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# CTW

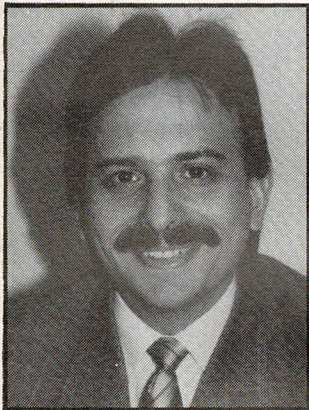
**12.12.88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 216**



The first Amiga game with 4,096 on-screen colours!

**MANDARIN  
SOFTWARE**

## Mirrorsoft loses duo



**BILOTTA: Restructuring**

**Mirrorsoft was last week playing down the loss of two of its directors in the same week.**

Amid talk of restructuring Pat Bitton and Bernard Grant, marketing and commercial director respectively, both left the firm suddenly after long service - but Mirrorsoft was last week claiming that the fact they left on the same day was purely coincidental.

The firm's managing director Peter Bilotta claimed that both partings had been amicable and attached little significance to them. He also revealed that the firm was not actively seeking replacements for either post.

He commented to *CTW*: "We have to expect movement of staff in this industry. They've both given loyal service but

Continued on page 27

## SDL throws down ST gauntlet

**Distributor SDL effectively woke up the Atari ST1040 as a games machine last week with a new version of the high volume ST Superpack.**

The move - which could anger rival distributors selling the official Atari package - came as Atari itself was cutting prices across its PC3 range to match Amstrad's 1640 cuts revealed exclusively in *CTW* last week.

SDL has effectively indulged in a spot of pack-splitting by transferring the 520 ST Superpack's extras to the slow-selling 1040.

The 1040 was previously being offered for £499 at retail as a standalone machine - but SDL has added 21 games titles, the business package *Organiser* and a joystick.

These additions have a combined retail value of £458.97, but the 1040 bundle will remain at £499. Dealers will also retain

their normal 20 per cent margin.

SDL has even gone to the trouble of making up a four colour sleeve for the package to make it look like an attractive Christmas purchase in-store.

"As usual 520s are getting increasingly short, whilst there's good availability of 1040s. It makes sense to make the slower product available for the Christmas market," commented SDL boss Tony Deane to *CTW*.

He admitted to a "degree of nervousness" regarding how SDL's move would be deemed by other distributors. Atari itself was also unaware of the new pack. "But I expect Atari will take a lenient view of anything that increases sales at this time of year," added Deane.

"Distributors like to cherry-pick - so they're mainly only shipping the high volume 520. Very few bother to try and

shift the 1040. But because we're real specialists we can put together these types of deals."

SDL has also put together a second 1040 pack - this time its own business pack. It still retails at £499 but includes £385 worth of software - *VIP Professional*, *Microsoft Write*, *Superbase Personal* and *Metacomco's Basic*.

Meanwhile, Atari last week dropped the prices on its PC3 range following various cuts across Amstrad's 1640 range.

The PC3 dual drive has fallen £50 to £599 and the hard disk version has fallen £150 to £799. Strangely, Atari was preferring not to comment on the move last week, presumably as matters such as price protection and the like had not yet been sorted out.

Distributor Hugh Symons responded well to the cuts. "Amstrad dominates the market so other manufacturers have to try and find advantages for their own products," com-



**DEANE: Pack-splitting on ST mented director Kenneth Abrahams to *CTW*.**

The main advantage appears to be that the PC3 can be

bought monitorless, leaving dealers to add what they think is required to help ship the most product.

## System free to sell in US

**A major precedent in leisure software copyright law was set last week with System 3 winning a two year battle against Data East in the US.**

In 1986 Data East - a wholly owned subsidiary of the Japanese coin-op manufacturer - brought an action against System 3's *International Karate*, which was being distributed in the US by Epyx as *World Karate Championship*.

Data East claimed that the System 3 title infringed its existing product *Karate Champ* under the 'look and feel' laws. Thus, after a court ruling, *World Karate Championship* was restrained from sale in any way in the US.

But after insisting continually that their product was in no way a deliberate copy of *Karate Champ*, System 3 and Epyx last week reversed the original lower court decision in the Ninth Circuit of Appeals.

Epyx and System 3 are currently deciding whether a further action should be taken

against Data East to gain damages for the sales lost on all formats of *World Karate Championship*, plus the unreleased *IK+* - which was also prohibited from sale in the US.

"This is an important landmark in the history of home computers. People are trying to destroy the market under look and feel," commented System 3 boss Mark Cale to *CTW*.

"Obviously ours is a karate game and so is theirs, so there's bound to be some similarities. But the truth is our game was

so good it destroyed Data East's sales."

This is believed to be the first time any firm has overturned a look and feel ruling.

"We believed and believe to this day that the product was never in violation of either the trade dress (packaging) or the code," commented Epyx' director of business development Bob Lindsay to *CTW*.

On how much winning the two year case had cost, Lindsay would only offer "more than your average salary".

## Limited cuts on leisure

**Software Limited effectively pressed a pause button on any leisure market hopes last week with the closure of its Software Publishing Associates division.**

Whilst the firm is insisting that its two games labels are still in existence, it has been left with no product and no staff on its leisure side.

The SPA operation has now been absorbed into its parent company and it is claimed that both the Pirate budget label and its full-price label Crysus will continue to release product, as soon as a new product manager is appointed.

This follows the departure of erstwhile CDS boss Henry Kitchen, who appears to have left the firm as a result of its lack of investment in the leisure side.

"Henry wanted a larger and more substantial operation, but following the acquisition of Norbain there's only so much money left in the pot. In reality we're not trying to create a brand name in the leisure market, we just haven't got the management time," offered the firm's managing director Alastair Handyside.

The firm is claiming that SPA's absorption is a natural move and is clearly playing

Continued on page 27

## INSIDE:

### CUT AND THRUST

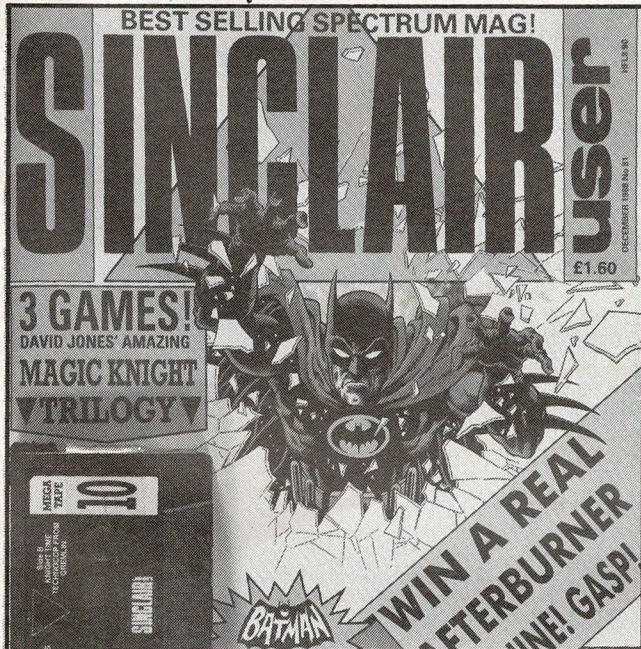
Alan Sugar has wielded the knife again, this time in the direction of his 1512 and 1640 ranges which have been variously reduced by up to £250. *CTW* talks to some grateful distributors about the possibility of a return to the glory, glory days of the firm's low end PCs..... 14

