order and catalogue company with a few retail outlets and its own clump of PC clones to boot — the Standard range. In the five years since it came into being the firm has doubled sales, every year. Last year it turned over \$100,000. CompuAdd claims to have done that already this year.

OK, it's obvious that such an operation offering sub-retail prices is working on a thin slice of margin but those figures have made CompuAdd the darling of United States business publications and the champion of the lucrative business computer arena.

Various writers are fond of pointing out that CompuAdd's president, Bill Hayden, was shifting peripherals from the back of his Chevy at the beginning of the decade. Rags to riches? CompuAdd was last year ranked third in the top 500 fastest growing companies in the US.

But Texas is a hell of a long way away. Apart from a few retail outlets in San Antonio and Phoenix the firm has been firmly rooted in the lone star state since birth. Clearly, its knowledge of the UK market is as minimal as its ambitions are extraordinary.

It had been bandied around that CompuAdd would be up and running by the middle of August. In time honoured fashion that date has been put back to "the fourth quarter". The catalogues should be in October issues of some of the hordes of PC end user mags. They'll only be selling peripheral products though — the Standard PC (8088, 286 and 386) won't be arriving until the beginning of next year. Or to put it in even less precise terms "sometime in the first quarter".

As for business computer superstores, that's an option, a possibility: "We'll see what happens" et al. In its first sortie CompuAdd has seen what makes the UK market tick and grasped an idea of which players are taking advantage of it. Unimpressed is too weak an adjective.

Next service, please

The reconnaissance team comprised of Hayden, international sales manager

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Kevin Toms, inventor of the world's best selling football game says, "It beats my best seller — hands down!"

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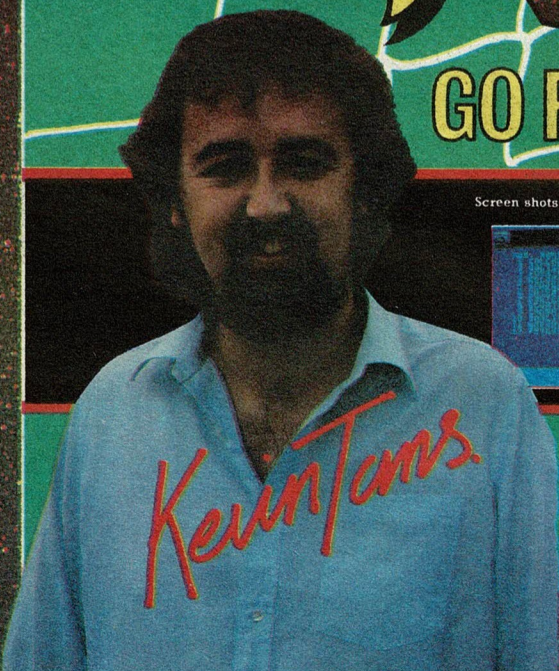
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- IBM PC Disk — £19.99

"Football Manager 2 is not just an improvement on Football Manager — it's the next generation!"



GO FOR GOLD!

Screen shots from Atari St system.



IT'S TOTALLY Addictive

*Addictive games is a division of Prima Leisure Corporation plc, Unit 1, Baird Road, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 1BJ.

Street Date: All formats June 17th

Tom Irby and the most outspoken, corporate sales director Richard McLemore. He possesses a real southern accent, and draws his own conclusions.

In contrast, Hayden says less and does it quietly. They're all plausible, keen to pick up clues and pointers and not afraid to drop comment on this new market. It would seem that the prevailing attitude is that the major retail and mail order players in the UK lack professionalism.

That's not a corporate pitch to impress the gullible so much as a reaction to sloppy service on the part of companies encountered. They're not the first Americans to wonder at how shop assistants and such can seem so bad here.

McLemore ponders the differences in hardware retail practices. "It's the invitiveness here. You walk in and have to look for the computer department. And you hit a salesman right up front who's qualified enough either to get you out the door or keep you in conversation. We have some stores that are 10,000 feet and full of equipment, systems are up and running.

But CompuAdd is becoming hoarse telling people that any retail chains here are an option, and only an option. The anchor will be the firm's biggest strength — its mail order business. That still makes up about 85 per cent of income. Mail order is full of mysterious tunnels here crisscrossing underneath the mainland of honest to God retailing. Where the BBC market is led by Watford Electronics no other large market has any dominant leaders. Not even the games market.

It's as if nobody has taken the PC mail order business by the scruff of the neck and shaken out all the little people who take out quarter pages in mountainous magazines. On that weak sandbank the market stands. CompuAdd regards its greatest threat here to be Inmac — a firm which doesn't stock full systems.

Not so long ago that was the case in the United States. There were a whole pack of companies jostling and juggling and trying to catch the buying public's attention. Come the inevitable shake down and a few end up leaving the barking hordes.

But some of the UK's players appear to be less like account hungry wolves than slightly overweight sheep. Unfair? Start naming mail order companies which pose a real threat to the major computer retail outlets here. Computer Express, maybe, and, er ...

But perhaps there's a wonderfully simple explanation for this. It's alright to buy your underwear from a mail order catalogue but a throbbing mass of state of the art hardware?

McLemore again: "In the United States we have such a high percentage of experienced and sophisticated end-users. They can go down to their local store and take a look at a demo. After that they're looking for price.

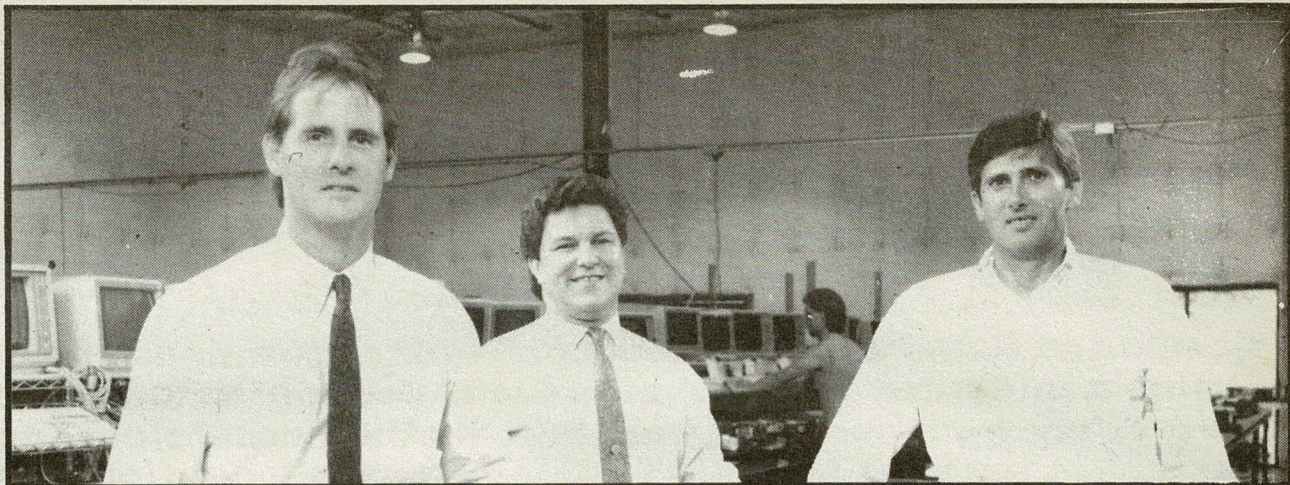
"They know exactly what they want. They're shopping around comparing price with price." And presumably anyone that obsessed with the best buy will go to mail order.

Providing, that is, that the company has as good a reputation as the retail outlets. That's the hard bit.

New balls, please

Back to the UK. Hayden freely recognises that he's only been here four days and seems to be open for correction. Again, it's a fact finding mission. "We have six years of history in the US but in the UK this is the starting line.

