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CTW

20-6-88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 191

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Chip gloom grows

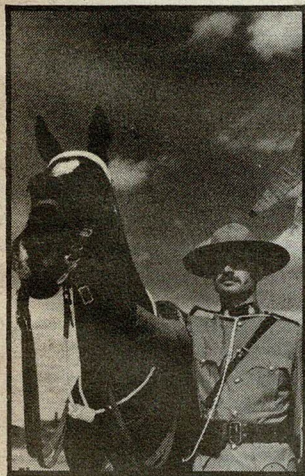
Far from showing signs of abating, the worldwide chip shortage is set to worsen.

That was the gloomy message delivered last week by Hewlett-Packard president John Young to stock market analysts in New York. And his view has been supported by Amstrad boss Alan Sugar. He said last week that he now believes the overall position will not improve until the first quarter of next year.

Having put up its prices and having secured long term supplies, Amstrad is unlikely to be further unduly affected. These days, 256K D-Ram chips are selling for \$15: last year they were just \$3.

INSIDE:

MOUNTING AN ASSAULT



When British leisure market firms think of the north American continent, they think of the US – and understandably so. Yet there is also Canada, which the Brits seem largely to have ignored. Barnaby Page reports on the state of play in the land where men will be Mounties and which isn't part of the US but feels as though everyone else thinks it should've been 10

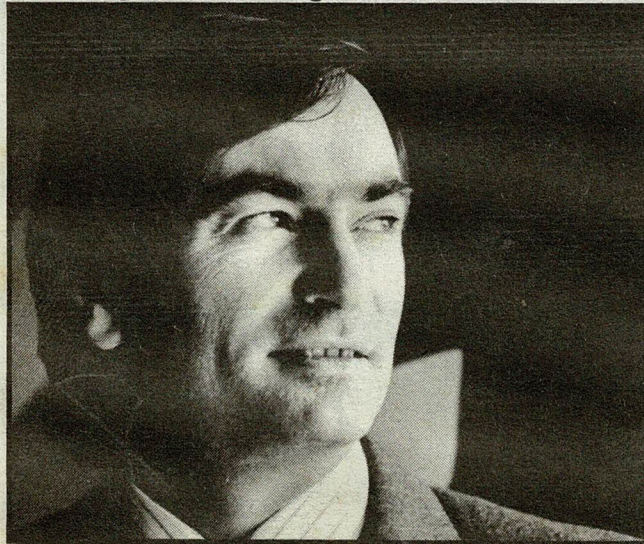
PITCHERS AT AN EXHIBITION

The great summer Consumer Electronics Show at Chicago has just ended. What trends emerged? Just how big is Nintendo? What effect is the whole console boom having on the rest of the market and on software development plans? CTW's special correspondent for the three days Robert Stein of Andromeda Software files a personal report..... 14

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PC famine hits Atari

Atari's PC business has yet to reach 1,000 units a month, its UK boss Bob Gleadow candidly acknowledged last week to CTW.



GLEADOW: Candid on PC failure thus far

The news comes at a time when Atari is set to announce that it will – after all – be attending this year's PC Show, inevitably as the largest exhibitor.

The shortfall on PCs is all the more remarkable given Atari's avowed intentions to make 1988 its "business year" (CTW December 21st 1987). Though there has been much talk and a fair smattering of adverts, Atari has lacked one vital aspect: product.

"It's been limping along, but we've been totally screwed up on deliveries. I hope that June will be our first 1,000 units month, which shouldn't be too difficult. The trick is increasing that to 2,000," Gleadow said.

Though commenting in an off the cuff, almost wilfully

downbeat way, Gleadow's thoughts evidently have more than just a hint of truth to them. Manufacturers customarily talk up their successes and have on occasion been known to resort to hype. Around 1,000 units a month at best is a very modest total.

Continuing D-Ram shortages are cited by Gleadow as the main reason for the failure to break through as a PC supplier. And he stressed that it was not the case that the UK is being starved of product in deference to some other Atari subsidiary.

In the wider context, Atari UK appears to be performing well. Its first quarter sales are "comfortably ahead" of target – which was to be 50 per cent up on last year's period.

Continued on page two

Amstrad nets Corvus

Amstrad has confirmed that it will indeed be launching a low cost Corvus-based networks package, as exclusively revealed in CTW last month (May 2nd).

From September, the firm will be selling a £399 3-node network kit featuring Corvus' Omninet/1 interface cards and a "tweaked" version of PC-NOS, which is Corvus' own

proprietary network operating system. The package – dubbed AMSNOS – will net Corvus between \$3 and \$4 million annually.

Amstrad is backing the launch with dealer training days and its customary ad-plurge. It claims that AMSNOS will demystify the whole networking area in much the same way as its modems are claimed to have demystified the comms market.

"We strongly believe that

many people using PCs in business don't really realise that they can be linked together. Or if they do, they don't know how to and are worried at the prospect," Amstrad's software and peripherals development manager Peter Roback told CTW.

"Potentially, the market is enormous: any business that currently uses two or more PCs. We've no idea quite how large a market that is, because there aren't any useful figures around. But like the modem

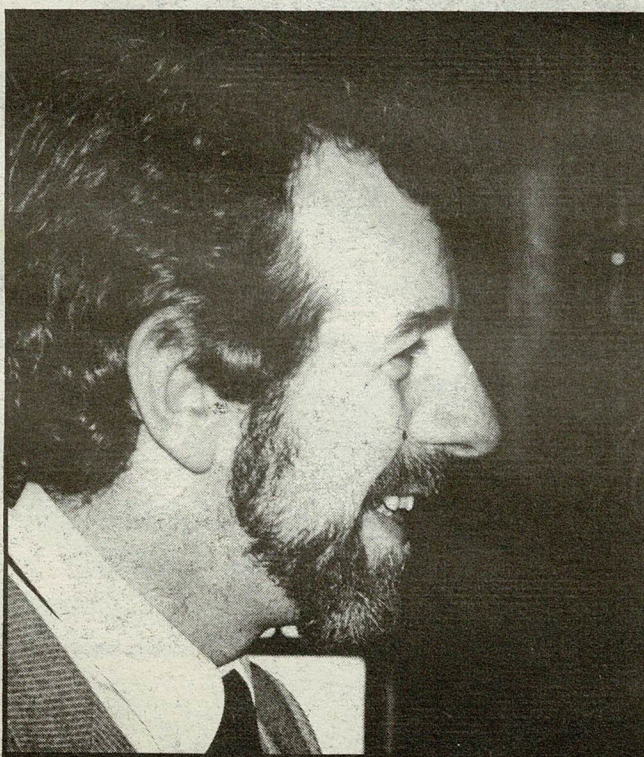
market, we're working largely on gut feeling."

Dealer training courses will begin in August, with the now customary Amstrad line of their price being offset by tokens redeemable against its software products. It is expected that the firm will shortly announce multi-user versions of its packages.

"We believe that the package will be simple enough for the likes of Dixons to sell," Roback added, "though

Continued on back page

Magpie Mastertronic picks up new business



HEATH: Detailing deals

In the wake of its curious talk of rationalisation (CTW June 6th), Mastertronic last week trumpeted what are claimed to be "four major developments".

The firm which seemingly has more market interests than employees has won new deals for its Sega games machine, tied up a distribution agreement with RM, just launched Melbourne House in the US and has passed the 100 site landmark with its arcade machine operation Arcadia.

Sega: For the first time Mastertronic has managed to get its sub-£100 console into the mail order catalogue world. Great Universal Stores, Littlewoods and Empire Stores have all accepted the product for entry in their forthcoming autumn/winter editions and have been mailshotting clients

with news of its immediate availability.

Furthermore, Mastertronic claims that the three firms have opted to take the Sega as a replacement for its main rival the Nintendo.

In preparation for the normally busy autumn selling period Mastertronic is also attempting to increase the machine's chainstore presence. Smiths, Menzies, Woolworths and Dixons currently stock the product already.

Independents are being targeted as well. "Our main thrust is on in-store point of sale. Our view generally is that if people go into a store and see something exciting they'll buy it. We're looking at turning shops into Sega Centres," commented Mastertronic director Geoff Heath.

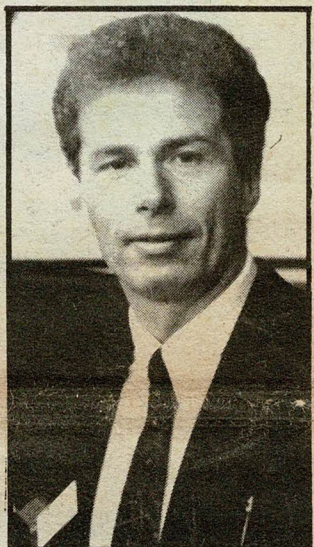
RM: After much prognostication it seems that the confu-

Continued on back page

CES sees Gold rush

US Gold is claiming to have taken \$1 million worth of orders during its first few days as an American label.

Along with the continued Nintendo consolemania that is currently sweeping the US, Gold's launch was one of the highlights of the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago.



BROWN: Successful US launch

The UK firm has become a transatlantic brand via a reciprocal deal with Epyx. Just as Gold looks after the giant US labels' interests in the UK, Epyx is controlling operations in North America.

Six games were previewed at the show and offered to distributors, chainstores and software dealers. They were: *Divebomber* (an unreleased Gremlin title); *Street Cat* (Go's *Bad Cat*); *Metrocross*; *Tower Toppler* (Hewson's *Nebulus*); *Techno Cop* (another unreleased Gremlin title); and *Sports-aroni* (Gremlin's *Alternative World Games*).

All the six titles will be available in the US under the US Gold name by September, retailing between \$19.95 and \$39.95.

"The main leaders haven't been released here yet. *Techno Cop* and *Dive Bomber* are well designed for the American market, one being a driving game and the other a flight simulator," commented Gold boss Geoff Brown to CTW.

"Also Epyx' distribution is second to none in the US so it's not surprising they've done so well. We've put a lot of effort into this and so have they. It's been a terrific show for both of us."

Gold's initial success in the US has ironically come without the help of its biggest titles, such as *Out Run* and *Gauntlet*. These are tied up in deals with other firms, although in some cases Gold's code will be used for certain formats.

Migent pushes up sales and profit

Migent International has posted third quarter financial figures showing a record profit and trebling of sales.

Turnover for the three months ending March 31st this year totalled \$1.6 million, compared with \$536,000 for the relevant period in 1987. Profits rose to \$55,300.

Migent built its position in the UK after the successful

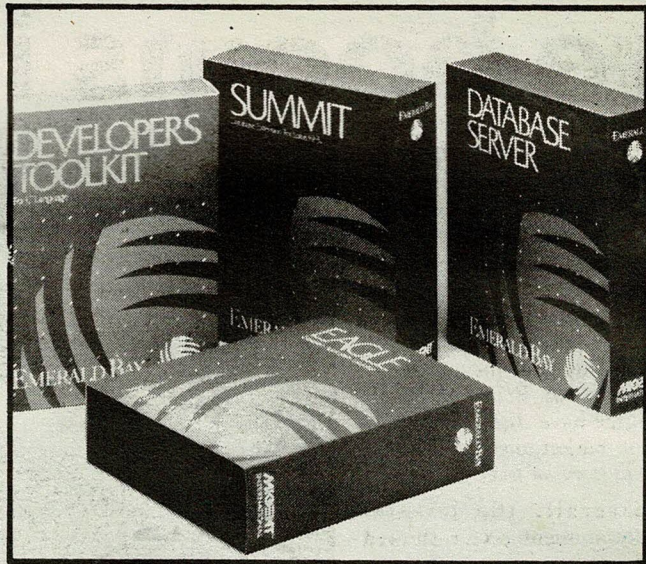
launch of the low-cost *Ability* suite in autumn 1986. Since then the firm has moved up-market, with this spring seeing the launch of the *Emerald Bay* range.

March also saw the launch of new versions of both *Account-Ability* and *Page-Ability*. Since Christmas Migent has concentrated more on the *Ability* upgrade *Ability Plus* which carries a pricepoint of £199.

The original version was bundled with the Amstrad 1512 last autumn.

For the nine months ending 31st March Migent's sales rose almost six-fold to \$4.2 million from \$743,700 in 1987.

The firm's full 1987 fiscal results showed a \$2 million turnover after nine months trading, but a \$1 million loss. This was blamed on heavy start-up costs.



EMERALD BAY: Third quarter launch

Genic takes Segrue

Mediagenic (formerly Activision) has poached Robtek's erstwhile sales director Mike Segrue.