### ALL THE POLL POSITIONS

With just two weeks of frenzied hype to go, *CTW* presents the dealers guide to crackers and turkeys this Christmas. Forget Kylie, Jason and Cliff (lovely song, lovely man), fifty top retailers talk about the real number one this Christmas. And what was the best marketed game this year? The best selling leisure machine? How big was Sega's margin over the console competition (perhaps not a particularly apt word)? And just who did nominate Sex Vixens From Outer Space? All the facts, all the figures plus a veritable opus of analysis, comment and downright affrontery. They'll all be talking about it in the morning..... 18

CHARTS 25/LETTERS 26

## EMAP blunder angers Beeb



The offending issue of *Sinclair User*

**EMAP was reeling last week after an unfortunate gaffe led to its *Sinclair User* monthly being reprimanded publicly on primetime TV.**

The current issue of *Sinclair User* was blasted by top BBC consumer affairs programme *Watchdog* for a reference to glue sniffing in one of its competitions.

The Motorbike Madness competition offered a free model motorbike to the winner and included the line "just think of all the glue fumes you've now got an excuse to inhale".

*Watchdog* presenters John Stapleton and Lynn Faulds-Wood were both scathing of the reference to such a dangerous activity.

"We received notification from a concerned *Watchdog* viewer about the matter. After investigating it we understood why that viewer was concerned and thought that it should be highlighted in the programme," commented a BBC spokesman.

EMAP itself is in no way trying to justify *Sinclair User's* decision to include the reference, but does feel that it was treated over-harsh by the programme considering that it offered a full apology.

"We deeply regret the comment made in that competition. It was a throw-away remark that was ill-timed and ill-thought out. We're doing everything in our power to get the situation right," commented *Sinclair User's*

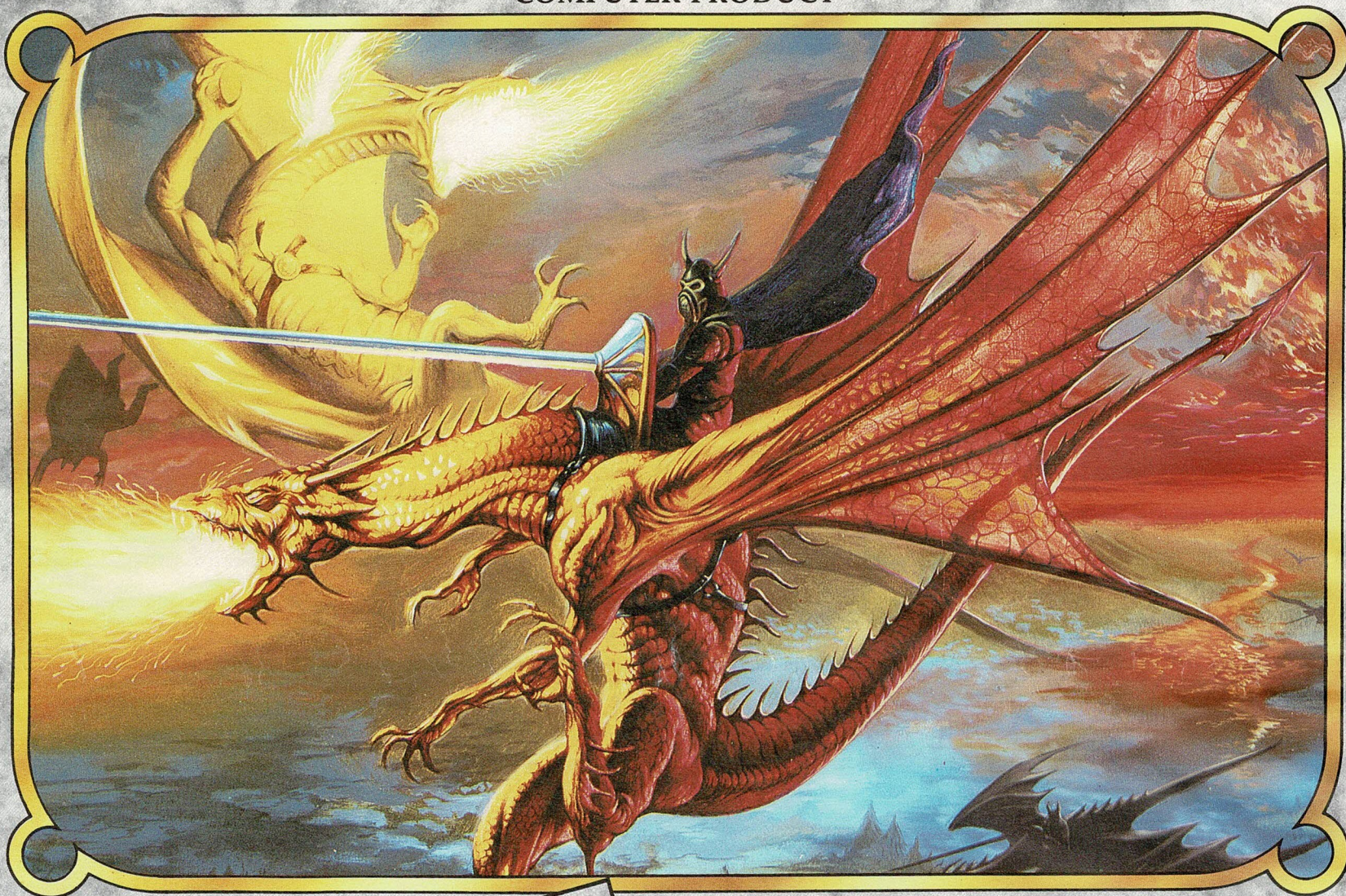
Continued on page 27



# THUNDER BLADE™

Is already flying...Heroes Of The Lance takes off this week.

OFFICIAL  
**Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®**  
 COMPUTER PRODUCT



## HEROES OF THE LANCE

ARCADE ACTION

CBM 64/128 £9.99 c £14.99 d  
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In the mystical world of Krynn an epic battle rages between the forces of good and evil. Eight brave companions enter the treacherous ruins of the temple of Xak Tsaroth seeking the precious Disks of Mishakal – the only end to this infernal struggle. Draconian monsters, skeletal undead, powerful magic and countless other terrors face the adventurers but the way is barred by the ancient black dragon, Khisanth. Find the key to destroy Khisanth or you are doomed to failure.