"We haven't found anybody who's doing what we're doing and it helps. The competition here isn't at the same level as in the US where we have clear winners. There's no dominance. It's like it was in our business four years ago



Eyeing the UK as a beach head: Irby, McLemore and Hayden

before the shake down."

Irby explains the state of play at the moment. "We

have to put some ads in various publications and then there's a site to find and

course some people." Due to being able to run only the tiniest overheads the head-

quarters won't be in London.

Perhaps they'll be west of the

Continued on page 19

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THE DIRECT SALES CONSTRUCTION KIT

In the often absurd and sometimes manic swirling of the leisure software business, it is sometimes not possible to pick up on the underlying trends. But one notion is gaining credence: that sooner rather than later other companies will be following Electronic Arts' lead in selling direct to retailers. In the first of a two-part feature, NICK JOHNSON takes a long cool look at the ramifications and reasons . . .

As obvious as it may seem, in the early days British software houses were primarily concerned with producing software. They were happy to sell it to anybody — be it a retailer, distributor or end-user — as long as payment followed.

Distributors came on the scene directly as a result of the market demand generated by those fledgling software houses. Being busy programming and producing, the opportunity of first selling large quantities of product to a single customer and then watching it appear on the nation's shelves immediately appealed.

Those were the days of Pionmist, PCS Darwin, Tiger Distribution, Express Marketing, Microdealer and Centresoft. Had the software houses been more mature they would have realised that had they invested in sales and distribution current problems would not have arisen. Only Geoff Brown, boss of both publisher US Gold and distributor Centresoft, realised that by mixing the two ingredients together he would always be able to get his products on to the market. The route to retailerland was there even if other distributors refused to take his products.

If you're a software house ask yourself this simple question. Who will sell your product better, you or a third party distributor? Each party has different motives. As a software house your livelihood is built on selling your own software. A distributor just has to sell software and he's not too worried whose it is.

A retailer will buy a limited amount of software per week. A distributor will try to get as much of that retailer's budget as possible, stuffing him up with product if possible. The way a software house can make sure the retailer orders what he wants rather than what he's offered is to actually talk (yes *talk*) to the retailers direct giving them all the information they can.

In some instances software houses sell independently to retailers, get their quantity commitments and then pass the bulk of these on to the retailer's preferred distributor.

Kick start too

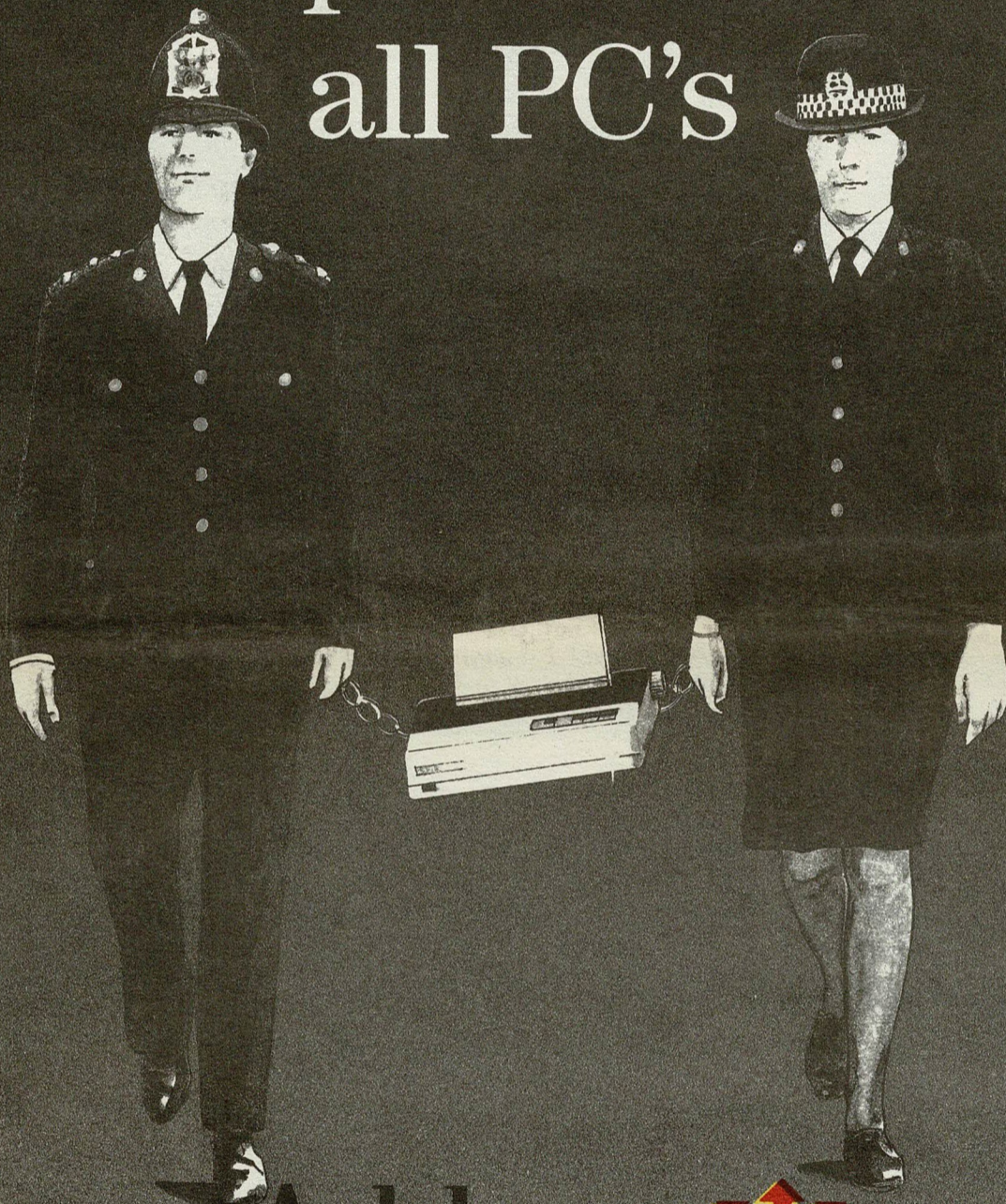
There is a very simple theory in football: if you don't get the ball into the opponent's penalty area you won't score. In tennis, if you don't get the ball over the net you stand no chance of winning. In any mass market — whether or not it's the software market — if your product is not on the retailers' shelves it won't sell. Any method that will increase that likelihood should be employed.

Currently distributors hold the key to success for virtually all product. This gives them an unusually strong position for bargaining.

When was the last time a distributor called a software house to request the return of mint stock? As things stand a software house has little choice but to accept the return of goods often three or more months old (and subsequently unsaleable). The alternative is to say no and risk the distributor deciding

Continued on page 18

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Business software business software bus

