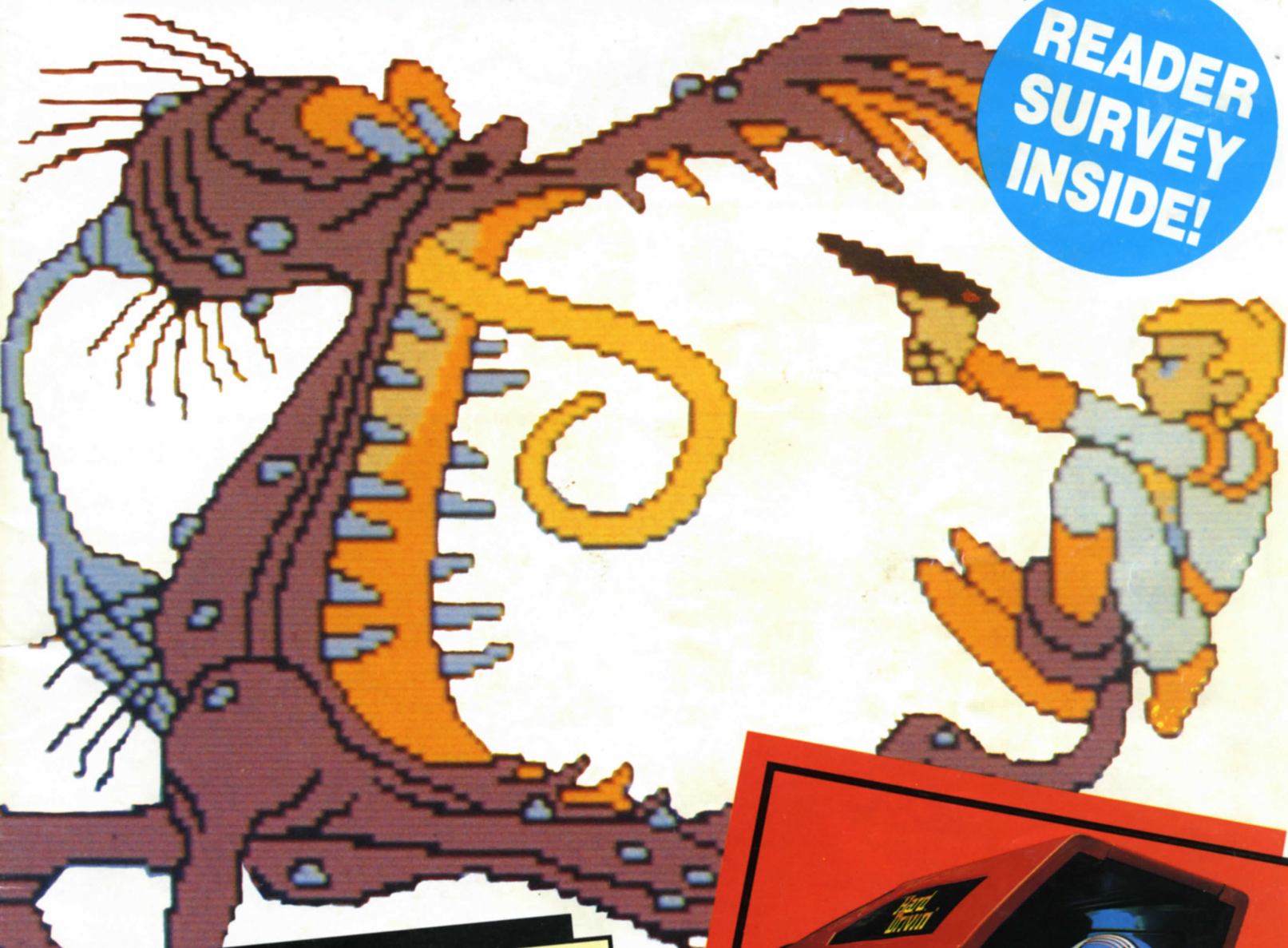# Megacomp

AUSTRALIA'S   HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE

READER SURVEY INSIDE!

PIRATES HAVE THEIR SAY
Amazing revelations from both sides!

OPEN LINE LETTERS SECTION
Includes more drivel from whackers

IT'S THE MIDI REVOLUTION!
Music will never be the same again

WRITE YOUR OWN GAMES!
It's a lot easier than you think

LIVING WITH A DINOSAUR
What's a TRS80? Reader confesses

BIG, EXPANDED GAMES DEPT
Nobody reviews 'em like we do

Hard Drivin'

WIN A FERRARI
RADIO CONTROLLED MODEL

NUMBER 4
Jan/Feb 1990

You ain't seen nothin' yet

With this issue, MEGACOMP has taken a giant step forward to add what so many readers have been asking for - colour!

But it's not the only change. Because we wanted to give you more contents, we've increased the page size and moved up from three columns per page to four and made the type slightly smaller.
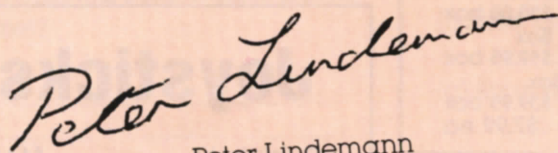
What it all means is that now we can fit a whopping 20.75% more onto each editorial page than before. We've a few more tricks still up our sleeve which will keep MEGACOMP top value for you.

You always know you're on top when others copy things you do, but we reckon some of the plans we have in the pipeline will make MEGACOMP a pretty hard act to follow.

The only thing we didn't like doing was bumping the price up by 40¢. (It's the old rising costs story, and we did hold back as long as we could.)

To balance that out, we've lopped about 25% off our 12-issue subscription price. Next issue, they'll go up too. So by taking out a sub now, you'll save almost $12 on our new cover price, which is like getting each issue for $2.99 - and your subscription is post free. The coupon is on page 7.

Stick with us - we're going places!

Peter Lindeman

Peter Lindemann
Publisher & Executive Editor,
MEGACOMP MAGAZINE

THE BORING BITS

Front cover: Frame from 'Space Ace', the stunning new game by Don Bluth, of 'Dragon's Lair' fame. It's put out by Readysoft (Canada) and distributed here by Questor. See preview, page 32.

Inside

Megacomp

The Gang

Publisher & Executive Editor
Peter Lindemann

Design & Features Editor
Denis Mercier

Technical Editor
Peter Chin Quan

International Editor
John Carter

Gopher
Jerry Blick

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Andrew Pam
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Valentino Rossi
Abe Schuyler
Ross Skinner
Marian O. Szczepkowski

Megablasts

Got a grouch about something? Want somewhere to unleash your aggro? Maybe you're even feeling like saying something nice for a change. MEGABLASTS is where you can do it. We can decipher almost anything as long as you write it in English. Long, turgid letters may be axed ruthlessly. Excessively sycophantic offerings ditto. Anything even remotely libellous gets the shove, OK? Write to: **MEGABLASTS, Megacomp Magazine, 1/40 Glenhuntly Road, Elwood 3184, Victoria** or if you feel too paranoid about Australia Post, do it on our Viatel page 666115. Wassamatta? Cat got yore tongue?

POTTY TRAINED

"Hey, MEGACOMP: Why are you so irregular"

Bruce McRae,
Viatel 598719520

Somebody slipped super glue into our All-Bran. - Ed.

MSX GRAPHICS

"I have recently acquired a Pioneer PX-7 MSX computer secondhand. The idea was to use it for titling on videos, since the PX-7 has inbuilt genlock so that video signal can be combined with images from the computer and output to videotape. The trouble is, I can't find any software to do graphics or titling, or graphics tablets, or even books on MSX Basic Programming. So the word is "Help!". I'd love to hear from anybody with an MSX and interest in graphics. I also own a ZX Spectrum +, and a Mac SE. Other interests include using any of these computers for MIDI sequencing. By the way, is it possible to hook up the Yamaha SFG-01 sound module for the CX-5M to the Pioneer?"

Heiko Meins,
Paddington 2021.

Heiko, the only MSX book in our reference library is one of Heinemann's Made Simple series: MSX Made Simple. (Margaret Norman, 1986. ISBN 0 434 98406 X). The computer book department of the Grahame Book Company (34 Hunter Street, Sydney; telephone 233 8470) may be able to help you. As for your Yamaha question, we suggest you get in touch with one of the MSX Groups listed in this issue. - Ed.

IDLE HANDS

"Today I purchase the first copy of your magazine in a Melbourne city specialist bookstore it was the first time I had seen it. Why did it take so long to get my hands on a copy??? If I can get the Australian Commodore & Amiga Review on time from my local newsagent WHY NOT YOURS".

INCONVENIENCED READER
Viatel 332841330

A1: Maybe your hands had been busy elsewhere. A2: We are not them. Despite any similarity which seems to become more apparent after we put a new issue out, we have no connection with the earnest fellows at the other place. - Ed.

MAGAZINE CLAIRVOYANT

"What an excellent magazine you've got . . . I own an Apple IIe, Amiga and Sega Master System. On the negative side, that the magazine is a little thin for $3.50. And also how about some reviews on Game Console games once in a while. . .".

Micheal Middleton,
Dareton 2717.

There was this bushie who had a dog whose ribs poked out like they were sculpted into his sides. Someone commented on the dog's prominent ribs, saying how thin the mutt was. "Ar," said the bushie, "'e's not really skinny. 'E's so fat on the inside, it pushes 'is ribs right out, see?" That's how it is with MEGACOMP, Mike. Compare us with any other Aussie computer mag at the same price, and you'll see we're the fattest on the inside. In fact, out 3rd issue was 16 pages bigger than our first. Are you clairvoyant? Our first piece on games consoles appears in this issue! - Ed.

WE ARE NOT THEM V.2

"Are you put out by Commodore & Amiga Review? You both have about the same sort of contributor listing, and you both have a contributor's guide. Why don't you brighten up C&AR so it's more like Megacomp?"

Wondering,
Parramatta 2150.

No, we are in no way connected with them. Nor are we put out by them. The fact that they commenced to list contributors and offer a contributor's guide shortly after we did it in our first issue is, of course, purely coincidental. As for the brightening-up, we're sure they must be working on it. How gauche of you to compare our Cadillac with an ordinary CAR. - Ed.

LEFT SPEECHLESS

"I picked up your mag for the 2nd time, issue 3, again the cover left me speechless, the most interesting mag cover yet. Also it had Sega written on the front cover . . . YES Sega, usually in most mags I can't even find it on the inside. I LOVE this mag, I took it to the Segaclub and everyone read it cover to cover. Now when I go to meetings I actually know about stuff others don't . . . I can't find 3" disks cheap anywhere, there are some starting to creep into this mag . . . a top effort guys . . . Thanks a lot."

Glendry,
Gympie 4570.

For someone who was left speechless, you sure can rave on. But we still won't publish your recommendation about what to do with C64's. Besides, they wouldn't fit. - Ed.

IBM COMPATS GRIPE

"Your 3rd issue was worth the wait. A couple of gripes. Those who don't live near a computer store and own a IBM compatable computer find it hard to get a good description of games available, even what's available. Perhaps Megacomp could have a supplement with new games & a brief description of each, every six months. Also instead of Computer that bit the dust, how about a description of current computers and games consoles . . ."

Grant A. Hazlett,
Dirranbandi 4486.

We're planning something even better than a six-monthly games round-up, Grant. We review computers and consoles but depend almost entirely on test units from the manufacturers or distributors, some of whom seem reluctant to give us as much as a business card to test. - Ed.

DOESN'T MEAN IT

"Look I don't mean to complain but if you say that you are going to print a magazine every two months then I think you really should do it. I also happen to think it is wrong to keep advertising for more subscriptions if you can't give people the magazines."

An annoyed subscriber J. Evans,
Viatel 37836720

Look, we don't mean to be picky, but we have been trying to do it, and we have explained our problems. If what's in the pipeline now works out OK, subscribers will receive a pleasant surprise shortly. We aim to keep faith with those of you who showed it. - Ed.

MISSING OUT IN MOREE

(Letter !) "IS MEGACOMP MAGAZINE STILL IN PRODUCTION? . . . I AM A SEGA OWNER & I HAVE NOT SEEN ANY ARTICLES ON SEGA EXCEPT THE ONE IN THE ABOVE MAGAZINE & A COUPLE OF PROGRAMS FROM ANOTHER." (Letter 2) "I AM UNABLE TO OBTAIN COPIES OF YOUR MAGAZINE AT ANY OF THE 3 NEWSAGENTS IN MOREE. IS IT POSSIBLE TO SUBSCRIBE TO YOUR MAGAZINE . . . I DID WRITE TO YOU SOME MONTHS AGO, BUT OBVIOUSLY MY LETTER MUST HAVE GONE ASTRAY IN THE MAIL . . ."

Lewis Macey,
Moree 2400.

Our unexpectedly rapid growth has caused us much pain, embarrassment and delight, Lewis, but we are now coming out more on time. Taking a subscription will guarantee that you don't miss out on future issues. If you want more Sega info, why not write to one of the Sega groups listed in this issue? Incidentally, both of your letters arrived within a few days of each other - another triumph for Australia Post. - Ed.

SIX KIDS AND A DEAD HORSE

". . . I purchased (like a fool) an ATARI VIDEO GAME SYSTEM . . . but I can't get any books, or software on it. My local dealer doesn't want to know, the shop where I made the purchase don't care, 'look before you leap' he said . . . The only thing I can find here are $30 carts for it. I have six kids and can't afford a ST or AMIGA. Have I been sold a dead horse? . . . Is the machine any good? Hope you can help before I blow a circuit. I knew I should have stuck to the 2600 games machine."

F.J. Tabone,
Whyalla Norrie 5608.

Cool it, Chick, everything's gonna be OK. Your XE is basically

a 64K version of Atari's 600XL (16K) and 800XL (48K) and 130XE (128K) computers with separate games console. Anything that runs on them will run on yours. Books on the 600/800XL apply to your XE, tho' some keyboard items might be in different places. Try Susan Fry's book, 'Learning to use the Atari 600/800XL Computer'. (Distributor William Collins; ISBN number 0-566-03511-1.) Dick Smith's Consumer Electronics catalogue lists software for the XE. You may be able to get it on their toll-free number, 008.226.10. You could try Highbury Computers (S.A.) on (08) 265.4537 or PH Computers (Vic) on (03) 791-3129. The crud who said 'look before you leap' gets our klutz award. Only a masochist would go back to the 2600. - Ed.

APPLE ISLE PLEA

"Congrats on a great mag! I was rapt to see articles on MSX, as I possess a SVI-728 MSX. I have a question about Viatel: could I use my MSX to access it. I know that I would need communications software to use it, but has any been written for MSX, and if so, where is it available."

Peter Saward,
Wynyard 7325.

Dont know offhand Peter, but somewhere around Oz, there has to be a MEGACOMP reader who'll write and tell us. Alternatively, contact CHMSUG (see Meganews). - Ed.

BIGGLES WITH A MOUSE

"A warning to Amiga owners who may be thinking about buying 'Battlehawks 1942' a WWII Pacific flight sim, it has great graphics etc, etc - but the Amiga version supports only a mouse! No joystick, try controlling a fighter in a dogfight with a bloody mouse..."

Uncle Kev,
Address not supplied.

It's enough to make you chip Spits. - Ed.

MEMORIES OF GEM

"...In addition to my 1040ST I also have a Tandy 102. I was impressed with your magazine, it reminded me of an earlier one called GEM...It is good to see a home grown magazine which caters to such a diversity of users. I get sick of paying a fortune for imported one eyed Atari mags..."

G. Evans,
St. Agnes 5097.

Thank you for your subscription, Mr. Evans. We're sure that the parents of the late G.E.M. would feel heartened by your generous comparison. Their address is 21 Darley Road, Randwick 2031. - Ed.

C64 TIPOFF

"To the people who are actually doing something for Australia's economy, it's time there is a decent AUSTRALIAN computer mag for ...the 'average' computer user, and by being Australian, you are helping to reduce our foreign debt problem ...now I would like to enlighten readers on something which is annoying many people. Many new C64c's develop faults very soon after the warranty runs out...the ones whose serial number has an 'E' in it. This particular series is very costly to repair (around $120-$180) because adjustments need to be made to the computer to prevent the problem from recurring. My advice is to give your computer HELL during the warranty period so that if a fault is going to occur it is likely to rear its ugly head in the warranty period, and try not to get stuck with an 'E' series C64c...also the new power packs are causing many problems for C64c users. I refer to the white 'brick' currently being supplied. These are normally impossible to repair due to them being filled with a hard resin...if your power pack breaks down, try and get hold of the old black power pack as these are more reliable, or get someone to convert a C128 power supply for use on the C64 by changing the cable going to the computer. These are more expensive but are a lot more reliable and will not harm your computer..."

Barry Sutton,
Minto 2566.

As you might have gathered, Barry, we're not short on national pride here at MEGACOMP. Thanks for the C64 tip - we're sure Commodore will be sensitive to problems like those. They didn't get where they are today by turning their back on consumers. - Ed.

SPUNKS UNCOVERED

"What a great magazine. I just love the unreal name...I don't have a computer...still enjoy reading your mag...I know at least two of you are spunks!"

S.S.S.,
Address not given.

We presume you refer to our general factotum and dishwasher, Mr Blick, who is frequently beside himself. - Ed.

PERIPHERAL PULLED ON ZLOTNIK

"After having enjoyed your terrific mag and having studied the photo of the Zlotnik 44 I have come to the conclusion that either someone is pulling your peripheral or you are having a lend of ours, as the Russians do not use a Qwerty keyboard..."

Half Duplex,
Ingham 4850.

We dunno what sort of keyboard the Russians use, HD, but it seems logical to us that if they were planning to export, it would certainly be Qwerty. Are you any relation to the other Half Duplex who wrote to us? In which case, are you the top or bottom half, or are you in fact, a rather full duplex? Very confusing. - Ed.

Megablasts

HAITCH FOR HARANGUE

"I can tolerate people mis-pronounciation of the word BAUD, but when a magazine has a heading with it in it I can't stand it. I doubt whether anyone has accessed a bulletian BODE. Yes that's right BAUD is pronounced BODE as it does not BODE well to see so many silly people. Not as in I am BORED stiff with stupid computer journalists and would like to smash a BOARD over their head."

**Z80,
VIATEL 695491480.**

For our gleeful catachresis, we are suitably admonished and totally unrepentant. We attribute your spelling errors (mispronounciation/bulletian) to your frothing ire, but cannot concede that all stupid computer journalists share the one head. - Ed.

ATARI ORPHAN

"I am writing to enquire if there is a Virus Killer disk for the Atari 520 . . . .only just bought my first copy of Megacomp (No.3) and love it all ready. . . .just bought my Atari 520 my first P.C. I haven't really discovered any use for it except games which are great but there must be more to life with a P.C. than just games."

**S. Blam,
Wynn Vale 5127.**

Why not contact one of the Atari User Groups listed in MEGACOMP, or get in touch with Highbury Computers (08) 265 4537? We mentioned your plight to the Grahame Book Co, and they are sending you their new computer books catalogue as well as a printout of any books on the Atari 520ST. We're working on a Virus Killer Disk for the 520 - Ed.

APPLE FREAK

"Ever since I bought my Apple IIc . . .I have been a devoted Apple freak. Although I think your magazine is great and I just subscribed to it for a year I have one gripe. I think the magazine deals mostly with Amigas. I know that there is an infinite number of freaks just like me who are dying to hear the latest Apple news. So how about it? . . .I think the magazine is tops and give 11 out of 10 for effort."

**Jason Meilak,
Altona North 3025**

Thanks for your sub. Jason. How could you possibly have overlooked Malcom T. Elliott, our resident Apple scribe? Or is it that you want more? We'll work on it. And we love your wonky maths. - Ed.

SLACK IN DARWIN

"Up here in the Northern Territory we rarely get a good mag that's Australian and to my pure delight when I looked through your magazine you had everything . . .Your mag is definately the mag I will be buying. The only other magazine was ZZAP! 64/AMIGA and that didn't even come close . . .I have a Commodore 64, the new one, I was wondering if there was any way of resetting my machine without stuffing it up? I have to be moving along now the cricket has just started . . .could you please write back to me because my local newsagent people are very slack and don't like telling 13 year olds when Megacomp is due in. Thanks."

**Zaun Bhana,
Palmerston 0831.**

We reckon ZZAP is a great mag, Zaun, so your praise for MEGACOMP is much appreciated. We're hunting down a reset mod for the 64. As for your newsagent being slack, KEEP ASKING! Newsagents get hundreds of magazines each week, so you can't expect them to single out one magazine for attention unless LOTS of customers ask about it. How was the cricket? - Ed.

ARCHIDMEDES FAN

" . . .I'm a pomie staying here in Oz for twelve months. It seems to me that the Australian home computer scene is way behind the UK one, Home computing seems to be a rather new thing out here, so congratulations on getting on Ozy computer mag up and running . . .there doesn't seem to be many Ozy software houses while there are loads in the UK, come on, there must be some decent programmers out there? For the record I've owned (gloat, gloat): ZX81, VIC20, Dragon 32, CBM64,CPC664, C128, Atari ST, Amiga 500 and an Archimedes. The 'Arch' is fantastic, easily the most powerful machine I've ever owned . . .what I'm trying to say is buy one . . .any jobs going? - I can make tea."

**Mark Hula,
Gatton 4343.**

The first Poms who came here stayed a lot longer than twelve months and they too thought things in Oz were way behind the UK. To answer your questions, Mark, sixteen million people is a much smaller market than the old Dart. A biff on your bonce for dangling your mouthwatering collection in front of us. We'll make you our tealady in exchange for a couple of pairs of Docs. - Ed.

HORRORHEAD FROM HELL

"I have a Sega 3000H computer . . .am a newcomer to using a PC . . .enjoying your magazine very much . . .didn't like the HORRORHEAD from hell that you used on your front cover. As an ex professional photographer I'm sure you can do better than that. . ."

**Kevin E. Anderson,
Wynnum North 4178.**

Do you mean our first issue where we had John Laws on the cover, or the third issue where we had John Jaws? OK, we'll try to do better. - Ed.

GET INTO VIATEL FREE

As a fellow Viatel addict, I'd like to add a few words to Dan Whitton's article on Viatel. You can get into Viatel for free! Provided you've already got the gear for dialling up services like Viatel, that is. Just dial 01955 (on 1200/75 as Den said). When you get the logon screen, key in 4444444444 (10 of them) for the ID. Then key in 4444 when it asks for the password. you're in! What you get is only a sample of Viatel pages, but it's fun to poke around. You can also request an application form online, to become a Viatel user. (You have to be over 18, unfortunately.) Oh yes, they also have a 008 number --008 033342, which works during business hours."

**An Anonymous Hacker,
Postmark ???????????**

Viatel doesn't seem to publicise its demo section a lot. The demo starts on page 1911111 but you get a "Closed User Group" if you try to access it direct. You must log on with all fours. - Ed.

OTHERS BORING

"Owning an Amiga I am very pleased with the amount of material you have on this marvelous machine . . .yours is a new mag . . .in an interesting and enjoyable style . . .your mag has an excellent future because of the layout and the humour. Too many other mags fall into the trap of becoming too technical and boring the readers to death. I am also impressed with the amount of space given to text and not advertisements . . .find enclosed my subscription, and feel free to send me as much new software as you like for reviewing. (HA HA)"

**Tim Vanderaar,
Gympie 4570**

For being so nice, Tim, we've made you an honorary member of the Arnold Meganegger Charm Academy. Do you have your own studded nulla-nulla or would you like to rent one? We've sent you a Contributor's guide. - Ed.

Malcolm Quits Megacomp

I still can't get used to our new phone. The old one went ring-ring, but the new one goes diddle-diddle. I never know whether to answer the phone or kick the cat.

Anyway, a couple of weeks ago, the phone diddled and I picked it up.

"Ullo?" barked a gruff voice, "Izzat It's-Not-Out-Yet, Australia's Home Computer magazine?" It had to be Malcom T Elliott. He's the only person who calls Megacomp 'It's-Not-Out-Yet.' I played along.

"Yeah, this is us. We're almost out."

"Well, this is Norm Gargoyle, an I wanna complain."

"Hullo, Malcom. How ya bin?"

"I'm calling from Brazil. You wanna buy some coffee?"

"Sure. Are you doing an Apple story for our next issue?"

"Nope."

"Ar. What are you doing in Brazil?"

"Calling you, you dimwit."

"Are you really in Brazil?"

"Would I lie to you, Senor?"

For friendship's sake, I declined to answer. This has been largely a pack of lies so far, anyway. Malcom isn't in Brazil. He didn't call himself Norm Gargoyle, and he hasn't gone into the coffee business.

The only truth is that, for the time being at least, Malcom is dipping out on writing our Apple stuff. We'll miss him, and we know you will too. However, if certain plans of ours work out OK, you just might find him back again soon, brighter and zanier than ever!