The fabled city of Phlan has been overrun by monsters – your quest: discover the identity of this evil force. No detail is missed, 6 player characters; non player characters; the Adventurers' Journal packed with history, maps and clues, and the Translation Wheel. The gameplay is exhilarating and the graphics state-of-the-art portrait displays, 3D-perspective, tactical combat display and personalised weapons: the ultimate breakthrough in fantasy role playing computer games.

CBM 64/128 £24.99 disk only.  
 AMIGA & ATARI ST coming soon.  
 IBM PC & COMPATIBLES £24.99 d

## POOL OF RADIANCE

FANTASY ROLE PLAYING





# Opus tops 35K sales, plans greater dealer push in '89

Whilst touting its best ever year for PC sales, Opus has promised to shake off its direct sales image with two new distributors lined up for the new year.

The firm is posting a £25 million turnover for 1988, with its sale of machines doubling to 35,000 units, having launched two new models at the PC Show (CTW September 12th).

Although the firm is claiming that 48 per cent of its computers sold this year were via dealers and distributors, it is planning to increase this to over 60% by the end of next year.

Opus already has three distributors — Eltec, CBS and Micro Peripherals — but will be appointing a further two in January. "We're not looking to appoint a huge number of distributors because that's not the way we plan to go. At the moment only M-P has a dealer base, with the other two handling education and corporates. With the new distributors we will be looking more to dealers as well as aiming for a geo-

graphical spread," offered an Opus spokesman.

The switch from being purely a direct supplier is being hailed by the firm as a necessary move if its PC range is to make greater impact outside of the company's traditional education accounts. Having only gone through distributors for six months the firm is claiming to have already made "giant steps", and that the recent opening of a new after-sales and servicing division has made it better equipped to take on a subsidiary role.

But whilst the company would like to eventually have over 90 per cent of its sales going through distributors, the firm admits that there is always going to be a small number of customers who will continue to want to purchase direct.

The firm is already claiming to have substantially increased its share in the business PC market which, along with the public sector (excluding education) accounts for 56 per cent of its sales. It was, however, keen to stress that this does not mean that education sales are



The complete Opus range of "British-built" PCs

diminishing. "We are still the leading supplier in education, but our corporate sales are continuing to grow."

Currently the Opus range of PCs is stocked in Alders, but the firm claims that it is not attempting major high street penetration. "Unless you sell through Dixon's you're not

really considered, but we're going for the middle market and do not want to be perceived as suppliers for the bottom end."

As well as shaking off its direct sales image, Opus is clearly looking to push home the fact that its PCs are British

built. "Opus is often regarded wrongly as not being a British company, which has become a glib phrase for a cheap Far East clone manufacturer. We are completely British and in sales terms are huge. Who else is selling 35,000 units plus? You can't describe Amstrad as a British builder of PCs."

## Top-end Sega disappears

Virgin Mastertronic last week announced that it has completely run out of stocks of its high-end Sega console.



HEATH: Seeking Segas

Such is the claimed demand for the machine at the moment that a second batch of TV advertising support has also been pulled — due to any increase in orders being impossible to fill.

The £129.99 system (which includes a power base, two hand controllers, 3D glasses, lightphaser and a couple of games) is now unlikely to be available again until February/March.

According to Virgin Mastertronic's marketing director Geoff Heath the lower range systems are already "going the same way".

"We thought that the amount of £129 machines we ordered would be enough to see us through Christmas. We obviously ordered a hell of a lot more of the cheaper ones — but it's getting tight," Heath told CTW.

He claims that even without further TV ads the Sega is set to gain a sizeable amount of TV coverage over the final weeks to Christmas — with several programs apparently due to feature it.

## And the nominees are...

The nominations have been announced for the annual industry awards with the winners due to be announced at this week's industry dinner.

The bulk of the awards will be decided by a jury consisting of editors from various computer magazines. There will also be an overseas award judged by French and German titles, a number of Gallup awards based on units sold and distributor and retailer of the year decided via CTW surveys.

Among the nominees for the more prestigious awards are *R-Type*, *Operation Wolf* and *Savage* for 8-bit game of the year, and *Speedball*, *Virus* and *Star Glider II* for 16-bit game of the year.

Telecomsoft, Ocean and Imageworks will battle it out for the title of software house of the year. The budget game of the year title is between *Beach Buggy Simulator*, *Draconus* and *Vector Ball* in the 8-bit market and a duel between *XR35* and *Sidewinder* in 16-bit.

In publishing, *ACE*, *Sinclair User* and *The One* are all up for

magazine of the year with Gary Penn, John Minson, Jim Douglas and Graham Taylor providing the choice for journalist of the year.

In simulations, *Project Stealth Fighter*, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* and *Matchday II* compete for the 8-bit title while the 16-bit contenders are *Ferrari Formula One*, *F-18 Interceptor* and *Falcon*.

The best 8-bit translation of a licence will be either *Afterburner*, *R-Type* or *Operation Wolf* and the 16-bit title is between *Super Hang On*, *R-Type* and *Pac Hang Mania*.

## Trade Show recruits with new added body

The European Computer Trade Show has signed a number of prestigious new recruits and gained the backing of the BMF.

Among the latest signings for the CTW-sponsored event are independent publisher Domark and US leisure giant Datasoft.

The show will run from April 16th to 18th of next year at the Business Design Centre, and is being pitched by organisers Database as a new concept and strictly trade-only show.

A number of conferences and seminars are also lined up for the event under the umbrella title of The Computer Forum. Among the subjects under discussion will be software piracy, the advent of 1992 and 'The American Dream' with input from a "top American speaker".

The backing of the BMF for the event is so far only from the leisure wing of the movement and will be seen as attempted proof of its intentions to take more account of the leisure industry.

## Limited director departs

Software Limited last week lost its sales director Mike Watkins, who had been with the company for two and a half years.

Watkins leaves the industry to "travel around the world". He does however remain a shareholder. The firm is not in any great hurry to find a replacement, instead managing director Alastair Handyside and his sales manager Matt Line will jointly share Watkin's previous duties.

Handyside commented to CTW: "Mike's departure is completely amicable. I envy him travelling around the world — I'd love to have done the same. He won't completely disappear though. He'll be popping in and out until the end of January, and I expect we'll see him when he gets back."

CTW - ISSUE 215 In the Dagger column of last week's issue of CTW it was stated that Microdealer International is engaged in the practice of 'grey importing' an Electronic Arts title from the United States prior to EA's official launch in the UK.

We now accept that the title in question had been available in the UK for three weeks prior to the publication of the article, and unreservedly apologise for any embarrassment or injury this may have caused the parties concerned.

In the same column, interpretative quotes were attributed to Mark Lewis of Electronic Arts which could be construed as being unnecessarily aggressive. While pointing out that the Dagger column is intended to be a slightly tongue-in-cheek view of fortnightly events in the industry, we do accept that these quotes were somewhat compromising, and again unreservedly apologise for any embarrassment or injury they may have caused.