INDEX GUIDE

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	AMSNOS	Not saying	Sales desk 0782 566344	Phone for details
	70 new products	70	Martin Lowe 031 557 4242	Kind Words 4 for price of 3
Professional	New training schedules for end users	400	Maureen Lindridge 0705 210012	Special on dust covers
	Brand new catalogue	500	David Neal 021 356 3388	Offers on Lifetree range
er 1512 alc 3	"Amstrad bundle affecting sales a little"	1,600+	Sales desk 0925 814529	"Something next month"
se	"Business doing well on ST"	300-500	Sales desk 0274 722512	Phone for details
ks DTP	It's all up in the air at the moment - holidays"	300	Sarah or Sue 0954 61258	"Not at present"
2-3	New: Claris and Uniplex range	60-70	Sales desk 0256 463344	Phone for details
ript/ all bundle	"Read our newsletter"	70	Chris Perry 0245 460788	PCW 9512 Acoustic Hood - £85
	"Looking forward to release of AMSNOS"	400	Rita Bailey 0279 412441	"They differ from day to day"
t	"Moving to new premises in six weeks"	850	Peter Leighton 0532 458800	"Extra discount on MAP software"
nd r ge	"PageSetter is doing very well"	200	Victoria Farmer 01 895 444433	Offers on Pagesetter
alc 3.21	Pleased with 1640 bundle	750	Paul Moss 0202 745744	"Not at the moment"
ccountant	New ranges	500	Laura Hibbard 0604 768711	Phone for details
s	DTP	500+	Millie Cherns 01 965 5555	Amstrad 1640 summer pack
financial er	None	1-200	Nick Fox 0908 74000	Phone for details
ner	"Not to mention"	800+	Jane Nolan 0277 220573	None
2-3	None	800	Lesley Hoole 0706 217744	"Always"
se	Definite trend toward Amiga as business machine	120	Karen Burwood 01 330 7166	Own business combinations
y +	New catalogue	250	Finuala Kavanagh 0977 795544	Not now, reviewing stock"
Plan	"Publishing Partner Professional soon"	300+	Alec Northfield 01 309 0300	None
erfect 5	"Business picking up"	2,000	Richard North 01 568 8866	Phone for details
Digitiser	"WordPerfect is doing well"	100+	Keith Mason 021 328 3585	None
erfect	Increasing sales on low cost packages	800	Mike Watkins 01 278 2377	Ashton-Tate summer promo

Business software business software bus



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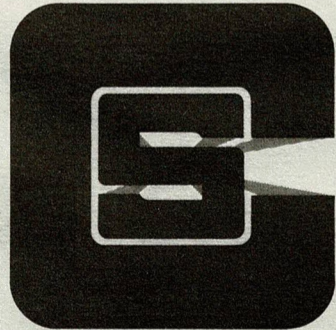
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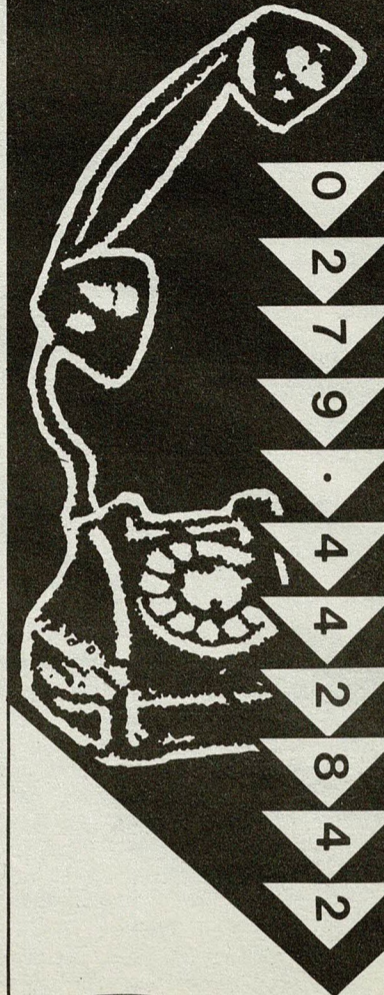
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JUST WHO CALLED IT PC SNOOZER?

Last year's *PC User Show* was just ever so slightly dull, to the extent that wags dubbed it the *PC Snoozer Show*. This year's show – on this Tuesday through to Thursday at Olympia – had better be far livelier, otherwise the trade might fall asleep (or, even worse, not turn up again). Notwithstanding the ennui factor as well as the absence of Amstrad, CTW offers a quick guide to what some of the firm's active in the low-to-middle sector will be doing . . .



Flashback to last year's highlight – the cross-industry forum

Opus

On what it is being labelled its "best stand ever" Opus will unsurprisingly be majoring on the recently launched PCIV 'Amstrad basher'. Its entry level model comes in at £995 (exc VAT).

Opus has added new monitors to its machines to aid each models' aesthetic appeal. The tilting and swivelling offerings are apparently 'far sexier looking and less bulky' whilst retaining the same in-nards.

The firm also appears to have ridden out initial supply problems on the PCIV. "We didn't anticipate the response," began sales and marketing director Martin Breffitt. "Supplies aren't short now. We're certainly on target to maintain and supply product within a two week period."

MAP

Mapnet will be on view along with new multi-user versions of the firm's accounts packages. Mapnet

costs £449 with the software retailing at £649.

"We've not officially launched it at the end-user market yet. We've already built up dealer awareness and sales have been extremely encouraging," offered MAP's sales manager Mike Martin.

The Mapnet range is available through New Star, Centresoft and Greyhound.

Gultronics

The £20 million a year retail and mail order outfit will be showing off its full range of wares plus offering special discounts.

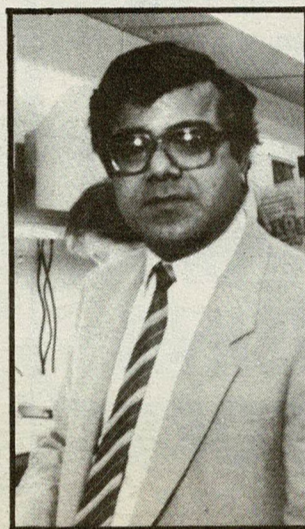
Products by name brands such as Commodore, Amstrad, Atari, Epson, Toshiba, Citizen, Star and Panasonic will all be sold equally as hard to the already much cajoled visitors, no doubt.

"PC User hasn't actually been a very successful show for us in the past but we have to make a presence. PCW is much more important," offered boss Sam Tulsiani

Precision

The latest addition to the Superbase range, Superbase IV, has been entered into the show's database challenge. It will be up against seven other packages including Paradox, Omnis Quartz and FoxBase.

"I think the fact that the product's participating in the challenge speaks for itself. We



TULSIANI: Discounts

won't be upset if it doesn't win. We just feel that Superbase will add a splash of colour to the contest," commented Precision's Precision's Alison Rutherford.

The £495 (exc VAT) program will be exhibited along with a new PC digitiser called DigiPic, which hasn't had its price confirmed yet.

There will also be room on Precision's stand for Logistix by Graffox – the software publisher recently acquired for an undisclosed sum.

Walters

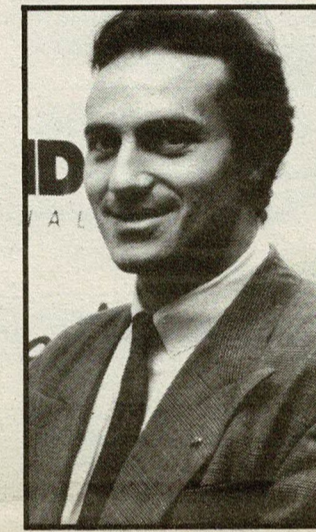
The quiet UK PC manufacturer will be taking the covers off four new products: a new hard disk laptop; a 386 based file server; a nine user 386 based multi-user system running Xenix; and a rack-mounted file server.

Features of the new 80286 laptop include a backlit LCD screen with a 640 x 400 resolution, 512K RAM and a 40Mb hard disk. As is often the case with pre-show news, prices were unforthcoming. Such teases, these chaps.

Borland

Still chirpy after recording pre-tax profits of \$7.17 million for the year, Borland will be giving more attention to its new multi-user database and low-cost word-processor.

The Paradox OS/2 database, coming in at £549.95, offers multi-tasking and extended memory capabilities. Sprint – the word-processor which



MORAN: Painless path

seems to have been around for ages – costs £195. As ever, despite its low-cost Borland is specifically pitching the product at established business users and corporates as well as small businesses.

Both these new packages as well as Sidekick Plus, Quattro and Prolog 2.0 will be demonstrated at regular intervals in Borland's presentation theatre.

"With the arrival of Sprint we can now offer a full range of powerful and affordable business products that provide a natural painless path to new technologies," commented UK general manager Denis Moran.

Zenith

The giant US manufacturer will be showing off its two new PC ranges recently launched in the UK.