He joins the firm as UK sales manager along with ex-Mirrorsoft sales executive Emma Bridgewater, who becomes sales co-ordinator.

Meanwhile, Activision has introduced cuts across its productivity packages for the Apple Mac's Hypercard. *Reports* and *Focal Point* fall £5 to £69.99, whilst *Business Class* and *City to City* have nearly halved to £39.99.



SEGRUE: Media man

PC famine

Continued from front page

"We're doing really well. The ST is about 60 per cent up on last year and we've been out of stock twice on the summer bundle because it's been doing so well. We're not unhappy. We'll be taking two weeks out, and then we'll come back scrapping for Christmas," Gleadow added.

Meantime, it is "95 per cent certain" that Atari will be taking a 918 square metre site at the PC Show in September, running along the back of all three sectors.

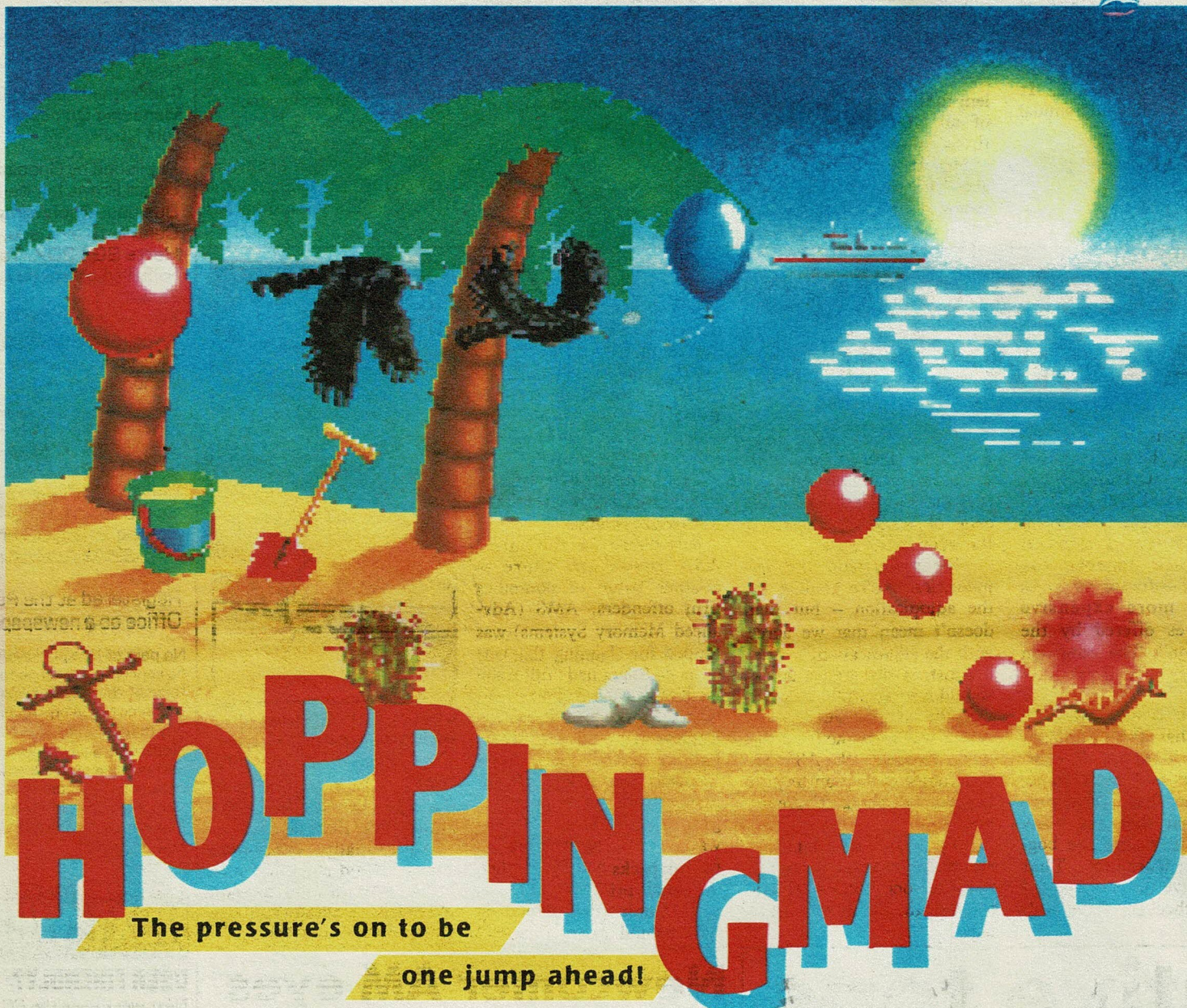
"I do feel we should go, but my initial problem of not having an ideally suitable space has not been resolved. Segregating the show into games, home and business isn't sympathetic to our aims. So we'll be taking a whole slug at the back for the Atari Village."

This will be around 16 metres deep and will house sundry distributors, software houses and ancillary firms as of yore. The Village is being split into a central arcade - which will also feature Atari's own software packages - and the wings divide into a theatre style presentation area and a users' workshop.

There is also the possibility of Atari branding the whole music sector at the show, which is another 900-odd square metres. "There's a lot of musicians who use the ST these days - everyone from Peter Gabriel to The Pointer Sisters. So a linkage with the music area would suit us," Gleadow added.

If this goes ahead, it is likely that Atari will attempt to pull off a PR stunt of parading around the UK soul/disco group Imagination, who are said to be ST devotees.

Atari last week turned down the option of sponsoring Coventry City football club. Overtures from the first division side were greeted with a cool observation about the experience of Atari's main competitor Commodore in sponsoring the former first division side Chelsea.



The pressure's on to be

one jump ahead!

●●●●● YOUR OPPONENT played first. Globe-hopping through the world and into space, he's skillfully avoided everything that could cost him a 'life'. And as he's gobbled and popped almost all the apples and balloons on the way, he's leapt his way to a brilliant score ● HE'S PLEASED. You're not ● NOW IT'S your go. In the forest, you escape the jaws of set after set of ball-eating plants, duck the bees and birds, over the hedgehog, under the rising ball. Perfect! ●

BUT THE seaside's no picnic—straight away you land on a lizard. Pop! One life lost. And you're down on score. Bounding on, you approach cacti, and approaching you is a balloon, closely followed by rooks. You could glide safely over the cacti, or jump for the balloon—risking death at the claws of the birds ● THREE BALLS, three lives, left. Lose them and there's no bouncing back. But you need those points ●



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27 JUNE 1988
EUROPE
13 JUNE 1988

SPECTRUM	£7.99
CASSETTE	£12.99
DISC	
COMMODORE 64	£9.99
CASSETTE	£11.99
DISC	
AMSTRAD CPC	£9.99
CASSETTE	£14.99
DISC	

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Leisure booms in US

The US leisure software market is booming, with sales this year up 30 per cent on the 1987 first quarter equivalent.

Detailed figures were provided by the US trade body the Software Publishers Association at the recent Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Chicago. They show that the shake-out of 1986-87 appears to be over and that – unsurprisingly – a small handful of publishers control the market either directly or via affiliated/licensed deals.

Probably the most remarkable statistic unveiled was that C64 software sales leapt 42 per cent in the first three months of this year. Despite Commodore's publicised attempts to kill off the machine (CTW June 6th), it is still selling strongly to the sector in the States not yet won over by the Nintendo games console. By October 1987,

Commodore is said to have sold one million C64s in the US before running out of stock.

The consequence has been a strong demand for software. But with many US publishers moving over to 16-bit and PCs (up 58 per cent in the quarter), this has meant that a number of British software houses have discovered a decent market to supply (see US Gold story on front page).

Overall, the leisure/entertainment sector showed the largest growth in the software market, with sales up 56 per cent in 1987 over 1986.

Longer term, the SPA is predicting continuing growth, primarily as it foresees a coming together of audio and video entertainment. It projects the following annual unit sales in the US:

- 1987 20 million
- 1988 27 million
- 1989 36 million
- 1990 50 million



C64: Strong US sales helping UK firms gain a foothold

One sobering thought for the publishers, though, is that the \$450 million profit recorded by Nintendo in its most recent figures is equivalent to the *Worldwide turnover* of all the leisure software firms put together.

Meantime, the most notable CES absentee was Commodore. Its great rival Atari was there, but only displaying

its consoles. The firm argues that the ST was excluded because Nintendo has opened up the whole console market and as the originators of the format, Atari should bang its own console drum.

But the lack of STs could also have something to do with the fact that the machine has completely stiffed in the States.

Schneider sales dip

Amstrad's erstwhile German distributor Schneider has suffered a 10 per cent drop in turnover since severing its ties with Alan Sugar's firm.

The company is attributing the falling off in the first five months of this year to its decision to move over to manufacturing and selling its own computers.

The Amstrad deal theoretically ran out at the end of last month, though in practical terms ceased long before that. Schneider's first PCs are due on sale in Germany later this month. For much of this year, its computer business has been concerned with selling off its old Amstrad stock at discount prices.

There are as yet few firm details about when Schneider will commence selling in the UK, though the autumn has been targeted.

CTW

Computer Trade Weekly

EDITORIAL:

0438 310184
0438 310185

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Published by Specialist

Retail Press Limited,

Business Technology

Centre, Stevenage,

Herts SG1 2DX. Telex:

825824 (Answerback

"Bustec").

Fax 0438 741247.

Printed in England by

Cherwell Valley

Lithographic Ltd,

Banbury.

Typesetting by Kestrel

Origination, Bond

Industrial Est. Bond Ave,

Bletchley, Milton Keynes

Subscriptions: UK £75;

Europe £120; US and

Asia £220; Australia

£250.

Registered at the Post

Office as a newspaper.

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Amstrad casts aside third ASA complaint

Amstrad is shrugging off its latest censure from the Advertising Standards Authority – this time, over business software claims.

The ASA upheld a complaint from a member of the public over the firm's pitch that "any of these Amstrad programs would cost hundreds of pounds from another manufacturer".

Amstrad was told that it had "failed to demonstrate that the advertised software was of an equivalent specification to the more expensive industry-standard packages currently available". Further, "In the absence of such sub-

stantiation the Authority concluded that the cost comparison was not supported."

It requested that Amstrad modify the advert "to avoid any suggestion of technical equivalence between the advertised software packages and the more expensive alternatives offered by the competition". The campaign had, in any case, finished by this stage.

Amstrad is understood to believe that the complaint concerns *WordStar Express*. CTW was told by a figure within the firm: "Everyone knows that that has many more features than the bog-standard *WordStar*. That doesn't have the mail-list and spelling checker, yet it sells for £259."

"The ASA are really playing to the letter of the law to the point of being wholly unreasonable. The full body code of *WordStar Express* is the same as *WordStar*."

"We understand the adjudication, we're abiding by the adjudication – but that doesn't mean that we agree with the adjudication."

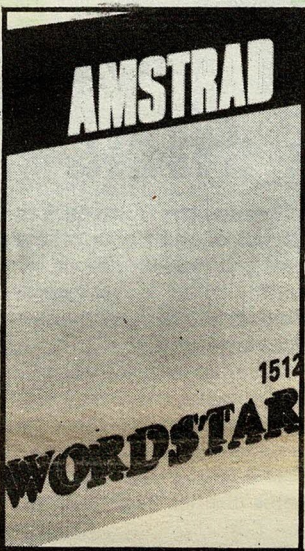
Amstrad also argues that it should have the right to know who the complainant was, in case it was someone from the trade. However, the ASA has a statutory obligation to protect its complainants' identities.

"If it came from a competitor, that means that we've not upset anyone but a competitor. Tough. We do that every day."

Additionally, he argued to CTW that given the high sales of Amstrad's software, if there had been any genuine confusion then many others would have complained. "Perhaps we should've said these products 'had' cost more, rather than 'would'. But it really is crazy."

This is the third complaint upheld against Amstrad in the last twelve months.

Elsewhere in the latest ASA round-up, there is another batch of computer firm offenders. AMS (Advanced Memory Systems) was rapped for claiming that one of its packages had "full zoom facilities" when it didn't really; discount retailer Computer Express (run by the mildly famous scribe Jerry MacDougall) was ticked off for saying that it had 20 meg Seagate drives in stock; Mydisk was in the wrong for claiming its disk packs cost £6.49 when the total price was £13.21; and Dennis (the publishing firm behind *MicroScope* and



WORDSTAR: Ad claims prompting Amstrad ASA rap
Your Sinclair ran into difficulties over a promotion of *Topcopy Plus* in *The Buyer's Guide to the Amstrad PC*.