We have also been asked to point out that the distributors' and programmers' margins quoted in the column are inaccurate: this we accept when applied to Microdealer International, but strongly maintain that there are other distributors operating in the market on these terms

# CTW

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EDITORIAL

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Editor: Stuart Dinsey

Deputy Editor:

Kelly Beswick

Staff Writer:

Dave Roberts

Chief Sub-editor:

Christina Bent

ADVERTISING:

0438 310105

0438 310182

Advertisement

Manager:

Jerry Hall

Assistant

Advertisement

Manager:

Russell Beadle

PRODUCTION &

ADMIN:

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Production Editor:

Lesley Hunt

Publisher/Managing

Director:

Tom Stock

Photography:

Dave Seymour

Marketing Consultant:

Steve Cole

Production

Consultant:

Pete Minney

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Two Smash Hit Games  
You MUST Stock!

### ARMALYTE

Commodore 64/128  
£9.99 cass £12.99 disk

### SANXION

the SPECTRUM remix  
£8.99 cass £12.99 disk

ARMALYTE, universally received by the press as the best blaster for Christmas, is NOW available for the C64/128! Yes, the buyers are queuing up for this staggering extravaganza of shoot 'em up mayhem.

And now SANXION the SPECTRUM remix is coming — the game thousands of Spectrum owners have been crying out for. Ring David Birch at THALAMUS for the low down on both these future number one games and place your orders. ARMALYTE and SANXION are the games which will make YOU money this season!



## THALAMUS

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# Palan pulls out in VCS shortage



FINE: Hardware cancelled

Palan has now decided not to distribute Atari's range of consoles because it could not be guaranteed delivery of any machines before Christmas.

The firm announced its support for Atari's hardware last month claiming it was a logical move on the back of its success with the games cartridges for the consoles. Previously the firm had dealt exclusively with Commodore hardware but was not happy with the margins involved.

Last week, however, Palan boss Lou Fine told CTW that the firm would not be dealing with any hardware this year,

but that the situation would come under review in February. He added that the firm would be taking the range of cartridge software from Atari's three new labels covering war games, arcade games and 'mind' games.

Fine commented: "We're just going with software for now because we looked at the situation and thought there really wasn't much point in taking it if we going to miss out on the Christmas market."

Meanwhile, Fine also claimed that the managed buy-out at Palan's holding company Prestwich was still going smoothly and was expected to be completed in the new year.

# SAM arrives after passage from India

After several delays and price changes MGT's SAM micro has finally gone into production, but contrary to previous plans the machine will now be manufactured in India.

A prototype of the Spectrum clone should be available for preview in the new year, with the firm hoping to start shipment by late April. The machine has been re-christened the SAM Coupe and is intended to be just one of a range of computers.

Back in August the firm was pitching the machine as being the first sub-£100 micro, but its price now looks like being around the £150 mark - which does not include a disk drive.

The firm will be offering a new slimline disk drive made by Citizen for the additional cost of £70, and is claiming that the SAM will be one of the first

machines to incorporate the new style drive. This will fit under the keyboard.

According to joint MGT boss Alan Miles only the initial production run of the SAM will be based in India. "We simply don't have the room here, nor the people, but when the machine takes off we will be needing a second source in this country. We've always looked to India as a market where significant sales can be made. By setting up production there we won't have to face the difficult export regulations and high tariffs."

Miles also claims that the firm is seriously thinking of appointing UK distributors for the machine by the autumn of next year. "Obviously until we can put the machine in their hands we're unlikely to get any firm commitment, and at this stage we're not too sure of going through distributors or direct to dealers."



MILES: SAM underway at last

Following the completion of the debut SAM Coupe the firm intends to start immediate production of the second machine in the range, which looks like being an upgrade on the original model. "We want to make it clear to any one taking the first machine that they will not lose out by taking the second," offered Miles.

# Logotron announces its Big Plan to move upmarket

In something of a move upmarket Logotron has announced that it will be releasing a time management package called *Big Plan* which will retail at £99.

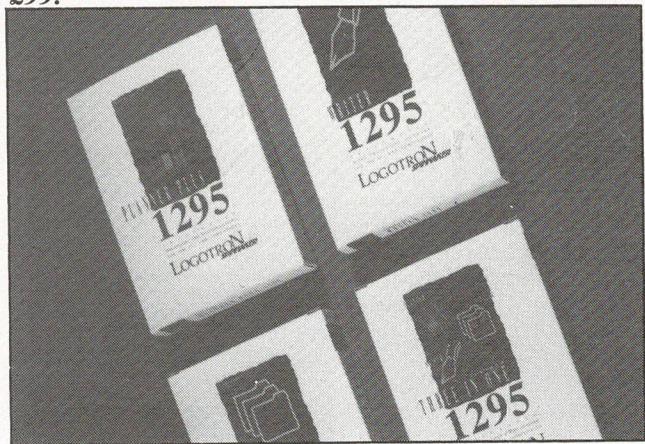
Previously the firm's only forays into the business market have been strictly in the budget area with prices ranging from £12.95 to £49.95. With *Big Plan*, though, the firm is apparently hoping to reach the "executive customer".

The firm's product development manager Ian Saunter described *Big Plan* as "a GEM based package which uses the intelligence of the machine to schedule the day".

He continued: "I guess the whole thing does mean a shift up the price range for us. It's not that we're not doing budget anymore, it's just that if you want to hit as wide a spectrum of PC users as possible, you have to have software in both camps."

*Big Plan* will be available from January 16th and will also be available as part of a package with *GEM 3* retailing at £149.

Meanwhile, Saunter also revealed that Logotron's *Eight-in-One* would be bundled with a number of machines due for launch in the new year.



1-2-95 RANGE: Upmarket addition due

# Daily pushes ST



LOG ON TO A WINNER: We're giving away 50 of these great Atari packages in our phone competition

## Hitch up to hi-tech

KEY in to our super £20,000 Atari computer phone-in competition!

We're looking for 50 winners, who will each get Atari's 520ST Super Pack - a £400 home computer PLUS 22 great chart-topping games and business software titles worth £450.

And there's a super MIRRORCARD bonus lined up too! By the year's end Atari will be the largest manufacturer of personal computers and video games in the world, with an ever-growing range of IBM compatible systems.

The Atari ST series has been described by *Whelan Computer* as the best-value computer for a buyer who's interested in a wide range of uses - games, graphics, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, etc.

0898 44 44 81

ATARI

16-colour palette and a mouse to draw with. AND enough software to produce *Roger Rabbit II*. And if any of our winners are Mirrorcard holders, they will each get a £200 colour TV to use in conjunction with the Atari 520ST Super Pack. So this is a chance not to be missed!

HOW TO ENTER

How Atari looks in *The Mirror*.

Atari last week gained a major publicity boost via an ST competition running each day in the *Daily Mirror*.

Some 50 STs - worth £20,000 at retail - were on offer to winners of a daily phone-in competition.