M1 TANK PLATOON

THE DEFINITIVE SIMULATION OF ARMORED LAND COMBAT

MICRO PROSE™
SIMULATION • SOFTWARE
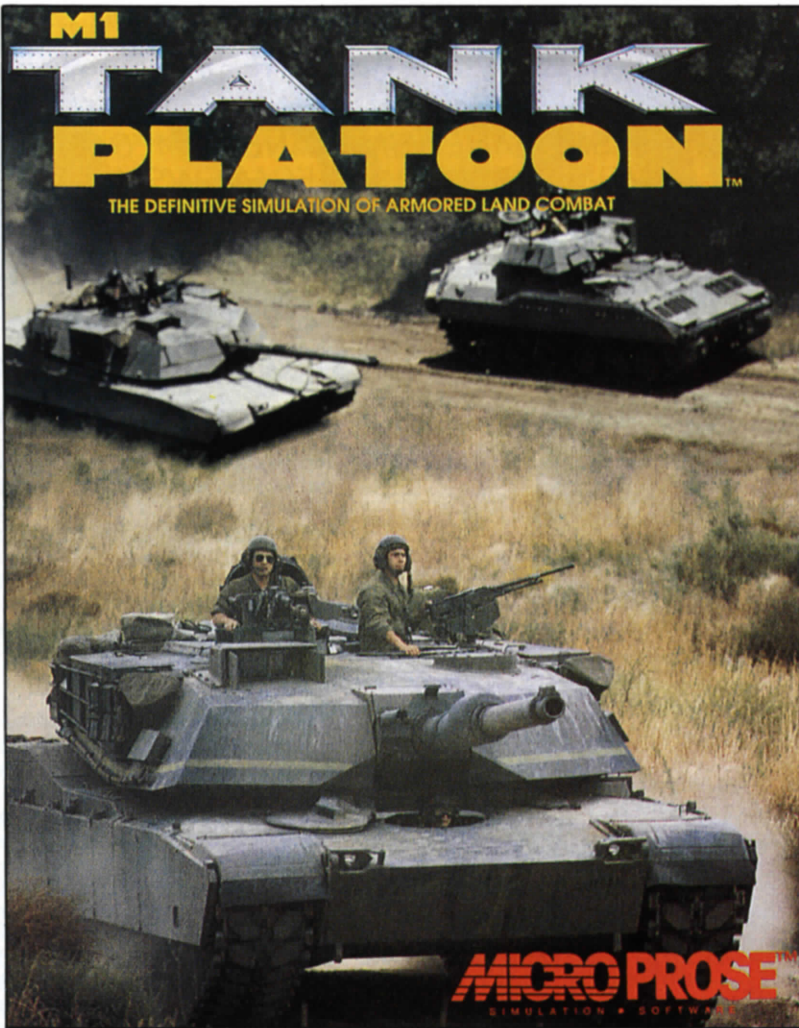
M1 Tank Platoon is the definitive simulation of armoured land combat. US tank platoons have four M1s. Four soldiers operate each tank. That's four tanks, sixteen men. And you control the whole shooting match.

16,000 acres of rolling, superb 3D terrain allows you to hide your tanks behind hills and ridges, just as a real tank commander would. Give orders to your entire platoon or to individual tanks. Lay down some heavy artillery or mortar fire before advancing your main tanks, or possibly call in air support in the form of A10 Tankbusters or AH64 Apache Gunships. Defend yourself against attack from the air by strategically positioning anti-aircraft batteries. The strategic permutations are endless!

With thousands of battlefields and millions of situations, there is infinite variation within the game. With varied skill levels allowing games for novice through to top notch, veteran tank commanders, take on single battles or wage war from start to finish.

M1 Tank Platoon. All the action of armoured land combat.

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II

SUPER 3-D GRAPHICS

F15 Strike Eagle II is a whole new concept in computer air warfare. Dogfighting is the name of the game. The air swarms with enemy aircraft. Dice with death as you light your burners and head for the skies. Success depends on making the right moves – fast. Super smooth, non-stop action takes place over 250,000 square miles of authentic terrain. Superb, solid-filled polygon-based 3D graphics makes it feel as though you really are in the thick of the action. Hundreds of options, four difficulty levels and a vast amount of missions and scenarios make F15 Strike Eagle II perfect for dogfighting veterans and novices alike.

MICRO PROSE
SIMULATION • SOFTWARE

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UK vs OZ

Overseas prices can look mouthwatering, but are they really good value? To check it out, we picked out a few U.K. ads for computers and games colsoles and converted the prices to A$ at the rate of A$1 = Stg 49.98p. By and large, it looks like we're not so badly off down under.

Make	Model	What you get	Price
AMIGA	500	A500; TV modulator; Mouse; Photon Paint; 10 games (Amegas/Art of Chess/Barbarian/Buggy Boy/Insanity Flight/Terrorpods/Wizball/Ikari Warriors/Mercenary/Thundercats); Free delivery.	$831.59
AMIGA	500	A500; 1084S colour monitor; Mouse; Photon Paint; 10 games: (Amegas/Art of Chess/Barbarian/Buggy Boy; Insanity Flight/Terrorpods/Wizball/ Ikari Warriors/Mercenary/ Thundercats); Free delivery	$1352.64
AMIGA	500	A500; TV modulator; Workbench 1.3; Joystick; Disk Box; Mouse Mat; 10×DSDD disks/8 games (Return of Jedi/Eliminator/Custodian/Zynaps/ Powerplay/Mercenary/Warlock Quest/ Hellbent); 4 disks of 24 PD progs.	$831.59
ATARI	520ST-FM	520ST-FM; Built-in 1Mb drive; /200 starter kit; Organiser program; CX40 joystick; 24 games (Roadwars/ Arkanoid II/Beyond the Ice Palace/ Black Lamp/Buggy Boy/Thundercats/ Chopper X/Ikari Warriors/Starquake/ Quadralien/Ranarama/Thrust/Xenon/ Return to Genesis/Wizball/Zynaps/Test Drive/Eddie Edwards Super Ski/ Seconds Out/Summer Olympiad '88.	$831.59
ATARI	520ST-FM	520ST-FM; built-in 1Mb disk drive; Joystick; Disk Box; 10 DSDD disks; Mouse Mat; First Basic; Organiser; First Music; 19 games (Eliminator/ Double Dragon/Nebulus/Afterburner Outrun/Gauntlet II/Super Hang-on/ Super Huey/R-Type/Predator/Black Lamp/Star Glider/Pacmania/ Bombuzal/Space Harrier/Bomb Jack/ Star Ray/Overlander/Star Goose).	$800.33
AMSTRAD	CPC64	Colour monitor and software.	$416.73
PCENGINE	G/Cons	PC Engine; TV converter; Booster.	$333.73
SEGA	M/Drive	Sega Megadrive	$375.00
NINTENDO	Gameboy	Nintendo Gameboy	$177.13

New Commodore catalogue: We've just had a preview of Commodore's new retail range catalogue, due out December 1989. Full marks to the big C not only for producing something that isn't full of flim-flam, but also which includes a listing of Australia-wide user groups. Other manufacturers kindly take note.

★ ★ ★

Virus, episode 2674: The whole scene seems to have turned into a classic battle between the Goodies and the Baddies. The faster the Baddies come up with another nasty, the faster the Goodies devise another knight-on-a-white-horse to kill it. It was funny at first, but now it has become a plain old pain in the posterior. The much-heralded October 13 virus came and went without too many problems, but now there is news from the UK of another, even more bizarre worgle. New Computer Express reports that it is called Fu Manchu. What it does is slot crude messages into the print buffer each time the name of a well known political figure is entered. The tricky part is that nothing shows on the screen when you preview what you have typed. It's only on the printout that it shows. When the virus finds the name of a political figure, it adds "is a ••••••. (Work it out for yourself, scumbag.) Yawnnnnnnnn.

★ ★ ★

F.A.S.T. not slow. Although seemingly invisible here, the Federation Against Software Theft is hitting pirates hard overseas. Early in September, they raided UK firm, Cybersoft, nabbing over 1000 disks and a couple of hundred illegal manuals. Cybersoft is said to be Malaysian-based. (Source: CTW)

★ ★ ★

New plans for Amiga. Commodore is producing a new starter kit pack for the Amiga 500, which should boost the sales of this winner even more. Watch for it - it'll knock your eyes out.

★ ★ ★

Help for MSXers: We have received a bundle of stuff on MSX from Craig Hursey, Assistant Editor and Treasurer of the Cir-

cular Head MSX & Spectravideo Users Group - CHMSUG. These guys put out a pretty good monthly club zine/newsletter and obviously are clued up on everything MSX. A year's membership of CHMSUG is $18 and gets you not only the zine and other info, but also club discounts. If you want to check them out before you join, why not send them a couple of bucks for a sample zine/newsletter? The one we got was June '89, and it included things like availability and prices of MSX2+ computers, a benchtest of the Sanyo PHC-70FD, a review of the Super Laydock shoot-em-up game, a listing to get 512 colours from your Spectravideo X-Press, hints and tips, plus a list of club software amongst which was Turbo Basic (disk) for only $19.95. Write to: CHMSUG, PO Box 46, Stanley 7331, Tasmania.

★ ★ ★

Commodore on top: According to the Roy Morgan Research Centre, you're having a red-hot love affair with the big C. Morgan conducted an Australia-wide survey of almost 5000 Australian households and the results showed that in 42% of homes which owned a personal computer, Commodore was the brand. It was a long drop to the Apple Macintosh at 9% an a short skip to Amstrad at 8%. None of the

others rated more than 5%. We have a feeling that there could be a dramatic change in the figures by 1990.

★ ★ ★

CPC dead? It's probable that Amstrad has decided to kill of its CPC range (464/6128). The 6128 seems likely to resurface as a games machine, with its memory in the machine instead of the monitor. At this stage, Amstrad isn't saying anything. As we toldja a year ago, Amstrad is muscling in on the market in a big way. If they decide to move into the games biz, sparks will fly. These guys don't muck around. (Sources: CTW)

★ ★ ★

Xenon flotches on Amiga. UK trade weekly CTW says that the big-time Xenon II (Mirrorsoft) has produced loading problems for some Amiga owners. Virgin's, Megastore reports a failure rate of 80%, although product distributor, Gem, claims only 10-15%. Nobody's perfect.

★ ★ ★

C64 alive and well. Contrary to industry rumours, the 64 is far from the grave. The marketing einsteins at Commodore are backing it to the hilt. We've seen some of the stunning new packs and can vouch for it.

Shortcut for RAF. London's Daily Mirror, says Harrier jump jet pilots at the RAF Wittering, Cambridgeshire base are using tweaked games sims for training. Games such as Space Invasion, Robot Attack, Bull's Eye and Rescue of the Hostages are modified by RAF then used for training. They reckon the deal does the job just as well as mega-cost pro units and saves them thousands of pounds. What do they play the games on? A Spectrum. Arrrggghh! The way things work on Oz, can we expect to hear the RAAF is doing the same with VZ200's?

★ ★ ★

Bouquet for Tandy: We have given Tandy a couple of (deserved) serves in the last year or so. Now comes the bouquet. One of the editorial cassette recorders, a venerable Realistic CTR-48, blew its cool recently. The little dingus-spring-thing which operates the switch for the record head had snapped off, so that when you played a tape you erased it. Much gnashing of fangs. At Tandy's Dee Why (NSW) store, we put in an order for a replacement dingus, expecting to be informed by carrier pigeon in 1995 that they didn't have it in stock and it would have cost scads if they'de had it anyway. (The CTR-48 was

discontinued about 5 years ago). A few days later, the store rang to say the part had arrived. Timorously, we asked the price. Two bucks. No charge for the service or the speed. It all seemed too good to be true. We collected the dingus, installed it, and it worked like new. Our bouquet to you, Tandy. It's a pity some other places can't get off their fat bums to provide a service as good as that. And thanks to Rob, the Tandy Dee Why manager - you deserve a medal.

★ ★ ★

Epyx end. Fings aren't so rosy in the US games market. Latest pullout is Epyx, who have opted to become solely developers of software. So while the label's gone, the product will still be around. (Source: CTW).

★ ★ ★

Stick Schtick. Eat your heart out, Oz. In the UK, Spectravideo's latest games controller takes the form of mini motorbike handlebars, which you hold with both hands. It's called the Spectravideo Quickshot QS 129 Flight Controller, and with a name as long as that, we can't wait to try it. (Source: CTW)

Music Computers and the Midi Revolution

Miker probes music's exciting new horizons

WE'RE ALL FRIENDS

The last six years have seen an enormous growth in the role of the computer in the field of music. The reasons for this growth are many, an important one being the ever decreasing costs of the ever improving technology.

The fact aside, the primary reason for the huge use of computers in today's music is the advent of MIDI - Musical Instrument Digital Interface. It has been claimed to be the most important development in the history of non-acoustic music since the voltage-controlled oscillator. (ie pretty important) MIDI enables synthesizers, sequences, drum machines, and in this case, computers to be interconnected through a standard hardware interface.

Of course, it wasn't always as simple as this. Before the MIDI revolution computer based music was very much the domain of the academic user or one who was more experimental in one's approach. At least, the user had to have a head-full of knowledge of computing to operate the system, not to mention music.

Today, all that power is available to the average PC owner who only needs enough computer knowledge to get around their own operating system. (OK, I realise that's not so easy for all you MS-DOS users!) One factor that has sold many is that you can get satisfactory results without knowing a hell of a lot about music or even MIDI, while power users can really have a ball!

TELL ME WHAT THIS 'MIDI' THING IS

MIDI, as the 'D' suggests, is a digital medium where information is passed down a cable now conveniently known as a MIDI cable. In reality these are standart 5 pin DIN (West German Industrial Standard) connectors as used by many domestic stereo systems through the 70's and early 80's until the more durable RCA connector took over. Though a five pin connector, pins one and three are not used. Pins two, four, and five deal with input, output, and shielding. I imagine this to be a better system than blessing the world with another connection standard.

The MIDI Interface is represented by three five pin sockets that adorn the rear panels of nearly all modern day musical units. As a standardised hardware interface this represents more than just synthesizers. It also embraces samplers (basically, digital audio recorders), drum machines, effects devices (digital simulations of reverberant environments, echo machines etc), mixing consoles, and other associated devices.

A noteworthy point is that MIDI is a serial interface with an operating rate of 31.25 Kbaud, and while this is certainly fast,

there has already been concern over data delay times under 'heavy' musical conditions. This refers mainly to situations where one is transmitting far more than note data. Functions such as pitch bending and after-touch (another issue!) send out lengthy and continuous streams of information that can clog the data stream if left to run amuck.

MIDI transmission is achieved via more than keyboard devices. Guitarists have recently got a look in with the advent of guitars with devices attached to convert the acoustic data to digital MIDI data. Dedicated guitar synthesizers are another popular avenue.

Also quite popular in recent years is the onslaught of MIDI Wind Controllers, a range of space-age looking devices that allow the humble saxophonist or trumpeter to join the revolution. While they feature the identical

fingering and blowing characteristics of their 'real' similies, the acoustic information is again immediately converted into MIDI data, thus enabling these wind players to access the infinite palette of sounds and sources previously only available to keyboard players.

The concept has even stretched to the vocalist where the same technology has been applied to allow the voice to control the music source. You can mimic a trumpet with your own voice while controlling a trumpet sound, thus giving the real-time expression that you imagine the instrument to have.

Another important factor is that MIDI has its own time code, conveniently known as MTC (MIDI Time Code). Certain interfaces (hardware that allows PC's to be MIDI compatible) can now read and write SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) code, the world standard. This allows us to synchronise our computerised music to pictures for effortless production of film scores and television jingles.

The SMPTE code is read off the tape and converted into MTC for the computer to control all the sequenced instruments in perfect synchronization with the pictures. The beautiful thing about MIDI, computers and music is how the three combine so well for so many applications.

Further discussion of the technicalties of MIDI would defeat the purpose of this exercise, but on a general note; it addresses data on one or all sixteen channels, and recognises a plethora of commands from simple note-on and note-off messages to specific data concerning an individual synthesizer's sound status and many in between.

An electronic instrument is not made today without the appropriate interface or implementation because it would be of little use. Many feel the accuracy of performance that the computer has provided has destroyed the art of

playing: On the contrary, when used properly it has allowed us to sound like better players. The bad become good while the good become excellent.

TO INTERFACE OR NOT TO INTERFACE

Just about any conceivable home Personal Computer can be adapted to behave as a music workstation. Atari's ST and Mega line of computers have MIDI ports built in which eliminate the cost of an interface, an option that has impressed many. The Atari ST is easily the most popular music computer throughout Europe and the UK, while the more expensive Apple Macintosh line has a larger slice of the market in the US.

The IBM and all associated compatibles would run a close third all around the world with a comfortable though not exhaustive supply of software available. Let's not forget the Amiga, which has had a number of popular Atari and Mac programs ported to it, yet sports very few dedicated programs.

Only a recent addition to the music computer line is Yamaha's

C1 Music Computer. It's basically a PC compatible in a laptop configuration but with a number of differences. It sports an in-built MIDI interface like Atari's ST range, but unlike the Atari, its implementation is far more detailed. A big future is predicted for the unit, this must say something when it's really only a standard PC, will run all compatible PC software and yet is called a Music Computer. It makes one realise that the size of the market must be larger than originally suspected.

To make our excursion complete we must fully realise the impact that MIDI has had on various areas of music technology. In other words, what's it do?
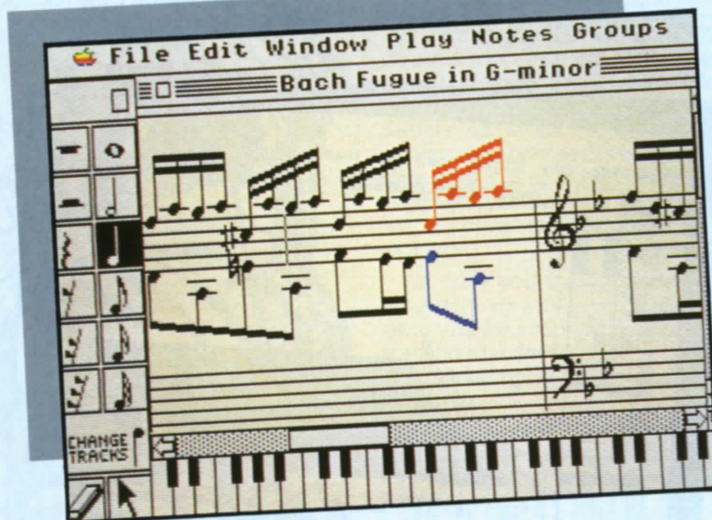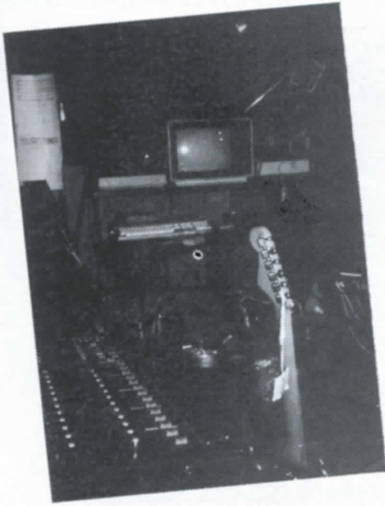
THE TAPE RECORDER'S REPLACEMENT?

The most common application for the computer in music is as a sequencer. This is a function that allows the reception, creation, and transmission of data to and from instruments. The sequencer is in essence a digital recorder, but instead of recording audio information it records the appropriate hexadecimal data required to tell the responding unit what function to activate.

A single status byte carries the details as to what type of message you are transmitting (assuming an example of a note message) and what channel this message is on, while two data bytes follow with the information of what note to play and how loud to play it. A later message forces the unit to release the note. The same principle is evident for other common functions such as changing the sound of a unit, bending or modulating a sound, changing a unit's volume and so on.

The sequencer was originally born as a dedicated unit and many sophisticated dedicated sequencers still exist but the computer based models seem to be taking over. This may be partly due to the open ended architecture that a software based product possesses, but more likely it has something to do with the amount of information that can be displayed on a computer monitor at one time as opposed to a two or four line LCD display. (not to mention the sheer power available to the sophisticated user.)

Most of the popular sequencers have adopted the visuals of a normal analog tape player, with standardised transport controls such as play, rewind, record and so on. These allow the user an immediate familiarity with the interface. Most feature an abundance of tracks, from 24 to over 200 which allow data on alternate tracks to be discrete as they would be on an analog multi-track recorder. The difference here is that data from several tracks can be merged into one track, or expanded from one into many without any audio degradation ▶

Music Computers and the Midi Revolution

continued...

because we are dealing with a stream of numbers, not an audio signal.

The data can be manipulated in a vast number of ways. Time correction puts your work into perfect time, regardless of how sloppily you play. You can transpose, stretch, reverse, and copy selected portions of the music. Certain features are analogous to all sequences while each has special functions.

SOUND MANAGEMENT

The second most popular application for computers in music would very likely be the 'Editor/Librarian' programs available for almost every synthesizer on the market. The better packages allow every internal and front panel feature of the synthesizer to be accessed via the software and all changes made are sent immediately to the unit.

This is more than a mere luxury item if one considers the fact that Yamaha's DX7 synthesizer (the only synthesizer with sales figures in six digits) contains more than 130 editable parameters, yet is adorned with only a small two line LCD display and banks of buttons, some that have four different functions depending on the current mode of the instrument.

Most of the available programs feature some form of graphic editing for parameters such as

envelope values. This way you can physically sculpt the curves that the sound should adhere to. Many also feature random sound generation where the computer scrambles the synth's parameters and thus creates a new sound. Often this can be user-controlled, in that one can specify which parameters to alter and set a percentage level that the computer must not deviate said parameters above.

Using Dr. T's DX Heaven for the Atari ST, a bank of 32 Yamaha DX7 sounds takes up only 9K of disk space. Thus we can assume that you can squeeze 80 banks onto a disk, or 2560 sounds. The computer can therefore manage many thousands of sounds at one time on a convenient disk medium that allows sounds to be swapped with friends, sent down a modem to a BBS and so on.

The mode of communication used here is a complex aspect of the MIDI specification known as System Exclusive (or Sys Ex). This

way the software can address all the editing parameters of the synthesizer.

SAMPLE THIS

Easily the largest growth area in popular music in the last five years (aside from the computer) has been the Digital Sampler, a device briefly mentioned earlier, that is simply a digital audio recorder. Any who have ever queried how the record that plays Beatles' classics with dog barks was made now has their answer.

If you imagine what it would be like to record any sound source and then replay it at any pitch on a keyboard you would begin to get the idea of the power that is available. The unimaginative become purely imitative, while those expending more thought can create absolutely original sounds.

It's for those with the desire to be creative on a large scale that dedicated and generic sample

editing programs were created. These programs allow the computer to take (via MIDI) a sound from the sampler and manipulate it in various ways. The power of the computer allows us to view the middle sample on an amplitude versus time basis, where we can physically erase, copy or move specific parts of the waveform and optimise the amplitude for maximum signal to noise ratio.

Some programs even allow the user to draw (with a mouse) their own waveforms to 'sculpt' their own sounds. When all this manipulating is complete one need do no more than issue a simple command to send the sound back to its original device or to any other compatible sampler, thus allowing the software to act as a middle-man for flawless sound transfer between compatible machines.

Other, more esoteric software allows learned users to synthesize sounds on the screen by stacking sine waves (additive synthesis) or

by chaining software modules that represent different acoustic processes. Either way, the final result can be sent to any of the aforementioned samplers for use - again, a totally original sound creation technique available with thanks to the computer.

PLAY IT AND PRINT IT

One final application of today's computers to music would to the uninitiated, appear to be the most obvious, that being score production, often on a professional level. The computer allows infinite hours to be cut off the labour time needed to create engraved quality scores.

Certain programs require the user to input all the data manually via keystokes or mouse movements, while others take advantage of the vastly clever MIDI File, a standard created by the MIDI Association to allow the generic transfer of sequence data between compatible sequences (nearly all current models) or in

this case to a score production program.

This considerate invention allows, in simple terms, the basic recording of a sequence as described earlier, and then the simple transfer of the file into the score production program, just as one would transfer a graphic into a word processor. A few personal touches in the layout department are generally all that is needed to achieve a high quality product.

As is the case with most software, notation programs vary greatly in price and subsequent performance. The most expensive (and often difficult to learn) programs allow the user to play their MIDI equipped keyboard and have the results appear on the screen in real time, and then go directly to the printer.

Print quality and availability of symbols also vary between programs, although some let you transfer the final product into a standard draw or paint program for manual touching up or the creation of 'non musical' symbols. Programmers admit that notation software is still in its infancy and make grandiose promises about the features that await us in the years to come.

THE FUTURE?