Additionally, complaints were received about the mail order activities of Bargain Software, Smiling Software and Software Supersavers.

Alternative tops leisure listing

Alternative Software is commanding the biggest market share by volume in the UK leisure market, according to latest Gallup research.

Alternative attained a 13.2 per cent share of open market sales, ahead of Mastertronic (11.4), Code Masters (8.8) and US Gold (7.4).

"We're highly delighted," said Alternative boss Roger Hulley to CTW. "It's the first time anybody's overtaken Mastertronic since Gallup lumped all their labels' sales together."

Alternative was formed on the last day of 1986 and has built up a back catalogue of some 130 products in that time. Its major successes have come from the re-release of previously full-price material, particularly product from the now defunct Piranha.

The label is an offshoot of distributor R&R, but Hulley



Alternative route to the top

brushed off suggestions that this could be perceived as an unfair advantage. "R&R has got to wear a separate hat. If we didn't supply the best product our dealers would get very peeved. We sell Mastertronic, Code Masters, Firebird, Players and Atlantis product along with our own." Alternative recently tied up

Microsphere's back-catalogue and releases CRL's *Rocky Horror Show* as a budget title this week.

Meantime another R&R offshoot, A1 Primary Distribution, has added Cascade's budget label Gamebusters to its list of clients. It joins Alternative, Summit, React and Top Ten.

Newcomer AM eyes £5m games share

Record distributor Audio Merchandisers has revealed that it wants to have achieved 10 per cent leisure market share worth £5 million by autumn 1989.

The Soto Sound subsidiary already claims to supply 25 per cent of all 7" singles distributed in the UK via deals with chains such as Boots, Asda and Tesco. Unsurprisingly, it has initially marked out multiples as its main potential customers on software.

"We see that area as the greatest opportunity in the sense that they tend to be fairly chart and budget driven. It is the sector of the market that we know best and know we can succeed in," commented AM's managing director David Hammond to CTW.

The firm expects to have started shipping to at least one multiple by the end of July. Hammond would not divulge who this is likely to be, offering only that all possible

accounts are being pitched.

AM's main target would appear to be Boots considering the strong links on audio product between the two firms. "We're not dealing with them at this stage as they have stated that they are satisfied with their current source. But it doesn't mean we're not trying."

AM is claiming that it will be able to provide a fast racking and stocking service plus accurate product selection akin to that expected in the record world. It has also launched a thinly veiled attack on some of its software rivals by emphasising the importance of independence from publishers.

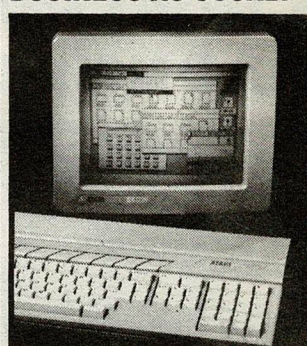
"It's not something we want to make too much of a play on, but it seems that the numbers of products being put into some stores do not always represent their market shares. That's bound to happen when people have vested interests," added Hammond.

Audio Merchandisers hopes to have signed up around four multiple accounts by autumn '89.

USER FRIENDLY?

Next week sees the *PC User Show* in London. Next week also sees a special CTW guide to what some of the firms active in the low cost business sector plan to be promoting...

BUSINESS AS USUAL?



Usually, when it comes to business, you're talking PCs. Yet Atari has also been talking about the ST as a business machine (cynics would say that's not surprising – see front page). So how important a sector is this? Which firms are leading the way? CTW attempts to find some answers.....

COMPUADDS UP?

Giant US mail order and retail firm CompuAdd will be shortly setting up in the UK. It has bold, not to say outspoken views on the UK scene. CTW listens in.....

Now Citizen slams EC printer ruling

The European Commission has been lambasted again for its decision to impose a 33.4 per cent levy on Japanese dot matrix printers.

Following recent outbursts from Epson and Fujitsu this time it was the turn of Citizen Europe, labelling the EC "blinker and deaf" to the realities of the printer market.

Citizen's decision to join in the chorus of disapproval is all the more poignant considering that the firm is unlikely to be affected to much degree by the levy. It has been manufacturing its main lines in Scunthorpe since January.

The firm is currently reviewing its pricing structure and is likely to introduce hikes of around 10 per cent on all models in the next few weeks. This is due to the cost of using an increasing number

of European components, however, rather than the levy.

"We're not affected, but it's the principle," started Citizen's European marketing manager Robin Marriott to CTW. "These suggestions about European manufacturers losing market share because of Japanese dumping are all bullshit. They never had any market share."

"Prior to 1983 there wasn't a PC printer market because there weren't any PCs. The European firms were in the DP heavy duty high speed end. Everyone was on the starting blocks at the same time it's just that the Japanese heard the gun first."

Marriott went on to claim that it will only be firms in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea that benefit from the tariff due to European manufacturers' inability to respond to any subsequent upsurge in demand.



MARRIOTT: Attacking EC

Whilst registering its discontent Citizen did not take the Epson line of warning that European investment would be reviewed as a result. Citizen will be expanding its facilities to produce new printer lines and hopes to increase production in Scunthorpe from 20,000 units a month to 30,000 by the end of the year.

Amongst its other business, Citizen is the premier printer supplier to Commodore.

Opus: 70K in '88

Three months after appointing its first distributors, Opus is claiming that it is now on target to ship up to 70,000 PCs this year.

Last year's claimed total sales were 40,000 units, this being when the firm sold direct only. Opus currently sells through Micro Peripherals, Eltec and City Business Systems and is looking to appoint a further two distributors later in the year.

"We're consolidating our efforts after a fantastic year in 1987. We've got backlog order of 1,500-2,000 machines at the moment," commented Opus' sales and marketing director Martin Breffit to CTW.

Opus' most recent launch was the PCIV XT which costs £995. It was immediately labelled an 'Amstrad basher' following the latter firm's D-Ram-prompted price hikes. The delayed machine is still fairly elusive, however, due to



PCIV: Leading Opus push

unexpected demand.

Breffit went on: "Demand for our machines has increased quite dramatically. We're taking time to appoint the right people in the right

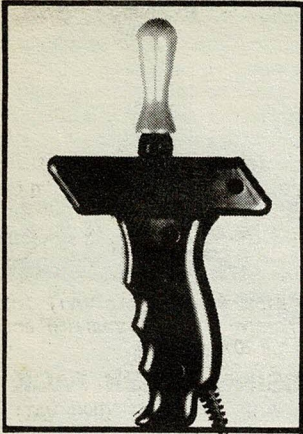
areas.

"If we have more than five distributors we won't have the right amount of control or be able to offer the same support."

Britannia gives US some stick

Britannia Software has signed a deal with US leisure giant Mindscape for distribution of its Phasor One joystick.

Mindscape has renamed the product Powerplayer and exhibited it at the recent Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. First year sales estimates are currently running at around 500,000 units.



PHASOR ONE: Into the US

Negotiations between Britannia and the US firm have been going on for around six months. The move heralds Mindscape's first ever move into peripherals.

"They've been looking at it and showing it to their key accounts. Some of them are already talking about ordering 20,000 units a time," said Britannia director Cliff Gardener to CTW.

The Powerplayer is expected to be put into direct competition with the Konix Speedking - marketed by Mindscape rival Epyx in the US. This means it will carry a retail of around \$15. In the UK, the Phasor One costs £12.95.

Gardener added that Britannia's income from the three year deal would be "in the millions" if targets are achieved.

The Phasor One was launched eighteen months ago and has already sold a claimed 200,000 units in the UK and Europe.

Chain adds Logo to business push

Logotron has had its integrated package Eight-in-One accepted by upmarket chainstore Alders.

The Cambridge firm is also currently considering an offer for the development of a German version of the package from book and software publisher Markt and Technik.

Alders recently announced that its ten stores that stock computer products would be looking to concentrate more on the business side in future. Eight-in-One comprises a word-processor, spreadsheet, database, spellchecker, graphics, diary, outliner and communications.

"We see Alders as an important business retailer because of the positioning of their stores and the fact that

they put a lot of effort behind computer retailing," offered Logotron's business development manager Anil Malhotra.

It seems unlikely, however, that Logotron will succeed in getting its ultra low-cost 1295 business line into the chain. "Due to their customer profile they want a £50 pricepoint like Eight-in-One rather than £12.95," added Malhotra.

Munich based Markt and Technik is hoping to collaborate with Logotron to publish a double branded version of Eight-in-One. Nothing has been signed although a deal seems likely.

Meantime, the firm has recently received an order for 3,000 units of its 1295 Planner from Home Software Benelux in Holland. It is also hoping to seal a similar deal shortly with Systel Automation, also of Holland.

CompuAdd delays UK push

Large US mail order firm CompuAdd will not now be setting up in the UK until the late autumn and will not be fully operational until the beginning of next year.

The Texas based firm had hoped to have a British sub-

siary in place by the middle of August. However, as yet a site hasn't been found and personnel are yet to be employed.

Advertisements containing CompuAdd's catalogue will be featured in the October issues of various PC end-user magazines. Although CompuAdd markets its own range of PCs - Standard - these

won't be here until next year.

President Bill Hayden told CTW: "It's taken a little while to do this and I think it'll take three months to be up and running. We're coming back over to find a team."

CompuAdd claims that it will have clocked up sales of at least \$25 million in the UK by the end of next year. In the

US it turned over a \$100 million last year and that figure is expected to have more than doubled this year.

The firm also has an eight strong chain of retail outlets in Texas, California and Arizona. No plans have yet been laid for that to be repeated in the UK or Europe, although the firm says that it is "an option".

Lewis leaves Cascade



LEWIS: Sudden departure

Cascade was remaining tightlipped last week after the sudden departure of its operations director John Lewis.

The unexpected nature of the move has left some doubt as to how amicable the split was. Managing director Nigel Stevens preferred not to be drawn too far on the matter.

"I have no comment to make, it's not fair," he told CTW. "Put simply, his departure wasn't really noticed. Everyone's mucked in and filled the gaps without any difficulties occurring."

Meanwhile, Cascade is finally nearing the release of its long awaited title 19 - based on Paul Hardcastle's hit record about the Vietnam war. It was first announced as a forthcoming title late last summer.

"We'll be launching it at the end of the month," promised Stevens. "It's been a long and difficult process but we've gone for excellence. This really is a state of the art game and it takes some beating."

When available it will cost £9.95 on Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad CPC and £19.95 on Amiga.

Goliath kicks off

Yet another soccer management game is on its way, this time from new indie publisher Goliath Games.

The firm's only claim to fame is that one of its directors wrote Scanatron's mail order game *The Double*. This pedigree has apparently led to advance orders of 4,000 units for Goliath's first release *Track Suit Manager*.

WH Smiths, R&R, Centresoft and Microdealer are amongst the firms interested, whilst Boots has turned the game down "because they've never heard of us".

TSM features 54 countries competing in the European

Championships and World Cup with sundry special features. It is being pitched as the best management game yet.

"The majority of games like this are much of a muchness. *Football Manager* has sold well and has never really been bettered. We've produced a very involved game with genuine match tactics," Matthews told CTW.

He hopes that with the help of monthlies' reviews and the odd small ad Goliath can follow D&H Games into the Gallup chart. "D&H did it and that's heartening for every small company," added Matthews.

TSM is available on Spectrum and C64 at £9.95.

D&H intends budget debut

Soccer specialist software house D&H Games is planning to enter the budget arena by the beginning of August.

Seven games have been lined up but as yet the new label hasn't been named. Pre-dominant in the releases is sports games with *On The Bench* - another football manager game - *First Past the Post* and *Boxing Manager*.

Currently, D&H is talking to an unnamed software house with a view to a sales and marketing agreement. All the games are available at the

moment via the firm's established mail order operation but it has long held hopes of breaking into the retail sector.

"It'll be a big blast of all sorts," offered joint boss Tony Huggard. "I expect the budget titles to do quite a lot in terms of sales. The sports simulators are particularly good."

Other games due for release include an adventure, *The Realm*, along with *Kemshu* and *The Damned Forest* - all will retail at £2.99. D&H is hoping that the budget launch will coincide with the release of its new full price title *Football Director II*.

The Atari ST



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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.