Atari was last week claiming the success of the tie-in, claiming that £12,500 related calls had been made to the *Mirror* on the very first day.

"We're getting an opportunity to push our products to 7.5 million *Daily Mirror* readers. It's got to be part of any consumer goods company's strategy to get as much national press coverage as possible," said an Atari spokesman.

The 520 ST Super Pack was the machine being promoted - with an extra "bonus" offered to existing Mirrorcard holders.

# Cascade umbrella opens

In an attempted change of image Cascade has formed a holding company called Artronic as an umbrella for its various market interests - while at the same time promising expansion into hardware in the new year.

The new look firm now contains three divisions; Artronic Products Limited - which contains the labels Cascade Games, Cascade Systems and Gamebusters - and Artronic Developments Limited and Artronic Systems Limited,

both of which will be concentrating on developing software systems.

The firm's joint boss Nigel Stevens told CTW: "Artronic is a nice word that we can put our stamp on. Cascade was fine for a while and it's a great name if you're selling showers, but for a Hi-Tech company it's not the right image."

He went on to stress that despite all the company's upwardly mobile aspirations leisure titles would still remain a part of the Artronic future. He did, however, have strong views on the subject of piracy amongst the games industry - which seems to be one of the reasons for the diversification.

"I think the volume of the piracy at the moment is frightening and the kids that are doing it have no qualms about it. Every user club is just a front for piracy and all these software duplication devices that are advertised are just tools for pirates. I think they should be banned."

As a response to the pirates the firm will be bringing out a low cost dongle in the new year designed for use with games and low-cost business software.



STEVENS: Name change

# Softsel bundles and gets the drinks in

Softsel has tied up distribution rights for Softech's pc-FAX and is introducing the product as part of a three package bundle.

The fax board will be available with Logi-UK's *ScanMan* and Logitech's *Paintshow Graphics*. Softsel is also organising a series of dealer training seminars for the package in the new year.

The three product bundle retails at £1,094, while *pc-FAX*

on its own is available at £895.

Meanwhile, the firm has announced an alcoholic promotion on SPC's range of business software. For every £250 spent on the firm's product dealers will be given a £5 voucher to spend on wines and spirits from a bar shopping list provided by Softsel.

The offer closes on the 16th December and Softsel claims that all orders of booze will be delivered by the 23rd December.

# Fake disks snuffed out

A batch of fake Commodore disks has been seized and destroyed by the hardware firm's exclusive primary disk distributor SJB disks.

The rogue disks turned up in a "prominent west end outlet" that all parties are refusing to name. They were being supplied by a source in Holland which is now apparently being "eradicated".

SJB boss Steven Burke commented: "It was incredible, they were the tattiest boxes of disks I have ever seen. The Commodore labels were either done with a John Bull printing kit or a colour photocopier."

Burke went on to point out that the problem was almost certainly confined to one outlet and that he had written assurance from that store that it would now sell only genuine Commodore disks.

# Watford deals out new card

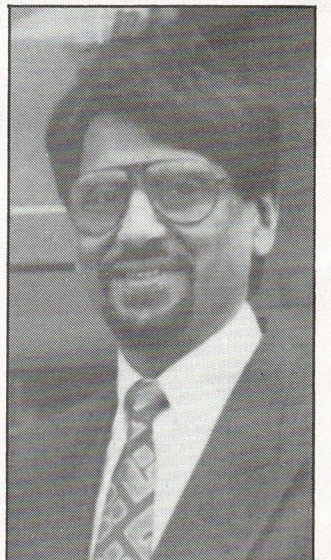
After recently unveiling its latest PC additions (CTW November 28th) Watford Electronics has revealed its plans to launch a PC fax card and drop out of the electronics component market.

The fax card will retail at around £225 and although still undergoing tests the firm is confident that it will be available early in the new year. The firm is claiming that its fax card will be the first sub-£300 package on the market.

The firm's decision to opt out of the components business is linked to its expanding Aries PC range. "We just haven't got the space to stock the stuff any more. We want to expand our showrooms to give the new machines maximum coverage, and besides the amount of effort required to make a decent profit on components just doesn't make it worth our while any more,"

commented Watford's boss Nazir Jessa to CTW.

The company is also toying with the idea of adding a portable model to its Aries range of PCs, although Jessa claims that "at the moment we'd rather wait and see how the market develops."



JESSA: Card shark



# Lightning

► BUSINESS TO BUSINESS ◄

Dear Dealer,

*Amstrad, you and us*

Amstrad has now aggressively priced both the PC 1512 and PC 1640, to commence 1st January 1989.

These changes clearly identify the markets for the Amstrad PC ranges - the PC 1512s as the low cost entry, the PC 1640s for small to medium businesses, and the new PC 2086s for corporate and system users.

Demand for Amstrad PCs will be high. We're all set to deliver now - at the new trade prices - and at the time of writing, we have the best stocks available. (But don't wait to place your orders, because it will be a case of first come first served!).

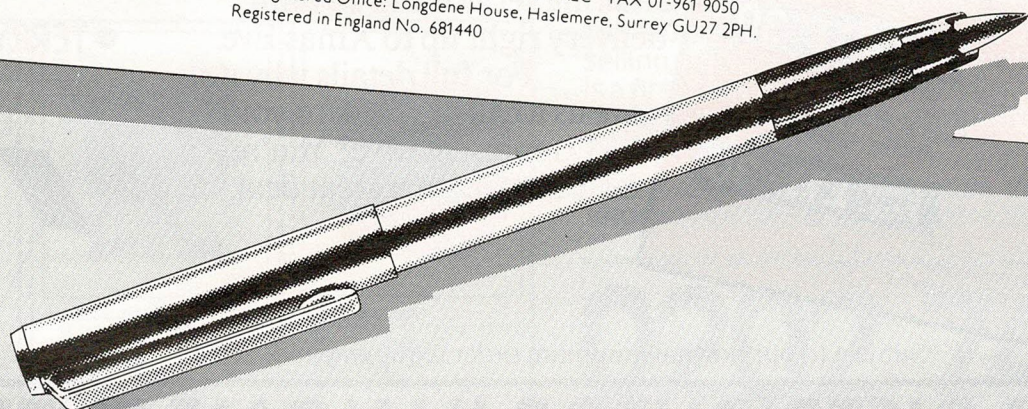
We know our lines are going to be busy, so as part of our service we've also made available a special FAX number for your Amstrad PC orders. If our 'PC-HOTLINE' number is engaged, FAX your orders through on 01-961 9050 - and we will call you back to confirm.