A pleasant trend for musicians is that the gap between programmer and musician is shrinking. For years musicians have abused programmers for writing programs that appeal to other programmers but are too cryptic for musicians to use effectively. These days much more time in consultation is spent prior to release.
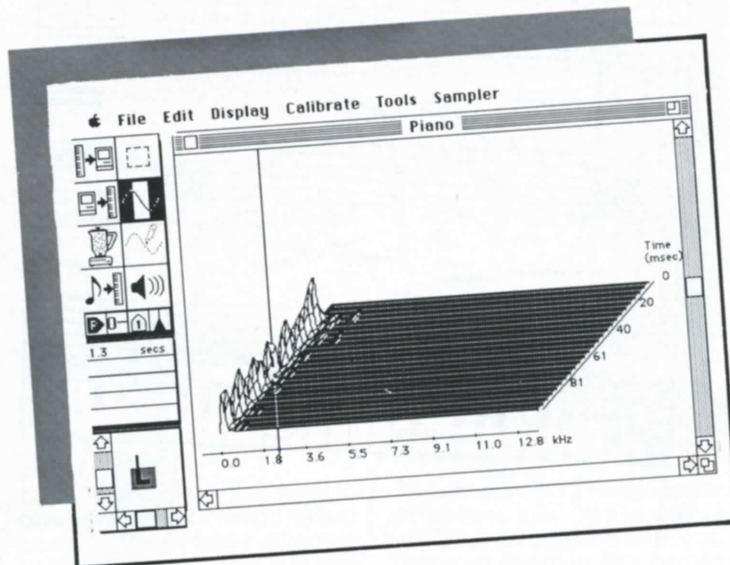
American software developers Opcode gave test copies of their current sequencer Vision (for the Mac) to many well known musicians almost a year before official release. This gave time for de-bugging and more importantly, feedback from those that count, the potential users. This resulted in a product more geared toward the musician. Happily, Opcode are not the only company utilising this sort of thinking.

The next few years promise great things in the area of computers and music. Eventually we will be able to have operations that install a MIDI socket onto our heads. We will then be able to 'think' our ideas straight into the computer. Won't that be fun!

Next time, I'll drop more names which will allow you to see which are the most popular products and why. It has already been suggested that I survey entry level sequencers. These are very popular not only because they're cheap, but also because they're becoming mighty powerful.

In the meantime, if you would like me to cover a specific area of music, feel free to drop me a line, c/- MEGACOMP.

Miker.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE

What izzit, where d'ya gettit and emmachizzit? Ross Skinner tells where to get free and near-free software and finishes up with a free commercial.

I bought my first 'real' computer, a Commodore 64 back in 1983 when they cost an arm and a leg plus a few of the fingers on the remaining hand. It was on a 'never to be repeated special' at just $595.00, this has subsequently proved to be correct as I've never seen one that expensive since! Anyway after getting it home and carefully removing it from its styrofoam cocoon I placed it in front of the TV as the rest of the family peered on in agitated excitement. After a relatively short period of time the thing was successfully connected to the TV and tuned in to ominous 'READY' and a little flashing square, simultaneously a multifaceted gasp wafted over my left shoulder and as I turned I noticed that where stood the members of my immediate family a few moments ago had now grown to include the next door neighbours, a dog and a few other people I hadn't even seen before.

While still contemplating my reaction to this uninvited gathering, someone from the back said "What's it do?" This was my moment to justify my purchase and I immediately began spurting all the things I had seen in the advertising literature such as: "Well, it balances my cheque book (now empty), educates the kids, works out my tax, writes letters, washes the dishes and mixes a mean Harvey Wallbanger! Such was the naivete of the times.

It was as I returned my gaze to the screen that I realized that none of these things were possible without the relevant software. But where do you get it? The toy shop I bought the computer from were of little help, they had a few overpriced games but where were those meaty programs that do all of the wonderful things promised in the advertising?

A couple of frustrating weeks passed and the terrifying reality of having to learn programming began to be the only real alternative. It was about then that an out of town acquaintance, noticing my distress said something like; "Back in Merangudup I think we got a computer club that has a library full of free software, Public Domain I think they call it." The temptation to rattle the guy by the collar was soon overcome by his offer to investigate further and

supply me with some. He remains my friend to this day!

Since that time, much of my most useful software has come from the public domain, indeed this article has been written on a public domain Word-processor.

IN THE BEGINNING

The first public domain computer software became available in the U.S.A. together with the first home computers in the late 1970's. Clubs were formed and many programming literate enthusiasts began to contribute their own work to help build club software libraries and thus in their own small way, adding fuel to he up and coming Information Revolution. Many of these early pioneers moved on to bigger and better things by landing jobs writing best sellers for the infant personal computer market. Of course the void was quickly filled by keen newcomers eager for some recognition of their skills and it wasn't long before public domain software became the testing ground of a good public domain software was, and is still the easiest way to make a name for yourself in computing circles.

Not long after this, modems and Bulletin Board Systems began to appear on the scene. Bulletin Boards are an electronic extension of the computer club idea except that you 'attend' at home using your computer and modem over the telephone line. Facilities to upload (send to the BBS) and down-load (receive from the BBS) programs electronically opened the floodgates to the availability and spreading of public domain software.

Well it's now 1988 and all of this is old news even here in Australia, but it's no secret that public domain software still plays a large part in catering for the needs of the home computerist.

WHERE TO START

The most common ways of tapping into the supply of readily available free programs are:

1. Join a computer club. A small membership fee s usually charged but you also have the benefit of close contact with like-minded people.

2. Join a Bulletin Board System. There are many available to choose from, or join them all! Once again a fee is usually

charged, though some are free. You will need to purchase a suitable modem.

3. Buy it

Many software suppliers offer it in bundled lots (per disk) at a reasonable rate and depending on where you buy, it has been to leave only the cream while the cruddier examples have been discarded.

Some time after I found out about Public Domain software, I got into the computer business myself, selling peripherals by mail order for C64s. I kept a weather eye on the growth of P.D. and, to paraphrase the Remington man, I was so impressed with the idea that (in a manner of speaking) I bought the factory.

AT LAST - THE COMMERCIAL!

We now have an enormous library of titles for C64, C128 and Amiga, and the range grows bigger every week. We run it as a software club, where you pay a $50 fee in the first year and $30 each year after that. This entitles you to buy as many disks as you want at $5 each postpaid, and it gives you free access to our Bulletin Board on (03) 742 3993. There are free program downloads on the board as well as plenty of Commodore tips and information.

Our catalogue disk lists all current titles and you can get a copy by sending $5 to Island By Mail, PO Box 381, Werribee 3030, Vic.

If you are just getting started in computing, or if you're an old hand looking for that oddball program, first see if what you want is in the public domain. It'll save you money and it's a fun way to learn more about your computer.

MY GOD! THE COMPUTER'S PICKING UP HINCH!
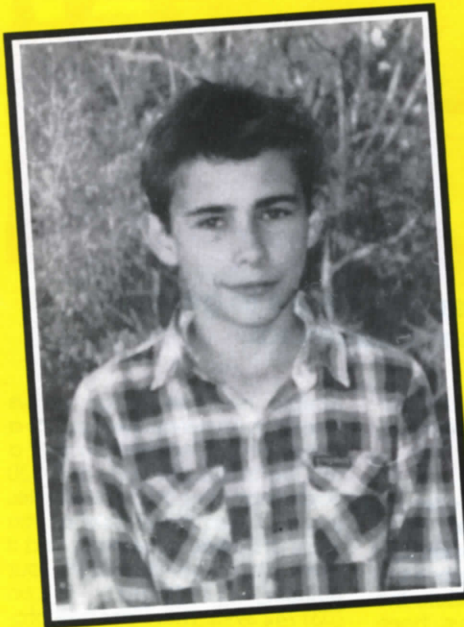
FUNNYLINE WINNERS!

Student scoops the pool!

We were literally overwhelmed by the volume of entries. They came from all over Australia. Most were funny. Some were funny but absolutely unprintable. Others we're still trying to decipher. Our judges spent days sifting through them until we had our winners.

I often wondered what it would be like to be the Lotto man who knocks on doors early in the morning to tell people they're suddenly rich, so I volunteered to drive to Newcastle to tell the winner of our High Technology Amiga 500 prize the good news.

With visions of Jake and Elwood Blues on their historic mission as my role model, I donned suit, hat and sunnies, loaded the editorial Morris Major up with the essentials (10 litres of oil and a crowbar) and set off up the Princes Highway.

Around Warragul, I stopped for some fresh air and a milkshake. Also, I needed to scrape the oil slick off the windscreen. I used to drive with my head out the window, but ever since the Richmond Roisterer (Ed. to you) backed his Chrysler Royal into the driver's door, I haven't been able to wind the window down.

Anyhow, the bloke at the milkbar spotted the Morris and offered me $50 for it. It's not every day you find a sucker with ready cash, so I took his money and hitched a ride back

home with a mob of hippies in an early model Kombi with flowers painted all over it.

They said they were botanists and had been driving up and down the Princes Highway since 1976 looking for a rare botanical specimen. Judging by the stink in the Kombi, I reckoned they'de found plenty of what they were looking for.

Back at the office, I set about telephoning the winner. There was no phone number on the entry form, so I rang Telecom for help. No dice. The winner's address was Glendale, so the only thing I could do was to ring everyone in this area who had the same surname as the winner. I was beginning to regret having flogged the Morris.

The first number drew a blank. The second number was answered by a lady who laughed a lot and said she was fat. She gave me a couple of numbers to try and asked me if I was married.

I hit the jackpot with the third number. Yes, he knew the name, because the winner was his nephew. But the number was unlisted and he'd have to ask his wife who was down at the end of the padock with the horses. I got

the number and rang. It went like this:

"Hello, could I speak with Jason Russell, please?" A girl's voice at the other end said to someone, "It's for you."

"Hello?" The voice was young and a little hesitant. I put on my Lottoman voice. "Is that Jason Russell - the Jason Russell who entered the MEGACOMP Funnyline contest?"

"Ah . . .yes." Dead silence. I took a deap breath. "Well, Jason, this is MEGACOMP magazine, and we're happy to tell you that you've won the High Technology Amiga 500!. I held the phone away from my ear, so the whoops of joy wouldn't deafen me.

"Oh." More deadpan silence. I wondered if he'de fainted. "Ah, Jason? Are you there? Can you hear me?"

Sounding slightly stunned, Jason spoke up. "Yes." Maybe the reaction would have been different if I'd turned up on the doorstep with the Amiga. News like this is always a bit impersonal on the phone - and probably a bit sus.

Anyway, Jason soon brightened up and we talked for quite a while.

He's 13, a student and he's never owned a computer. So he's getting a flying start with the Amiga 500 - if he can keep his older brother's mitts off it.

We've lettered in Jason's winning line, and reproduced it above. It broke our judges·up properly and was a stand-out winner.

Rod Fawstar, of Kallangur, Queensland, wins second prize, which is a 14 inch Commodore colour TV, also from High Technology. His entry: "AAARRGHH! I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE PAID THE VIATEL BILL!" Happy 92's Rod!

The full list of prizewinners is below. All prizewinners have been notified. Thank you to everyone who entered - it was great fun.

Special thanks go to our good friends at High Technology for providing the major prizes. They're not kidding when they say they're the Commodore experts, so it's worth getting in touch with them if you're looking for something special, or you're shopping for a better price. What they don't know about Commodore isn't worth knowing - and their service is tops all over Australia. Tell 'em MEGACOMP sent ya!

High Technology, 290 Bay Street, Brighton 3186. Telephone (03) 596 6211.

Jerry Blick.
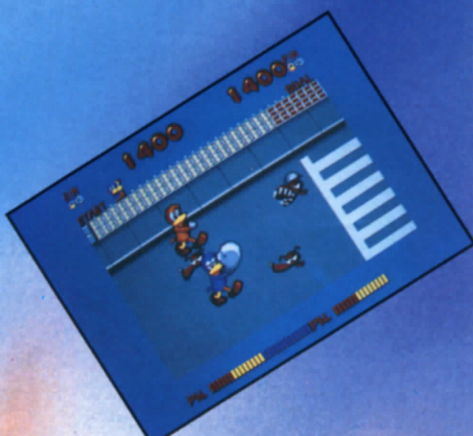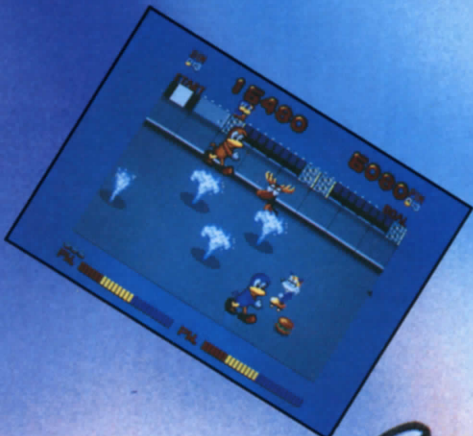
QUARKS COSMOS

What's out there? David Benn gives you an eyeful.

I had been a Viatel User for several months when, one day it dawned upon me that my favourite hobby-come-way-of-life had no representation on Australia's Videotext system.

Plenty of astrology services (mumble mumble) there were . . .but as for astronomy and/or space flight - they were nowhere to be seen! So shocked, horrified and generally dismayed was I by the realisation of this state of affairs, that I resolved to do something about it.

Now what I lack in PhD's, I make up for in enthusiasm and diligence (ahem...and modesty). So, despite being just a humble amateur astronomer and general space freak (would-be astronaut, trainee Time Lord and stuff like that), I decided to start a small section with the likely lads at Microcorner.

That small three-frame user section called Quark's Quadrant grew to a 180-frame Sub-Service-Provider (SSP) node over 18 months or so, and even now, Quark's Cosmos remains the only dedicated astronomy and space flight service on Viatel.

Its purpose is to promote the fascinating and enjoyable science of astronomy and allied fields to all who are the slightest bit interested in things cosmic.

Quark's Cosmos consists of the following sections:

1. **Cosmic Forum** - A section in which I take the opportunity to inform you about current cosmic happenings, from Pegasus the winged launcher to the mystery of the Eta Carina Nebula.

2. **Cosmic Comments** - A bulletin board for any comments or questions you may have about the Universe, divided into an astronomy & spaceflight section and a science-fiction section.

3. **The Observer** - Monthly updates of the state of the Solar System; a Deep Space section which describes objects such as globular clusters, nebulae, and galaxies; NASA space shuttle schedule which reflects changes as they occur; and Comet Corner, which gives ephemeral data for bright-ish comets.

4. **Cosmic News** -Keeps you up-to-date on the latest discoveries, theories, observations, launches, and orbital happenings.

5. **Amazing Cosmic** - Facts and Cosmic Quotes - Facts and thoughts to blow your mind and make you ponder.

6. **Astronomical Society & Space Organisation listing** - Tells you about groups nearby where you can find out more about astronomy, learn how to use a telescope, or just talk with other cosmic-minded people.

7. **Technical Reference Section** - Explains some of the BIG words used by astronomers.

Items on Quark's Cosmos are comparatively inexpensive,and it costs nothing to have your say on Cosmic Comments, nor are there any joining fees. The Cosmos is open to all!

To become an amateur astronomer or simply an astronomy enthusiast, requires only that you are curious about the Universe, and are willing to take the time to understand some new concepts.

Astronomy is one of the few sciences in which amateurs can still make important contributions. For example in timing the motions of Jupiter's Galilean moons, so as to provide more accurate navigational data for spacecraft (such as the Galileo probe), variable star observations, supernova and comet hunting, and many other areas. The simple fact is that professional astronomers just don't have the time to do these kind of things, so there is plenty of work for amateurs to do.

But you don't have to be a researcher to do amateur astronomy. I spend most of my telescope time just gazing through the eyepiece at planets, nebulae, double stars and all manner of wonders. Sometimes, just gazing skyward with the naked eye can be just as exhilarating. That's what it's all about!

For me, the pursuit of these things has become a way of life. But anyone who spends a little time thinking about the Cosmos, or standing under the night sky, and truly appreciating it, is reminded of the fact that they are in the midst of immensities, surrounded by the deepest of mysteries.

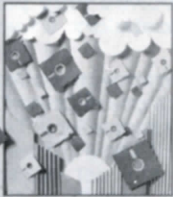So, come to my Cosmos, and see what the Universe has in store for you.

Booklook

Avatar reviews a couple of irresistibles for your computer bookshelf.

Public-Domain Software & Shareware

By Rusel DeMaria and George R. Fontaine.

(Second edition published in 1988 by M&T Books and available from McGills bookshop opposite the G.P.O. in Elizabeth St. City for $34.20.)

This book is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in Public Domain, Freeware and Shareware. If you download programs from BBSes, this book will be of interest to you. It explains how to log on to BBSes, how to download programs, compares the protocols, and explains how to subscribe to commercial BBSes. Most importantly, though, it evaluates and reviews about 400 of the best PD and Shareware programs currently available for the PC.

The only program I was really surprised to see omitted was Telix, which in my opinion is easily the best Software comms package around, and certainly on a par with Procomm, Qmodem, and GT-powercomm, all of which are reviewed. Once again the book is slightly dated by reviewing GT version 12, whereas we're now up to version 15! The book also contains no mention of the MegaLink, Jmodem, Super8K, or BiModem protocols, as they are all too new.

Nonetheless, this doesn't make the book useless; it's important to remember that programs that have been around for at least a year and are still prospering are the ones you really want to use if you expect to get any kind of decent support or regular upgrades and improvements, so things too new to appear in the book aren't necessarily desirable unless you're willing to take the risk that the programmer will just disappear some day!

All in all, it's well worth the nearly $35 to anyone wanting an excellent guide to PD and Shareware, the philosophy behind it, how and where to get it, what's good and useful for you, and how to avoid getting burned by viruses, trojans or badly written, documented or supported software and so forth. I'd have to rate this book five stars!
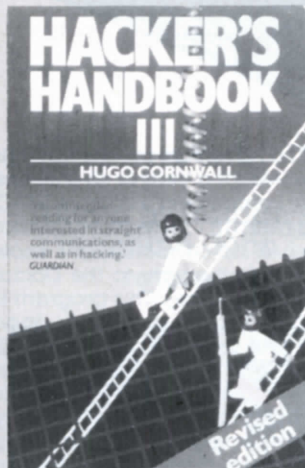
The Hacker's Handbook III

By Hugo Cornwall

This book, written by Hugo Cornwall, a british hacker and systems expert, was first published in 1985, and has been kept up to date with 1986 and 1988 editions. It's a veritable hacker's bible! I cannot recommend this book highly enough for anyone who has ever wanted to be a hacker, to find out what real hackers are like, just to be better informed about hacking and indeed computer communications in today's world in general.

A fascinating and informative book that had me unable to put it down, despite the fact that I already know ALL of the information in it except some of the anecdotal history! Literally a how-to handbook, and yet hardly the kind of thing that's legally reprehensible, despite containing quite lengthy extracts from all sorts of useful information. The author has also gone to pains to ensure that his information is globally useful.

Definitely five stars and I got mine marked down to $17.50!

STAC

STAC

TALESPIN

STAC

Write your own games

Failed playwright, Peter Chin Quan, gets into something more rewarding.

Once upon a time, back in 1967, there was a funny looking seven year old kid who decided it would be fun to write a play. At the time I could barely write but that didn't deter me. I climbed up onto the chair that sat beneath the lounge room window so that I could use the wide window-sill as a table and spent the evening putting pencil to paper with a fish tank to keep me company. The result was only two pages long but I was none the less happy with the result. It was an epic drama about a witch trying to do something nasty (I can't remember) but I eventually threw in the towel when the cast decided that playing chasey around the cricket nets was more fun!

The next seventeen years (thank you Mr. Taylor for your encouragement) saw a string of mostly incomplete short stories written in pencil to make corrections and alterations easy. Enter the word processor!!!! A writer's dream in the form of a 'SpectraVideo' computer with 'Word Star' but gone were the days where I could scribble a paragraph or two on the train.

Somewhere along the line I bought a copy of 'King Solomon's mine' which was my first experience with adventure games. A game well known by many if not most seasoned 'adventurers'. It quickly became clear to me that such games were a perfect vehicle to tell stories. The reader as purely an observer suddenly became a thing of the past being directly responsible for the actions of the main character. The reader now WAS the character!

Hunting around I found 'Book of adventure' by Keith Campbell and published by MELBOURNE HOUSE which I studied thoroughly. A good book; it introduced the concepts of organising the 'world' into individual locations and objects. Interaction with this world was achieved through inputting a combination of verb and noun into the computer. The Author clearly explains the programming techniques involved in creating simple adventures with examples in 'BASIC' and includes program listings specifically for three computers that were very popular in 1983: SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64 and the BBC. Before long I had

a working program written in MICROSOFT Basic (same as GW Basic).

STAC

One of the all time classic text adventure games (one with only words and no pictures) is ZORK. The 'world' is positively huge with seemingly endless number of places to explore. Apart from that it is amazing in that the player input is not limited to the usual two word commands but entire sentences can be entered and understood by the program (usually). Seeing what was possible with a sophisticated 'Parser'; the part of the program whose job it is to understand what is asked of it by the player, lead me to take another look at my own program.

Somehow I ended up with a SEGA SC3000 computer which I used to develop a parser almost as clever as that in Zork. I was quite proud of my creation which could untangle and interpret complicated sentences with multiple verbs and several objects. I set out to write the 'ultimate' adventure game but progress came to a grinding halt when one day the message feared by any 8 bit computer programmer 'OUT OF MEMORY ERROR' jumped up onto the screen. Shock! Horror! Distress!

The Adventure project was thus shelved for a year or so until one day I purchased a copy of 'STAC' the (Atari) S.T. Adventure Creator from a rip-off merchant I know while on the way to the Doctor (cough, sneeze). This program is reputed to be extremely good and this proved to be true. It will enable anyone with imagination without necessarily any programming knowledge to simply and quickly create a graphics adventure game (text illustrated with pictures). No obscure cryptic language needs to be learnt as game play is orchestrated by giving instructions that are almost plain English. Running the software is simply a matter of selecting from menus and filling in easy to understand forms. The documentation is easy to read and understand.
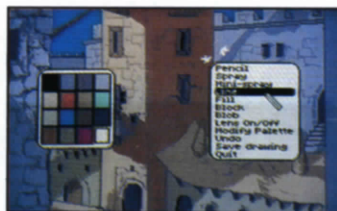
TALESPIN

It takes the uninitiated on a guided tour of what makes an adventure program 'tick' and how everything places together. An art drawing package is part of STAC which enables the game writer to illustrate his or her adventure. It isn't as good as a specialised art package such as the ubiquitous DEGAS and NEOCHROME, but picture files can be imported from them to be used as illustrations so the point is fairly academic. The resulting adventure with excellent graphics capabilities, effective

parser and the ability to create quite involved story plots with large vocabulary; it's up to the writer!

Another software package that will be of great interest to any would-be story teller is 'TALESPIN'. As far as I know (at the time of writing) it is not officially distributed in Australia and has to be bought via international mail order. This excellent, easy to use program produces a game that is completely different from STAC being entirely mouse driven and having the feel and look of a comic strip. Movement through the game is achieved by 'clicking' on characters or objects drawn on the screen, reading any narration, thought or talking balloons and selecting from the given multiple choice options. All in all playing a game written using TALESPIN is little different to reading a comic! Naturally enough, the software included an art package. The same can be said for this as was said for its STAC equivalent including the ability to import picture files. Game play is controlled by the use of counters and event markers hence plot cannot be as involved as in STAC but the limitations are only really evident under extreme cases. Charles Dickens-style plots and sub-plots are still easy to create.

Neither software package is necessarily better than the other; each creating an entirely different type of game. STAC results in a traditional style adventure with written descriptions of places and objects where the player types into the computer what he or she wants the main character to do. TALESPIN in contrast presents the player with frames from a comic strip. A choice of action may be offered openly or hidden in the picture! Having a reasonable artist at hand is probably more important in a TALESPIN game due to its visual nature whereas a STAC user can simply leave pictures out altogether!

Both of these software packages are very good. Both are brilliant tools for use by anyone wanting to tell stories through the new medium of computers, enabling the reader to live a story not just to observe it. This is essentially what an adventure game is.

BLADE WARRIOR

The beast was present in the land and from tower to tower the sorcerers voice called upon him. As night encroached and set the sun to flight, so his legions made ready to conceal the tablets that would see daylight banished forever.

So, as the same last bloody light drained from east to west, the paladin came forth, ready to do battle against the legions of the night, using all his might and skill in this tale of swords and sorcery.

Screenshots from Amiga version

Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC and compatibles.

BISLEY 89

Now you can't really accuse me of being 'up with it' - whatever 'it' may be. Pushing fortyish (plus), life for me stopped with the breaking up of the Beatles.