The Z-286 LP small footprint PC/AT clone has sundry features including 1Mb Ram expandable to 6Mb. The 20Mb version retails at £1,995. The more advanced

Continued on page 16

A GREAT NEW GOLDEN SENSATION, AND IT'S COMING YOUR WAY!!!

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Mrs Lynggit, Basingstoke

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Mr Capcon, Craven Arms

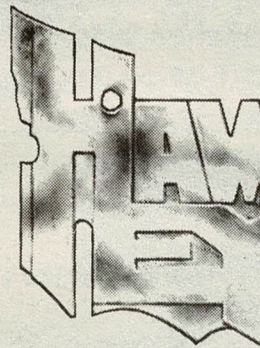
* The letters in this advert are fictional

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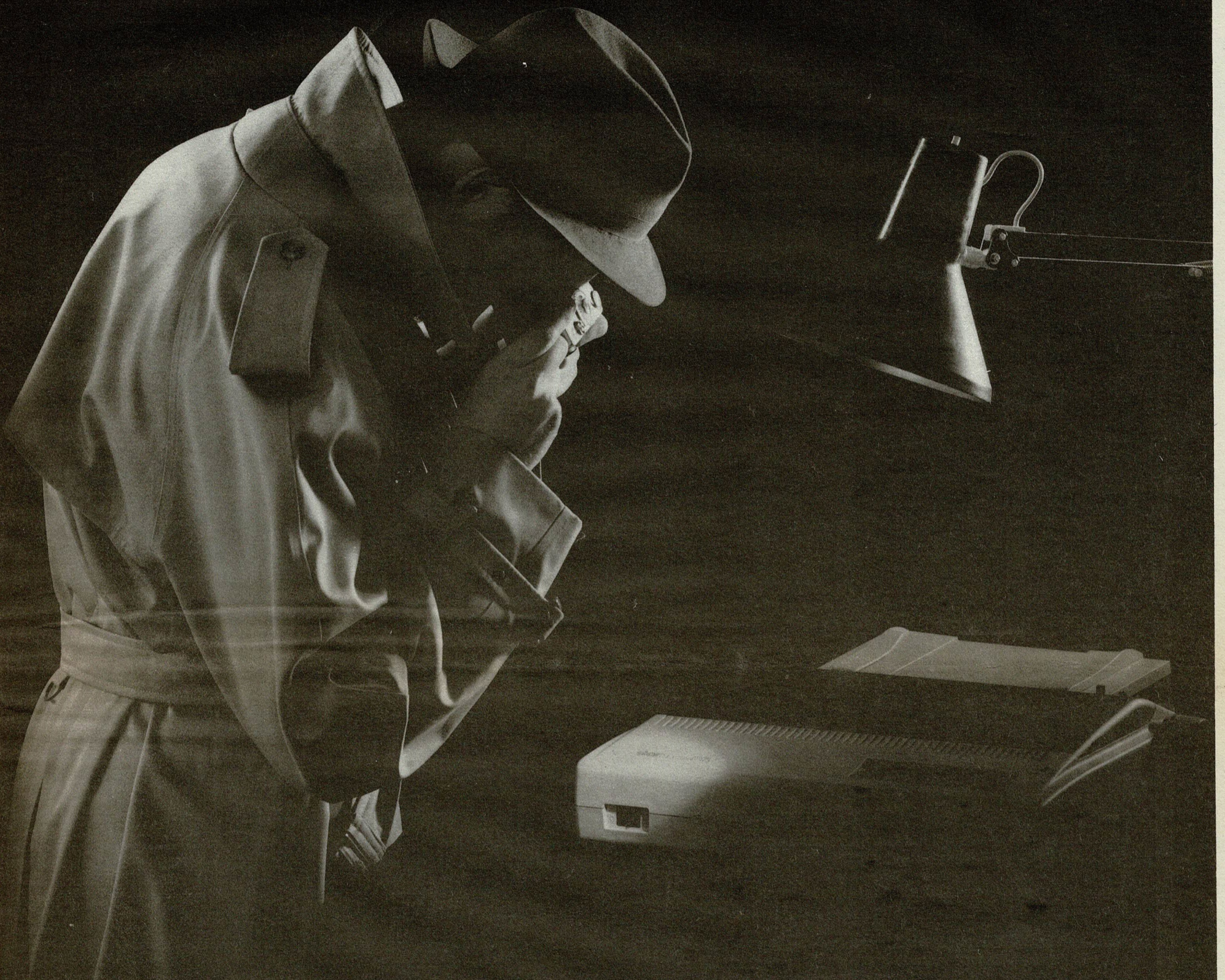
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JUST WHO CALLED IT PC SNOOZER?

Continued from page 14

Z-248/12 starts at £2,795 with a 40Mb hard disk.

The new line of portables runs from the entry level Z-184 SupersPORT at £1,395 through to the £3,195 286 and £4,995 386.

Zenith's Sarah Fleming is unworried by the fair deal of criticism the *PC User Show* has already attracted. "We don't see a problem. Obviously we're coming to the show and we're putting a lot of effort into it."

"I don't think that other people pulling out of the show affects us. We're just going to get on with meeting dealers and end-users."

Star

Star's highlight of the show will be the unveiling of the first LC-10 printer manufactured at its new plant

in Tredegar, Gwent. It will bear the serial number 001.

The low-cost LC-10 features six fonts and retails at £229. Production is expected to be around 16,000 units a month.

The firm's new low-cost 24-pin printer, the LC24/10 will also be on show. This has eight built-in fonts, runs at 170 cps and costs £379. First year sales are predicted to total around 15,000 units in the UK.

"There's always a need for a major London business show. We don't really consider the *PCW Show* as the same sort of thing. I know they're trying to separate the toyshops from the business people but once you've got a reputation it's very difficult to change the type of people who turn up," said Star's sales and marketing director Roger Bayley.

Blyth Software

Blyth is marking the show by launching its first ever accounting package. Both single user and multi-user versions of *Gladiator* will be unveiled featuring sales, purchase and nominal ledgers, invoicing and stock control. The price is being held back until the show itself.

The firm used *PC User '87* for the launch of the *Omnis Quartz* database and this year's show will see the demonstration of the inevitable PS/2 version. *Omnis 3 Plus/Express* will also be on view in a newly enhanced form.

Mirrorsoft

In what is only Mirrorsoft's second appearance at a major business show, the firm will again be concentrating on its *Timeslips* activity management package, *File Rescue Plus* and the evergreen *Fleet Street Publisher* range.

Timeslips has been backed recently by a sizeable mailshot undertaken by First Software, followed by an apparently pleasing dealer response.

The £29.95 package will share equal billing with the revamped *File Rescue Plus*. This help program has had its copy protection removed "through public demand" and a 3.5 inch disk has been added. Mirrorsoft is asking owners of corrupted or deleted data to come along to the stand for free "on-the-spot treatment".

Mirrorsoft effectively launched itself as a major business

contender at last January's *Which?* show in Birmingham. "I think we were perhaps a little optimistic as to the speed of take-up but now we're seeing the results. We're becoming established and people are taking us seriously," commented Mirrorsoft's marketing director Pat Bitton.

Viglen

Viglen certainly seems to have been very quiet of late, but it'll still have its full range of machines on view.

The Vig I XT starts at £785 with mono monitor, the Vig II AT costs £1,385 with mono and the Vig III 386 is available for £2,485.

The firm is currently selling direct and hoping to reach sales of 40 machines a day in the very near future.

"We're not actually on that at the moment but we're hoping that this show will help. It's an experiment really," said Viglen's Stuart Mullen.

"This is our first major PC show and we're really going all out for success. Its timing and locality makes it just right for us."

Logotron

In a bid to beef up its business pitch Logotron will be unveiling two new packages, but there's also room for a couple of new games.

Running Start joins the *Eight-in-One* integrated suite which was launched last March at a similar price of £49.95. It's aimed at the first time PC user and is being pitched as a "guide through

the mysteries of MSDOS" by business products manager Ian Saunter.