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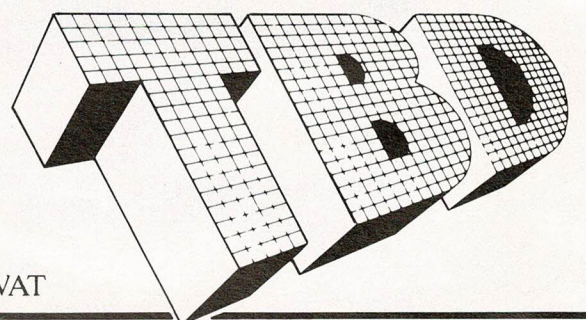
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# BT follows budget wave, scorns rumours again

Telecomsoft last week became the latest firm to re-align its budget approach — whilst denying trade rumours about imminent major changes in ownership yet again.

Following similar moves by rivals Mastertronic, Code Master and Encore, BT's budget label Silverbird is due to shift its emphasis away from £1.99 product in the new year.

The label will only be releasing around 20 per cent of its products at £1.99 — with the rest carrying a £2.99 price-point.

Also, rather than releasing six budget titles a month on a couple of formats each Silverbird will be only releasing two or three titles a month from next year — each arriving on five formats simultaneously.

The upward shift in budget prices has been caused by the

increasing difficulty for publishers or retailers to make significant margins.

"It's obviously a lot harder now than it was when there was only the three of us — but we're not leaving £1.99 games behind altogether. The budget side has always simply been instrumental business for us," commented Telecomsoft boss Paula Byrne to CTW.

"Budget's nice because it gives us a lot of market share

due to the way Gallup puts the charts together — which is by volume not value."

Once again, Byrne was last week moved to deny all knowledge of major changes afoot in the way Telecomsoft operates — rumours over the past few weeks have been ranged from a proposed management buy-out to BT looking for a buyer to the Mirror Group making an offer.

"I'd love to get to the bottom of all this and where these stories are coming from. There's nothing in any of them," said Byrne.

"Perhaps people are getting jealous — we've just had our most successful month of sales ever."

# Softek predicts court success

The longrunning Ariola/Softek court battle raised its head again last week with Softek making bullish noises about the eventual outcome.

The UK firm began suing Ariolasoft for around £250,000 in October 1987. Since then the firm has been closed down by its parent company Bertelsmann (CTW February 8th) — and it is in no way connected with

Ariolasoft the German software distributor.

"The outcome of the trial is as close to 100 per cent sure as you can get with these things. We've got a *prima facie* case and we think this will all be cleared up pretty soon," commented Softek boss Tim Langdell to CTW.

"No date has been set yet for the hearing. We know that the defence has got to have its day in court if they want it."

Unsurprisingly a spokesman for Ariolasoft UK did not share Softek's optimism, offering: "This is what they've been saying since the beginning. Obviously there will be different opinions. We prefer to leave it to the courts to decide."

# AST cuts and unveils

AST is cutting the prices on its Premium range of 386 machines by up to 17 per cent, as well as introducing a new model to the range.

The firm is claiming that a rapid growth in volume and market shares since the machine's introduction has resulted in reduced production costs which have enabled the company to cut prices. The firm is also claiming to have improved efficiency, with the recent opening of a distribution centre handling European operations.

At the bottom end of the range the Premium/386-300 has been reduced by 12 per cent to £2,280, whilst the 340 model is now priced at £3,180 — a cut of 14 per cent.

The higher spec 390 model has undergone a 7.5 per cent reduction and is now priced at £3,695, whilst the 17 per cent price cut is being offered on the Premium 3150 which now costs £4,130.

To coincide with the price cuts the firm has also launched a new top end model to add to the Premium range, called the 3320.

"With the industry turning its focus increasingly upon the 80386 processor we feel that these moves will firmly place AST in a leadership position in this segment of the market," commented the firm's European boss Art Miller.

# Seikosha aims high for 1992

Seikosha has outlined plans to gain a 15 per cent share of the business printer market by 1992.

Part of that grand scheme was last year's claimed investment of £2.5 million in its UK operation. The firm also plans to launch three new printers in the new year to spearhead its ambitious assault on the market.

One of the new printers will be the OP-105A LED printer. It will be officially launched at the *Which Computer?* Show and will operate at five pages per minute.

# PLAY IT AGAIN SAM 6

NEW RELEASE



**GALAFORCE 2**  
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A wonderful shoot 'em up — fast, furious, beautifully designed and stunningly compulsive. This will be one of the top three BBC games of the year — I promise...  
A & B Computing (September 1988)

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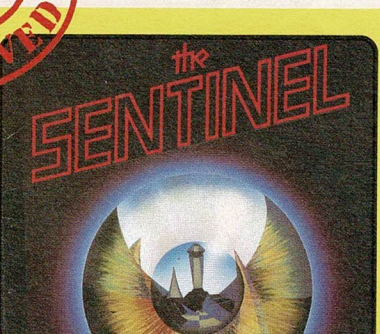
**HUNCHBACK**  
Superior's Authentic Arcade Conversion  
This superbly addictive and amusing arcade conversion is now available again for the BBC Micro and is available for the first time ever for the Electron.  
"This game has excellent graphics and sound... a good addiction factor and is fun into the bargain"... Micro User

SUPERIOR APPROVED



**HOPPER**  
Acornsoft's Classic Hit  
The best implementation of the "Frogger" game. (Even better than Superior's own version!) Fast-moving with detailed, colourful graphics. Features include diving turtles, crocodiles, snakes and dragonflies.  
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SUPERIOR APPROVED



**THE SENTINEL**  
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**ACORN ELECTRON VERSION**  
Unfortunately it is not technically possible to produce an Acorn Electron version of THE SENTINEL. The four games on the Acorn Electron version of PLAY IT AGAIN SAM 6 are: GALAFORCE 2, HUNCHBACK, HOPPER and VIDEO'S REVENGE.  
**VIDEO'S REVENGE** — An action-packed, fast-moving alien blaster from Budgie Software. "If you can imagine Defender twisted on its side with the mentality of Rambo in a bad mood, then you are getting close to the destruction possible in Video's Revenge. Sprites are fast and furious... sound is wonderful"... Micro User.

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The screen pictures show the BBC Micro versions of the games.  
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# Genius springs into new promo

Shunning the belief that the leisure market stops after Christmas, Virgin has embarked on a three-way promotion for its Leisure Genius label.

In a tie-up with the Virgin Atlantic airline, three pairs of tickets for an all expenses paid trip to see *The Phantom of the Opera* in New York are being offered to consumers, dealers and distributors.

The promotion began on

December 1st and will run until March 31st.

"Obviously during the September to December period everything takes off. The Leisure Genius range moves into a world of its own during that time and it needs very little support," commented Virgin Mastertronic's general manager Bryn Gilmore for full-price software.

"One interpretation is that after that period everything tails off. With this promotion

we're hopefully have a six month Christmas."

The consumer competition requires purchasers of Leisure Genius product to fill in the relevant form, naming their favourite Leisure Genius title.

Two New York trips are on offer, plus fifty runner-up prizes of a free Leisure Genius title.

Winning dealers will be chosen on merit, with the most supportive independent outlet or small chain gaining the trip. Three runner-up prizes of £250 worth of free software are also on offer.