I did have brief period of playing with a CB radio, but we all have our lapses.

Now I could claim that any interest I may have with computers relates simply to trying to help my 13 year old son with his school work but the truth is I was intrigued by these electronic toys.

Let's face it, when you're raised on wind-up gadgetry - where cogs are turned by spring power - electronic wizardry with its unknown workings (and questionable result) can be both daunting and intriguing.

So it was with great interest I lashed out some $199 and purchased a Spectravideo SV-318 - just for the lad's education you understand.

With a Coleco adapter, it soon became just a games toy. Apart from entertaining the local ankle biters, the Spectravideo didn't live up to my expectations.

I bought the right books (and magazines), tried to encourage the youngster in programming, even tried to get involved myself (just to help out you understand).

The Coleco games were popular, the basic computer was not.

That was about four years ago.

In the meantime the brat started high school and became involved in Apple IIe computers. I took one look at the price of the IIe and decided to pass.

THE GARAGE SALE

The Spectravideo then went to that great CPU in the sky and Monash University decided to have a garage sale.

Now I just love garage sales - the joy of picking up a good bargain, the haggling, everything. But this sale was somewhat different. Though not advertised as such was basically all computers and computer-related gear.

Now a bargain is a bargain and the sight of a computer with built-in screen, disk drive and with a daisy wheel printer (all in good working order!?!) for only $200 was more than this little black duck could pass up.

We hurried home, the wife and I, minus our $200 and clutching an assortment of computer gear. Very impressive!

In our eagerness we plugged it in and discovered two things. The first was that there was no cable between the printer and the computer (even we realised that was an ommission), and when the computer was switched on all that happened was the screen lit up and said:"Insert Diskette".

What diskette?

All we had was a computer. Even the el cheapo Spectravideo did something when you switched it on and pushed some buttons. Our new toy did nothing.

With our new found wisdom we now understand that the old SV-318 had quite an amount of ROM - the new toy had virtually none.

I went back to Monash Uni and aquired some 8 inch floppy disks. Ha, I thought, this should do the trick.

We 'inserted the diskette' and, guess what - the only thing that happened was that the screen went from saying: "Insert Diskette" to "Not A System Disk".
In one fell swoop we went from having nothing to . . .having nothing!

What a disappoinment.

DEAR MR. TANDY . . .

Now this 'new' computer was from Tandy Electronics so, armed with model numbers, catalogue numbers and numbers of dollars, we went down to our friendly Tandy Computer Centre.

By this time we'd been the proud owner of our computer for the grand total of 24 hours. We were experts!

"I'd like some software and manuals for a TRS 80 Model II, catalogue number 26-4002, please," I asked confidently.

"You want what?" said the helpful sales assistant rolling around the floor laughing. "That technology is 20 years old - we don't have anything **that** ancient.

"Take my word for it, trade it in on a new Tandy computer - they're IBM compatible. You'll get nothing but heartache trying to buy software for that old dinosaur."

Now heartache might be what I'd get but that would cost less, dollarwise, than the new Tandy toy. We opted for heartache.

Now you can win sometimes and a few days later I kicked a goal - a TRS 80 Model II **with** software and manuals - plus the hardware! - for the grand sum of $280.

That's $280 plus the $200 we'd already spent! We now owned two computers, one daisy wheel printer and the aforementioned software.

The chap selling the TRS 80 (with software) was quite right. The hardware was worth basically nothing - the software was everything.

Whether we needed two computers is debatable but again the man was probably making good sense when he suggested that there wouldn't be any parts available for our dinosaur(s). When one finally died we could put it away, use the other machine until it died as well, then make one good machine from two crookies.

I hate it when people make sense - and it costs me money!

As my 13 year old son has a 12 year old sister - both of whom use computers at school - two computers could save many hours of argument. Now all I have to do is make sure they don't want the printer at the same time.

Besides, there was more of a chance of there being a spare dinosaur for yours truly . . .

Now who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks? With a lot of manual reading (which is different from automatic reading I suppose), and much hands on, I'm slowly getting the hang of using this electronic whizzbang machine.

Of course my wife now considers herself a CPU widow as I pound the keyboard and flip through the manuals into the wee

a dinosaur

small hours. My children, both lively little cretins, whine and carry on that some old grey haired goat (wonder who they're talking about?) has taken over **their computer** and won't let them have a turn.

Talk about wanting to take bat and ball and go home - but I no complain.

GETTING THE HANG OF IT

I've nearly mastered Scripsit, which was Tandy's fancy name for word processing. The Model II was, and is, simply a business computer. No colour, no graphics, no games, no frills, no getting sidetracked when you're supposed to be doing homework . . .

The Model II was also priced well outside the average home when it was first introduced. I have seen an American Tandy (sorry, Radio Shack) catalogue with the Model II priced at about $US8,000 ($10,600 at current exchange rates) though it was apparently selling

for about $6000 here two years later.

It makes an interesting exercise to use such a dedicated business machine in the home environment.

Forgetting the masochistic 'fun' of going through the raw learning process to acclimatise myself to the computer (I would prefer the machine acclimatise iteself to me), there is great satisfaction for this old ex journalist to present copy for publication in a final virtually editless form which doesn't look like something the cat dragged in.

I still hit the wrong keys, misspell words and in other ways mangle the text - but I can clean it up on the screen before anyone else sees it. Word processing really is fun.

I've found a whole string of characters, letters, numbers and symbols (which I'll probably never use) hidden on the daisy wheel. Knowing they were there and accessing them were two different things. But I won, eventually.

I'm quite proud of my ▶ ● ● and μ symbols. Small things may amuse small minds but even smaller minds comment. . .

My children are slowly starting to use the word processor to do their homework but they seem to work on the premise that it's easier to ask good ole dad (he's suddenly stopped being that grey haired old goat) than it is to actually read through the destruction manuals.

But good ole dad is starting to reach the outer limits of his worn out brain.

Limited by a single disk drive and confounded by the lack of available software, I started to look around for some help. Join a user group, I was advised. If you browse through the magazines at your newsagent you'll find lists of user groups. Make a note of an appropriate phone number and you're in business. You don't even have to buy the magazine.

MEGACOMP TO THE RESCUE

As an ex magazine editor, I was appalled. Magazine editors and their publishers going broke all

over the world and I'm being advised to avoid spending a couple of dollars and thieve - yes, thieve - the information I so desperately require.

I did go down to the newsagent and was amazed by the total number of computer magazines on the shelves. As Con would say, looking, looking, looking.

Megacomp leapt off the shelves and attached itself to me. Now it wasn't the competition for the Amiga 500 which swung me over (the entry is in a separate envelope - do I make bribes payable to the Editor?), or the list of user groups towards the back, or even the irreverent approach to "the boring bits" in the front. Rather it was a combination of things (surely I'll get a free subscription for all this praise).

The issue I acquired even had a list of computers which bit the dust - and both computers I had purchased were featured.

But it was really the user group listing which I was after. Tandy was mentioned with a Sydney contact number. A quick call to the city of Syn gave me a Melbourne business hours contact and I ended up speaking to Robin Dudfield, one of Melbourne Tandy's chiefs.

Now, in all seriousness, I'd like to make a suggestion to Telecom. How about a reduced rate for bulk telephone calls? I would hate to make a note of all the calls I've made trying to get information on our dinosaur. People not in when I called, suggestions to call other people, general telephone hassles, et al.

But back to Robin.

He gave me the name and telephone numbers of two local managers who may have been able to help. He also spent much of his valuable time on the telephone talking to someone who, while owning some Tandy gear, would probably not spend as much as a bean on new gear from his stores. A public thank you, Robin.

The first manager (about 15 telephone calls to reach him) was helpful to a point but mentioned that the Model II dinosaur was not the type of computer to regularly

feature in user clubs because: a/ it was a business computer; and b/ because of its initial cost. Fair comment but not helpful in a practical way.

The second manager, Mark Tilley from the Camberwell store, had some old software lying around. When I asked about second hand 8 inch single sided disks (just in case, you understand) he mentioned he had just disposed of about 50 disks in a big cleanup. Talk about Murphy's Law!

As I write, I'm still waiting to hear back from Mark about that old software. I've got my fingers crossed. . .

REASONS, REASONS

I've heard that there's a CP/M program for the Model II. While I may not know just why I want this software, I've been told to watch out for the same. I'm sure there's a good reason.

But I do know why I'm looking for a Model II Disk Drive System. This unit has three built-in drives for the 8 inch floppy disk and would allow me, apart from other benefits yet to be ratified, to run the Spelling Dictionary program with the Scripsit word processing package.

Imagine, I'd be able to throw out my trusty old Oxford Paperback Dictionary and still improve my spelling 100 per cent.

So here I sit, the trusty Model II flashing its little cursor at me, knowing that all you expert computer whizzes will be smiling up your collective sleeves at that this noddy with his dinosaur.

Well bugger you all. Until you can convince me it's better owning an 8 MHz IBM (or whatever) toy with nine million colours, 10 zillion graphic characters, untold fancy video games and which would make me coffee in the morning, I'll stick with my trusty dinosaur.

It was good enough for Fred Flintstone y'know.

The technology might be from the Ark, it might take longer to put its boots on than me, it might even look a little ugly - but it's all I've bloody well got!

Besides, it was cheap. . .

But is it a good adventure?

A masochist to the bitter end, Chimera bravely cranks up his trusty C64 to take a wistful glance back at some of the games which have put a dent in his pocket

Greetings! I'd like to make some small-talk here, so grab a comfy seat, possible a pleasant brew, munchies & etc. Are We ready...? LET'S ROCK!

"Adventure Games". Almost every user I know has an adventure or two stashed away, possibly gathering dust, possibly stapled to a wall, smouldering in the fireplace...I have decided to ask the totally pointless question... "WHAT MAKES A GOOD ADVENTURE?". Unavoidably, there are a few gratuitious plugs for progs that I have not been given to review. I hope that Himself doesn't mind. Those who know me will testify that I lavish a significant portion of my spare time playing these fiendish contrivances. It hasn't changed me at all ...(Twitch, spasm ...)

The Secret of Bastow Manor taught me two things ...Computers do not understand plain English, and typing "list" can get you out of the ca-ca! Like most things in Life, it's far easier to cheat. Cheating is acceptable. Indeed, several software houses market "hint books" (admittedly, they cost as much as games, but I digress ...) which allow the troubled gamer to find some peace, solve the mystery, and render the game pretty much useless for further enjoyment. Bummer. There is an undeniable thrill in solving the Ultimate Riddle (for this week!), but there is always that "cheated" feeling when it happens. I speak from the heart here; I have just finished playing Battletech, and the anti-climax was pretty staggering! Blasting 'Mechs into confetti, training the men up to Genius levels . . .For what? Aaaarrgh! - The game did not give a chance to use all of the effort expended. A neat little game, nonetheless. Neuromancer is much in the same vein. The scope is huge, but I can't totally suss out where it's all meant to end. I know that Wintermute is behind it all, and I have used as much sneakiness as I can muster, wringing out the secrets of the game. Ploughing through listings of gibberish, searching for passwords, numbers and etc.

The game Neuromancer is all about hacking, and I decided that the game was best approached from that angle, thereby creating a sub-game, and cutting down on the sheer frustration that I happened to be suffering (and still

doing so!) at its convoluted plot. It worked. By the way, I have some useful info for anyone foolish enough to take Neuromancer on... Be prepared to spend some time on this one. Time spent playing should be rewarded accordingly; and there are a few things more frustrating than running out of money in a game that requires oodles of it. Neuromancer burns the stuff like crazy, yet there is no way of earning or winning the massive amounts needed. I'm sure there could be a gambling routine to help things along. I fear that the biggest waste of time spent in any game, is obtaining the filthy lucre, and even more wasted in games that allow one to amass huge sums, and then being unable to use it! The Legend of Blacksilver struck some balance there, and I was able to complete the game with a tidy stash; totally unlike the ludicrous 65000000 C-bills left after Battletech! A good adventure should consider these things: Is the interaction system easy to use? Will the parser support a desired response?, Can clues be obtained by a near-miss?, How easy is the combat system to use, and how long before it gets too boring?, Money, if needed should be reasonably challenging to obtain, but not impossible. Graphic content should be executed in the most realistic fashion possible, as should sound effects. Hint books should not cost more than the game itself (!)...Mars Saga is the culprit there, and is not helped by the constant slather of armed opponents who appear to have hides tougher than dried rhino, thwarting the player's every move. Combat in adventure games is a sore point.

What's the bloody use of that

superservo assisted starplate Mobile Suit, with built-in weapons, if some lout with a blowgun or cudgel can inflict GBH on you? I am amazed that there seems to be no real "To-hit" modifiers in most games on the market. In one game, my characters have the very best armour, and STILL have the local hoolies using them as clay pigeons!, yet the lowest scum on the streets take at least five hits with a grenade-launcher, before they go "Aarrrgh!" ...That's the whole point! - All of the equipment that you shell out for should DO something! The same could be said for skills. Half the game is spent racking up enough skills, whether they be Brawling, Medical, Calli- and Flower-arranging; yet these skills have little to do with the actual denouement, the vinegar-stroke, the goal ...No, I would say from my rather jaded viewpoint, that these piddling little tasks tend to detract from the overall effect, and are more trouble than they are worth, game-wise. There must be a dividing-line between amusement and boredom, and should be considered in the game design. I'm sure that most people have fell for the snazzy little program that degenerates into total and utter crap halfway through. Not good, considering the hours that we can put into any given game, not forgetting the financial outlay!

So far, I've done nowt but mither and chelp (little bit o'Lancashire dialect for variety ...) about the bad points of some selected games, and said precious little about the building blocks of what should be a good program. A plot helps. There is usually some basic pre-mise behind all of that hack/slash/ nuke/insult-type behaviour, and

not just sheer bloody-mindedness.

This takes the form of The Quest. You are almost invariably cast as an over-muscled vagabond with a serious lack of charisma (available at your local temple/P.D. centre, Only $$$$!), and have as much buying power as pocket -lint. Some Deity/King/Father/Little Green Man has had the deplorable bad judgement to choose you as a solution to their problem(s). In real life, this is known as "The Peter Principal" ...Being promoted to the highest degree of incompetence.

Armed with little more than a spud-gun/kitchen knife, you are sent on the quest to recover Loki's Whoopee Cushion, The Holy Grail, The Tapes, random Princesses, etc. etc. ..Along the way, you are accosted by various beasties, all having taken an instant dislike to your bodily odours, taste in clothing, religious persuasion ...There is something generic in all of this. -Rather worrying, actually. I suppose it's only a matter of time before the plot runs out, and either see old games re-packaged for further release, or bizarre mutations of disparate themes. Imagine: Battletech vs Leisure-Suit Larry, or Manor of The Leather Goddesses, Captain Blood Meets Bard's Tale . ..I'm not quite so sure this isn't happening now.

Whatever happens, you are expected to plod along, either carving a swathe of destruction, or solving more riddles than Oedipus and Bilbo Baggins put together. Clues are pretty scarce, and usually useless, if something has been done out of sequence. This is something that you don't discover until very late in the game. The text games are even more limited, having no visual cues to jog the memory. Robots of Dawn is a pure text-only adventure, and I have spent many fruitless hours playing an agoraphobic detective with a retarded droid as a sidekick. The game has all the appeal of watching Masonite warp. C'est Magnifique, but it ain't fun.

Oh well. This particular mythical beast enjoys the odd adventure game, albeit some are VERY odd, but I'm still looking for the ultimate challenge. A game that I can play again, right after I've finished it. I'm still looking.

Oh. Just one more thing . . . Does anyone know of a store that has a copy of "Slaine the Barbarian?"

AS AUSTRALIAN AS OUR KOALA

3 YEAR GUARANTEE

Koala Courtesy Lone Pine Sanctuary

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"Stands up to a battering" — Amstrad User, Feb. '89.
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"Aussie stick comes up trumps" — New Computer Express, U.K.

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HOW A P.C.

Part 2: Delving into DOS. Bill Liao continues his guided tour through the operating system of your P.C.

Last issue I gave out a brief run down of how you start up your PC. This time I will begin to explain some of the workings of DOS and leave further technical info on the PC to later Issues.

So what is DOS? and why are all the best PC's wearing it this summer? Well truth to tell, many of the best PC's are wearing many other things, but DOS is still No.1. DOS stands for Disk Operating System, which I explained briefly last time. Operating systems have been with us for a very long time and are basically a program that a computer uses to control and talk to the devices it is attached to.

DOS was copyrighted by IBM as the standard operating system to be loaded from disk for their range of personal computers or PC's and was largely written by another company called Microsoft. What DOS does is to provide a method for you to control the facilities of your computer.

Let us play with DOS a little. You will need a DOS disk and a blank disk. Place your DOS disk in the floppy drive A of your computer and keep your blank disk handy. Turn your computer ON and wait. After a while you will see a message something like the panel at the top of this page. Pehaps it will say with Microsoft MS-DOS and another company name depending on who you got your DOS from. The X.XX is a version number which could be any-

where from 1.21 to 4.1 depending on when your copy of DOS was written. There are many different versions of DOS and there are a remarkable number of differences between them, though the newer your version of DOS (the higher the version number) the more bug free and powerful it is likely to be.

The first thing you should know about DOS is that it is composed of many programs. DOS reads the keyboard and displays on the monitor what you type. Also it allocates space on various disk drives for your programs, and it allows you to manipulate your files and ports - your printer for instance.

To do this, it has small programs, both built into the main part of it and external to it, that come on the distribution disks. To see what programs you have on you DOS disk, let us use one of the internal commands to get a list or DIRectory of the files on the DOS disk you have in drive A. To do this, at the A> prompt type DIR then press enter or return. You will get a list something like this:

```
Volume in drive A is SYSTEM
Directory of A:\

COMMAND COM  25307  17-03-87  12:00p
ANSI    SYS    506  20-09-88   7:57p
CONFIG  SYS    108  29-09-89   1:02a
FORMAT  COM  18403  10-09-67   4:47p
        <ETC>
        <ETC>
XX File(s)  XXXXX bytes free
```

Now, to begin our little exploit into the usage of DOS we will need a blank formatted disk. The rest of today's lesson will focus on achieving this goal. When you get a disk straight from the factory it is like a vast empty space. What DOS does to utilise this space is a little like what we would do with an empty warehouse. Instead of just dumping goods into it, first we would put in a storage system such as shelves and pigeon holes.

This first step to organising your data and program files on a blank disk by DOS is called formatting. What it does is setup predetermined areas on the disk by writing data in regular sequences across the disk surface. If this is done to a disk which already has data on it (EVEN A HARD DISK!) it will UTTERLY DESTROY the data which was previously there, so be careful with this next step. If in doubt, turn the computer off and start over!

Once the disk is set up in this way, DOS may output files to the disk for long term storage. The next step is to format the blank disk that you still have handy. If you have the program 'format.com' in the above directory of your DOS disk, then you can complete this next step now. If however you have a copy of DOS that has two or more disks, find the disk that has 'format.com' or 'format.exe' on it. Make sure it is write-protected. This means make sure there is a label covering the write-protect notch or that the write protect hole of your disk is clear. Then place it in drive A and

after A> type FORMAT A: /s
You should be rewarded with something like this:

```
Insert new diskette for drive A:
and strike ENTER when ready
```

(Insert your blank disk and hit ENTER here)

```
Format complete
System transferred

    362496 bytes total disk space
     78848 bytes used by system
    283648 bytes available on disk

Format another (Y/N)?
```

Press N then press ENTER. The /s option tells the formatter to put a copy of the booting bit of DOS onto the disk so you can use your new disk to start your computer with next time.

For now, though, remove your DOS disks to a safe place (you will need them later) and place your blank disk where you won't forget it.
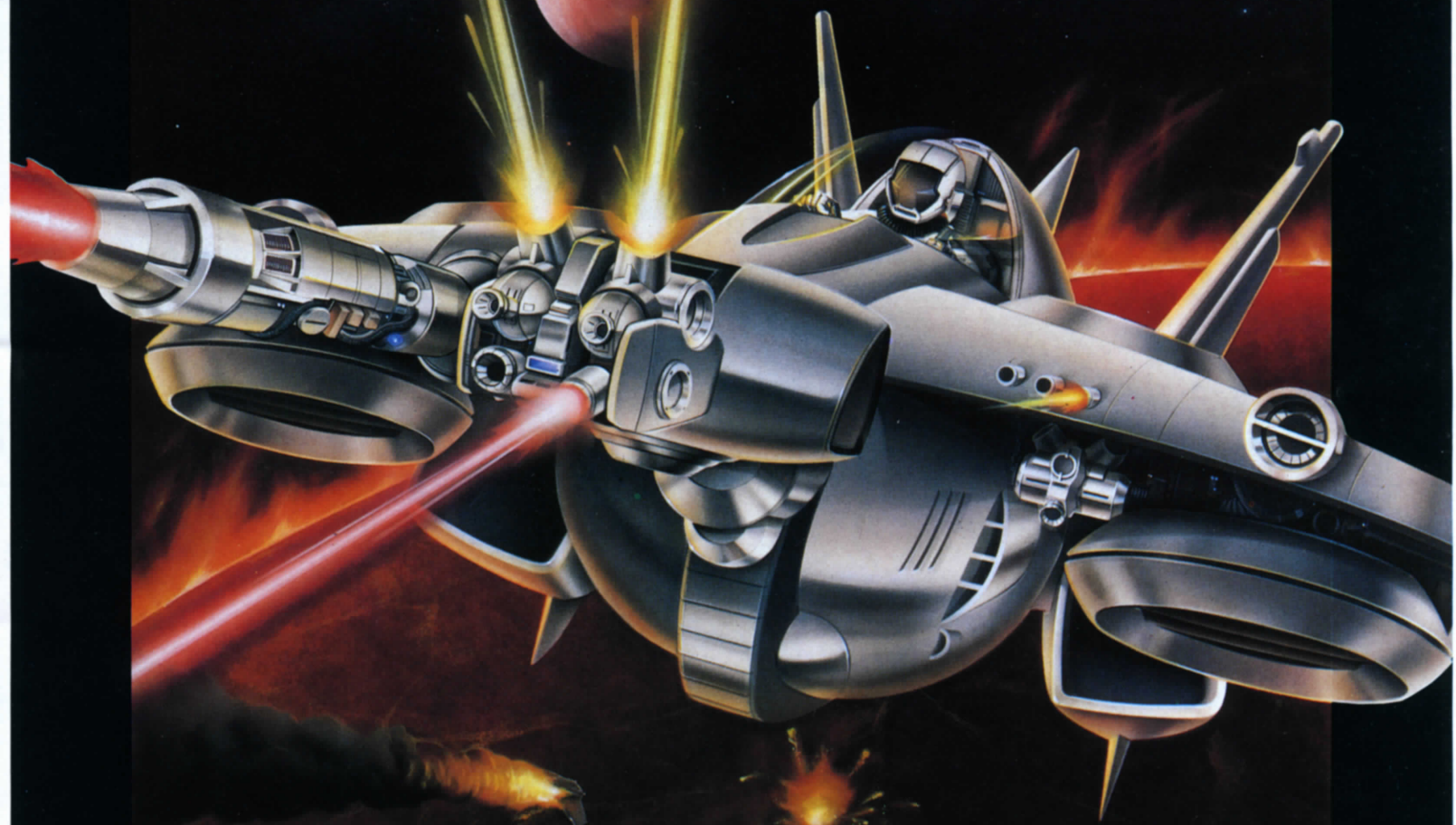
Next time, I will continue with the DOS tutorial. But if you have any input (have I gone too fast or slow; do you want me to give you more background on what I have covered?) please write and tell me so I can adjust this feature to reflect what you want to know.

Bill Liao

DR. DOOM'S REVENGE!

Available for SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, C64, AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC and Compatibles.

Free Marvel comic book destined to become a collector's item, available by return.

Screenshots taken from various formats.

Win a Ferrari!

You could win one of FIVE radio control model Ferraris in the new MEGACOMP Hard Drivin' game!

Hard Drivin' just has to be one of the hottest arcade hits ever released. It's a breathtaking, death-defying, action-packed stunt car sim that'll sweat your palms and pound your temples like no other!

To whet your appetitie, Questor (the Hard Drivin' people) have given us FIVE authentic Hard Drivin' radio control model Ferraris for our readers to win. Here's what you do:

Make a word up to six letters long, using letters from the name Hard Drivin. No letter can be used more than once in the word except for I, D and R, which can be used only twice each in the word.

Using the same rules each time, make a different word, then another different word. (All three words must be in the Macquarie dictionary.)

Now score your words on the chart below. The five top scoring entries will be the winners, and one of them could be YOU!

Complete all details, seal your entry in an envelope and write your total score on the back of the envelope. Mail or deliver your entry to HARD DRIVIN, MEGACOMP MAGAZINE, 1/40 GLENHUNTLY ROAD, ELWOOD 3184.