Logotron's second new edition is *Splash!*, an interestingly titled graphics paint program which runs on PS/2 machines as well as bog-standard PCs. It retails at £129.

Finally, to add a touch of much-needed relief for the show's sweaty businessmen, a strategy game called *Quadralien* and a chess simulation *Sargon III* will be up and running on PCs. They both retail at £24.95 each.

Direct Disk

Direct Disk Supplies' usual range of 3M, Verbatim and Sony media will be exhibited along with sundry accessories such as disk boxes and the like.

There will be special discounts available for those making orders at the show.

Brother

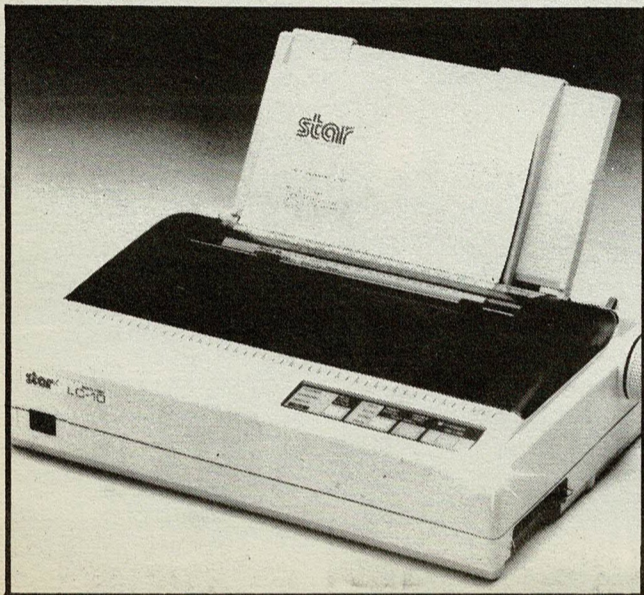
As expected the typewriter and printer giant

will be launching its first ever personal computers. No prices have been announced yet for the BC-10 XT and BC-20 AT, but they are likely to cost around 10-15 per cent more than their Amstrad equivalents.

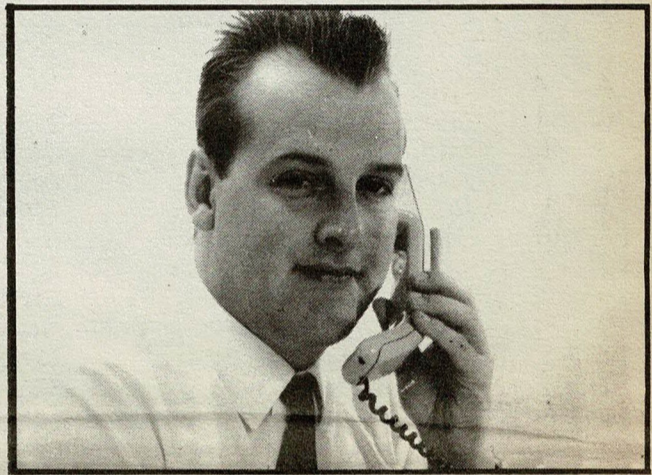
Sales will be restricted to 200 Brother Computer Centres backed by a comparatively small marketing campaign. The firm's computer products division manager John Carter recently told *CTW* that he would be "quite happy" with sales of just 500 units a month.

The two models are strictly no frills affairs. The BC-10 offers 640K RAM and one 5.25 inch floppy drive as standard with optional floppy and hard disks. The more advanced BC-20 offers 1Mb RAM and a 5.25 inch floppy drive. Further drives are available and both the 10 and 20 feature either a 12 inch mono or 14 inch colour monitor.

Brother will also be showing off its complete range of printers, plus launching the 3524 24-pin heavy duty office model.



LC10: Star debut



CARTER: 500 sales aim

A LIGHT SYNTHESISER FROM LLAMASOFT

TRIP-A-TRON converts the **ATARI ST** into an instrument on which the user can produce at will, flowing patterns of light and iridescent colour. Interactively and simultaneously, the display can be matched to any type of music.

THE RESULT is a fascinating experience, its pleasure enhanced by the knowledge that the combination is a unique creation. And that the light and pattern sequences so created can be saved and enjoyed at will.

THIS IS TRIP-A-TRON. It will run on any version of the **ST** from 512K up. It comes in a form which is instantly useable. But behind that facade is a comprehensive range of controls and variables which allow the adventurous user to experiment, creating dynamic, uniquely personalised effects.

ON ST's of 1 Meg and up, or combinations of several machines linked via the MIDI interface, *TRIP-A-TRON* becomes a professional's tool, enabling, for instance, the artist/composer to lay down graphics and music tracks on video tape.

TRIP-A-TRON has its own programming language, **KML**, and a variety of beautifully designed 'pull-down' menus to assist the user to construct his own effects... including the addition of 'real' images as well as abstract patterns.

LIGHTSHOWS generated on *TRIP-A-TRON* can be projected on large screens for use at discos or by pop groups. **Soon the LIGHT-SYNTHESIST** could be up there with the guitar heroes...

In short, *TRIP-A-TRON* offers a new art-form to those with the imagination to tame it.

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SPECTRUM TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP
1	1	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	7.95
2	3	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
3	4	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
4	2	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
5	13	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	7	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
7	9	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
8	16	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	17	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
10	11	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
11	8	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	2.99
12	30	SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER	REACT	1.99
13	14	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
14	10	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
15	12	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
16	6	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
17	22	NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
18	RE	COMBAT SCHOOL	OCEAN	7.95
19	24	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	7.95
20	21	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	1.99

C64 TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP
1	15	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
2	3	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
3	7	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
4	22	ALIEN SYNDROME	A C E	9.99
5	27	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	4	PAC-LAND	QUICKSILVA	9.95
7	34	IKARI WARRIORS	ELITE	9.95
8	1	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	9.95
9	9	DRACONUS	ZEPPELIN	2.99
10	2	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
11	6	IMPOSSIBLE MISSION 2	EPYX	9.99
12	19	KONAMI'S COLLECTION	IMAGINE	9.95
13	30	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
14	13	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99
15	18	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
16	6	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
17	11	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
18	38	FAMOUS COURSES VOL. 3	ACCESS-US GOLD	4.99
19	29	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
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AMSTRAD TOP 10

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP
1	1	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
2	2	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
3	3	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
4	4	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
5	5	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	9	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
7	8	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
8	10	SIX PAK 3	HIT PAK	9.95
9	6	NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
10	18	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP
1	4	CARRIER COMMAND	RAINBIRD	24.95
2	2	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.99
3	6	DUNGEON MASTER	MIRRORSOFT	24.99
4	3	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	14.95
5	5	CAPTAIN BLOOD	INFOGRADES	24.95

AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP
1	5	INTERCEPTOR	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
2	RE	OBLITERATOR	PSYGNOSIS	24.99
3	RE	FERRARI FORMULA 1	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
4	1	AAARGH	MELBOURNE HOUSE	19.99
5	RE	STAR WARS	DOMARK	19.95

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	44.4	45.6	46.8	47.9	29.8	30.0	29.0	27.1
COMMODORE 64	27.2	21.9	20.9	22.2	24.0	23.5	24.4	24.9
AMSTRAD	18.5	18.1	17.0	16.8	19.2	18.8	18.8	20.3
ATARI ST	6.0	4.4	4.9	3.2	7.5	7.0	7.0	6.3
AMIGA	2.5	1.6	1.0	1.5	2.7	3.0	2.0	2.3
ATARI	1.7	1.9	1.9	0.9	3.4	3.8	2.5	2.5
COMMODORE 16	1.6	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.0	3.3	2.2	3.7
BBC	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.7	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.3
ELECTRON	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.4	2.6	2.5	2.1	2.2

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
76	106	78	91

Soft options

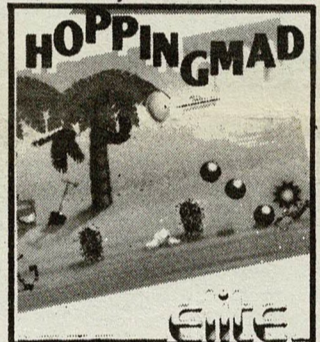
SOFT OPTIONS carries salient details of leisure software titles just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software houses wishing to be included should fax (0438 741247) or phone (0438 310185) through details ten days prior to our publication date.