The winning distributors will also be chosen via a combination of performance and



GILMORE: Non-conformist promo volume - with the New York trip as main prize and runner-up prizes still to be decided.

# Ocean fires in at No. 1 with a bullet

With just two weeks to go Ocean's *Operation Wolf* has staked its claim for the prestigious Christmas number one spot.

So far the title has only been released on Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore and has entered the charts of all three formats at number one. It replaces Melbourne House's *Double Dragon* which achieved the same feat last week.

The game has also had a

large enough impact to push Ocean to the top of the publishers' chart with an 11.2 per cent share. This compares with the firm's share last week of 4.6 per cent.

According to Gallup figures *Operation Wolf* alone accounted for 2.8 per cent of sales last week. Next week's charts, however, will show the affect of US Gold's *Thunderblade* - which is now expected to be the other main challenger for the number one position.

# SJB cleans up dealers

SJB is offering dealers a free drive head cleaning kit with every two boxes of disks bought.

The promotion is only available on the firm's Parrot Ready To Run 5.25 inch pre-formatted disks and the free kit, which is worth £7, can be sold separately or used to promote sales.

The disks are IBM PC compatible and retail at £14.90 a box, although the firm is offering special trade prices with savings of up to 50 per cent. For example, a dealer can save £50 on ten boxes, £320 for 50 boxes, whilst a £700 saving can be made on an order of 100 boxes.

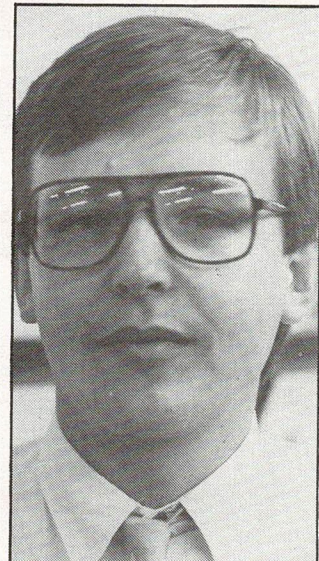
# Weekly appoints

Future Publishing's fledgling consumer weekly *New Computer Express* has ended its month long search for an editor.

Rob Ainsley, erstwhile editor of fellow Future publication *8000 Plus*, has replaced *NCE*'s original editor Peter Worlock - who had his role at the weekly redefined after just one freebie issue (*CTW* November 14th).

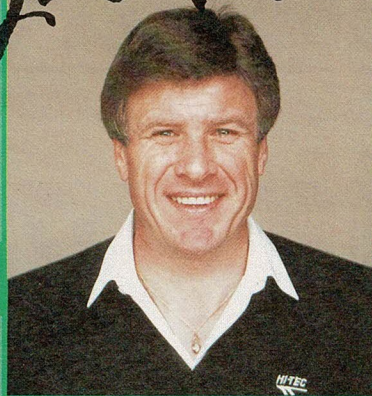
"The guy's perfect for the job. Actually we've been after him from day one, but we had to go around looking for alternatives - and we had to persuade him to take the job," commented Future boss Chris Anderson, to *CTW*.

Whilst Anderson preferred not to disclose estimated sales figures for *NCE* he did claim that a recent survey showed it to be selling nearly twice as much as its rival weeklies.



ANDERSON: New man in

# Emlyn Hughes



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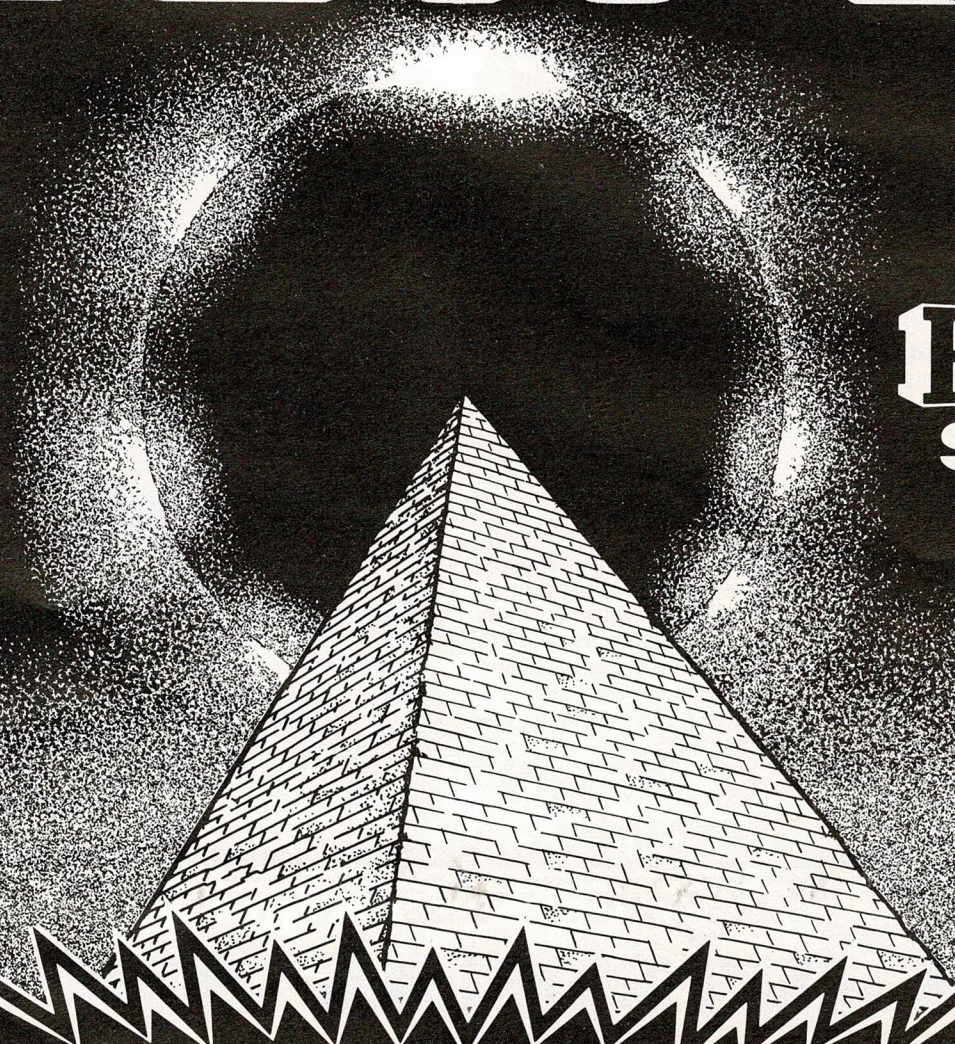
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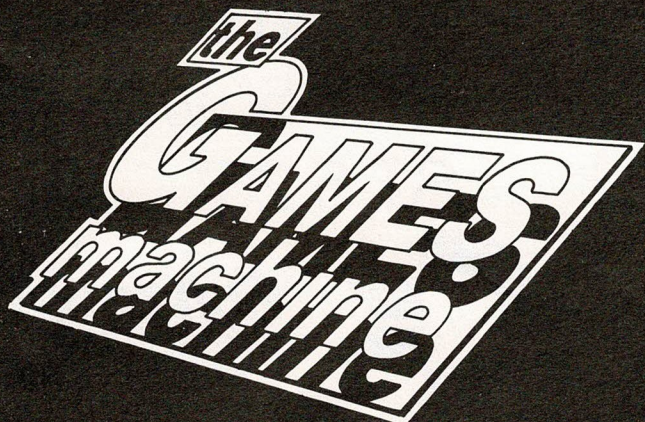
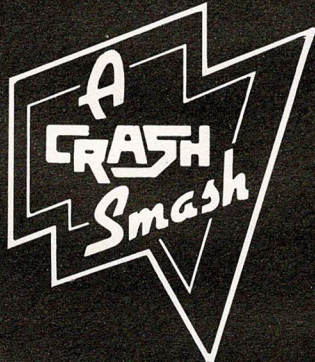
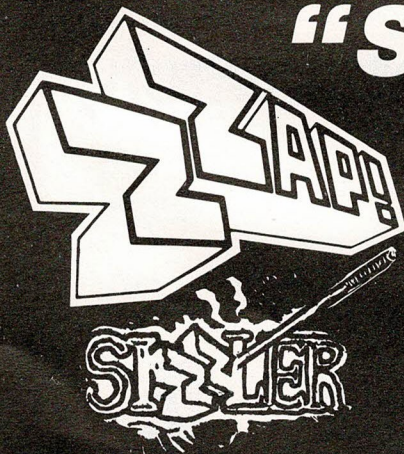
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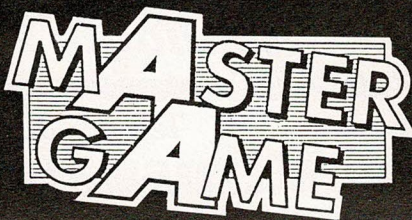
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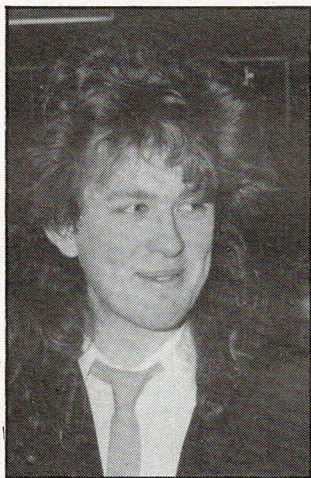
Last week **Amstrad** boss Alan Sugar entered the world of academia on receipt of an honorary degree from the City University, London. The degree was awarded as a mark of respect for his "outstanding contribution to his profession", and the East End boy made good can now boast several letters after his name...