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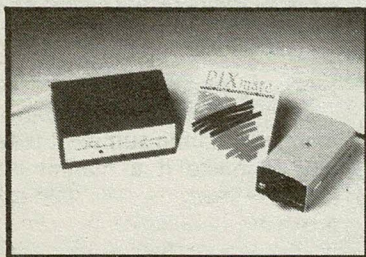
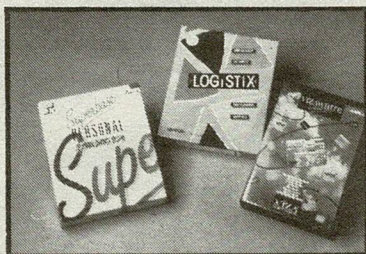
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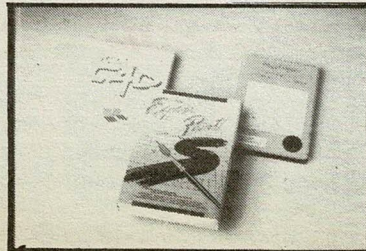
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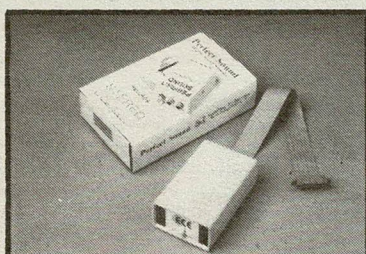
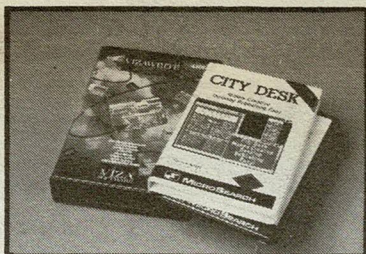
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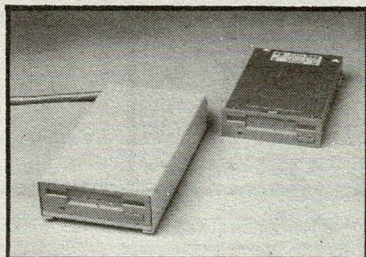
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Newsfield coming up from behind

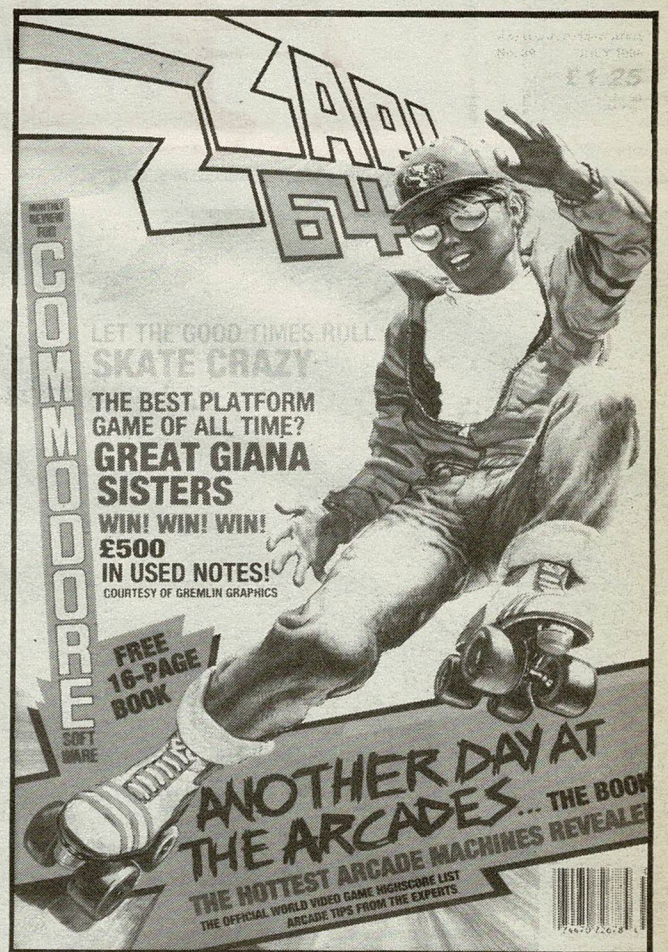
Newsfield has responded vigorously to suggestions in CTW last week that the Commodore magazine sector is heading for difficulties.

It was argued by Commodore Computing International and Amiga User publisher Anthony Jacobson that the C64 would not provide a sufficiently large and active enough market come next year to sustain the handful of Commodore-specific magazines. In particular, he cited the prospect of Newsfield's Zzap and EMAP's Commodore User being squeezed by the advance of both the budget and 16-bit sectors.

But Newsfield's advertisement manager Roger Bennett has hit back. "We've got our own strategy to cope with the growth of the Amiga. As it becomes more important, so we'll be increasing the coverage and help generate revenue that way. We're coming up from behind, really," he said.

"As yet, the Amiga sector isn't threatening us. But there's a natural loyalty amongst 64 owners to Commodore, and there's also strong loyalty to Newsfield. So they'll be turning to us for information about the Amiga."

Elsewhere in the magazine publishing world, EMAP has nixed the notion that it had to drop the original title of its



ZZAP: Sliding into Amiga sector

new 16-bit magazine, due to legal threats. Editor Gary Penn told CTW that 16-Blitz was pulled simply because "no one was really happy with it. It was racy, but we wanted something which said 'This is the best – it's something new'."

EMAP had already had an

initial legal joust with Jigsaw, the publishers of Blitz, before the decision was made. "Publisher Terry Pratt and the solicitors were desperately disappointed. The whole board was spoiling for a fight," Penn added drolly.

The new title, called The One, is out in September.

Ambtek eyes dealer route

PC mail order company Ambtek is planning to set up a dealer network for badged PCs.

Thus far no machine has been tied up to spearhead the push but the firm is making tentative moves into the trade sector. For the past three

years it has been selling little known Far Eastern clones direct to end-users.

It is unlikely though that there will be any sub £500 entry level machines. For the moment Ambtek is "looking closely" at an AT in the £1,500-£1,700 price bracket. "It's early days yet and

we're evaluating the market. The problem with setting up a dealer network is that you need a good stock of machines to start," said boss Anthony Bourne. "That puts the onus on keeping stocks high and we're looking at all the various avenues."

On the possibility of any low cost machines he said: "I think the Amstrad type market has been tied up now and so we are looking to get a bit more upmarket." Bourne hopes to have the operation in place by the autumn.



Proselytisers for the leisure software cause have banged on ad nauseam about the parallels between the record and games market, but Destiny is taking the pitch a stage further. Its next release Diamond (Spectrum £7.99, C64 £8.99/12.99) includes a cassette single by the apparently "emerging" band, The Company She Keeps. The label – which is distributed by Activision – is run by erstwhile Beyond boss Francis Lee. To confuse matters, he has also started a record label Destiny Records, which – inevitably – will package its vinyl releases with games . . .

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NEW HORIZONS

The emergence of the new price for the A500, will certainly increase the user base, which in turn will stimulate even greater interest from the manufacturers of software and peripherals. New products are being developed all the time, and the machine is proving its prowess in a wide variety of fields. Apart from its obvious excellence in the games market and its popularity both in the graphic and music sectors, the Amiga has also proven its worth in business and education.

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Even though the retail price of the A500 has been reduced by £100, SDL are still able to offer dealers the same 17½% profit margin which was available previously. This makes the dealer price just £286.95 exc VAT.

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Multi-tasking enables the running of more than one program at once, or the operation of more than one task simultaneously within a program.

* WIMP

The Commodore Amiga offers a Window, Icon, Mouse, and Pull-down menu (WIMP) environment with its own custom designed operating system Amiga DOS.

* QUALITY SOUND & SPEECH

Four independent channels producing sound in stereo, and a high quality sound synthesiser, a built-in English text-to-speech device, with controls for rate, pitch, volume and gender of voice.

* CUSTOM CHIPS

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* BLITTER CHIP

a sophisticated high-speed graphics processor which is fitted as standard.

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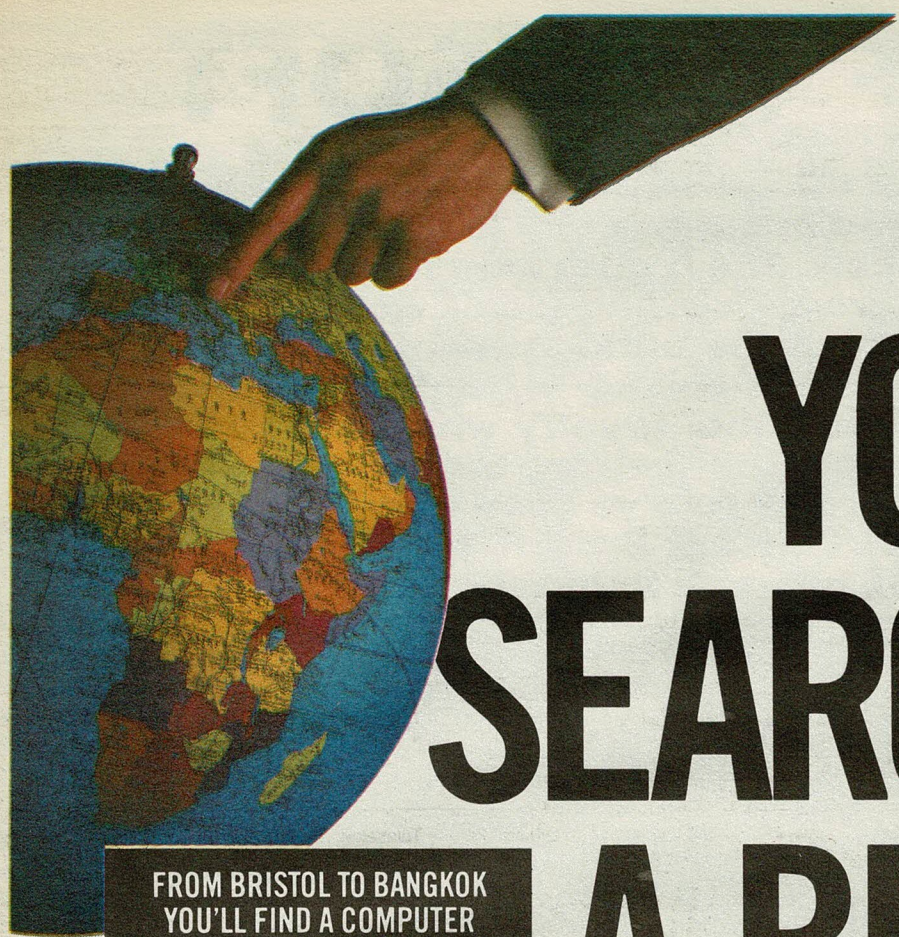
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Prism Leisure	References or cash	£100	30 days net	40-80%	Securicor	Next day	Telesales	2000	Football Manager II (Addictive)	No	Me
R & R	References or cash	No	20th of month following	40%	Courier	Next day	Telesales	4000	Yogi Bear (Alternative)	Peripherals	Rc
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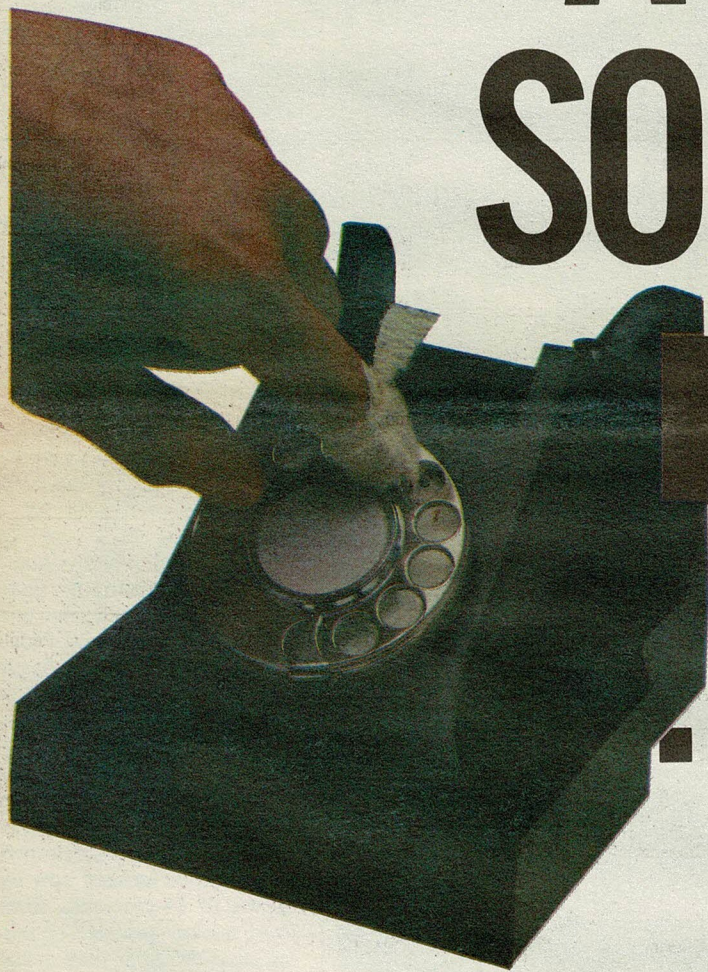
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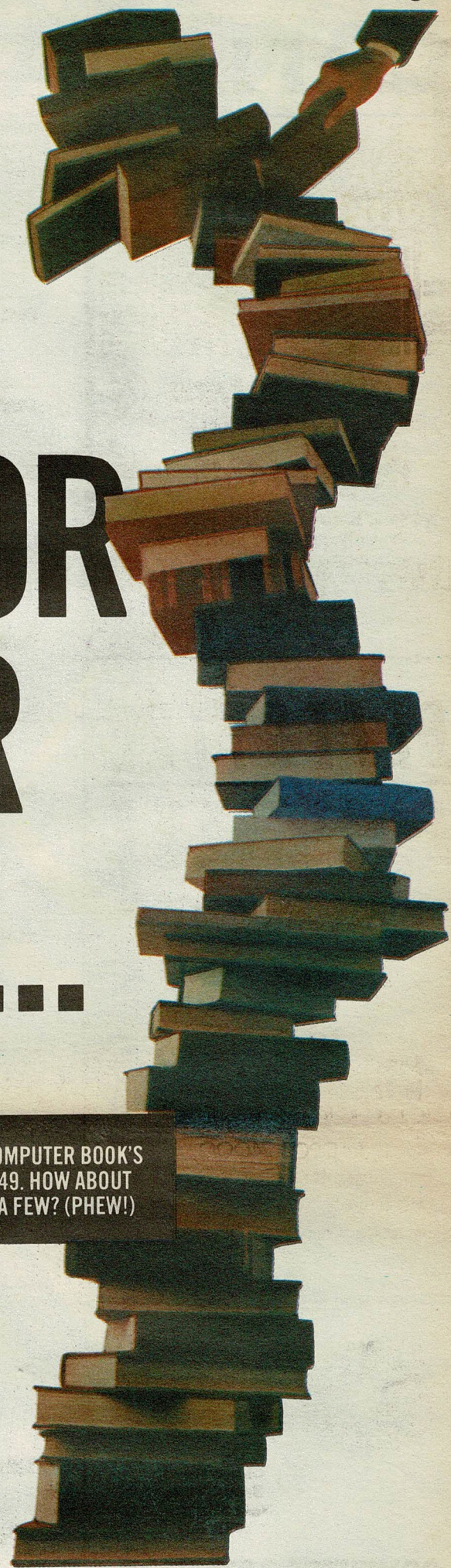