						Word totals
HARD DRIVIN						
HARD DRIVIN						
HARD DRIVIN						

Letter values:
A:2 I:2 D:5 N:10
R:15 H:20 V:30

TOTAL [ ]

Name..

Address ....

....Pcode.............

Telephone number ....

RULES & CONDITIONS: HARD DRIVIN GAME

1. This is a game of skill, conducted by MEGACOMP magazine. 2. Entry is free, but must be made on an entry form taken from MEGACOMP magazine. 3. South Australian entrants may submit a photocopy or hand-drawn facsimile - limit one entry per person. 4. In the event of a tie, short words and neatness will be deciding factors. 5. The decision of the judges will be final, and we won't cop any whinging after it's over. 6. Prizes are not exchangeable for cash, and anyone who is in any way connected with MEGACOMP magazine can't enter, so stiff cheddar. 7. Illegible, obscene or grotty entries will be invalid. 8. Only entries received by 5pm, February 28th 1990 will be judged. Prizewinners will be notified by mail or telephone and listed in MEGACOMP magazine 9. Prizewinners agree to the use of their name and address and/or photograph for publicity purposes. 10. Submission of an entry constitutes acceptance of these rules and conditions.

Megacomp

ARCADE

GAMES REVIEWED

- Continental Circus
- Paperboy
- Stunt Car Racer
- Wonderboy 3
- Rommel
- Dynamite Dux
- Double Dragon II

- Space Harrier
- Weird Dreams
- Sideshow
- Rainbow Warrior
- Altered Beast
- Wide World of
  Sports

DOUBLE DRAGON II

Dave Baron hits the aggro button and discovers a sequel that's the equal!

They're back - Billy & Jimmy, better known as the DOUBLE DRAGONS in the new Double Dragon II!

It was just a matter of time, after the huge success of double Dragon I and the release of Double Dragon II in the arcades, that the computer version arrived - and what better timing than now at Christmas?

So how do I know - before release - what it's like? Well, I'm one of those privileged people whose brother in law's sister's brother has contacts in the industry, and I must say it was worth the effort to wheedle a copy.
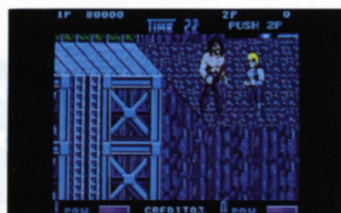
Double Dragon II really does make the first version look like an amateur attempt. The graphics are fab, loads better than the first version, and the sound is still gripping enough to keep you listening.

The game this time is focussed around Bill & Jimmy seeking revenge for the death of Marian. They do this by beating the living daylights out of anyone of the "Secret Lair" group and finally snuffing the shadow boss. The heart-touching part of this story is that if they do succeed in their mission, they may be able to bring Marian back to life - isn't that just wunnnnderful?

Anyhow, the guts of it still revolves around a staggering amount of violence, with just about every weapon you could imagine, such as spades, daggers, powerballs, boxes, chairs, grenades (pause for breath), logs, whips and anything else you can lay your hands on.

In a sense, the gameplay is basically the same as the first, but there seems to be a more professional feeling in regard to how the game flows. I don't know about you, but where the first version got a little boring at times, this one kept us going for days. (Brazil, my partner, played Jimmy). This is another reason why I think Double Dragon II will be the game of the year, because two people can sit down and actually play at the same time, helping each other out, and that makes it interesting.

Overall, I'de have to say that if you consider yourself a game enthusiast, and you don't buy a copy of Double Dragon II, you will develop a weak link, your friends will ignore you, your parents won't talk to you and Brazil will hunt you down!

Space Ace

## Valentino Rossi previews the latest SF extravaganza from Don Bluth, creator of Dragon's Lair.

Coming out soon for the Amiga (probably by the time this issue sees print) is the latest animated extravaganza from Don Bluth, the creator of Dragon's Lair (reviewed in Megacomp last month). Called Space Ace, the game is set in the realm of science fiction, and once again you play the part of the story's hero in an attempt to overcome the forces of evil in the far future.

If you haven't heard of Dragon's Lair, the idea of this sort of game is to control the actions of a fully-animated on-screen character, by use of a joystick, hopefully making him do the correct actions which will lead him safely through various encounters and eventually (after many, many tries!) to the game's conclusion. Broken joysticks and smashed monitor screens are par for the course with this type of game, so beware!

Having seen various snippets of the actual game, it appears to have graphics, sound and animation just as brilliant as Dragon's Lair, and probably better gameplay. Look out for it, it'll be a must!
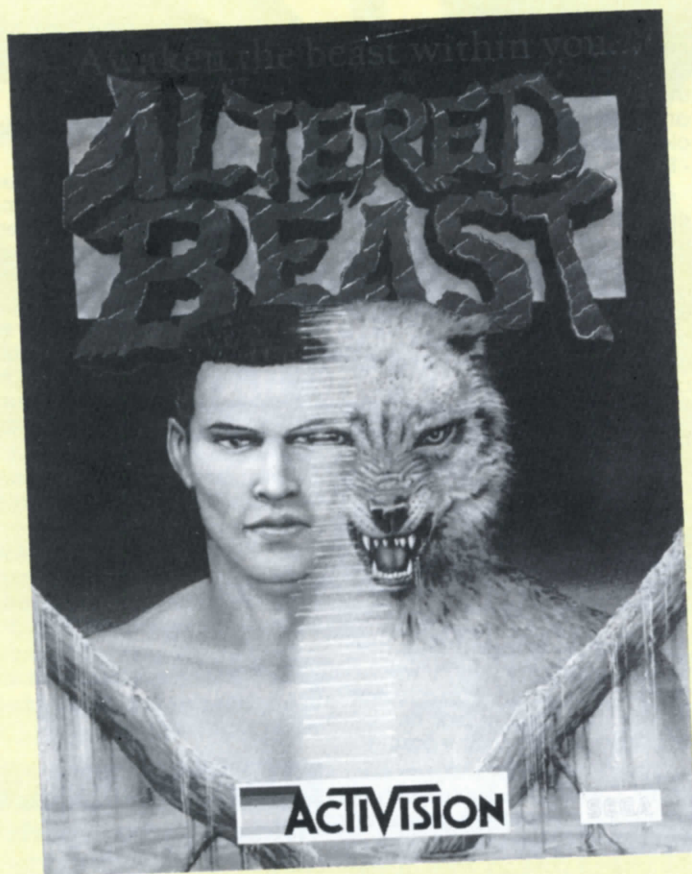
John Carter undergoes a gruelling metamorphosis beyond the call of duty. He still hasn't shaved. . .

By now, you have probably seen this part-human-part-animal game in the arcades. Well, this is now available for Amiga, and it makes excellent use of the machine's graphic abilities.

Okay, here's the scenario: you were once a Roman centurion, a brave warrior who knew no fear. When you died on the battlefield with courage and honour, you thought you would know peace and rest for all eternity.

But, when the evil Neff, Lord of the Underworld, abducted the beautiful Athena, her father Zeus searched for a warrior strong and brave enough to rescue her. He chose you, and brought you back from the grave!

Since you would be battling against creatures of supernatural powers, Zeus gave you supernatural powers of your own.

Within certain creatures of enemy are magical spirit balls. If you defeat these enemies and take the spirit balls, you gain the powers of the Altered Beast - the power to metamorphosise (transform, Ethel. - ED) into creatures of awesome strengths and abilities!

You go from man to strongman ...to werewolf...to weredragon...to weretiger, and to the ultimate - the golden wolfman! It's at this stage that you have the power to do what no man, living or dead, has ever done before - to battle

the demons of the underworld and WIN!

Altered Beast is a great game, and if used without the "continue" feature, it can be very challenging. Keep listening for the great sounds: when the digitized words "POWER UP" come on, when you collect the spirit balls and the unearthly howl when you transform.

The graphics could not be much better, being extremely smooth and not too jerky. With persistence, or with the continue feature, you will probably manage to reach the end of the four rounds. This is NOT one of those absolutely impossible games!

Megacomp Scorecard

Altered Beast

GRAPHICS: 8	COLOUR: 7
ACTION: 9	SOUND: 8
DOCUMENTATION: 7	
BRAINSTRAIN: 4	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 7	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 8	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 72.5	

Reviewed on   : Amiga
Also for   : C64, Sega Master
Software by   : Activision
Distributor   : Ozisoft
R.R.P.   : **$59.95**

SIDESHOW

Valentino (buckskin) Rossi goes for the kewpie doll in this sideshow alley classic.

If you're not sure when the next circus will be coming to your neighbourhood, but you are yearning for the action of the shooting galleries and other side-show attractions that circuses bring, then perhaps Sideshow, a new release from Actionware, is what you need.

Sideshow brings to your Amiga about half a dozen of the most popular shooting games which can be found at any circus or amusement park, in a fairly realistic arcade game.

The game is intended to be played with a phaser gun, although Mouse control is supported, obviously, the phaser gun gives a more realistic action, but the mouse is reasonably effective. Using a joystick or the keyboard would be just about impossible. A crosshair is moved around the screen, and when it is aimed at the appropriate targets, you squeeze the trigger and fire.

The games are presented in nice perspective, with artistic and colourful settings and animation which is quite smooth and fast. The animation consists of balloons

floating upward, balls shooting out of milk bottles and various targets moving past your view in the shooting galleries, depending on the game you're currently playing. The sounds are up to scratch, but there could be more of them.

The graphics are nicely detailed and the digitised sound effects are well done, and the phaser gun helps to make the games fairly good fun. I think Sideshow is a good idea, although I have come to expect more than something as basic as this from Actionware. Perhaps the full-release version will be better. I used a test for this review. One thing is certain - to get best value from Sideshow, the phaser gun is a must - it's a boring game when you use a mouse.

Megacomp Scorecard

Sideshow

GRAPHICS: 8	COLOUR: 8
ACTION: 7	SOUND: 7
DOCUMENTATION: 7	
BRAINSTRAIN: 2	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 6	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 7	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 65	

Reviewed on   : Amiga
Also for   : —
Software by   : Actionware
Distributor   : Questor
R.R.P.   : **$59.95**

New Copier for Amiga: German firm Cachet have released X-Copy V2. Takes only 68 seconds to copy an unprotected disk. Program includes fast formatter, disk checker, optmizer for fast loading, and other advanced features. X-Copy will support up to four disk drives at the one time. Available here for $49.95 + $5 p&p through A.S.I.D. on (03) 563-8092.

Super virus killer: Also from Europe for Amiga is "Virus-Expert V1.4". Analyses program, bootblock & memory for virus, also kills new file viruses currently stuffing Amigas. Retails for $39.95 from A.S.I.D. (see above).

Mega Drive a winner: We have driven Sega's new 16-bit wondertoy and were spellbound by it. Unlikely it will be added to the range here until well into 1990, and then at a mega price. Graphics are crisp and colours fantastic. Hard to believe Sega could improve on the Master System, but the Mega Drive certainly does it. Should be a host of arcade conversations available. As soon as we can grab one for a full test, you'll read about it.

New games on the way: Starlord is a space sim; Powerdrift is a sort of dune buggy Outrun; Moonwalker is based on Michael Jackson's movie; The Jetsons is ah . . .; Xennon II promises more than the original horizontal scroller; Tower of Babel is a strategy game where you control robot spiders; Fighter Bomber is a sim that gives you a choice of aircraft; Shaolin is the full martial arts bit; Commando is a conversation of the arcade shoot 'em up; Beyond the Black Hole is a weirdy you play with 3D goggles; Toobin is a rage for hearty wilderness explorers; The Untouchables is a bang-bang version of the TV series; Bruce Lee Lives is another of those interminable Kung-fu epics.

Only the brave: To bring out a new computer these days you either have to be mighty sure of what you're doing or have rocks in your head. But in the UK, a new Z80B machine called SAM has just hit the market. It runs at 6 MHz, is compatible with uncle Clive's 48K Spectrum, has 256K RAM, 6 channel stereo sound, 4 screen modes, supports all the usual bits and pieces and claims a faster disk drive than the ST. Good luck, fellas!

EPYX
WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS
9

Amiga 3.5" Disk

Epyx have combined three of their sporting games into a tremendous triple pack. It contains California Games, The Games Winter Edition and The Games Summer Edition.

California Games contains six radical events. It is for all you sunbaked beach-bums with a fondness for ripping, grinding and shredding. These events will take you to the edge and beyond, with full-on, mindblowing action.

The first event 'Skateboarding' takes us to the half pipe. Skateboarding is definitely an awsome event, you'll have 1:15 minute time period or three falls to build up speed and successfully complete stunts. Points are awarded for each stunt and the highest score wins the event.

We then head off to the 'Foot Bag' event. Foot Bag is like juggling with your feet. You have to keep the bag in the air for 1:15 minutes, quite a challenging event.

'Surfing' is next, here you'll shoot out the curl, shred the tube and probably even eat a little sand when you wipe out. The object is to manoeuvre your board at high speeds close to the curl, scoring points.

Scott Raynsford takes a break from uni to check out this new 3-in-one sports sim.

Now we hit the pavement in the next gruelling event 'Roller Skating'. The trick is to skate down the sidewalk avoiding cracks and other obstacles. (such as little old ladies and council inspectors. - ED)

BMX stands for bicycle motorcross, it also stands for radical action and challenging competion. Here bicycles race on an action packed course in the California Desert. There are plenty of bumps and dips as you race across the course performing stunts and avoiding obstacles.

Finally we wind up the competition with the 'Flying Disk'. The object is to throw accurately to the catcher at the end of the field.

All of these events add up to a totally awsome competition that blew me away. It had reasonable graphics and sound effects topped off with great music.

The Games Summer Edition has eight exhilarating events, where you face the world's top athletes in all the demanding nerve-wracking pressure of the games.

The games involve Velodrome Sprint Cycling, a 1000m sprint where the competitors go slowly for the first two laps, jockeying for the trailing position. Then at the sound of the bell for the last lap they break away and race to the finish.

We then travel out to the gymnasium for the Rings and the Uneven Parallel Bars, both events involve a lot of timing and a great deal of practice to master.

Archery is the event where you control the pull of the bow while compensating for the wind. You'll shoot six arrows at a target 90m away in a 1:30 minute period.

The next three events take us to the athletics field where you compete in the Hammer Throw, Hurdles and the Pole Vault.

Finally we are off to the pool for a little diving.

I found The Games Summer Edition to be a terrific sporting simulation game, It had spectacular scenery and sound effects as well as dramatic camera angles.

The Games Winter Edition, set in the Canadian Rockies, contains seven events, the Luge, Downhill skiing, Slalom, Figure skating, Ski Jump, Cross-country and Speed Skating.

Compared with California Games and The Games Summer Edition, it's disappointing.

Graphics and sound are below average and although the games were quite difficult, the events weren't even worth describing.

Overall, it's a mind-blowing pack, full of action, and if you are into sports simulations, it's great value for the money.

Megacomp Scorecard

Wide World of Sports

GRAPHICS: 7	COLOUR: 6
ACTION: 7	SOUND: 8

DOCUMENTATION: 9

BRAINSTRAIN: 7

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 7

VALUE FOR MONEY: 9

OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 75

Reviewed on :	Amiga
Also for	C64, IBM, ST
Software by :	Epyx
Distributor	Questor
R.R.P.	: $59.95

Cheats for your Amiga

Niall Ginsbourg spills the beans on a few utterly despicable tricks to help you cheat your way to the top!

Getting frustrated with your favourite game? Why not cheat? It can save a lot of costly computer thumping, and it makes you feel good, and it's immoral only if you think about it for too long. Here we go . . .

Sword of Sodan: Type either 'JANET' or 'NANCY' to get unlimited lives and power. If any level is giving you a really hard time, just hit the RETURN key to get into the next frame.

Hybris: wait until the title screen has loaded, and then hit the SPACE bar/key. This puts you into an interesting - and helpful - screen. If that doesn't do much, type 'COMMANDER' on the title page. Once you start the game, you can use function keys to get goodies such as infinite lives.

Experiment a bit.

Flying Shark: if you want to kill the sprite collision, wait until the game is at the title page and the disk drive has stopped. Press TAB, HELP, and F10. Three messages will appear. Play the game normally and get a high score. On the high-score table, enter RAB. Before hitting fire on the third letter, hold down the 5 key on the numeric pad, and you'll be free to cheat!

Hewson's Eliminator: type these passwords in on the Help menu, to be placed at different levels: ameoba, blooop, cheeki, doinok, enigma, slipme, geegee, handel, bicile, jammin, kinkong, lapdog, mikado.

Finally, here's a doozie for all machine code hackers. To get

infinite lives on Kyle Hodgett's 'Albert', 'Alpha 1', 'Cortex' or 'Huey', do this: load the game up, then reset your machine. Load up a machine code monitor ('Exterminator' is a good one) and have a look around location $71868. You'll see bytes $0001. If you change this to $0000 you will then have infinite lives. To go back back into the game, jump to location $70000. On Kyle's other games, 'King of Barbarians', 'Caverns of Pale', and 'Evil Dawn', do the same thing, but look at location $72346.

Ahhhh! See? All those cheats-never-prosper stories were wrong. You still haven't turned into a warty toad, and you feel absolutely omnipotent, don't you? So long, Amigans, time to jump back into the pond . . .

SEGA®
Wonder Boy III
The Dragon's Trap

WITH PASSWORD SAVE!

Peter Lindemann gets a touch of the hovering smogs and the cutsies playing Sega's latest blockbuster: The Dragon's Trap.

Japanese animation characters are unique. Nothing else in the world compares. Hanna Barbera (believe it or not, mostly made in Australia!) characters such as the Flintstones are, well, Hanna Barberaish and Disney have their own style. But Japanese cartoons are just so cute!

Here we have a game absolutely loaded with the cutest characters you could imagine! But it's more than just a game full of cute things, it also has depth. There are lots and lots of locations, castles, underwater, deserts, pyramids inside and out and many, many more. There's lots of money to earn by zapping baddies but sometimes you get extra, maybe a 'fireball', boomerang or such to help you. When you have enough money, you can go to shops to buy things such as armour. There are hospitals about the place where you can get patched up after battles. The game at first appears like any other arcade game but the variation in the game play is immense. The more it is played the more this is apparent.

As Wonderboy, you start off being human and equipped only with a sword. In different levels you change(metamorphisized for those who like big words) into an assortment of peculiar beasties that are all cute. For example the first level involves finding and killing the dragon that is reminiscent of a giant, armour plated kangaroo! After this, you turn into Lizardman! You run around breathing on everything (Garlic breath!!! - ED) to kill your enemies. Little bubbles float up when you swim and jump and incredibly you still blow fire under water!

Another character you become is Mouse Man. Mouse man looks like an escapee from the 'Mousketeers' club. Because you are small you can get into small places. Other transformations include Pirahna man, who is a great swimmer. Lion man and Hawk man who flies through the air with the greatest of ease. There are tons of baddies like Skeletons, crabs, skulls, ninjas and cobras. My favorite is the hovering smog, which is a cloud wearing sunglasses and it gives you a hard time by firing smog at you. Blugh!

Wonderboy 3 is a barrel of fun. The Graphics, the sound and the game play are all first class and it's sooooo cute. Good one Sega!

Megacomp Scorecard

Wonderboy 3

GRAPHICS: 9	COLOUR: 9
ACTION: 9	SOUND: 8

DOCUMENTATION: 8
BRAINSTRAIN: 6
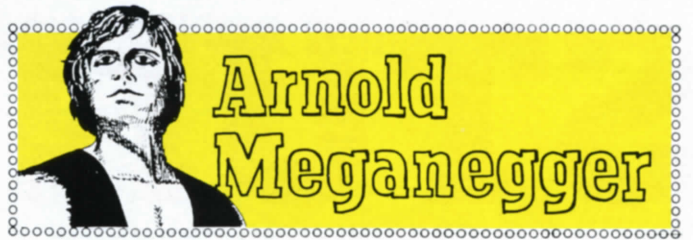PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 9
VALUE FOR MONEY: 8
OVERALL, OUT OF 100 82.5

Reviewed on	:	Sega Master System
Also for	:	—
Software by	:	Sega
Distributor	:	Ozisoft
R.R.P.	:	$39.95

Arnold Meganegger

Police Quest 2

To get de password, check on Hall's desk, OK? Soon you're gonna wanna talk wit Marie (she's sumpn else, huh?) so when you wanna whisper sweet nuttinjs in her pinky, jest dial de operator on 411 and ask fer her number. De good noos is dat you get to treat Marie real nice at Arnie's. De bad noos is dat next night, after you've bin to Snuggler's, you find de broad's been snatched. Get back to de station, book your evidence like a good cop, den phone Colby and Steelton to give dem de tipoff about Bains. Mebbe more next issue. In de meantime - suffer, sucker!

King's Quest 4

If you wanna know what your moosh looks like after a semi backs over it, check dat ogre! Worse still, check his mutt. Mean critter. If you got de bone from de troll's cave behind de waterfall, chuck it to de mutt, and you'll get past. Now lissen good, on accounta dis next bit is sorta complex. Pandora's box is in de crypt in de side of de mountain. BUT you gotta have de key! For dis, you gotta make a little music, like. See, de key's in a secret drawer in de organ. Get music from one of de graves and tickle dem ivories until de drawer opens.

Hitch-hiker's Guide

Anyone dat lies down in front of a dozer is gonna get rocks in de head - if dey ain't got 'em dere alreddy. In which case, it's you, and you're tryin' to work out how you follow Ford to de pub, right? Nix to his towel. Ask him about your house, den when de bum leaves, follow him to de pub. By de way, in case you ain't worked it out yet, when you're wit Ford at de bar, ask for a sandwich den feed it to de mutt.

Space Quest II

Sumpn tells me you got a little hassle wit robots, like in Vohaul's ship, hey? (Vohaul's mum ain't never gonna forgive you for wot you done to him, heh-heh) In de corridors, press buttons near weird doors. I'd go for de glass tube door to put space between me and dat robot. Also, you gotta rust de robots by lightin a fire in de trash basket to set off de sprinklers. Use paper in de basket, put it below de sprinkler, and flame it wit your lighter. Whoosh! Rusted robots! Jest bee-ootiful.

Space Quest III

I'm gonna presume you got past de droid by fallin down de chute an dat you climbed troo de robot head den got a ladder to get inter de space ship. Now you're gonna get mugged by de rat when you're trying ter get de reactor to de spaceship. Cop it sweet and do it over again. You'll get past. De guards at Scumsoft won't see ya if you got dat invisibility belt on. Later, after you press de buttons so you can use de walkway to get onto de platform, you use your vaporizer to blast de lime jello off de udder poor slobs.

Leisure Suit Larry 2

Dis guy has to be de number one sleazebum. (I never wear white shoes myself. GP's or Docs suit me fine). Anyways, when you're at dat airport cafe, grab de hairpin from de blue plate special. You're gonna need it to open de emergency exit in de plane. You need bottle, airsick bags and matches to make a molotov cocktail to get inter de volcano. Stand near de edge of de crevice and chuck it in. Almost forgot to tell you: to get past dem stingin bees, you gotta crawl under some bush and you need a stick for de snake. Waggin your pinky ain't gonna help - it's gotta be a stick. Dis game really sends me offa my twig.

Leisure Suit Larry 1

Mike Fiek wrote, and he seems an alright dude, but he's havin trouble gettin de champagne to de honeymoon suite. (I never had no trouble gettin champagne to MY honeymoon sweet). So Mike, what you do is give your order from de phone near de disco and say it's for de honeymoon suite. Den you hotfoot it back to your little lady so you can pop de cork, so to speak.

Dragon's Lair

Tony Green, who's got an Amiga 500, is some sorta brain. He writes dat you can see de whole game from start to finish just like a movie. At de end of de credits, hold dese keys down together: ESC R / L N 7. Thanks buddy, how's de scene up dere in Toombul, Queensland?

Arnie.

STUNT CAR Racer

There's a stench of shredding rubber as your nitro-guzzling mill wig-wags off in an awesome all-or-nothing demo of ultimate power. King cool Paul Metcalfe survived to tell the story.