▲ **ACTIVISION: Black Jack Academy** (Ag—£24.99) One can't help feeling that there's a certain falseness about playing cards with a machine. After all, Black Jack's a simple game made good by the fact that there's money to be won from it. This is for those preferring electronic gadgetry to the delightful sound of flicking cards. ▲ **ALTERNATIVE: Ready Steady Go** (Sp—£1.99) Nothing to do with fab pop TV show circa 1965. Rather, it's a mini sports compilation including canoeing amongst others. Good value tag. ▲ **CCS: Stalingrad** (Sp—£8.95) An attempt to succeed where old Adolf and his gang of nutjobs failed. The Stalingrad campaign of 1942 has always been popular amongst the bedroom generals. Great packaging too. ▲

▲ **ELECTRA: Better Dead Than Alien** (STAg—£19.95) This is the first to emerge for Entertainment International's new Oxford based label. Why such a terrible name has been chosen for its debut isn't clear but it's a fun shoot 'em up with a free comic to boot. ▲ **ELECTRONIC ARTS: PHM Pegasus** (PC £24.95) Ten mission combat extravaganza featuring a hydrofoil. EA likes this sort of thing. ▲ **ELITE: Hopping Mad** (Sp—£7.95) Bounce along affair complete with various backdrops—beach, forest et al. It all looks a little like *Pac Land* but is a pretty thing nonetheless. Charts ahoy. ▲ **FIREBIRD: Sentinel** (Ag—£19.95) Seems to have been around for a mini eternity on one format or another but should do well. Firebird reckons it to be "the most compelling and original computer game ever



devised". Surely not. ▲ **GRAND SLAM: Peter Beardsley's International Football** (Ag—£19.95) No doubt Grand Slam will be trying even harder than the rest of us to forget the absolutely diabolical,



completely unforgiveable and shamefully appalling performance of Beardsley and his pals in Germany. It can't be doubted that those missed chances in the European Championships will be to

the detriment of this splendid game. ▲

▲ **GREMLIN: Skate Crazy** (Am—£9.95-£14.95) Not a skateboarding game but roller skating. That's a trifle unfortunate considering kids' preference for the former but it's an interesting angle. ▲ **LEISURE**

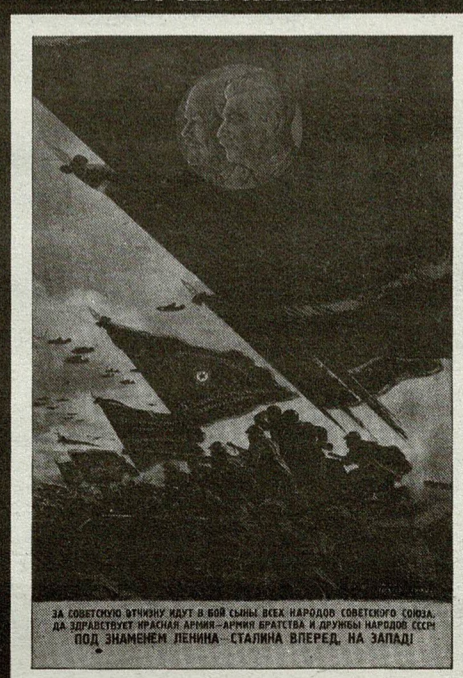
▲ **GENIUS: Scrabble Deluxe** (Ag—£24.95) One for word freaks and sundry lovers of the original. Not exactly a barrel of laughs but as with all Leisure Genius' efforts it holds true to the successful formula. ▲ **RAINBIRD: Corruption** (AgSTPC—£2.95) Not another epic Rainbird/Magnetic Scrolls adventure based on weird creatures and so forth. *Corruption* manages to completely avoid mystical lands and sticks to the insane world of high finance in the City. Hopefully the computer version doesn't give you ulcers. ▲

▲ **MIRRORSOFT: Dark Castle** (64—£8.99-£12.99) Maxwell's software subsidiary is planning to take the market on from a new angle with a separate label. In the meantime this is *Dungeon Master* without the brains.

▲ **MIRRORSOFT: Sundog** (ST—£14.95) Sourced from US publisher FTL (of *Oids* and *Dungeon Master* fame) this is an "interstella trading game". The trade and industry in space genre seems to be scoring a direct hit with the punters—for the moment. ▲ **US GOLD: Street Sports Basketball** (Sp+3Am £8.99—£14.99) It's worth a wager that this'll find its way into the top five and stay there for a few weeks. Nobody was surprised at its success on other formats. Worth ordering more than a couple. ▲

STALINGRAD

BY KEN WRIGHT



Spectrum 48/128K

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.

SPEAKEASY

Opus (and others) slammed

Hopeless Opus and others: I sympathise with your recent correspondents regarding the treatment that small independents receive from suppliers.

Like the majority of small retailers, my company adopts the attitude that we cannot possibly match the buying power of the multiples and we will therefore justify the higher prices that we MUST sell at by offering the expertise and after sales service that the competition cannot and will not offer. Unfortunately a lot of our suppliers and manufacturers do not and will not even support us in these endeavours to project and support their products in a way that will improve their reputation in the market place.

We are at present engaged in what has become a prolonged battle with Opus Supplies Ltd. On May 9 we took a customer's machine to Opus for repair under guarantee, received a receipt for it and eventually received another acknowledgement on June 9 informing us that work would begin on May 30. Numerous telephone calls since then to expedite the return of the equipment have been to little avail and it is obvious to us that the staff and management at Opus really don't give a damn about our problems.

This morning we have been informed by a supervisor at Opus that they cannot find our customer's equipment and they therefore intend to replace it with an ex-service stock machine. When reminded that the computer incorporated a hard disk that held a large amount of our customer's business programs and data we were told that the customer should have taken a backup! When we asked how our customer was supposed to do this on a dead machine we were told that this was not their problem.

Had this been the first and only problem that we had experienced with this company I would not be putting pen to paper now but I can list a whole catalogue of events over

the last eighteen months that would bring tears to the eyes of a less experienced campaigner.

Similar problems have occurred with Thinking Software Limited. An accounts package purchased two years ago for our internal use at a cost (trade) price of over £2,000 has never worked properly due to bad programming and options on menus and report facilities that are just not available.

Discussions with the Company nearly always end in the comment that if we take out a Software Support Agreement at £500 per module for four modules they will correct the faults. Surely the Trades Description Act should stop software companies from using customers as guinea pigs and then charging them for the privilege of having the errors corrected!

There are many software suppliers who in our opinion try to circumvent their responsibilities by offering a three month free support agreement but, as the more enlightened members of our trade will know, the change over from a manual accounts system to a computerised system is a long and involved process and in our experience, new users especially will not be fully conversant with the new system until well after the free support agreement has expired. If a fault with the program is then discovered, payment for "additional support" is required before the fault will be rectified.

As I have said, these are not isolated occurrences by any means and unless the major suppliers and manufacturers get their acts together and realise that without the dedication, expertise and support that the independent retailer gives to their product and reciprocal support from them, there will be no retail computer trade with obvious repercussions for their sales.