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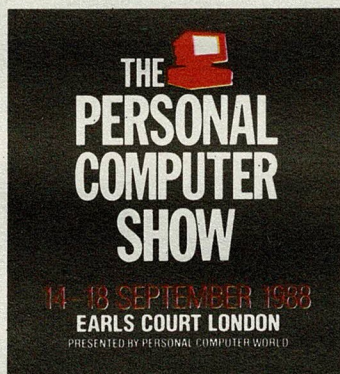


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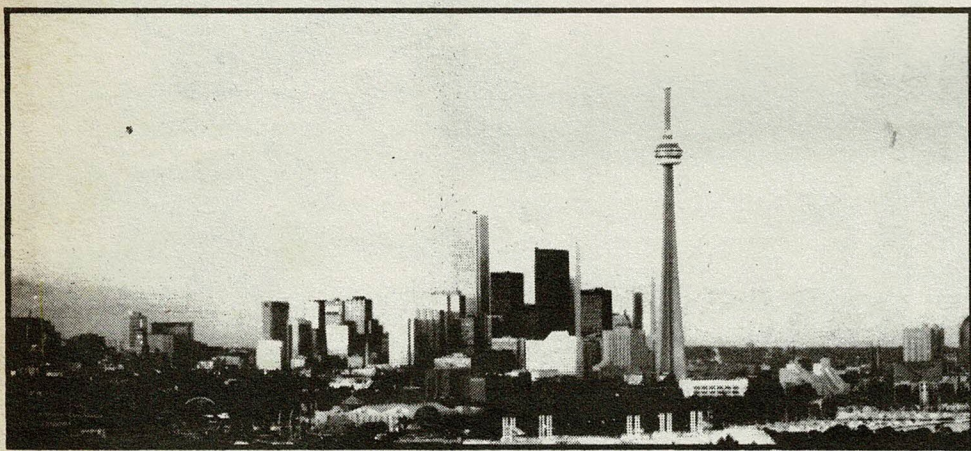
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CANADA DRY OF BRITSOFT



The Americans tower over the Brits when it comes to Canadian software sales

Over the years, British leisure software has tapped in successfully to most leading foreign markets. The battles may have been hard and the cross-licensing deals virtually impenetrable, but the bucks, yens, francs and pesetas have been rolling in. But when it comes to Canada – that country which isn't quite part of America, but feels as though everybody else thinks it should've been – the shelves are virtually bereft of Britsoft. Newsfield's **BARNABY PAGE** attempts to answer why . . .

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Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards may have gone out a failure and come home a hero, but to Canadian retailers British software remains an also-ran, rarely seen and often discounted when it is available.

The biggest disadvantage for the exporting Brit is, as everywhere, hardware. The Spectrum, still a mainstay of so many houses, is virtually unheard of out there where the buffalo roam, and by contrast the PC is seen as taking an ever-larger market share.

Retailer Lenny Post of Soft Options in Calgary assesses the base: "Commodore 64 is still fairly high but the IBM and compatibles have been catching up – they've really exploded in the last year."

He's also seen an Amiga 500 explosion since Christmas – but as for the ST, "demand for the software has never been there".

Commodore is "still selling a lot of machines," observes Steve Wexler, editor of trade paper *Computer Data* (a Canadian sister of Britain's *Computer News*). "They've had a big hold over the market for a long time."

Most retailers, producers and pundits back up these views, and despite myth – and low North American hardware prices – few see an Apple Mac attack outside the educational market. As a spokeswoman for Activision in Mountain View, California, puts it, "the Mac is, like, low down the totem pole".

But the PC's Canadian predominance is assured now by hordes of 14-year-olds, fresh from hockey practice clutching their dimes as they queue for the latest Compaq; rather, it's because DOS kit is fun for all the family, purchased by and for parents but also used by the children. As Wexler puts it, the PCs are home machines for "some work, some writing, and you can have the kids up and do some educational software and games".

Also, says another Calgary retailer – Austin Hook at The Computer Shop Of Calgary, who became Canada's first micro retailer in 1976 – there are "businessmen who want to have one game to play".

High prices, low Brit appeal

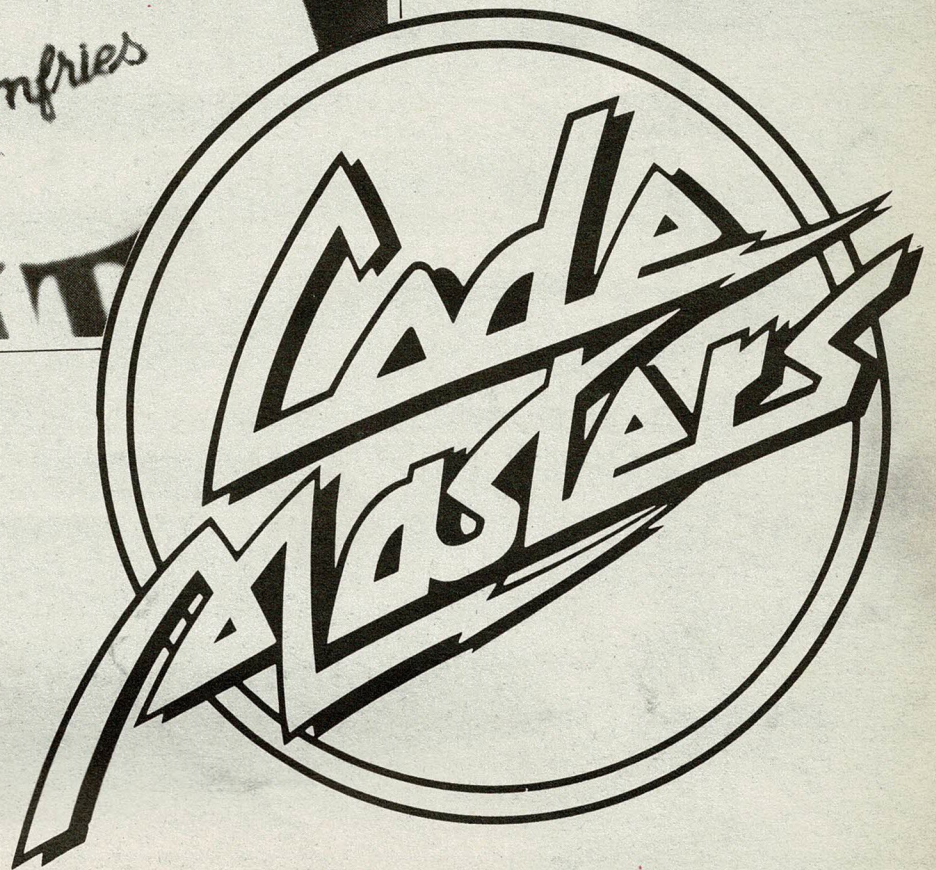
This adult market may explain Canada's high software prices. Most games cost between \$19.95 (£8.91) and \$79 (£35.27), a big PC adventure will typically be \$65 (£29.02) to \$85 (£37.95). And though the very cheapest games, sometimes repackaged

Continued on page 19

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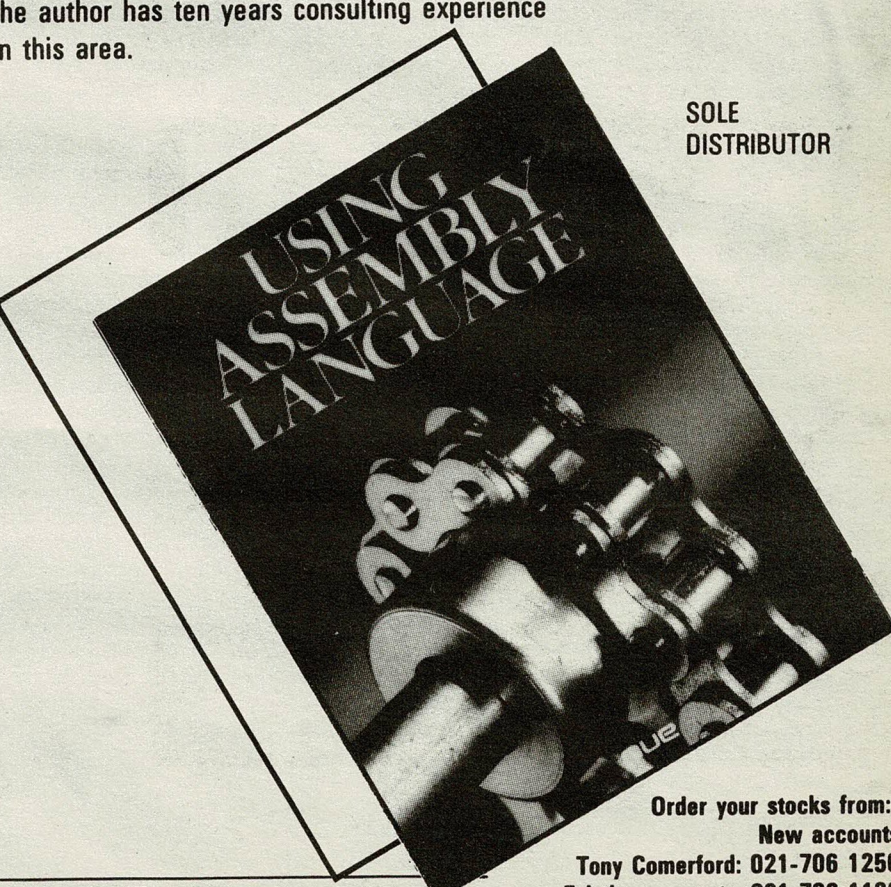
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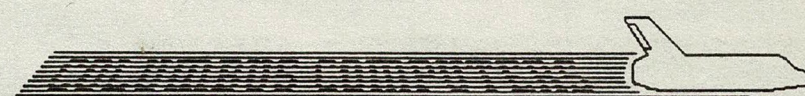
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THE LEISURE PRINCIPLE

T'other week, the vast summer Consumer Electronics Show (CES) was held in Chicago. What lessons can be learned from it by the British trade? Just how well are the console firms doing? Why was Geoff Brown wearing the widest smile of the Brit publishers? Andromeda Software's boss ROBERT STEIN files a special report for CTW. . .