Here we have a game based on the novel idea of driving a racing car on something that resembles a roller coaster! There are several tracks to race on - al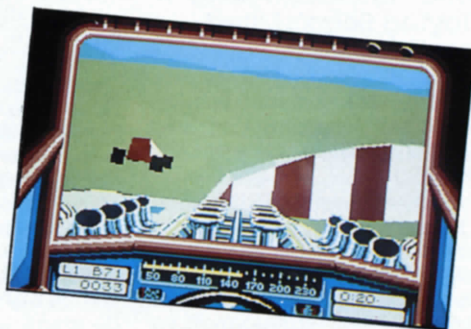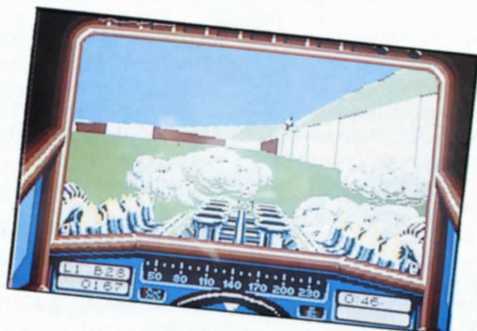l triangular and elevated above ground level - which range from simply having a big hump down one side to 'you gotta be joking!!'. The car you drive is 'hot roddish' with a big V8 literally hanging out of the bonnet (what bonnet?) and open front wheels. A crash cage protects you but this devel-opes a fatigue crack that grows every time you fall off the track until your car eventually breaks down. Fortunately your crew can repair this in between heats. The same cannot be said about chassis damage that you might cause by a bad crash.

The game is joystick controlled, pushing forward to accelerate, back to brake and naturally left and right to steer. The fire button is used to give an extra power 'kick' but this has to be used sparingly as the Nitro' bottle only contains so much. Graphically the game is quite impressive with the driver's view of the track being entirely 3-dimensional. The track is steeply banked in the corners and the humps make seeing ahead difficult. Drive over the crest too fast and the car will leave the ground and bottom out as you land heavily. Realistic enough to make one dizzy!

The object of the game is to win a series of heats qualifying the 'driver' to go up to the next of a total of eight levels. The upper-most four qualify the player to drive on additional extra daring tracks. One feature in particular which makes this game unusual as far as racing games are concerned is the ability to link two seperate computers and have two players race against each other directly! Stunt Car Racer shows a different approach to car racing games and is a must for petrol heads.

SEGA
Master System

After a marathon session with Sega's games machine, John Carter and Paul Metcalfe return with a thumbs-up verdict.

Game consoles have been around for some time now, starting from the early 'Pong' type game consoles of the seventies which tended to be variations of the same table tennis game. Each game seemed to be made up of one or two lines representing bats that would slide up and down the screen. Your job (should you choose to accept it Mr. Phelps) is to manoevure this line to reflect the white dot that was bouncing all over the screen. From these early days we have progressed to the very successful Atari 2600, Intellivision, Wizzard and so on right up to the lates game consoles such as the Atari 7800, Nintendo and the Sega Master System.

The Sega Master system is one of today's leading Video consoles. It has been designed for home entertainment using your colour television instead of an expensive monitor. Sega have been one of the world's leading arcade machine manufactures for many years creating such classics as 'Afterburner', 'Outrun', 'Altered Beast', 'Wonderboy' and many more. You only have to go down to your local video arcade to see how may machines are running games written by Sega. Many of these arcade classics are available for the Master system so you can play them at home - just think of the saving at 40¢ - $1 a go!

Sega produces games in two different types of packaging. One is the revolutionary 'My Card'. This is only 2mm thick looking like a credit card and is usually used for games that require less memory than the larger cartridge type games. The Master System comes with two joypads which are smaller in size than most joysticks and don't have the usual large stick and knob but a raised pad instead. Using this odd device involves rocking the pad with the finger tips. The Joypads can take a little time to get used to but they work well. Sega have also produced a range of accessories for the Master System including a joystick (for those who can't get the hang of joypads), light phaser gun and 3D Spectacles.

The best thing is not so much that the capabilities of the actual console are excellent but that the quality of the large range of games available does the machine proud. Included in its list of classics are well known titles such as 'Senobi', 'Altered Beast', 'Monsterworld', also known as 'Wonderboy 2'), 'Fantasy Zone', 'Outrun', 'Rocky 4', 'Afterburner' and so on.

We've spent many hours playing games on the Master System and can vouch for the superb quality of the graphics, colour and speed. It's easy to become addicted.

If you're not into computing but enjoy playing computer games, the Sega Master System offers an ideal low cost alternative. A test drive will get you hooked.

The Australian distributor is Ozisoft, and the recommended retail price is $199.
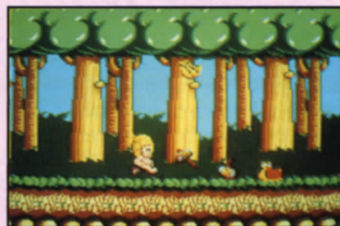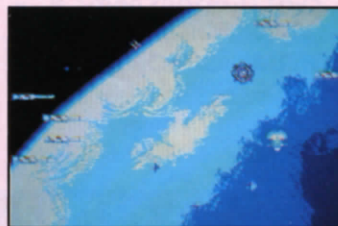
ROCKY

OUTRUN

SPY v SPY

WONDERBOY

GOLDEN AXE

ALIEN SYNDROME

ALEX KIDD

S.D.I.

CHAMPION TENNIS

FANTASY ZONE

CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

Niall Ginsbourg went looking for the fat lady and the clowns, but found an 8-course motor race sizzler stacked with action.

Put on your helmets, fasten your seatbelts, and floor your accelerator, here comes Continental Circus! From the company who brought you Silkworm, & Gemini Wings, their latest offering is a sure winner. The game has been converted from the Arcade game, and although it does not have 3D as it's big brother, it still has the fast, smooth graphics, and possibly the graphics are fast, they are badly drawn as the cars are a bit blocky. Also the collision meter is a little faulty (it claims you have crashed even though according to the graphics you have had a near miss). The game would have

The game has some nice extra touches such as lots of hills, bad weather (it could be set in Melbourne!), and men that run out and fix your car when you pull into the pits. The game also has some of its bad points. Although probably been a lot better if they had made it 3D as it was supposed to have been. All in all it is a highly playable game and should provide hours of fun!.
more addictive gameplay. The game takes you through 8 different grand prix courses, placing you at rank number 100. The idea of the game is to gradually move up the rankings ladder as you

complete each course. If you have not reached a preset ranking by the time you have finished the course, you will be made to do it again.

Megacomp Scorecard	
Continental Circus	
GRAPHICS: 8	COLOUR: 7
ACTION: 8.5	SOUND: 7
DOCUMENTATION: 6	
BRAINSTRAIN: 5	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 6.5	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 7	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 68.7	

Reviewed on	: Amiga
Also for	: Atari ST
Software by	: Gremlin
Distributor	: Mindscape
R.R.P.	: $—

Space Harrier

Come with Abe Schuyler as he blasts his way through this high speed arcade classic: it's sweaty palms time, folks!

I'm usually a bit dubious about coin-op conversions, as they inevitably fall short of the original arcade versions which they are trying to imitate. Licenced conversions are often quite good, but until hardware becomes more powerful you can't hope to match the quality of the dedicated arcade machines. The graphics and sound are pretty close to the mark, but the outright speed needs to be an order of magnitude higher (something which is undoubtedly around the next corner of the computer maze. We've come a long way in a single decade . . .)

Space Harrier is an official conversion of the original Sega arcade game, reviewed here on the Master System, but available for several machines (see below). If you haven't seen Space Harrier in the arcades (it's been around for quite a while) it is an all-out shoot-em-up, where you control a little man who runs/flies headlong into an absolute barrage of weird spaceships and

Megacomp Scorecard	
Space Harrier	
GRAPHICS: 8	COLOUR: 8
ACTION: 9	SOUND: 4
DOCUMENTATION: 6	
BRAINSTRAIN: 2	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 6	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 7	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 62.5	

Reviewed on	: Sega Master System
Also for	: Amiga, C64, ST
Software by	: Sega
Distributor	: Ozisoft
R.R.P.	: $39.95

assorted alien stuff, blasting everything which gets in his way with what looks like a portable 19th century cannon.

The view is from behind your man, looking into the distance in 3-D perspective so that everything seems to be rushing towards you at great speed. The ground is

like a checker-board, which adds to the feeling of forward movement. Control is with joystick or mouse, and is quite responsive. Moving the man up or down changes the angle at which the terrain is seen, as in real life, and this adds greatly to the overall 3-D effect.

After shooting your way through enough alien territory, you will have to overcome one final 'guardian' before being allowed to the next level. Each level has its own distinct look, with different alien strategies, but basically the idea is the same for them all.

Space Harrier is quite an acceptable conversion, as conversions go. The speed of the game, like the original, is very fast and yet very smooth, with well-drawn and smoothly-moving objects. The sound is minimal, however, except for a tiny piece of digitised voice ('get ready'). Overall, Sega has done a reasonable job with Space Harrier, if you like that sort of thing.

PAPER BOY

Andrew Pam mounts his trusty BMX to go out delivering papers, but he can't turn the music off. . .the music off. . .the music off. . .

Take on the role of a young newspaper delivery person, riding the sidewalks of suburban USA on your BMX and attempting to hurl papers into subscribers' mailboxes and through non-subscribers' windows! Every day you brave the streets and attempt to avoid obstacles such as local residents, cars and vicious lawnmowers while rapidly delivering papers to all and sundry. At the end of each day you are tortured with a bonus course that's a cross between a BMX rally and target practice!

Based on a popular US arcade game, this is clearly a low-budget production. The graphics on the PC version aren't very good, and if you have anything better than a CGA display the program fails to make any use of it other than displaying 16 colours rather than 4, admittedly a worthwhile improvement but a very disappointing lack of effort to use higher resolutions to make the PC graphics approach that of the Amiga and Atari versions.

Game play is pretty good, especially for such a cheap game, but the amount of effort expended on the PC version at least is more suited to a share-ware game than a commercial release.
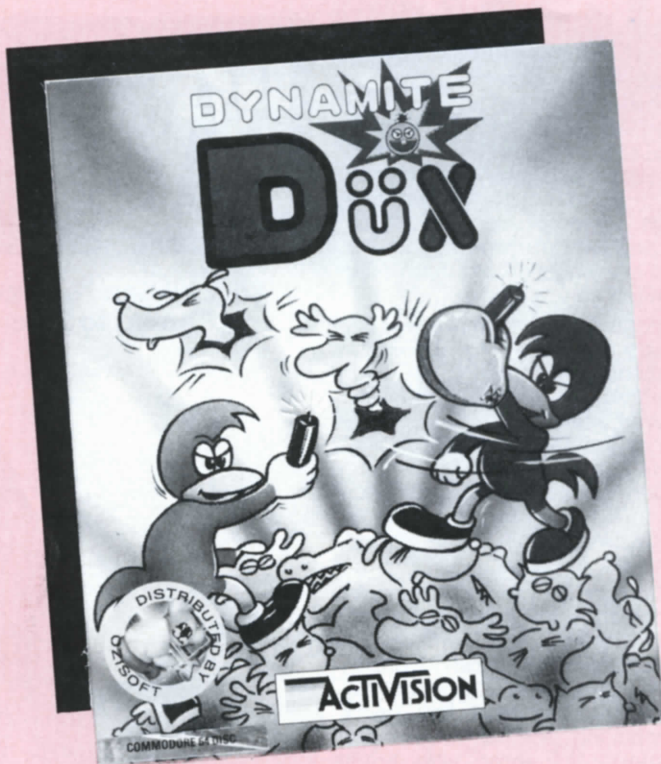
Another annoyance is that the game is copy protected and can't be played from a hard disk, even with the original disk in the drive; when will software publishers learn that users just don't want protection that interferes with their legitimate use of the product? Overall there's enough in the game play to keep you interested for a while, and the other shortcomings are hardly surprising in a budget priced game.

Megacomp Scorecard	
Paperboy	
GRAPHICS: 4	COLOUR: 5
ACTION: 7	SOUND: 3
DOCUMENTATION: 5	
BRAINSTRAIN: 5	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 8.5	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 8	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 56.8	

Reviewed on	: AT Clone
Also for	: Amiga, Atari ST
Software by	: Elita
Distributor	: Questor
R.R.P.	: $29.95

Chimera falls for a Sumo pig in a fantasy punchup/blowaway designed for anklebiters who need somewhere to vent their aggro.

The gameplay is very basic. To gain points, simply punch the lights out of your foe. If it doesn't go blooey the first time round, simply hold the fire button down, witness the ludicrous windup, and release! In true "Manga" comic fashion, the boxing glove swells to about five times "normal" (fnarr, fnarrr!) to deliver the coup-de-grace. Walk over cakes, pies and hotdogs to build up energy levels. Other weapons may be found, and used to telling effect. I looked high and low for the matching sweatband, but all I could find was this rotten machinegun . . .The heatseekers are pretty silly, as they fishtail their way to the wrong target. Oh well.

The overall aim of the game is to rescue little Lucy from the clutches of the evil nerk named "Achacha". The two birds are named "Bin" and "Pin", which only shows that Sega have tried hard to prevent any copyright violations! (I think that they should have checked with Jimmy Durante, before naming the villain!). Loopy names aside, I would recommend this for any bloodythirsty ankle-biters out there; has enough basic weirdness to slake the most discerning oddball desires.

One word of warning: During the load phase, there is a statement that tells the user to flip the disk. AFTER level 6 has loaded. Please, oh please, don't flip the disk until then, or you will end up with a screen full of pixillated garbage. I guess I should have been just a little more attentive. Them's the breaks.

Apart from that little sniggle with the disc, there do not appear to be any logic-puzzles or what-not to solve, leaving naught but the gratutous trashing of handicapped (sans body) and deranged wildlife. If this is just the thing to while away those idle hours, you may enjoy it with impunity . . .Weirdo.

There was some feeling of apprehension as I loaded this one.

Any packaging that has "Ducks" spelt "Dux" does that to me. The artwork suggests some totally different fowl; to whit: something looking suspiciously like a "Wood-pecker-who-shall-remain-nameless." . . .Oh, why me???

At its most basic, Dux is a horizontal-scrollingish shooter, er, punchup. Easy as pie to play, but harder to swallow, reality-wise. But then, when has that stopped any gamer?. Some of the foes are really warped, what with disembodied dog and moose heads, Sumo pigs, Boxing Crocs, Ninja Dogs, Canine Mortar crew.

I would think that the Japanese influence has a lot to answer for!

ROMMEL
Battles for North Africa

Roger Keating
Ian Trout
Mark Holman
Phil Niven
David Freer

Marian O. Szczepkowski tackles this engrossing new Australian wargame (Battles for North Africa) and comes away more than just a little amazed and impressed.

I remember a time in the distant past when a man had to do everything himself. As with all things change is upon us and woe


to the man who ignores that change. Even as I write, the wars of the world are being fought by those inscrutable machines that have invaded our daily lives; you guessed it, the computer. I came across this tidy little package lying beneath a pile of wreckage in the hallowed halls of the Megacomp dungeon. It impressed me with its clarity of design and obviously superior workmanship (the 'made in Australia' had nothing to do with this obviously unbiased dissert-ation).

I once had the pleasure of trying to join the more intellectual of our gaming brothers and enter into the world of the Historical Wargamer. These reclusive souls

spend sleepless nights agonizing over the follies of past commanders seeking to redeem their honor, even if only posthumously. I had entered into this steamy world seeking the acceptance that we in the 'adventure role playing' world seek so desperately. Here I thought my D.M. (Dungeon Master) skills would be honed to perfection.

My illusions were shattered however, for even here, where the battles of once great Kings were taking place, I found those loath-some of instruments -dice- and oh, the number of times you
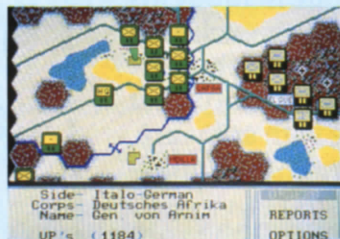
have to throw the things! It is with this memory of failure, and sub-jugation to all mighty dice (have you ever tried to throw one 200 times?) that I joyfully unwrapped this most amazing and liberating of games.

As already mentioned, my experience of war games is meagre to say the least, coming as I do from a background in D&D, (and for those of you who do not know what it means, delve at your peril!) That brief experience was the most cruel of teachers. How-ever, there is now a cure for the suffering Wargamer; the computer.

'Rommel', encompasses an array of battles in, as the name indicates. North Africa. The real joy though, is not the obvious pre-pared scenarios, whereas with other games you have a series of preplanned scenarios that have a tendency to get mildly repeti-tive, Rommel has the ability to provide original scenario material for years.

The group who wrote this soft-ware appear to be affiliated with a magazine called 'Run 5', and as indicated by the small advertise-ment inside the front cover of the handbook supplied, will be a continuing source of gaming material for those who have purchased the product. The pro-gram itself is made by a group calling themselves S.S.G. (Strategic Studies Group) based in N.S.W. Australia.

The game is rather more insulated in the conduct of war than I have been used to in the past, but only in the sense that you seem to have no direct control over the actual positions of your men. The game works on an awesome area when viewed through the average screen and can be up to 39 hexes across and up to 28 down. This might not seem that much but when you have to play on it it's an awful lot of ground! The other point about the game is that as commander, you have no real control over where each of your forces decides to place itself. It must be remembered that you are not a platoon or regiment commander but the commander of the whole army, and as such, more con-cerned with the overall objectives of your men than with their actual positions at any given time.

WEIRD

Edgar Allen Poe would have
Thanks to killer et al, Pa
in a col

DREAMS

grooved on this creepy epic.
Metcalfe still wakes up
sweat. . .

In the search to create a new idea for a game, Firebird software have come up with Weird Dreams. As the name suggests, this game uses different dreams which are more like Nightmares. You start with surgeons looking down at you then you go into one of the dream sequences. You find yourself at the bottom of circular metal wall then a long stick appears and if it hits you you're done for. There is fairy floss flying everywhere, and you realize you're in a fairy floss machine. To get out, you have to jump on the long stick (oops!) then on to another dream.

Next you find yourself in an Amusement park with giant Wasp after you - definately a nightmare if you have a fear of insects. The Wasp is after the fairy floss which is stuck to your clothes, so you have to find something sweet to throw at the wasp, then run away. Surprise! The only place you can run to is the hall of mirrors, where you are plunged into more dream sequences, depending on which mirror you pass through. One of the mirrors transports you to a garden. It's a good idea to pick up a stick here because the tulips in the garden are really killer tulips and will do their best to gobble you up. This is where you can do your best Errol Flynn impression using your stick as a sword to fight the Tulips. The tulips are not the only person here as there is a motor mower on the loose wanting to turn you into a skinhead - in little pieces.

If you survive this there is the weirdest dream of all. You are in a desert and above you are fish. That's right - Flying fish! You have to catch a fish and attack the monster that comes with the fish to get you. First class weird.

Weird dreams is a well conceived and constructed game with impressive graphics, interesting locations and clever sound (in the garden scene you fight the tulips to the sound of An English Country Garden). It falls down a little in game play which can become a little repetitive after you conquer each dream.

Megacomp Scorecard

Weird Dreams

GRAPHICS: 9	COLOUR: 8
ACTION: 6	SOUND: 8
DOCUMENTATION: 8.5	
BRAINSTRAIN: 5	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 5.5	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 6	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 70	

Reviewed on	:	Atari ST
Also for	:	Amiga
Software by	:	Firebird
Distributor	:	Questor
R.R.P.	:	$59.95

RAINBOW WARRIOR

Feel like saving the World? resident conservationist, Chimera, does an unabashed rave over this highly original game.

Speaking as one "Endangered Species" to another, I can do no more than insist that everyone buy this program; assuming, of course that they own a computer!

The game, or series of scenarios is based on the real-life actions taken by the members of Greenpeace, as they battle against Humanity's lemming-like blunders toward oblivion. Seven campaigns make for a thought-provoking attempt at enlightening the Great Unwashed. I hope that they all take the hint. . . I'll get off my soapbox now, and get on with the review. P.S: Take care of this world, will ya?

The campaigns are: Radioactive Waste, Ocean Dumping, Save the Whale, Stop Acid Rain, Ozone Depletion, Save the Seals, and the last is rainbow warrior.

One thing should be pointed out; This game is dedicated to Fernando Pereira, who, as a result of French stupidity, died in 1985. For further information, you may contact Greenpeace via the addresses in the back of the 70-page manual/information booklet that comes with the game. Do it.

For the most part, the games are based around the style of your average platform game. Graphics are excellent, and there are some which border on the stunning. I have shown a few of the games to my mates, and one seems to be a favorite. Well, look

at it this way; What other game plonks you in Antarctica, armed only with snowballs, and beset Killer Penguins? I detect just the merest whiff of Python here. . . The Whale campaign is more or less like a bass-ackwards form of Breakout/Arkanoid, where you

are placed in charge of an Orca (mammalian) which fires water globules into the air. The water

hits an area of a blacked out screen, revealing part of the "Big Picture". Be warned, it is not all sweetness and light, what with whaling vessels, guns, whale steaks, perfume bottles and tubs of margarine playing Pacman with the picture that you are feverishly trying to complete. Try not to hit them.

In the final analysis of this program, it owes a lot to other games, but it offers so much more than anything yet released. I have played all but the Rainbow Warrior scenario, as the first six are selectable, but I feel that the final one requires dedication. . . A fitting tribute to Fernando Pereira, wouldn't ya think?

Just one minor gripe though. . . the final scenerio involves firing

missiles at various objects to reveal another picture.
. . .Firing MISSILES? - Sorry. . .
Bad taste, guys.

Megacomp Scorecard

Rainbow Warrior

GRAPHICS: 9	COLOUR: 8
ACTION: 7	SOUND: 8
DOCUMENTATION: 8	
BRAINSTRAIN: 7	
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM?: 10	
VALUE FOR MONEY: 8	
OVERALL, OUT OF 100: 81.2	

Reviewed on	:	C64
Also for	:	Amiga, ST
Software by	:	Microprose
Distributor	:	Questor
R.R.P.	:	$39.95

Pirat

"By using these Bulletin Boards, and similar ones throughout the rest of the world members are able to download almost any commercial software they want to, including program such as Lotus 1-2-3 R3.0, which was available about 4 weeks before it was released in Australia."

One of the first letters came from someone calling him/her self Grump of G.S.I. N.S.W. Grump is very much into Chaucerian English and etceteras.

". . .the features on Piracy and Virus etc, being a Pirate myself, I feel these are pretty accurate. . . try to include a program listing section in which us hackers and etc can send in grafix/tricks routines etc for other readers to try. Please do not encourage any a***oles to dob in anyone as a large majority of your readers have either done a little copying or are involved in large scale cracks. . . crackers never swap with people who might report them and if they wanted to completely stop piracy they would have to get rid of over 50% of schools computers, as where I go to school. . . kids openly swap copied programmes. . ."

WHO'S MAKING A KILLING?

While not a pirate, Ian McDonell, of Lithgow, N.S.W. made some important points about the issue:

". . .it is very hard not to be sympathetic to pirates, moreso to those who purchase pirated programs. There is no doubt that software companies are grossly overcharging for material, especially if you consider print runs against payments to creators of programs. . .take GEOS 2 for the C64. Currently discounted to $125. Probable sales in the range 50K-100K? How much was paid to the author? $¼M? I doubt that much but if so thats a max $5 on costs. Add to that disc costs of 50¢, packaging about $10 max. . . . total significance less than $20. Someone's making a killing! No excuses for breaking the law, but I'm not surprised to read it's as common as you suggest."

HACKING AMBITIONS

Unlike the sturdy pirates of yore, today's versions seem to be uncommon shy. So most of them opt for nicknames. Not so this cautious writer, who gave no name or address and even asked that we didn't trace the letter:

"I have been a 'Software Pirate' for over 6 years now, and you can imagine how many games I've got (over 1500). I don't copy games to sell them, I just copy them for home use. Is there anything wrong with that? The main reason I'm writing to you is about hackers. How and why do they do it? Is there some sort of program or is there some other way? It puzzles me deeply. I'm not trying to find out how, I just want to know if there is some program they use to hack into a certain game . . ."

Just curious, you understand. Well, next on the list was someone called "The Doctor" who told us about DUCK. "The Doctor" seems more erudite than your average pirate:

THE DOCTOR ON DUCK

". . .as a member of 'DUCK' (the Down Under Crackers Klub) I would like to point out a number of facts and figures that you might not have been aware of. In your article . . .you fail to mention the increasing number of crackers clubs forming in Australia. The largest of these cracking clubs in Australia is DUCK, with a total membership of over 1500 people, divided in 13 individual clubs. Living at Coffs Harbour on the north coast of N.S.W. I am a member of the Mid North Coast division of DUCK."

Each of the 13 DUCK clubs owns at least one computer, which is used as a bulletin board for the collection and distribution of pirated software. The Mid North Coast club's computer has just recently been upgraded to an Amstrad PC2386 with two 65Mb hard disks, one Netcomm Trailblazer modem, two Netcomm Smartmodem 1234 SA, and three 'Black Box' freefones which allow all calls made to or from either of the BBS's two phone numbers (one for the Trailblazer and one for the two Smartmodems) to be made almost totally free of charge."

DOWNLOAD DOWNLOAD

WE'LL MAKE A FORTUNE OUTA THIS LOT

about $75 and $125 p.a., depending on the club, with the average price being about $100."