Yours faithfully,
K. R. Clark
Cerac Computer Supplies
Wallington

Opus reply

From time to time manufacturers have to take the criticism as well as the praise and we make no excuses in this particular case. The computer in question was regrettably mislaid during the recent transfer of the company's entire Service and Technical department to new premises. A thorough investigation was carried out before the dealer put pen to paper and the computer was thankfully located, repaired and returned direct (by taxi) to the customer with all its hard disk contents intact.

Although we would clearly want to dispute some of the dealer's unjustified comments, we understand how frustration can turn to despair when an incident of this kind happens. It is perhaps ironic that a move designed specifically to improve the future service needs of our customers, namely the transfer of our staff to a new £350,000 service centre, should have inadvertently led to this case. We can only apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Yours sincerely,
Martin Breffit,
Opus,
53 Ormside Way,
Holmethorpe Industrial Estate,
Redhill,
Surrey.

SPEAKEASY

Once Bitten...

I read with interest your article "Macbyte dips out" (CTW June 13th), and noted that Memorex were listed as a "major creditor".

This news came as a surprise to me and I am pleased to announce they do not owe Memorex anything.

I would appreciate your assistance in printing this information to set the record straight.

Regards
Tony Nester
Product marketing manager
Computer media & supplies group

Memorex Slough
- Curious case, this one. For some strange reason, Tony Nester has left out the explanation of how Memorex came to be listed as a creditor, with the result that cynical punters might think it was our mistake.

Macbyte ordered over £2,000 worth of goods from Memorex, and was then invoiced even though Memorex by then had decided that Macbyte was too ropery to supply. This outstanding "debt" then turned up in the list of creditors.

So it goes . . .

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THE DIRECT SALES CONSTRUCTION KIT

Continued from page 12

not to take your next product.

For mainline entertainment software products, true volume distribution is being concentrated into the hands of just a few. Those few, even now, are lining up new links with software houses. Centresoft has US Gold, English, Gremlin and more, Leisuresoft is handling the primary distribution for BT and Activision and Microdealer shares Mirrorsoft's owner.

Where does that leave those software houses outside that clique?

To be able to sell to a retailer you must be able to offer various services: one stop shopping (80 per cent of his needs from one source); 24-hour delivery; competitive discounts; and POS information.

Software houses can offer all the above except the one stop shopping aspect. Certainly, on POS and information they should be able to offer better assistance than the distributor. After all, he might be handling over a hundred different firms' products.

It is clear then that the problem lies in the inability to provide that one stop shopping advantage. A range of product must be offered to the retailer that is so desirable that it makes him want to buy direct. Some retailers may argue that they only want to buy from three or four sources because of paperwork and time, but there are solutions to this.

Eagle eyed

Electronic Arts came over to the UK last summer and under the strategic leadership of boss Trip Hawkins it put into place the biggest direct selling operation the UK leisure market has ever seen. The US firm is now starting to be successful with a slowly increasing number of titles making the charts, especially on 16-bit formats.

But this has taken time, effort and a great deal of money. EA currently offers a selection of goods on behalf of itself, Martech, Accolade, Strategic Studies Group and a handful of others. With the titles covering all formats and ranging from war games to arcade, the catalogue is large enough to attract dealers to buying direct.

However, this does not diminish the need for good marketing. EA products are well advertised and give a perception of high quality. And, of course, the only place you can buy EA products from is EA. The Centresoft and TBD deals only give those distributors a right to supply specified multiples.

The Centresoft/US Gold group, with its distribution power and array of labels, is the only other force that could potentially offer enough product for retailers to buy directly. As those products are invariably amongst the best chart performers a retailer would have little choice but to buy them. Thus, without much ado Centresoft could sell direct very effectively.

Leisuresoft, seeing the market's movement has sensibly teamed up with BT and

Activision for primary distribution. This gives it far more security and control.

Other distributors are also offering primary distribution as a means of counterbalancing potential future threats from Centresoft and Leisuresoft. Roger Hulley at R&R has had A1 Primary Distribution in operation since the very early days but recently it has been on the prowl for new clients — gaining Cascade's Gamebusters budget label and Martech's similarly styled React arm. Microdealer is offering primary distribution deals too.

The only upstarts in this distributor dominated world are the ones assisting software houses with direct representation to dealers. This is currently in the guise of promoting products to retailers and then transferring orders to the distributors.

To sell and back

Bullet is a direct marketing operation which has performed well in the record industry.

Now it is pitching some 240 high street independents with the odd software title. USD operates throughout the UK offering a merchandising service to a number of major software houses. Active Sales and Marketing relies on telephone marketing and mail-shotting to promote directly to retailers. Entertainment International — run by two ex-Microdealer employees — promotes directly to stores, handling sales for companies such as Microdeal and French owned Titus.

No doubt, another addition to this growing market sector will spring up within the next few months, if not weeks.

These direct promotion companies currently sitting on the fence between retailer and publisher could easily turn into direct sales organisations representing a handful of software houses.

There is an alternative to making any drastic changes. The small and medium sized software houses could just carry on as they are, supplying the 10-15 recognised distributors and possibly doing the odd direct deal with a mail order firm. But what would be the consequences?

Life could go on, but more likely is that current predictions from many in the trade would become reality. The independent software houses will be forced into a corner. They'll have to become a programming house like Alligata or Bubble Bus, auctioning off product to other publishers and letting them do the marketing.

Otherwise, the indies could become an affiliated label. But once the deal is signed and things go wrong they could find it difficult to get out intact. Big Brother may also start dictating game content, artwork etc.

The alternative to all this is thinking about new ways of getting products on to the shelves.

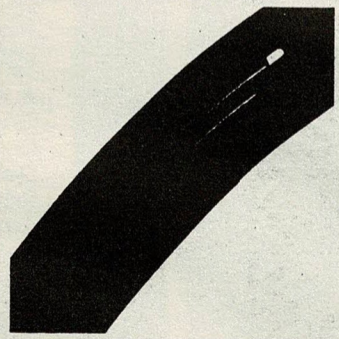
Next week we will take an in-depth look at direct sales methods — examining how easily it can be done and the costs involved.

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Write with full CV and photograph to:
Mr T Little, Sales Manager/Major Accounts,
Amstrad Distribution Limited,
PO Box 299,
Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 7QS.

THE TEXAS CHAIN STORE MASTERPLAN

Continued from page 11
M25, though the current favourite is in the Manchester/Liverpool area.

"In the first quarter we'll be bringing our machines in," offers Irby. "Until then it'll be sensory items. We'd like to take other lines but in general we don't yet have enough knowledge to know what is hot and what is not."

Its US catalogue includes Zenith hardware, NEC and Samsung monitors, Hayes modems, IBM add on pro-

ducts, photocopiers, faxes and telephone answering machines, as well as boards, furniture, software and cables. Prominence is given over to the range of Standard PCs.

"We like to offer people name brand as well as our brand. There are a lot of people who want name brand," explains Irby. "It's really an issue of what's selling. As for Amstrad, we'd like them but we still need to see what machines are selling."

McLemore has some reasons why this is the right time to enter the UK market. "During the next year a lot of people will be new buyers who've never had a computer before. It's important to have the ability to have a good penetration rate into that."

Hayden takes over: "In the past we've been able to step into a market and do a good job and grab market share. In any established market we can offer quality product at a good price."

Price is the all important factor here. The US buyers — to a greater extent than the UK buyers — are confident and familiar enough with technology to recognise the cheap and nasties and the good buys.

In the US though there are more players willing to splash out on advertising and promotion in the PC arena. Even Amstrad's entry level machines are being seen as mid-price in the US and establishing a name has been at least as difficult as Sugar predicted.

"In the US the movement toward buying on price is strong," comments Irby. "We work under a lot of diffe-

rent mail order names — they're the same products in slightly different combinations and slightly different prices. We can appeal to different audiences."

PC Source is one of these labels that's been revealed as a CompuAdd name. Bentley is one which few know is CompuAdd and which relies on a shade of upper class quality. The ads are in black and white and with a dash more style. They won't be featured here.