Chicago once again. I have been coming to this city since 1975. In that time I have witnessed, and experienced the birth, the growth and the often forecast downfall of our industry. Twice a year, in spring at Las Vegas and in summer at Chicago, the CES is an opportunity to meet old friends, indulge ourselves in some soul searching analysis of the last twelve months and view the latest products.

As with previous years I had forgotten to book a room well in advance. Discovering that all the VIP hotel guest cards aren't worth the plastic they're printed on, the SOS goes out. When you reach the eleventh hour anything will do: a spare bathtub, a shed on lake Michigan, anything. Fortunately, someone came through in the end. Pledging life-long friendship (thankfully none of us are immortal), you gratefully accept their offer of a room. OK, so no one has ever heard of the hotel. Still, if it's good enough for them . . . As with the hotel reservation, so too with the flight. I chase around travel agents, looking for good deals, only to transfer it at the last minute.

The flight over is always an interesting and, occasionally, entertaining prelude to the show. For some it is seven and a half hours of thoughtful solitude. For others, a time to make new friends - especially with the better looking members of the cabin crew. The facts you learn about the industry, and all too often about your own company, are truly amazing. It's times like these you wish that cell phones worked at 30,000 feet . . .

This year I had departed with mixed feelings. Ever conscious of the duties back at the office, I decided to list my tasks for the show. After ten minutes of staring into space, I realised I had the best possible reason to go - I had been bestowed with the rare and distinguished honour of writing an article for CTW.

I had never done anything like this before, so I contacted a friend who had. The result, three pages of A4 full of topics to write about. I decided the only way to tackle this was to try answer questions I would ask, if I had stayed at home. So here goes.

Games gain

Everyone attending the show compares it with the previous year's. Then they tell you, "I told you things are not as bad as they seem, there's hope yet . . . I said everything would be alright."

Some people have short memories.

For me the most significant difference this year was the increased visibility of software publishers, particularly American ones. This about-face from last year's poor showing is indicative of fresh optimism, brought on by the success of the last six months trading.

As expected, the resurgence of the video games console, which began 18 months ago, was much in evidence. Headed up by Nintendo, with support from Sega and not forgetting the veterans Atari, the console market is back and here to stay. Everyone seems to be involved in rapid product development for these machines. Names like Broderbund, Activision and Mindscape are side by side with newcomers like Nintendo specialists Acclaim - a name you will be hearing a lot more in the UK.

Currently a total of 30 companies, predominantly Japanese and American, are working to support a projected installed customer base of 11 million machines in the US by this Christmas. This excludes the existing 15 to 17 million already installed in the Far East.

Despite this apparent opportunity to print money, there is serious concern regarding the availability of cartridges for this year's products. This has led to some curious licensing agreements

not been as high as this for over three years.

As part of its market control strategy, Nintendo is the only firm that can manufacture these cartridges. Combining this with the limited titles a publisher is allowed to license - currently five, but some have rumoured this might be reduced, and the fact they will use 40 per cent of the available cartridges for their own product - it will mean some publishers being disappointed this Christmas.

Nintendo says it should be able to produce around 30 million cartridges in total this year. Simple mathematics shows that there will only be about 18 million cartridges for third party publishers. Divide that by the number of supporting companies and then by the number of machines worldwide, and the returns may not be as great as some think.

Sega says . . .

Sega, by highlighting its greater experience in the coin-op market, is promoting itself by claiming its games

release 50 new products recently and won more show awards than any other company.

Atari's representatives were not shy in extolling the virtues of their system: lower cost (for console and software), no production shortages and no restriction on how many titles a publisher wants to convert.

How will this affect the UK market? Nintendo's production shortages will severely restrict its European activities. And Sega is still having problems with distribution and brand identity; it ought to be an Atari Christmas. There have been a number of Atari development systems sold to major developers in the UK and a range of new product is expected in time for the peak period.

One Atari spokesman claimed: "The games market has never been more buoyant, and we have no doubts about that continuing. The XE system has interested many 8-bit programmers who were about to switch to 16-bit machines. Many big-name publishers are supporting the XE and

players to drop in retail price, at which time they will launch a while range of exciting interactive products. Until prices do come down, they intend to carry on exploiting specialist, vertical markets; like large database users.

Other diverse product lines that are attracting attention from some larger software publishers are: VCR games - VHS based products that some are hoping will be the skateboards of this Christmas; home educational video - a strong market in the US, but one sadly neglected (mainly through ignorance) in the UK; and board games. Board and role playing games sales currently represent 12 per cent of the toy industry, so it is difficult not to take a closer look.

I decided to investigate the state of the budget market in the US. I asked some of the larger publishers if they are tempted to emulate current trends in the UK market. They were all of the same opinion - why should they?

If a piece of software sells for a fifth of the price then it's

retail industry". And so he should be; in the first three days of the show the six titles attracted a million dollars in orders. US Gold's direct involvement with the US market is expected to double the company's turnover this year. Brown also commented that he had acquired some "exciting" licences while at the show. I didn't know there were any left: I thought US Gold already had them all . . .

At this point I tried to unearth rumours of US publishers planning to set up offices in the UK. Well, there weren't any. In fact, all the rumours seem to be in the UK.

It is clear from the activities of the main players in the US, they have neither the time, nor the inclination to invade our shores - at present. They are using all their resources to strengthen their positions in their own market place, broaden their images and diversify into other products.

On the hardware scene, I'm sorry to say there is little to report. Commodore was not even there, Atari did not bring along any ST or PC equipment. Amstrad was there showing similar products under two names, Amstrad and Sinclair - nothing like trying to have two bites of the same cherry.

The one hardware manufacturer who did manage to impress me was British: Psion. Its presentation was exceptional and its staff were the most helpful at the show. I am sure that if it keeps up this standard it will have no difficulty in making its presence felt in the US market.

Division too

In conclusion, the show reflected how the consumer electronics market is dividing itself up. The entertainment side will never die - the consumers will just go on demanding higher standards from the producers. Whereas, the 'home office' market place now offers everything a consumer could want: low cost facsimile machines, integrated telex systems for PCs, cheap photocopiers and an enormous range of communication software and hardware.

Personal productivity is one of the most lucrative markets for tomorrow, and some of the more astute players in our industry have already realised it.

When I left the show on the last day, the attendance figures had still not been released and the general feeling was that no records have been broken this year. Despite all the controversy, hard work and occasional disappointments, I still wouldn't leave this industry. After all, our industry is one of the few that affects so many aspects of our daily lives, and whose effects can be visibly measured.

I am glad to be a contributor to this industry as I know are many others. I look forward to seeing you all at Las Vegas . . .



NINTENDO: Shortages loom as format dominates

between Nintendo and its supporters - especially in terms of the royalties publishers are willing to accept and the time they may have to wait till the product is launched. Some sources have suggested up to a year.

Nintendo, which claims to control over 65 per cent of the video games market, admits there could be shortfalls in cartridge production which will affect the peak Christmas market. Even though there is no immediate improvement in sight, it has no intention of cutting back its console production for this year - a projected seven million units.

Many software publishers, especially the smaller independents, have been swept up on a tide of promised riches from converting titles on to Nintendo and Sega machines. Some are finding the cloud's silver lining may be a little tarnished, and are now proceeding a little more cautiously.

One by-product of Nintendo fever is that many publishers are taking a second look at the Atari VCS format. Sales of VCS software have

are superior. As many of the games have been great successes in the arcades, it is justified in doing so - and it charges more for its cartridges.

There were rumours that Sega will be launching a 16-bit machine to compete with the Nintendo Mk.II console and the Nec PC-Engine. Sega was not willing to confirm this.

Atari, at long last, seems to have woken up to the fact that the console market is booming. It now recognises the need to exploit a market it created, but failed to capitalise on. Atari's renewed interest in the video games market was demonstrated by its stand. It was designed to attract and hold visitors' attention. This it did with great effect - including the attention of the competition, who seemed to be in constant attendance.

The main thrust of the Atari stand centred around the 2600, 7800 and XE machines. Admittedly, Atari does not have 30 mainstream publishers fighting to put product on its systems. Having said that, it has managed to

their biggest problem seems to be just how much of their resources they allocate to it."

Sourcing resource

The subject of resource management was a talking point at many meetings. The general feeling amongst publishers was to look outside the industry for professional managers who could get the best out of programmers. Also, the attitude to using 'external' resources for product design and marketing has changed dramatically - everybody wants it but doesn't know where to find it.

One final point about which machines to support. It was interesting to note that all the major US publishers now included Apple II GS versions of their products. Apparently, the Apple now has a bigger installed base than the ST or the Amiga.

CD Rom-ware was not on public display but careful investigation of some hotel suites held a few surprises. Development is proceeding positively, but cautiously. Developers are waiting for the

only going to give the purchaser 20 per cent in terms of game value. If you combine the negative attitude of American game buyers towards budget software, with the distributors' and retailers' reluctance to work on such low margins, it all points to a pretty dismal future for low cost software.

Although the response is so negative about lower price points, I could not help noticing that Thunder Mountain (Mindscape) and Mastertronic are adopting a very professional and positive approach to the market place and will continue to try and gain a greater market awareness.

Gold rush

As usual, the British publishers were very much in evidence. Especially on the Epyx stand. Epyx used the show to launch the US Gold label in America, with six titles being available immediately.

Geoff Brown said he is "very pleased with the initial response shown by the US

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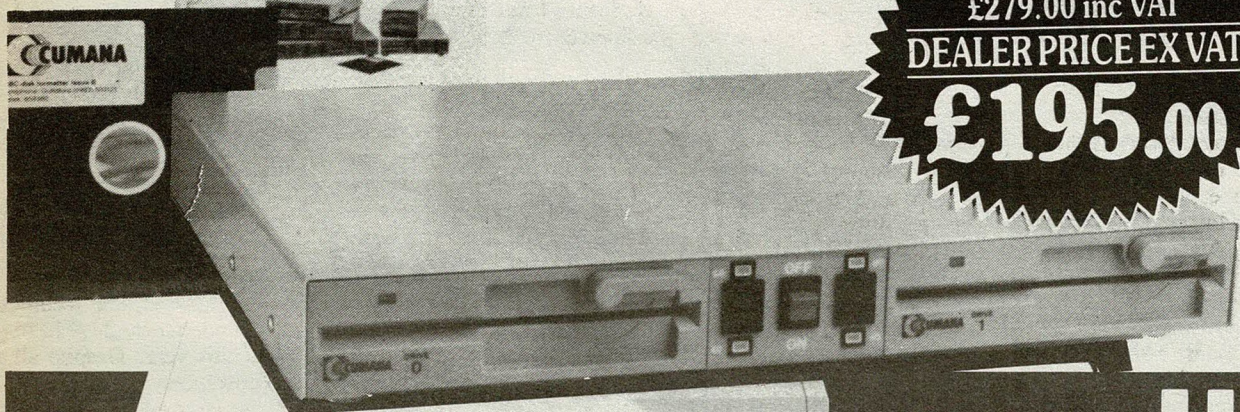
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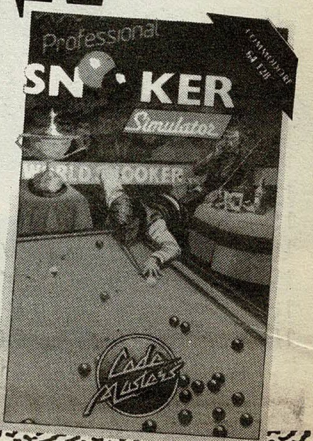
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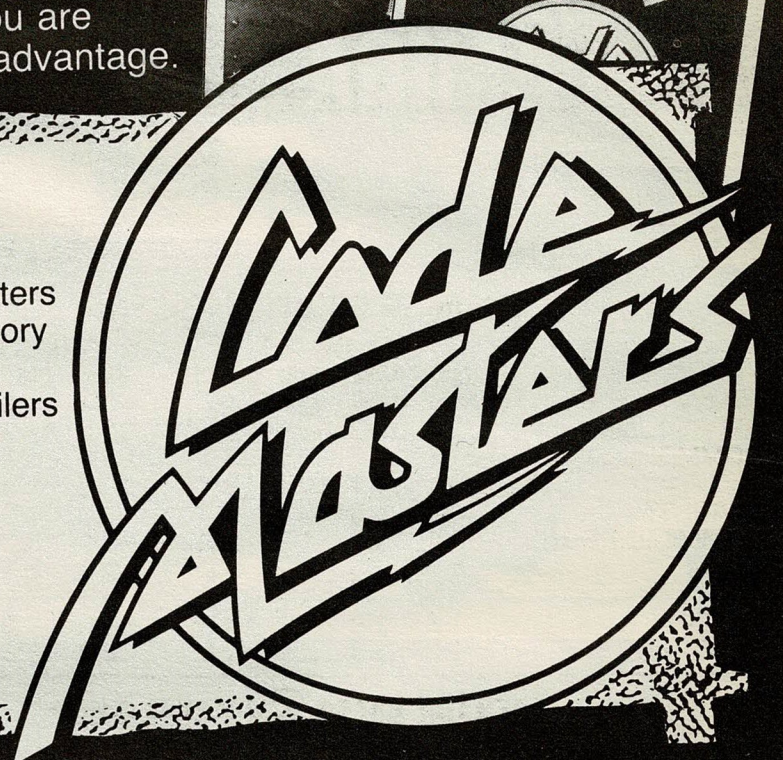