"The computers, and all other expenses incurred in the running of the clubs, are funded by members, with the current membership fees being between

(At this point, the good Doctor let slip a few details which might have blown his cover, so we have left those bits out. As we said before, we don't snitch.)

"I would also like to point out an error in the letter from The Fallen Angel in the same issue. In his letter he claims that by plugging a joystick into port two and holding down the fire button while rebooting will kill the Revenge Virus. This is true for most versions of this virus, but for the latest versions of this virus doing this will actually cause it to format all of the disk except the boot files and the File Allocation Table and directory sectors all whilst the computer continues to boot so the user is not aware of this occurence until a program on the disk is run, in which case to computer will lock up."

"In case you were wondering this letter was written on an illegal version of MicroSoft Word with the spelling checked using the Oasis Word Spelling chacker, again a copy."

Thanks, Doc. We were wondering if a spelling chacker suffered through being copied. (Only jokin'!)

TEENAGE DAREDEVIL

From the Holroyd district of Sydney, NSW, someone signing himself Daredevil wrote as follows:

"I admit I participate in the pirating business. I have NEVER though, sold a pirated game. The main ways I get hold of pirated games is through local swapping and buying, and also through the modem. Over 3 years, my software collection has grown from zilch to hundreds - and 30% are bought originals."

"I accept pirated software because I cannot afford to buy all that I wanted (being a student) and you must admit, you'd rather get something for free than to pay $35.80 for it. The Federation Against Software Theft (F.A.S.T.) has had no big bucks in Australia as yet, for let me tell you, I would have known because word of such travels fast around the pirate world. If they want to bust everyone who owns a pirated game, they would have to bust over 60% of people who own computers. I know that everyone I know in my school who owns a computer has pirated games and will jump at any chance for

more. We have two computers in our family - the Commodore 64 and an IBM AT compat. We have pirated games for both because both are active in pirating."

COBBER DOBBER

We scored our first super grasse when Stephen wrote to us from Orange, NSW:

"After reading the article in issue three on computer pirates, I decided to give information regarding Pirates so that they may be dealt with. I know of Andrew, a member of the third largest team in Australia. His address is . . ."

We showed the letter to our Arnold Meganegger and he promptly ate the pirate address off it, saying that it contravened our no-snitch policy. Not that it mattered. At least the aim of the letter was achieved - that being for Stephen and his buddy Andrew to get their names into MEGACOMP.

GOODY TWOSHOES AND COYTS

Hot to trot, Grump sent us another letter, this slightly more aggro than his first:

". . .You said that us pirates are bored with life. This could only be caused by stuck up goody twoshoes like this Niall character who is probably a bloated, smelly Bros fan who is rich enough to buy any stuff wot comes out. Boredom is also caused by pains in the coyt such as members of that squeeky organisation for poofters only, F.A.S.T. As for your suggestion of the disk which dies after 100 uses, that is sh*t . . .like FAST, we have our own ways of finding out addresses, dobbers can expect beatings if we or our mates are caught . . .By the way, keep up the top job on your ace mag . . .PS: you can't catch me!"

Niall Ginsbourg, who researched and wrote our pirate story, is a 120kg unarmed combat instructor who treasures his bloated, smelly Doris Day collection. We trust that Grump's coyt feels better after such stenuous literary exertions.

SO MUCH FOR PIRATES. TO BALANCE THINGS, MEGACOMP SOUGHT AN INDUSTRY VIEWPOINT ▶

Pirates Den

To get an industry viewpoint, MEGACOMP spoke to Tim Alison, National Marketing Manager of Questor, one of Australia's largest distributors of games software.

"WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE"

MEGA: As I read it, the piraters generally seem to be mostly schoolkids who copy programs for each other. But what you've been telling me is that there's a thriving industry out there.

QUESTOR: We've got lists on about 270 or 280 regular advertisers of pirated software. We know who they are.

MEGA: Why can't you close them down?

QUESTOR: Well, because we don't necessarily have the support of the Federal police. It's not perceived as such an issue yet, but obviously, we're working on that.

MEGA: We had a letter from a guy who said that he had, over the last six years, pirated fifteen hundred games. He seemed quite proud of it and said he saved a lot of money and things like that and didn't seem to think it was such a bad thing. What's the situation with the law now if someone's pirated a game. Do you guys pursue people?

QUESTOR: There's some interesting changes happening. The most recent one was . . .(here Tim told MEGACOMP about a Queensland raid on a commercial pirate. We cannot publish details.)

MEGA: Pirates say software costs too much and if it were cheaper they wouldn't be pirates.

QUESTOR: I understand that. But every top game that's worth copying has been in production for about two years . . .

MEGA: For two years? You mean before it gets out, or in development?

QUESTOR: In development. Development of the artwork, the program, the graphics. And up to four or five people can be working on the one game.

MEGA: So a game is not necessarily the product of one person?

QUESTOR: No, no, not at all. Top games are usually done by several different people specialising in graphics or music or whatever. And you know, in a game like that, the development costs are quite horrific. On top of that if you add licensing costs . . .

MEGA: What, like Batman or something?

QUESTOR: Yes, or Ghostbusters or whatever. The money you get from a game is really from how much time you've spent on developing it. So if you've got a top game, and its got license, it's got good quality play, it's got multiple disks, then you should pay a reasonable price for that.

PRICING AND WARRANTIES

MEGA: What would you do as a company if people stopped buying your games? Would you drop the price?

QUESTOR: Well, as an Australian distributor, we're not making the games, so we're buying what we can overseas at the best price. So we're actually negotiating continuously with our suppliers to get better pricing so we can bring the price down within Australia.

MEGA: Um, well, for instance, say that someone overseas found that their games weren't selling - ah, and they heard that consumers were holding back buying because they wanted the price to go down - would they drop their price do they think?

QUESTOR: We'd go back to them and say 'your product is not selling, because you've priced yourself out of the market. No one perceives the value of your product to be worth that much. To sell more product we have to drop the price.'

MEGA: Could a pirated game screw a computer up?

QUESTOR: It depends if it comes from somewhere like the states and you get an NTSC version which someone's tried to add something to it so it'll run on PAL. Who do you go to for support? You can't come to us because we didn't sell it to you. So who's going to support that product once it dies? I mean if you buy one of our products and it dies on you, at least you can send it back to us and we'll repair it under warranty or give you another one or whatever.

MEGA: How many times do you have to honour warranties?

QUESTOR: Our suppliers say that if a game's faulty, then of course they'll replace it to us so we can honour our warranty. The industry standard is about five percent faulties.

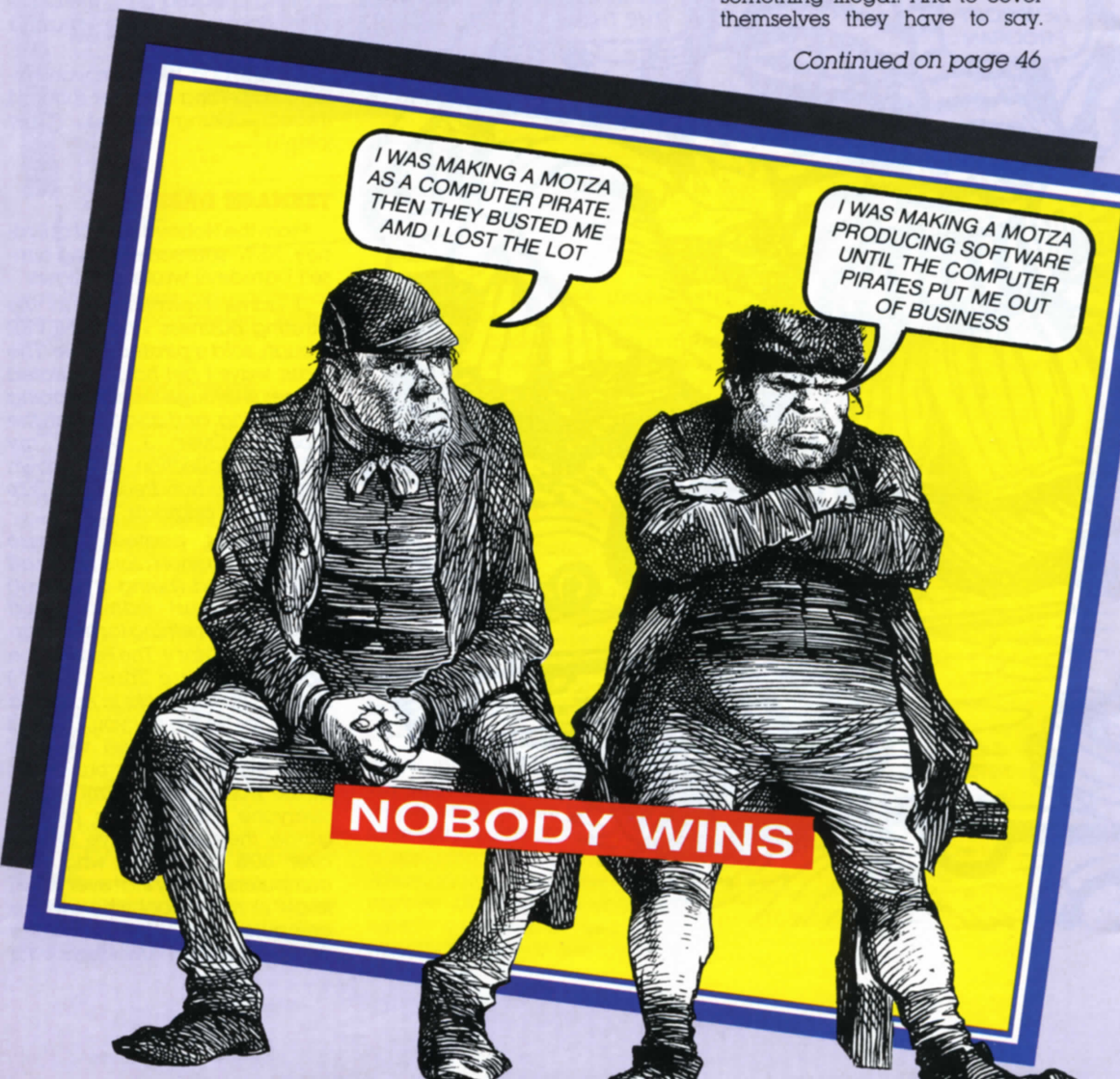**MEGA:** When you get the games out do you batch test them?

QUESTOR: Yep. You also find that the suppliers will run product off in batches themselves and they'll even change masters and stuff like that. So you may test a game when it first arrives but another batch will come through which may have a bug in it.

WHEN THE COPS COME

MEGA: We had one letter that said anyone who dobs us in we're gonna come around and beat up. Do you know if there have been any instances of things like that?

QUESTOR: Well, what comes from that is they know they're doing something illegal. And to cover themselves they have to say.

I WAS MAKING A MOTZA AS A COMPUTER PIRATE. THEN THEY BUSTED ME AMD I LOST THE LOT

I WAS MAKING A MOTZA PRODUCING SOFTWARE UNTIL THE COMPUTER PIRATES PUT ME OUT OF BUSINESS

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ARC=ARCADE ACTION ADV=ADVENTURE SPT=SPORTS
SIM=SIMULATION STR=STRATEGY

NAME OF GAME	TYPE	C64	AMIGA	ST	CPC	IBM
POWERDRIFT: A bit like Outrun in dune buggies. Slip, slide & oops - start again! A real ride on the wild side for all you serious petrol heads.	ARC	$35.95	$59.95	$59.95	$39.95	$59.95
ACTION FIGHTER: Change your bike to a car then to aplane to complete your mission in this vertical scrolling game. Loads of fun for everyone.	ARC	$39.95	$59.95	$59.95	$49.95	$59.95
FIGHTER BOMBER: In this high powered simulation you have your choice of the fighter-bomber you'll be flying (Such as F111, Mig 23, etc.)	SIM	$35.95	$59.95	$59.95	$39.95	$59.95
GHOSTBUSTERS II: Just like in the movie, you save New York by zapping ectoplasms & nasty ghostly 'orribles. Will keep you on your toes.	ARC	$35.95	$59.95	$59.95	$35.95	$59.95
3D POOL: The real thing. You can do trick shots & the lot. Realistic 3D effect allows you to rotate the table so you can line your shot up properly.	SPT	$34.95	$49.95	$49.95	$49.95	$49.95
ROMMEL: Not just tanks in the desert, but a classic war game requiring clever strategy. For dedicated wargamers who want something more intelligent.	STR	—	$50	—	—	$50
STUNT CAR RACER: You're the jockey of a nitro-sucking drag machine on a treacherously evil stunt track that looks more like a roller coaster.	ARC	$39.95	$49.95	$49.95	—	$49.95
RAINBOW WARRIOR: Battle to save wildlife & the world from man's environmental irresponsibilities. There's plenty to do. Seven sub games.	ARC	$39.95	$59.95	$59.95	—	$59.95
MOONWALKER: Nasty Mr. Big is threatening Michael Jackson so it's your turn to be the hero. Echoes Mike's movie. A barrel of laughs & fun.	ARC	$35.95	$59.95	$59.95	$39.95	$59.95
FISH: Imagine being a secret agent who can metamorphasise into things such as fish. You have to save the world from the 7 deadly fins. Yoiks!	ADV	$34.95	$59.95	$49.95	—	$49.95
WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS: This is the combo pack, which contains California Games, Summer Games & Winter Games. If you're into sports, then this is the one!	SPT	$39.95	$59.95	$49.95	—	$49.95
LICENCE TO KILL: A James Bond classic. Can you survive the fiendish traps? Plenty of excitement & danger in this slick 6-stage game.	ARC	$29.95	$49.95	$59.95	$29.95	$59.95
BLADE WARRIOR: For those bold & fearless knights who have a yearning for things mediavel, this adventure game will test & tease. Arise, Sir Thing!	ADV	—	$59.95	$59.95	—	$59.95
STAR WARS TRILOGY: Superb 3-in-1 pack contains Star Wars; The Empire Strikes Back; and The Return of the Jedi. Plenty to keep you busy in this one.	ARC	$39.95	$59.95	$59.95	—	—
RED STORM RISING: You patrol the oceans in your submarine to help preserve democracy & peace world-wide. Convincing simulation for naval buffs.	SIM	$49.95	—	$59.95	—	$49.95
XENON 2: Multi-multi level space throbber has you trying wipe out wave after wave of thoroughly nasty aliens. Will please itchy trigger fingers.	ARC	$35.95	$59.95	$59.95	$39.95	$59.95

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Pirates Den

'we'll do something violent if anyone tries to dob us in.

MEGA: It seems so simple if you've got a good game, and you think gee, I think I'll make a copy for a friend of mine. It's only putting a disk in and running a copy program. Does that make copy programs not such a good idea?

QUESTOR: You've got to understand, most games have copy protection on them. Pirates aren't just saying 'oh, I'll copy one for a friend'. They're going into that program and altering what's in that program so they can copy it. So they're doing an obvious illegal act, altering the copyright of that program.

MEGA: Is it illegal to go and have a look at the program?

QUESTOR: Have a look at it? No, I'd say it's probably not - to see how it's made up. But to alter it would be illegal.

MEGA: It's a really iffy area, isn't it? I mean, it's a terribly hard thing to police, because someone who's bought a pirated game and knows it isn't about to turn around if the cops come to the door and say 'we wanta see your pirated program', they're not about to turn around and say 'yeah, here they are. I got 'em from so and so'.

QUESTOR: Yeh, well the thing is you know, copy if for a friend, I mean whoopee, everyone's done it in their lifetime, but it's the people who are out there selling it and the ones who are advertising in the papers - they're the ones who are going to get nabbed first by the police because they're out there trying to make money from other people's property.

WAIT AND PAY LESS?

MEGA: Which games have been most pirated?

QUESTOR: Stuff which ends up being called public domain because it has been pirated so much, or stuff where the rights have run out.

MEGA: What are rights?

QUESTOR: People write the software. They may sell the rights to a publishing house, a distributor will take two years for something like that - no one else will handle that product for two years, and when the rights run out it may not be worth selling the rights to anyone else.

MEGA: Then the rights revert to the original creator of the game?

QUESTOR: Yeh, but that creator may not worry about it anymore, it's not worth any more money to him, so then it could become public domain.

MEGA: In that respect, does that mean that in games, they've really only got a lifespan of about two years?

QUESTOR: Yeh, if you wait long enough, you'll pick up the game on budget, so if you're complaining that a game is too expensive, you can guarantee that from six months to twelve months down the track, it'll come out budget price which will be fifty to seventy five percent cheaper.

> ## "The industry two years ago used to put out a lot of crap product"

MEGA: So if someone sees some of your stuff around and they like it, if they wait long enough, they'll get it cheaper?

QUESTOR: Yep, absolutely.

MEGA: The genuine thing?

QUESTOR: Yep. 'cause the companies cover their costs when the product's new, like any company does . . .

MEGA: So the first buyers pay for all that?

QUESTOR: No, no. They estimate how many products they'll sell and will write off all the costs and depreciation over that period. (In budget games) what they cut back on is the packaging, or it'll come in a compilation.

MEGA: But I mean, a kid'll buy a game and if he's got a copy program, he could quite easily . . .

QUESTOR: If it's a worthwhile game take something like Honda RPF - it's got a manual which is sixty pages long, which talks about tracks and races and the different bikes and things like that. Now, there's a lot of information in there that's great and if you love motor bikes, you're buying that as well as the game. If you're going to just copy the game then you're losing out on half the pack.

MEGA: So he doesn't get the documentation?

QUESTOR: Yeh. The industry two years ago used to put out a lot of crap product. That's when most of the piraters were whinging. But you'll find now that it's so competitive that the industry is only putting out good quality games. And if a game does happen to be not up to standard, it'll be gone.

PIRATES OR PROFITEERS

MEGA: What would it cost a commercial pirater to take a game, look into it, and then copy it?

QUESTOR: A commercial pirater would have to set himself up realistically with probably a couple of computers, you know - multiple disk drives. . . .

MEGA: We got a letter from one of the cracking clubs and they were boasting about the equipment they had and it seemed quite impressive. They'de spent a lot of money and they were saying that membership - depending on which division of the club -ranges from seventy five bucks to a hundred and twenty bucks a year, which gives members access to all sorts of things.

QUESTOR: Well, you tell me then, how do those guys justify saying that the product's too expensive when they're out there producing on such a high level? They're running a business now, and they're charging you a premium, so I guarantee you they'll be making a profit.

MEGA: They didn't say that. They said that they share the costs of the equipment.

QUESTOR: They'll be making a profit. Not much, because they're cutting out the dealer and the supplier and advertising support costs. There won't be any piraters out there - the ones selling software - that aren't out there

making a profit. The ones we've got on our lists, the main ones, eighty main ones and a couple of hundred of the minor ones, all their names have been passed on to the Federal Police so that they know about them. . .

MEGA: But they're not doing anything about them.

QUESTOR: Not yet.

> **"**
> **We compare piracy to things like drugs**
> **"**

MEGA: How long have they had the names?

QUESTOR: Probably about eight months?

MEGA: It doesn't seem to be a high priority with them, then?

QUESTOR: No.

MEGA: What's going to make it a high priority?

QUESTOR: Just industry growth. Overseas, police are cracking down on all piraters, ones who advertise. They're going in there, arresting them and prosecuting them. There's software associations which are mainly around games. It's only a matter of time before that happens here. And when police go into someone who's been pirating in Australia, they don't only go to that person, they find out who they've been supplying regularly.

MEGA: You mean like someone who's bought a pirated game - unknowingly?

QUESTOR: If people bought from the type of ads that are run by piraters, they would know what they're buying.

We compare piracy to things like drugs. You start of with just making one for your friend, then someone hears you can supply that, and says will you sell it to me. He makes a couple of bucks and it goes on from there. It's got so bad overseas that it's quite a criminal organisation. There's games being supplied by people from within the software houses. New games that have never been released get out into the pirate network and because the piraters have got hold of it the company's lost all of the development money that they've put into the game. Now tell me - what can the piraters say about that? Is it legal?

MIDNIGHT SPARES

MEGA: Pirates must work bloody fast.

QUESTOR: They do. There's people downloading games continuously from the UK and the States into Australia as soon as a new release gets out. They'll be out there, working their butts off to break the copy protection. Once they've got it they'll download it to all their mates. Everyone sits there talking about games, but there are a lot of other high-priced programs like the Lotus that are getting done. Piraters don't play games all day. There's no software association in Australia to stop pirating as yet because they haven't really focussed on what's really happening . . .

MEGA: Or is it that no one's been hurt enough - in the pocket?

QUESTOR: No one knows how much they've been hurt.

MEGA: And no one's talking?

QUESTOR: I could guess at how much we're losing, but I couldn't put a figure on it.

MEGA: In other words, you really don't know how much copying's going on?

QUESTOR: I couldn't put an exact figure on it, no. But we can see how many people are out there advertising making a profit out of it. And if we've got a list of about 280 of the obvious ones who are advertising - 280! That's a helluva lot of people out there making a good little business out of it.

MEGA: It seems that the answer for the industry is to keep one step ahead of the pirates.

> **"**
> **No-one knows how much they've been hurt**
> **"**

QUESTOR: That's saying OK to the pirate, go ahead. It's illegal! You're taking . . .

MEGA: I realise that, but nothing's happening about the pirates.

QUESTOR: It will do, within time.

MEGA: In the meantime?

QUESTOR: In the meantime, we're doing what we can to battle it with things like copy protection. We're confident that things will change and a lot of the pirates will get severely burned.

Bulletin Bauds
On the Bauds with Avatar

Hello and welcome back. First of all, I'd like to say thanks to all the new users on our board who read about us here in Megacomp - hope you have a good time! Some of you asked us to start a Commodore 64 file area as well as the IBM, Amiga, Atari and Z80 areas, so we have. If anyone has C64 or C128 files to contribute, please call The Cage on (03) 882-2605 any time!

I have to apologise to users who had trouble getting on during the first week of August as we were upgrading the hardware and had a couple of problems. First the Netcomm 1234SA modem bit the dust and we had to buy a Maestro 2400ZXR. Then, after I had just changed the hard drive controller and reformatted the drive, my tape cartridge with the backup of the entire BBS broke halfway through the restore! Aaaarggh! If it hadn't been for C, who somehow managed the impossible task of untangling and rethreading the creased and mangled mess of tape well enough for it to miraculously still read properly, the BBS might not be here today.

We've also upgraded our software again, and are now running World War Four version 4.07. My copies of Turbo C 2.0 and Turbo Pascal Professional 5.5 arrive today, so I could finally be able to fix some of the little bugs and "features" that have been annoying me for some time. WWIV is written in Turbo C and Tradewars, Max Headroom and Chess - our online games - are written in Turbo Pascal.

And now for a bit about file archiving for those still in the dark. Most bulletin boards make their download files available in the form of archives for three main reasons. Firstly, archives can store a number of files together, which ensures that you get all of the files needed for a package. Secondly, archives have Cyclic Redundancy Check (CRC) codes, which ensure that the copy you receive is intact. And finally, archives usually use various methods of file compression (such as RLL or LZW) to reduce the size of the file and thus the transfer time.

There are several types of archive which are currently popular, and they include the following:

.ARC - invented by SEA for their ARC program and later used by many other programs, most notably PKware's PKARC program which was the subject of a recent lawsuit. A defacto standard.

.LHZ - used by LHARC, a Japanese archive program fast becoming a new standard due to the fact that it produces smaller archives than any other program, although it isn't the fastest.

.PAK - used only by NoGate Consulting's PAK program, and the only format not supported by The Cage due to the fact that PAK crashes when run within a DOS shell.

.ZIP - invented for PKware's new PKZIP program, this is probably the best designed format and rivals with .LHZ to replace .ARC as the new standard.

.ZOO - probably less well known than the other four, but has a long and honourable history and is apparently well supported under Unix.

To read files in any of these formats, you will need the appropriate unarchiving program. These are usually available from your local bulletin boards and user groups and come with instructions built-in. As far as I know only .ARC and .ZOO are currently used on Amigas, but all five formats are common on PCs.

This issue I'll finish up with a list of two dozen bulletin boards compiled by our users (see box) with their comments, the maximum baud rate supported and the software used. Any inaccuracies or omissions will gladly be corrected - just leave a message for me on The Cage, or write to me care of this magazine.