Advantage advertising

Advertising may not have made CompuAdd but it

has sustained the company and fed its rapid growth. This is a company which spends \$1 million a month on ads — sometimes \$2 million if there's a bump in sales. The painful outlay for a few square inches of paper has paid its dividends.

Various UK magazine publishers will be pleased to hear Irby's words: "In the UK we'll spend whatever it takes — after we've seen all the magazines."

The expense of advertising apart there's always the cost of maintenance. Mail order has never had a good reputation on this count but CompuAdd offers 30 day money back guarantee and one year warranty "regardless of the manufacturer's warranty". There is a free 0800 number for customers with problems. "These aren't clerks though," says McLemore. "They're fully trained."

It's CompuAdd's retail ambitions which are fascinating. In the southern States it has eight stores. Another 15 will be open by Christmas. By the end of next year there should be 50 stores in place.

It claims to have been forced into opening up retail sites. "We'll open up here when people start asking for it. That's how we got into it last time. Our prices were so competitive that people wanted us to do it. They were demanding a real location," said Irby.

McLemore took the argument a step further. "Stores here look like they sell primarily typewriters and low end machines. They're not the computer literate type. That perception might be entirely wrong but we don't see a proliferation of computers and faxes and laser printers ready to run.

"To us Dixons looks like K-Mart with business products."

CompuAdd has long held the belief that hardware shifters should be involved in all aspects of business retailing. It makes sense to be able to buy fax, modem, PC and furniture in the same go. McLemore again: "We see a trend that way. People don't like to have multiple accounts."

But again the three jumped in with reminders that as far as Britain is concerned this is entirely hypothetical. The game plan is to get a big mail order splash going, and then

"We'd like to have regional and widespread coverage. Rather than starting up one small retail outlet and building a reputation on that we want people to come and recognise us," said Irby.

"Someone can come in our store and spend ten minutes or an hour or three hours and then walk out with a complete system: ready to start computing when they get home."

CompuAdd has labelled its UK launch as the beach head for a full European operation. That said, the plans for the continent are sketchy to say the least.


Irby explains: "We perceive the UK as the door to the common market. We have the intention of opening up similar operations. Everybody seems to be talking about opening common market doors in 1992 and that's what we're looking at."

"We want to be in position when the activity starts."

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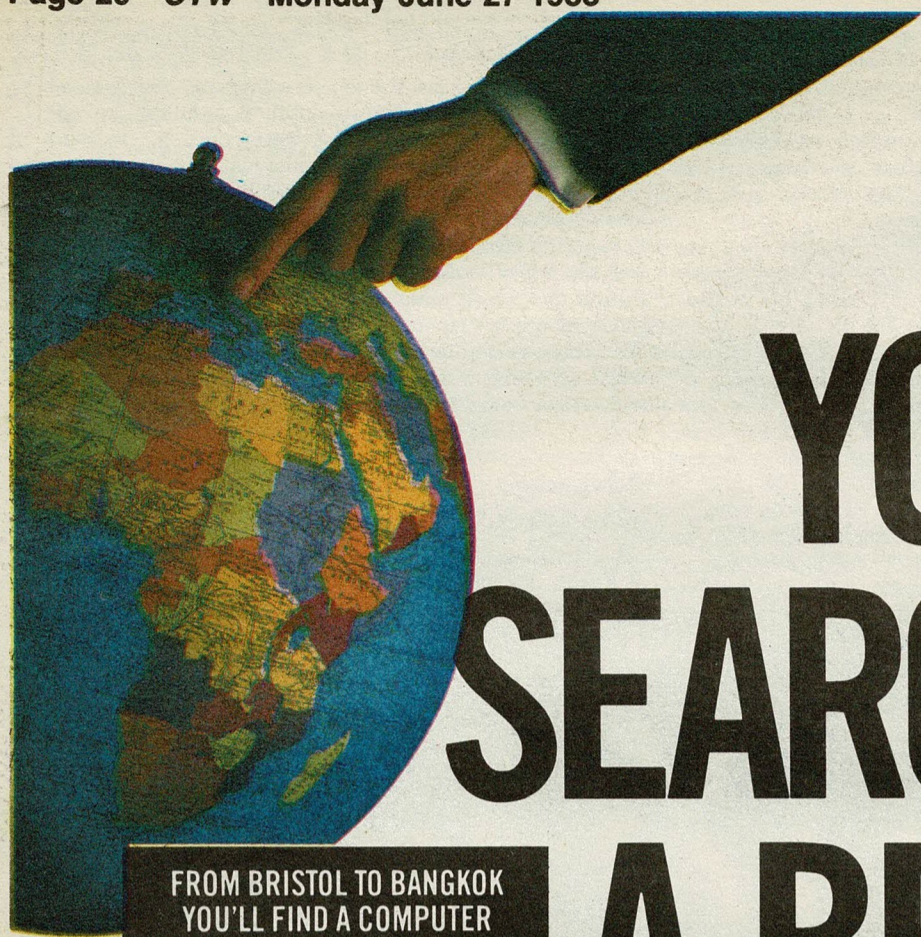
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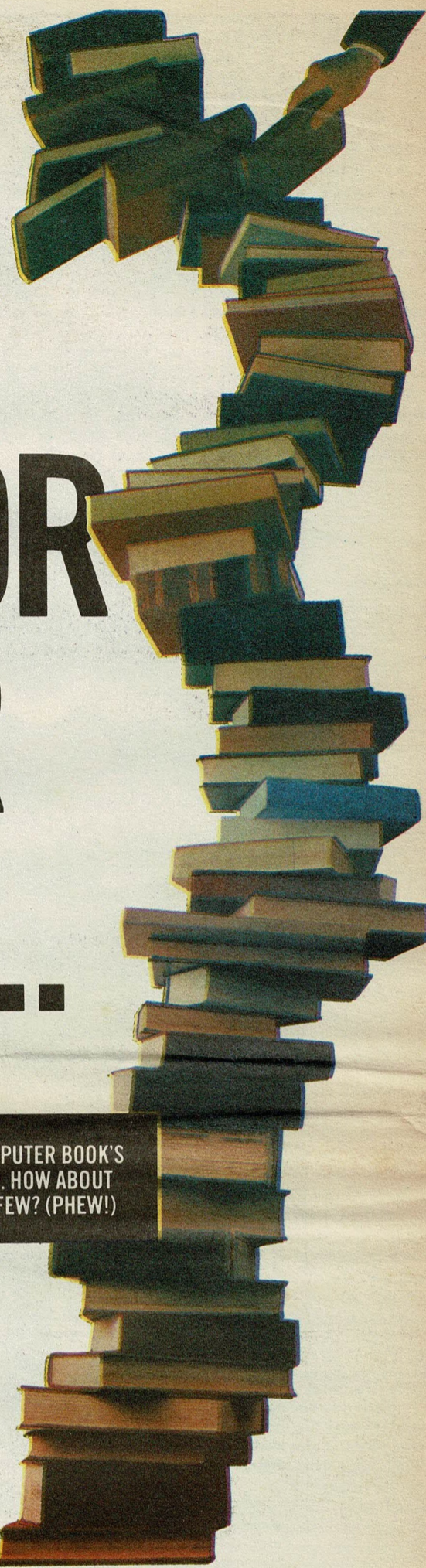
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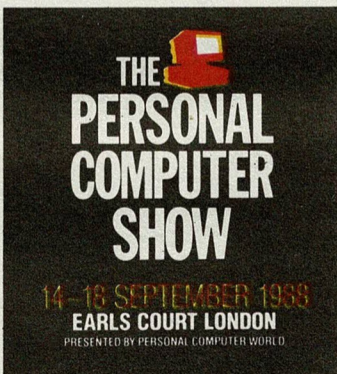
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