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2	3	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
3	7	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
4	2	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
5	24	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
6	9	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
7	NE	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
8	6	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
9	5	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
10	4	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
11	14	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
12	12	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
13	8	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
14	15	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
15	16	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
16	11	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
17	10	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
18	RE	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
19	25	MATCH DAY 2	OCEAN	7.95
20	RE	BRUCE LEE	AMERICANA	2.99

C64 TOP 20

1	6	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	9.95
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AMSTRAD TOP 10

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3	2	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
4	7	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
5	5	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	RE	NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
7	RE	SKATE ROCK	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
8	RE	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
9	3	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
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ATARI ST TOP 5

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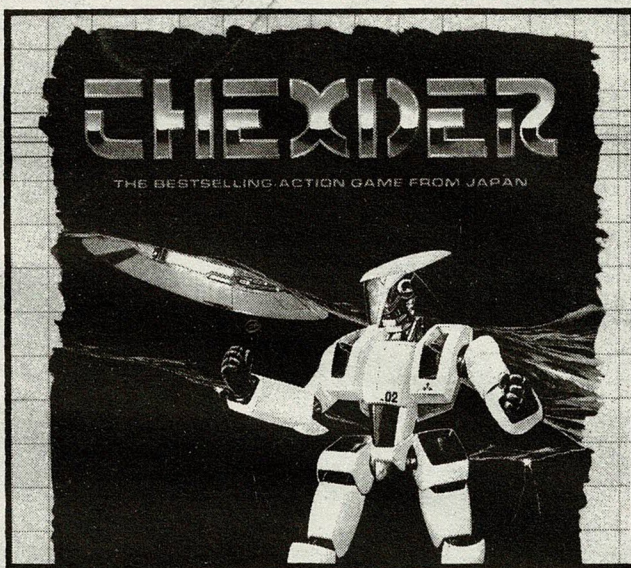
Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
SPECTRUM	45.6	43.8	44.6	46.1	30.0	31.3	27.9	28.5
COMMODORE 64	21.9	22.7	22.6	23.1	23.5	26.5	25.8	23.6
AMSTRAD	18.1	19.1	18.9	16.7	18.7	18.4	18.9	19.2
ATARI ST	4.4	5.5	4.2	3.3	7.0	6.1	6.9	5.9
COMMODORE 16	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.9	3.1	3.3	2.5	1.8
ATARI	1.9	1.3	1.9	1.4	3.8	2.1	2.9	3.4
BBC	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.9	3.1	2.5	3.8	3.2
AMIGA	1.6	1.2	1.1	1.5	3.0	1.8	2.7	2.6
ELECTRON	1.3	1.3	0.9	1.8	2.7	2.3	2.7	2.9

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
106	86	91	87

Soft options

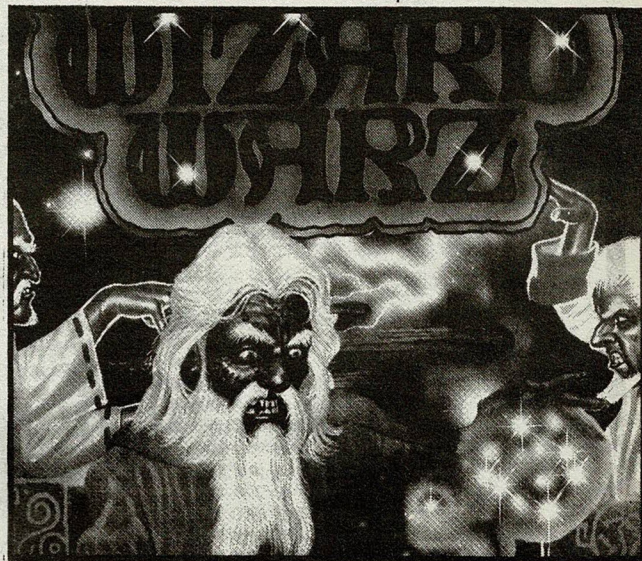
SOFT OPTIONS carries salient details of leisure software titles just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software houses wishing to be included should fax (0438 741247) or phone (0438 310185) through details ten days prior to our publication date.



▲ **ACE: Alien Syndrome** (SpST - £8.99-£19.99) The people down Softek way have been getting very excited about this one, and well they might: it's not every day they get their hands on a Sega licence. But this will have to be a very good conversion if it isn't going to suffer from not being part of a 'sexier' and better known label. ▲ **ADDICTIVE: Football Manager II** (Sp64AmSTAgPC - £9.99-£19.99) A claimed 500,000 people have bought the original version of this game, from full-price to £2.99 and ST to Electron. It's not surprising then that there's been a fair bit of excitement in the monthlies with countless previews and bags of hype. The nine month delay since its original launch at last year's PCW Show probably won't have harmed it but the squillions of FM clones already out there might have swept up a bit of demand. That said, this - with its long list of extra features - should smash its way into the charts very high and stay around a long while, possibly until Christmas. ▲ **CODE MASTERS: Pro Snooker** (64 - £1.99) The C64 version duly arrives a year after the Spectrum and Amstrad in true Code Masters fashion. Also in true Code Masters fashion, the firm is attempting to argue that the sustained success of Blue Ribbon's *Steve Davis* won't be to *Pro Snooker's* detriment. What, not even one lost sale? ▲ **ELECTRONIC ARTS: Arctic Fox** (SpAm - £8.95-£14.95) This game first appeared a couple of years ago via the unfruitful relationship with Ariolasoft (remember them?). Presumably these are a couple of new formats for what is actually a fair game. ▲ **ELECTRONIC ARTS: World Tour Gold** (Ag - £24.95) EA boss Trip Hawkins said a while back that despite possibly being a better game *WTG* would suffer in the UK because of the enormous success of *Leaderboard* in

its numerous guises. EA, however, has cleverly beaten US Gold to the Amiga, at least, and this should satisfy a few of the golfheads out there. ▲ **ELITE: Buggy Boy** (Ag - £24.99) This one certainly seems to have been around for ages, but that's due more to the gradual release of new versions rather than delays. It should perform well and is certainly the closest yet to the original Tatsumi coin-op. ▲ **FIREBIRD: Black Lamp** (Ag - £19.95) BT seems to be releasing a bucketful of full-price stuff at the moment. This is the Amiga version of a game already much talked about because of its big sprites and array of colour. ▲ **GO: Wizard Warz** (C64Sp+3AmST - £8.99-£19.99) For some reason Go doesn't seem to have caught the imagination as much as one would have initially expected. On the whole its games have tended to disappoint even when they've been good ones. US Gold will be hoping to stop the rot with this fantasy role playing effort written by Canvas Software. ▲ **LEISURE GENIUS: Scruples** (PC - £24.95) A steady seller for a format that still has to prove its worth as a games area won't enable Virgin executives to drive round in Rolls Royces as a result - but then again haven't they all got one each anyway? ▲ **MICROILLUSIONS: Blackjack Academy** (Ag64 - £24.99) It's not often

these days that you find a C64 game coming in at £25. This is a very detailed card game simulator that will appeal to the real enthusiast who 'works the tables' rather than those brought up on Happy Families and Old Maid. ▲ **RAINBIRD: Jinxter** (Am - £19.95) This is obviously not such a big property on the 8-bit formats but a slightly higher percentage of adventure games own CPCs rather than, say, a Spectrum or C64. For a good British-style text adventure you can't get much better than a Magnetic Scrolls effort - even if they are a tad boring. ▲ **SIERRA: Thexder** (Ag - £19.99) This, believe it or not, is actually a seriously well known game in Japan with some 1.5 million units sold to date. UK marketeer Activision would no doubt be delighted if it could sell one hundredth of that quantity in the UK (for those without calculators that's 15,000 units). ▲ **SILVERBIRD: Stunt Bike Simulator** (64SpAm - £1.99) As long as this isn't an absolute turkey in a well garnished cassette box this should do well by name alone. And with a name like that it won't make a mess of the kids' Code Masters collection. ▲ **SILVERBIRD: European 5-a-Side Football** (Sp64 - £1.99) It is surely written in the heavens that anyone who tries to cash in on a major TV event should have his dastardly plot thwarted. And so here we are with just a few European Championship games left and BT's banker isn't here yet. That said, it's still a football game and it'll still do well. ▲ **US GOLD: Dream Warrior** (Sp64+3AmPC - £8.99-£19.99) This purports to take the gamer into a "kaleidoscope of psychological warfare". It's certainly nice to see software attempting to take up the theme of wars being fought inside people's heads rather than on battlefields, but despite all this *Dream Warrior* is really just another shoot-em-up.



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

Electric shocked

Re: "Publishers Blasted"
 In *CTW* May 30 you published a letter from Michael Donoghue at ABC Leicester, bemoaning the standard of service publishers and distributors give to their dealers. I would like to point out that not all publishers/distributors act in this way. At Electric Distribution we both publish and distribute software for leading machines, including Commodore, IBM, Amstrad and Atari.

In answer to the points raised by Mr Donoghue:
 • "Software houses that bundle creating an instant loss for dealers." In the UK we rarely bundle software that has been sold through dealers. Even when this happens our Stock Exchange Service allows dealers to return stock for full refund against another order.
 • "Suppliers sell direct at below their own retail price." Electric has a firm policy never to sell direct, even to the educational market.

- "No product information." Our dealers are provided with information sheets — and of course these are free of charge.
- "Advertise months before it could possibly be available." Although it is difficult because of the lead time on adverts to get advertising synchronised with product release we have never been more than one month out.
- "Magazine offers at below trade prices." Even if we ever did this our Stock Exchange System protects the dealer fully.
- "Software houses reduce prices and the retailers lose out." All Electric Distribution dealers get full 120 day

price protection. Whilst publishers and distributors are not angels, your editorial is right to say that standards are improving. Perhaps if dealers were to look further than just the products they buy and the prices they pay to the services and support they are getting from their suppliers, then the standards within the industry would rise even further.