SOME VICTORIAN BOARDS

Phone	Name and description	Baud	Type
(03) 758-7086	Brainstorm OZ - Home of Vic pams list	2400	QBBS
(03) 848-3331	Custom Programming BBS	2400	OPUS
(03) 525-9015	Darkside BBS	1200	QBBS
(03) 793-4548	Delta - Good Role Playing Board	2400	TPRO
(03) 232-9149	Eddies Electronic Exchange - Something for everyone	2400	QBBS
(03) 787-8759	Happy Hacking BBS	2400	QBBS
(03) 696-4625	Legends - Good games board	1200	QBBS
(03) 583-4778	Little Shop of Horrors - Great for just about all	1200	QBBS
(03) 560-9292	Maxitel BBS	1200	ARB
(03) 887-1485	Mercury BBS	300	CNET
(03) 369-2403	Rastar BBS	2400	WWIV
(03) 872-3738	The Comedy Company	2400	OPUS
(03) 725-1923	The Further Regions	1200	BBS
(03) 578-1007	The Last Frontier - Roleplaying games and Tradewars	2400	QBBS
(03) 725-6650	The Outer Limits	1200	OPUS
(03) 288-0331	The Real Connection (Line 1)	1200	OPUS
(03) 288-0810	The Real Connection (Line 2)	2400	OPUS
(03) 470-4403	The Strike Force BBS	2400	APPL
(03) 718-2198	The Witches Brew - Great for games and everything	2400	QBBS
(03) 840-1565	Underground Talk Channel, 4 other lines!!!	2400	TALK
(03) 64-3126	Yarra Valley BBS	1200	ARB
(03) 899-6180	Zen BBS - 5 line talk channel	2400	TALK

Catch up with Megacomp!

Back-issue classics now available!

Okay, okay - you asked for them, so here they are! If you missed out on our early issues, now's your chance to catch up. Supplies are limited, and once they're gone, you'll probably have to pay collectors a small fortune to get your mitts onto these classics. Here they are:

ISSUE No. 1

•Amiga virus report •C64 Megapokes •PC your ST •Atari ST review •Amstrad CPX 6128 •Living dangerously with Co-Co •Guided tour of Viatel •Amiga's hidden messages •First Zlotnik report •Computers at School •Linkword wordprocessor for SEGA •Apple Imagewriter LQ Printer •Viatel Honour Roll •Futuresound's Audio Digitiser for Amiga •Meganews •Commodore Connection •MSX in OZ •Blick gets into it •Games reviewed: Champion Boxing; Star Wars; Slaine; Feud; Ace 2; Last Ninja; Defender of the Crown •Marketplace •User Groups

ISSUE No. 2

•Virus survival kit •Publishing ST style •Meganews •Amiga's hidden messages (full text) •Megablasts •Why a PC? •Win an Amiga contest •HuCAL Spread-sheet for Sega •Getting into Bulletin Boards •Malcom T on Apple •$50 Atari bargain •Megawords (Atari) contest •Disk Demon vs Dolphin DOS review •Multiface II tape-disk transfer unit for Amstrad •C's Workshop •Blick's Christmas •Amiga blockbuster review: Photon Paint & Digi-Paint •Basic Bits goes A.B.C. •Computer Bulletin Boards •100 names from Viatel •Games reviewed: Startrek; Better Dead than Alien; Balance of Power; Living Daylights; Fire Brigade; Summer Olympiad; Black Lamp; Wonder Boy; Final Assault; Thundercats; Fire & Forget •Gamer Newsline •Arnold Meganegger •Marketplace •User Groups

ISSUE No. 3

•Computer Pirates •Meganews •Megablasts •Amstrad PC 20 review •The ones that bit the dust •Art & Film Director (Amiga) review •Computer Cracker speaks out •Chimera on C64 •Apple's problem child (IIGS) •My PC review •Megadisc review •How a PC •Zlotnik photo •Public Domain software for Atari •Bulletin Bauds •Malcom T goes hard •Blick and the computer mafia •Win an Amiga contest •Hardware bits 'n bytes •Beginner's guide to Viatel •Star Cursor joystick review •Will Amiga's fire scorch the 64/128? •PC in-Modem review •MSX: dead but won't lie down? •100 more names from Viatel •Catalogue Corner •Games reviewed: Fish; Rocket Ranger; Street Sports; Salamander; Airborne Ranger; Dragon's Lair; Willow; Colossus Chess; Supreme Challenge; Fantasy Zone; Live & Let Die; Crazy Cars II; Legend of Blacksilver •Gamer Newsline •Arnold Meganegger •Dragon's Lair Solver •Megawords winners •Marketplace •User Groups

BLICK
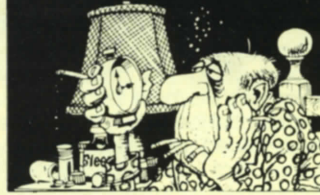
After a year of slaving away in the pokey hole under the stairs, I reckoned I deserved a better deal. Admittedly, the firm had shown some recognition of my efforts: not only had they replaced the 25 watt light globe with a 60 watter, but also, in an unprecedented burst of altruism and munificence, they had pensioned off my VZ200 computer and given me a TRS80 which almost worked. Little things mean a lot.

So, considering how well we've been doing, I thought this might be an opportune time to put the heavy word on the management.

After all, as soon as we moved into our new place, his gloriousness, the executive editor had a big spare-no-expenses redecorating job done. The whisper was that a lot of the materials had fallen off the backs of trucks. The EE denied this most indignantly, of course.

His suite was all very tasteful, and reflected his devotion to his favourite footy team. There was black vinyl wallpaper, with a yellow flocked duck pattern; a tinkling polycarbonate chandelier which came from a bankrupt Kings Cross sex shop; fluffy grey carpeting from the games room of the same establishment (it turned out that it was really white so the EE decided not to have it cleaned), plus a desk and various chairs which Harry Gribbings said he got before they went to the tip. Harry painted them yellow which looks very nice now, but it took a little while for the paint to dry on the upholstery, and the yellow didn't quite fill in the broad arrow marks.

The biggest problem I had was getting an interview with him. Most days he was too busy, working out strategies on his electronic Ludo game. Every lunchtime, he locked the door while he was dictating to Miss Fripple. And after work, I was always too puffed out after pushing his car to ask him anything.

Then one day, it happened. I had gone to that room at the end of the corridor (just past the executive suite) to answer a call of nature, when he came in. It was my big opportunity.

"ER, gidday boss," I began nervously as he mounted the step, "how's yer Ludo coming on?"

He was doing a funny little whistling sound and had obviously ignored my question. "You got nothing better to do, Blick?" he snarled, staring at the tiles on the wall 20cm in front of him.

Adhering to the strictest washroom etiquette, I fixed my gaze on the tiles as I replied. "Ar, no boss - I mean, it was just that I needed to . . . you know . . . call of nature and all that."

I had never really studied the tiles before. They had a coloured spot the size of a twenty cent piece on each one. In the centre of each spot in white was what looked like the heads of a couple of golf clubs. I was sure I'd seen them somewhere else - but where?

"No time for idle chit-chat," he harumphed as he jiggled. "wouldn't have got where I am today if I'd wasted time like you young fellers do."

It was my turn to jiggle. The tiles were troubling me. Where had I seen them before? My mind snapped back to what I wanted to say. "Boss, I was wondering if you . . ."

He stepped over to the wash basin, and the automatic flusher drowned out the first part of his reply. " . . .worked my way up through Telecom . . ." he said as he reached for the roller towel. Rubbidderrubbidderrubbider it went as he continued, "ought to think about that."

Then he opened the door and was gone. I looked again at the tiles, and tilted my head to check the pattern. It was only then that I realised I was wrong about the golf clubs, and I knew just where the EE had picked up those tiles. No wonder I had trouble working out where I'd seen them - the cunning so-and-so had simply fixed them on the wall upside down!

I made a mental note to come back here at the same time tomorrow and beard the lion in his den, so to speak. I could hear EXACTLY how I'd start our conversation.

"I was thinking about this washroom, boss. Don't you think it would go well with the tiles if we installed a public phone in here? And, by the way, I'd like to talk with you about my new computer, my new office, and that raise I've been after, and a company car . . ."

Tough business, this publishing. I'm getting to like it more every day.

BLICK

Commodore Amiga screenshot

User Groups

AMSTRAD

National Amstrad Network. Acts as a central point for Amstrad User Groups all over Australia. To find Amstrad groups near you, phone (03) 383 2671.

APPLE

ACT Apple Users Group: Please address enquiries to GPO Box 1231, Canberra 2061, ACT.

Tasmanian Apple Users Club: Meets 4th tuesday of each month. Enquiries to TAUS, PO Box 188, North Hobart 7002, Tasmania.

Apple Computer Aust. P/L: May be able to help find an Apple group nearest to you. (02) 452 4277 during business hours.

ATARI

Atari Computer Enthusiasts NSW. Meets 6.15 pm second Monday of each month, for 8 bit Atari; fourth Monday for ST at YWCA, corner Wentworth Avenue and Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst. Has disk magazine, PD library, and Bulletin Board on (02) 529 2059. Enquiries (send SAE) to A.C.E. NSW, GPO Box 4514, Sydney 2001.

Melbourne Atari Computer Enthusiasts. Meets 10.30am to 3pm second Sunday of each month, in Rotunda Building, Monash University. Has large PD and Freeware library for members. Enquiries to M.A.C.E. PO Box 340, Rosanna 3084. Victoria

Qld. Atari Computer Enthusiasts. Meets third Wednesday of each month at Yeronga State School, Park Road, Yeronga. Enquiries to PO Box 17, Acacia Ridge 4110.

Atari Computers P/L. May be able to help find an Atari group nearest you. (02) 805 0344 during business hours.

COMMODORE

Amiga Users Group Inc. Meets 2pm second Sunday of each month, at Victoria College, Burwood campus. Has PD software library, runs Amigalink Bulletin Board on (03) 792 3918. Enquiries to PO box 48, Boronia 3155, Victoria.

Australian Amiga User Association. Meets mostly via Bulletin Boards and bi-monthly Newsletter. Has good connections with overseas Amiga groups. 24-hour V21/22/23 Bulletin Board has limited access for visitors, is on (047) 58 8006. Enquiries to 56 Davies Avenue, Springwood 2777, NSW.

Brisbane Amiga Users Group. Meets 6pm first Sunday of each month. Enquiries to PO Box 853, Toowong 4006, Queensland.

Commodore 64 Users Group. Meets regularly at different Melbourne venues. Enquiries (send SAE) to PO Box 64, Abbotsford 3067, Victoria.

Melbourne Commodore Computer Club. Meets 7.30pm, third Wednesday of each month at Nunawading Civic Centre. Enquiries to PO Box 1777, Box Hill 3128, Victoria.

Albury/Wodonga Commodore User Group. Meets first Monday of each month at Albury High School. Enquiries to PO Box 1014 Lavington 2641, NSW.

Lithgow Commodore Computer User Group. Meets 7.30pm first Wednesday of each month. Enquiries to PO Box 489, Lithgow 2790, NSW.

Southport Commodore Computer User Group. Meets 7pm every Monday at Labrador Primary School. Enquiries to PO Box 6333, Bundall 4217, Queensland.

Commodore Business Machines P/L. May be able to help find a Commodore group nearest to you. Sydney: (02) 427 4888. Melbourne: (03) 429 9855, Brisbane: (07) 393 0300; Perth: (08) 389 1266. During business hours only, please!

IBM

Melbourne PC Users Group. Meets 6pm first Wednesday of each month, at Clunies Ross House, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville. Enquiries to GPO Box 1728, Melbourne 3001, Victoria.

IBM Australia Ltd. May be able to help find an IBM group nearest to you. Phone head office during business hrs. on (02) 634 9111.

MICROBEE

Central Coast Microbee Club. Meets first Tuesday of each month at Microbee Systems. Enquiries to PO Box 41, West Gosford 2250, NSW.

Microbee Users Group of WA. Meets first Sunday of each month at Nurse's Lecture Theatre, Sir Gairdner Hospital. Enquiries to GPO Box N1090, Perth 6000, West Australia.

MSX

Melbourne MSX & Spectravideo User Group. Meets 1pm to 5pm first Saturday of each month, at Nunawading Civic Centre, enquiries to Mrs. Sandra Phelan, (03) 546 3035.

Brisbane Spectravideo & MSX User Group. Meets third Tuesday of each month. Enquiries to Lucille Parker, 25 Primrose Street, Woodridge 4114, Queensland.

SEGA

Sydney Sega Users Group. Meets 10am - 5pm, second Sunday of each month, at Gladesville Public School. Runs 24-hour Bulletin Board ("2000 & Beyond") on (02) 522 6514. Enquiries C/- PO Box 17, Ryde 2112, NSW.

Victorian Sega Users Group. Meets second Monday of each month in rooms 7-8, 489 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Enquiries to PO Box 102, Doveton 3117, Victoria.

Queensland Sega Users Association. Meets monthly at YMCA building, Ann Street, Brisbane. Enquiries to secretary, PO Box 433, Lutwyche 4030, QLD.

SINCLAIR

QL — Australia. Meets 7pm first Tuesday of each month at Burwood (NSW) RSL Club. Has book and software libraries, special buys for members. Sample copy of Newsletter sent free. Enquiries to PO Box 729, Parramatta 2150, NSW.

TANDY

Bundaberg Tandy User Group. Meets every Sunday, Mostly during afternoons. Enquiries to PO Box 856, Bundaberg 4670, Queensland.

Intertan Australia Ltd. May be able to help find a Tandy group nearest you. Phone head office during business hours on (02) 675 1222.

MARKETPLACE

The Hacker's Guide to the Galaxy

By Count Zero Interrupt

Editor's note: That Cracking story we ran in our last issue has really stirred the pond. Within days of it getting on the streets, we had received a flurry of phone calls telling us (a) what a bunch of nerds we were to publish something like that, and (b) what a bunch of heroes we were to publish something like that. Heroic nerds, that we are. We believe that it's about time all the 'underground' debate was brought out into the open. Just as we were about to have this philosophy etched into a giant PCB for our smallest room, we received ANOTHER anonymous stunner. It sure sounds authentic, but we can't be sure. Just the same, we're presenting it to you here . . .every golden word of it. Got anything to add?

"

This is the first time I've gone public. If there's anyone out there whose system I've broken into, HI! I've only done this because of all the scare stories in the media about hacking - mostly by reporters who wouldn't know a PAD from a NUI.

To start off with, we hackers have kept up with the times. Forget the whiz-kid with his 300 baud acoustic coupler, my computer's worth $7000, not counting the work I did myself. I've also got a miniature modem connected to a pocket computer and a monitor I got from a video camera. It's probably the smallest hacking setup in the world, and it weighs less than a kilo. With it I can just walk up to a phone line anywhere and tap in. Or I can go into your office and plug my computer into your terminal. Into your system and out, in under five minutes.

The bigger and better you make your network the more holes there are. No-one's going to bother hacking a CPM system running at 300 baud . . .but a

Prime with 100 ports and gigabytes of files - That's fun! Just think, if you take over a mainframe and set it to hacking every password on a system, you can get good results in (say) an hour or two. Most skilled hackers have a couple of mainframes up their sleeves just for that purpose.

Hackers are actually good for computing systems. Let's say some nerd in Accounts section has been siphoning off funds, left himself a gateway into the system. Think they'll find it? Not in a thousand years. But if a hacker gets onto the network he'll find it and exploit it, and won't be as careful about hiding his tracks. Net result is, the hacker has some fun and you catch the crook. Everyone's happy.

What's more, hackers are the best guarantee of personal liberty there is. You can't make a modern police state without computers - and who do you think runs the computers? Hackers. We L-O-V-E electronic records, because people believe them. See, if your

name comes up on a screen they believe it's true. You don't have to prove anything anymore, it's all there in green and black.

Right now you can do a credit check on anyone for under two bucks. With the right friends, you can do it free. Who needs an Australia Card? The credit check will tell you everything you need to know, name, age, phone number, the works. Tie that into the ATM network and you know where everyone is, who they are and what they're doing. Big Brother isn't just watching you, he's following you.

Don't think people aren't abusing the system already. If you work at a Building Society or Bank you can get someone blackmailed for life. Alternatively, if you know the right access codes you can get someone wiped clean. The Credit Reference Association handles all this stuff, and they know the problems. People keep quiet about it because there's no alternative. If you take away credit references you'd

have to start trusting people again.

Given twenty years we'll run the world. In the States they're already hiring us - quietly - for computer surveillance. They'd do it in Australia if they had their heads on right, but we haven't caught up yet. Just last year someone hacked his way into Citibank and played around with their system. He had tens of millions of dollars at his fingertips . . .and it was all untraceable.

I don't like these stories that make us out to be criminals. Sure, you find a few bad apples in every bunch, but we're just here to enjoy ourselves. The three golden rules of hacking are these:

1. Don't harm the system you're (ab)using

2. Don't rip off the little guys; and

3. Stay cool and have fun. That's all I do.

"

MEGACOMP COMMENTS

If what Count Zero Interrupt says is only partly true, then we're all living in some sort of fantasy bubble set to burst at any minute.

Computers have contributed enormously to the quality of our life, but their biggest - and most frightening drawback is their apparent vulnerability to invasion by unauthorised persons.

We admire the enterprise and ingenuity of hackers as much as we dislike their cockiness and the threat they pose to personal security and privacy. Count ZI might be one of the good guys, but what about the bad guys?

How would you like it if some hacker tickled your bank account for pocketmoney every

now and then? Or what if there was a hacker who disliked you and gave you a lousy credit rating just to get even?

Let's put the electronic stuff aside for a bit, and make a real-life analogy, just to get things into perspective . . .

You're away from home for the day. Somebody waltzes in, picks your lock, and makes himself comfortable. Uses the bathroom. Helps himself to your Pepsi. Phones a few friends. Play your stereo. Pokes around in your private stuff. Then he cleans up, locks your door, and leaves.

Has a crime been committed or not? Are you going to laugh it off, or call the cops? Think about it.

Megacomp Reader Survey

(Here's your chance to kick a few shins through Australia's ultimate gripeline!)

BIG things are happening here at MEGACOMP. To help us fine-tune the mag to be the way you want it, we need your input. It's the perfect way to sound off on just about anything! It won't cost you a cent to mail, and you can send photocopies if you want to. OK?

HOW TO DO THIS SURVEY: You can answer most of the questions by ticking or exxing boxes. The more information you give us, the better we can improve MEGACOMP. If there are any questions you don't want to answer, just draw a line through them. If there are any questions that don't apply to you, write N/A. Here we go . . .

COMPUTERS

1: Do you own a computer?
   a ☐ Yes — b ☐ No (if No, go to 9)

2: Make & Model:..
   ....

3: Where did you buy your computer?
   a ☐ Computer or Electonics Shop.
   b ☐ Chain store such as K-Mart.
   c ☐ Classified ad or garage sale.
   d ☐ From a friend.
   e ☐ It was a gift or a prize.

4: What score would you give to your com puter on a scale from 0 (Awful) To 10 (Terrific)?..

5: What do you like most about your computer?..
   ....
   ....

6: What do you like least about your computer?..
   ....
   ....

7: What rating would you give to dealer/ manufacturer support?
   a ☐ Slack
   b ☐ Ordinary
   c ☐ Good
   d ☐ Excellent
   e ☐ Haven't needed it
   Any comments to add?..
   ....

8: How many times each week do you use your computer for:

	0	1-5	5+
a Games?	☐	☐	☐
b Word Processing?	☐	☐	☐
c Accounting?	☐	☐	☐
d Database Work?	☐	☐	☐
e Communications?	☐	☐	☐
f D/top Publishing?	☐	☐	☐
g Programming?	☐	☐	☐

COMPUTER GAME PLAYERS:

10: Best game you've ever played:
    ....

11: Worst game you've ever played:
    ....

12: How many games do you own?
    1-5 ☐ a   6-15 ☐ b   16+ ☐ c

13: In how many different ways have you aquired your games?
    a ☐ Bought new from shop
    b ☐ Bought new by mail order
    c ☐ Bought second hand
    d ☐ Copy bought or given
    e ☐ Swapped
    f ☐ Public Domain
    g ☐ Download via modem
    h ☐ Fell off the back of a truck

14: Any gripes about games?..................................
    ....
    ....

WHAT YOU READ

15: In order of preference, please list your 5 favorite mags (they don't have to be computer mags.)
    a..Price............
    b..Price............
    c..Price............
    d..Price............
    e..Price............

16: Which newspapers do you read?
    a..
    b..
    c..
    d..
    e..

17: Please list any 5 books which you have read in the past year:
    a..
    b..
    c..
    d..
    e..

ABOUT MEGACOMP

18: Where do you get your Megacomp?
    a ☐ Newsagent b ☐ Computer store
    c ☐ I have a subscription

19: Apart from our eratic publishing dates, have you had any problems getting Megacomp? If so, please give a blast right here:..
    ....
    ....

20: Please give a score from 0 to 10 for each of these Megacomp items;
    a .... Editorial
    b .... Inside Megacomp
    c .... Megablasts
    d .... Meganews
    e .... Chimera
    f .... Hardware bits & bytes
    g .... Games reviews
    h .... Gamer Newsline
    i .... Arnold Meganegger
    j .... How a PC
    k .... Bulletin Bauds
    l .... Viatel Articles
    m .... Catalogue Corner
    n .... User Groups
    o .... Blick
    p .... Marketplace
    q .... Competitions
    r .... Hacker/Cracker articles

21: What would you like to see more of in Megacomp?..
    ....
    ....
    ....

22: What one item would you change or eliminate from Megacomp?..................................
    ....
    ....
    ....

GAMES CONSOLES & ARCADE GAMES

23: Which of the following games consoles have you used?

a ☐ Atari 2600
b ☐ Colecovision
c ☐ Intellivision
d ☐ Nintendo
e ☐ Sega Master System
f ☐ Sheen
g ☐ Victory
h ☐ Vectrex
i ☐ Wizzard
j ☐ Any other ....

24: Which is/was your favourite game?
....
....
....

25: If you own a games console, which one is it? ....
....
....

26: If you play arcade machines, how often do you do it?
a ☐ Once a week or less
b ☐ Up to three times a week
c ☐ More than 3 times a week

27: Which are your three favourite arcade games?
a ....
b ....
c ....

28: Is there anything you don't like about arcades/arcade games?
....
....
....
....
....
....

YOUR FAVOURITES

29: (a) TV Show ....Ch:.........
    (b) Radio Station ....
    (c) Single ....
    (d) Album ....
    (e) Performer ....
    (f) Food ....
    (g) Drink ....
    (h) Sport ....
    (i) Item of clothing ....
    (j) Hobby ....
    (k) Movie ....
    (l) Person ....
    (m) Place to go ....

30: If money was no hassle, what would your personal transport be?

WHAT YOU DON'T LIKE

31: (a) About Yourself ....
....
    (b) About School or Work ....
....
    (c) About Computers ....
....
    (d) About Life ....
....
    (e) About Australia ....
....
    (f) About Clothing ....
....
    (g) About People ....
....

32: What's the biggest ripoff you've ever known? ....
....
....

33: What is your greatest health worry, if any? ....
....
....
....

A FEW BITS ABOUT YOURSELF

34: Which age group is yours?
a ☐ Up to 12
b ☐ 12-16
c ☐ 16-21
d ☐ 21-29
e ☐ 29-35
f ☐ 35-42
g ☐ 42+

35: Are you Male a ☐ or Female b ☐

36: a ☐ Single   b ☐ Married
    c ☐ Defacto   d ☐ Divorced

37: Do you live:
a ☐ With Parent/s   b ☐ With Spouse
c ☐ With Friend/s   d ☐ Alone

38: What is your occupation? ....
....

39: About how much does it cost you each week for:
a $............. - Meals
b $............. - Fruit/Vegetables
c $............. - Movies/Music
d $............. - Rent/Mortgage
e $............. - Transport or vehicle
f $............. - Clothes
g $............. - Bathroom/Personal items
h $............. - Reading matter
i $............. - Computer items
j $............. - Sport/Amusements
k $............. - Confectionery/cakes
l $............. - Insurances
m $............. - Cigarettes/Tobacco
n $............. - Alcohol
o $............. - Tea/Coffee
p $............. - Fizzy drinks
q $............. - Fruit juices

40: Extra comments/gripes or suggestions?
....
....
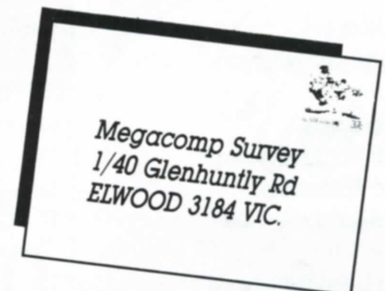..

Thanks for your help. If you want to include your name and address, please print it below, or just put your postcode. (While we'll be publishing the survey results, no names and addresses will be revealed). Now jam the whole thing in a stamped envelope addressed as shown at right, and mail it to reach us by March 12th, 1990.

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

☐ Please mark here if you want to be in our prize draw.

Megacomp Survey
1/40 Glenhuntly Rd
ELWOOD 3184 VIC.

Awaken the beast within you...

ALTERED BEAST

ATARI ST SCREEN SHOWN

ACTIVISION

SEGA

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