Neal O'nions
 Sales & marketing manager
 Electric Distribution
 — *The original letter appeared to be directed more at the leisure than the business market, so it'd be interesting to hear some response from that sector. No company puff, though . . .*

SPEAKEASY

Hager the hopeful

To all software distributors:
Would you like my account of £15,000 per annum?
 All you have to do is give me *sale or return*. You can impose any limitations you like — let's talk. I am sick of out of date dead stock (I hope the software publishers are reading too because I know I am not alone). What is a three month old game worth? Half price? NO CHANCE!
 I am sure the time is coming when we will have S.O.R. from the publisher right down to the retailer. The result at present is if we aren't 100 per cent sure a game will sell it doesn't even reach my shelf.
 So to any distributor who would like another £15,000 sales a year give me a ring let's discuss it — lower margins? No game back over six weeks old? Not on compilations? Sounds fine to me.
John Barker,
 Hagar's Electronics,
 Sheerness
 Kent
 — *Doubtless all the phone lines to Sheerness will be clogged in perpetuity, such is the attractiveness of this pitch. John Barker can be reached on 0795 663336 — and best of luck . . .*

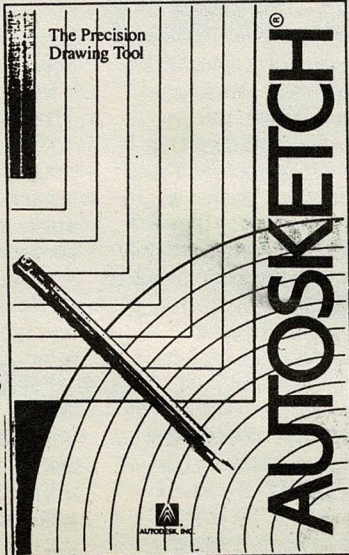
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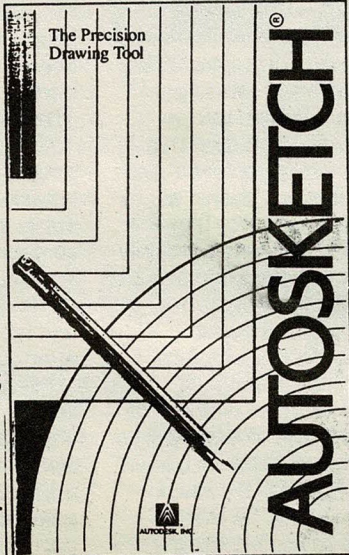
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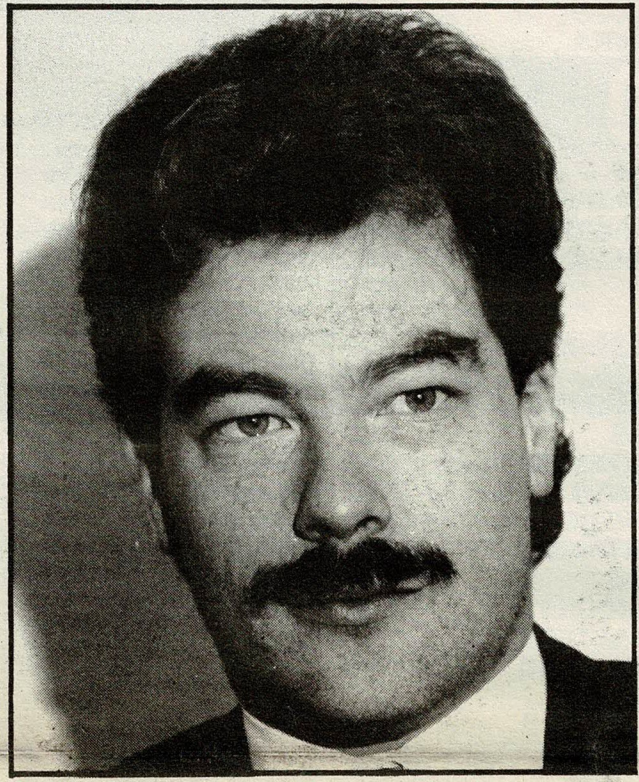
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O'NIONS: Standards will rise if dealers scrutinise

Whatever happened to Brenchley & ECL?

We are informed by the official Receiver in Bankruptcy that Essential Consultants Ltd., of 34 Bourton Road, Gloucester, went in to liquidation last October. But as yet no Creditors Meeting has been held, because we are told, the Official Receiver has insufficient documentation to establish a list of creditors. Mr R Brenchley, who was a director of the company until he resigned early in 1987, has told the Official Receiver that he sold the company to a Mr Fisher of Johannesburg, South Africa who cannot at present be traced.

As one of the creditors anxious to resolve the matter we would ask that any of your readers who:—
 a have outstanding claims against Essential Consultants Ltd., or
 b know anything of Mr Fisher, or
 c bought our 'Hot-shot' BBC-compatible computer joysticks or other items from 34 Bourton Road (whether from E.C.L. or any other party) or
 d have any information regarding the administration of that company during 1986/87 contact the undersigned. All information will be gratefully received and will be passed to the Official Receiver.

Yours faithfully,
I.R. Francis
 Flight Link Control Ltd.
 Unit 12, The Maltings,
 Turk Street, Alton, Hants
 Tel: 0420 87241
 — *CTW would also be interested to hear from any readers with any sensible information about these points or about related ECL matters.*

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CANADA DRY OF BRITSOFT

Continued from page 10

British product, will cost as little as \$9.95 (£4.44; there is no sub-Code Masters Plus budget market), Hook observes: "I can get cheap games in that don't capture people's interests and they stay on the shelves."

Conversely, he notes, price resistance occurs at about \$49 (£21.88), the level of games like Melbourne House's *Amiga Road Wars*.

Cheap and cheerful British product is often repackaged and discounted - for instance, two games for \$13.95 (£6.23). *Gauntlet* and *Ghosts N Goblins* were big in Canada, and Hook says "we're selling a bunch of *Barbarian*", but the big movers are slicker American titles.

Epyx, Mindscape, Broderbund, MicroProse, Accolade, Electronic Arts (though Post observes it's "not as popular as it was back in the heyday of the 64") - these are the houses retailers name.

And, says Post, with "a lot of the suits coming into the store", the high proportion of 35-to-45-year-olds in the PC market is "really going toward a little more strategy, thinking games". Successes include *Bard's Tale*, *Might and Magic* from New World, and *King's Quest* and *Space Quest* from Sierra.

Simulations such as MicroProse's *Gunship* and Microsoft's popular *Flight Simulator* also sell, "so they can have a game over the noon hour at the office".

Quality is the criterion for the Amiga customers, too, though they're younger - 20 to 30. Hook observes that "Amiga people tend to be professional programmers, really intense, and they want really good games when they get them".

In all the major markets quality arcade adventures are popular, everyone agrees, but text adventures not so - the Canadians like their cerebral-ity flashy.

The crunch, as everywhere, is distribution. Still in Calgary - as good an example of middle Canada as you'll find - Mel Fishman at Phase Four claims to be the country's largest distributor of Amiga and MS-DOS product.

He contends: "Canada, though it's a very very large country, doesn't have the population (total: 25.4 million UNESCO 1985 estimate) to support more than one distributor in each market area."

That's not strictly true, but though there are regional dis-

tributors and a few chains to which producers ship direct, most distribution is through a handful of firms, the majority of them based in the Toronto area.

Naming the names

Major players in distribution include Micro D, Beamscope and Ingram. Significant chains include Computerland, Canada's largest with more than 70 outlets, and Hartco Enterprises - which owns Compucentre, Hart Department Stores and Micro Age retailers.

Fishman says the standard distributor's margin is 60 per cent and retailer's margin 40 per cent.

Advertising is of necessity limited to point-of-sale - across the Atlantic, games magazines just don't hold the sway that they do here. Canada did have its own title; *Video/Computer/Connections*, in 1980-1981 - but Cindy McGee, now executive editor at its erstwhile producer Page Publishing (no relation), dismisses it as "a short-lived offshoot when video games were really hot".

And though many say the

happy days of Atari and Intellevision are set for a rerun with Nintendo and Sega, that magazine market was "a nothing issue for, like, five years" according to McGee.

Trade papers apart, Canada now produces only a handful of small homegrown titles, such as *The Transactor* (Commodore 64) and *Maple Orchard* (Apple Mac).

And Lenny Post's view from behind the magazine racks at Soft Options is that games titles "just don't sell as much as the regular information" - *PC Magazine*, *Byte* - and though the US import *The Electronic Game Player* does well, "the demand isn't really there. Most of the ones

that do sell are the ones that do simulations."

The costs of distribution across the world's second-largest nation - which also affect software - and the paucity of patriotic Canadian games houses to advertise are likely factors in this dearth of magazines. After all, most of the leisure software that reaches Canada is marketed through California - either because it is American product, or because (in the words of one UK producer) "we regard the Canadian market as being contiguous with, and part of, the American market".

But are UK software houses ignoring a wide open

sales opportunity in the wide open spaces, at least for their top-end Commodore 64 and Amiga product? Canadian retailers often don't stock it simply because they can't get it.

As Austin Hook observes: "The major problem in getting British software is getting a relationship with the distributor."

Canadian distributors and chains

Beamscope: (416) 291-0000
 Computerland: (416) 673-3222
 Hartco Enterprises: (516) 354-3810
 Ingram: (416) 738-1700
 Micro D: (416) 741-9825
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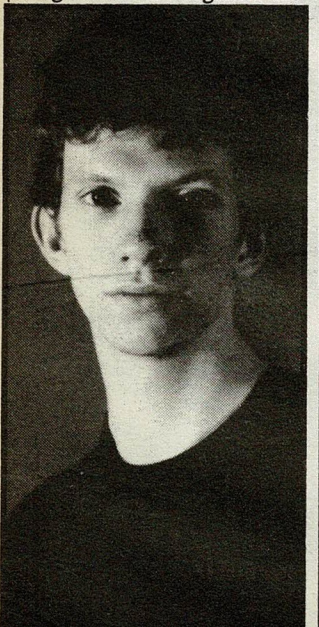
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PAGE: There's a market out there

Mansell hits C64 pitstop

Publisher Martech and development firm Andromeda have become embroiled in a row over the protracted delays to the C64 version of Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix.

Both sides have told CTW that they are actively considering their legal options. Martech claims that it has variously lost sales, trade and end user goodwill, as well as

its patience with the non-arrival of a major title. It has also incurred the wrath of the Advertising Standards Authority for promoting Nigel Mansell when the game was not finished.

For its part, Andromeda is upset that Martech has pulled the contract from it and poached one of its freelance programmers.

The C64 version was originally due to have appeared prior to Christmas last year, along with those for the Spectrum and Amstrad. They too

were delayed, but charted highly when released in February. One effect of the non-appearance of the title at that time was a loss of momentum in overall sales: success on the C64 would have kept it high in the charts and thus would presumably have prompted additional Spectrum and Amstrad sales.

Andromeda last week acknowledged that there had been certain difficulties with programmers, but said that the situation was still essentially under control when

Martech pulled the plug. In all, some four or five programmers worked individually on the title. One is said to have had something of a mental breakdown, and another "just disappeared", according to Andromeda boss Robert Stein.

"Then we had a new guy working on it and he was making tremendously good progress. But then Martech approached him directly, took him away and locked him up somewhere in Brighton where

we can't get hold of him," he added.

For his part, Martech's boss David Martin said: "It's been a never ending saga and if we'd waited for Andromeda, we'd be waiting until 1989. It's been very costly to us in terms of promotion, loss of sales and reputation. Eventually, we had to pull one of our programmers off another project and take one of the guys working for Andromeda, who was working on antiquated equipment. We expect now to release it some time in July.

"At this moment, we're considering what form of legal action to take. We could go

for the simple damages for losses incurred - the advance, the advertising spend - or we could go for the full, overall damages."

The first would total just under £10,000; the second, Martech believes, "is approaching six figures".

On the equipment claim, Stein countered by pointing out that he was contracted to produce a game and that the method of production wasn't specified.

"The whole thing has been totally ridiculous and I feel very badly let down. We're now having to do Andromeda's own work for them," Martin added.

Amstrad

Continued from front page

whether they do or not remains to be seen. We've made it so that it can be picked up and taken back and installed easily so that people can be up and running with the minimum of fuss."

Roback refused to give any target sales figures, as is Amstrad's wont, but claimed that there had already been a "very positive response from the distributors."

One threat to Amstrad achieving high volume sales comes from the prospect of other networking firms reducing their prices, or offering stripped down versions.

"Our prices make a nonsense of the current pricing structures. I'm sure that we'll see them trying to match us on price, since there's very little currently at the low level other than Sage - which is really only a peripherals sharer working only with their products. Ours is genuinely multi-user: it'll run with anybody's multi-user software."

Magpie

Continued from front page

sion surrounding a Mastertronic link with the Woolworths-owned distributor and changes to Woolworth's own buying methods has been settled.

The upshot of a still unclearly defined "joint venture" between RM and Mastertronic means that the two firms will be providing Woolworths, Tesco, Littlewoods, Asda and a number of smaller accounts with software. Mastertronic, it seems, will take over Softek subsidiary Software Consultants' role of RM buyer and evaluator on July 1st.

Melbourne House: The rejuvenated label has just been launched in the US, its first product being a character licence: *John Ellway's Quarterback* for the PC.

The now very much 16-bit orientated label has had three Amiga number ones in the UK this year with its first trio of releases: *Xenon*, *Aargh* and *Roadwars*.

Arcadia: Mastertronic's expensive attempt to create a UK competitor to the Japanese arcade machine is beginning to make an impression in the UK. It has now been installed in over 100 pub sites.

Last month the firm's erstwhile UK marketing manager Rachel Davies took up a similar position in the US to bolster Arcadia's management team.

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