Not content with performing well in *CTW's* inaugural Christmas Poll, **US Gold** was last week vaunting initial sales of its *Thunderblade* coin-op licence. According to boss Geoff Brown, some 50,000 units were shipped out first day on only two formats -ST, Amiga and C64 are due out this week. *Thunderblade's* got a way to go to match last year's Christmas biggie *Outrun*, though - latest sales claims stand at 500,000 units worldwide...

**Sharp** is lining up a rival to **Atari's** much trailed Pocket PC. Called the Wizard, it is not DOS-compatible but relies on a propriety microchip to provide standard functions - including a time/calender/diary system, and a basic word processor. The machine is expected to go on sale in the US for around \$150 early next year...

High profile PR firm **Barrington Harvey** has poached **Leisuresoft's** erstwhile marketing co-

ordinator Beverley Gardner. She has taken up the post of account executive, handling Domark and Grandslam. "I'm over the moon, Brian," commented the firm's boss Simon Harvey...



**HARVEY: Poaching**

**Virgin** has taken the decision to concentrate its retailing activities on megastores and whilst selling its remaining small stores, the firm will be opening up a new megastore in Glasgow as well as a number of jointly-owned megastores in France and Australia...

Another UK firm has picked up an award from French computer magazine *Tilt*. **Palace Software's** *Barbarian II* was voted best action adventure, which brings the number of UK winners up to five, including *US Gold*, *Telecomsoft*, *Mirrorsoft* and *Logotron*...

An expansion card that turns the Acorn Archimedes into a fax machine has been launched by **Computer Concepts**. It is called Fax Pack and plugs into the back of the computer and any standard telephone socket. It is priced at £499...

**Mandarin's Lombard/RAC Rally** is set to get some pretty heavy publicity in the next few weeks. Not only will the game be featured on *A Question of Sport*, it will also be played on the Saturday morning kids show *Motormouth*. Some PR man has obviously been doing his job...

The *Which Computer?* Show is being used as the launch pad for **Quma's** latest addition to its CrystalPrint range of printers. Although no price has yet been fixed, the Publisher printer is being hailed as a low-cost alternative to laser printers and is a Postscript-compatible LCS model running at six pages a minute...

Both a price cut and bundling deal are being offered on the **Epson GQ3500** laser printer. For £1,599 the printer comes with two font cards, whilst for £1,799 (the old price) Epson is offering the two cards as well as a 250-sheet input tray worth £445...

**Cascade** recently tested out its latest horse racing

predictor system called *Form Master*, with Bookmakers William Hill. The firm is claiming that the system predicted the winner of the two o'clock at Haydock - Beau Ranger, whilst the money raised from the bet was donated to the Children in Need appeal...

Over 600 new products are being featured in **MES'** latest computer supplies catalogue, which is available free on request. The firm is now claiming to provide the widest selection of computer related products in the

UK...

In a bid to promote its increased range of Amstrad software, **Abbot Computer Products** has curiously recruited two dogs to handle the new stock. The photo-scan has been devised to draw attention to the arrival of *Wordstar 1512*, *Supercalc 3.1* and *Accounts Master DD* - which are all on sale to the trade...

The latest version of the *Omnis* database, version 3.24, is now available from Suffolk based **Blyth Software**. The

new package is priced at £145, although existing users can upgrade for £25 and new features include: the ability to enter data without updating files and the addition of full colour support to entry layouts...

**Software Limited** has been appointed as the main UK distributor for *XTree's* disk management software and the enhanced *XTreePro*. The packages are claimed to allow beginners to operate a PC without having to learn DOS and are priced at £70 and £100 respectively...



Abbot's latest recruits

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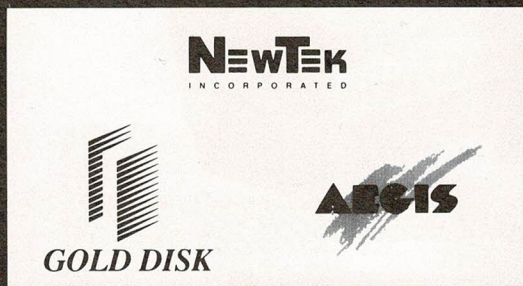
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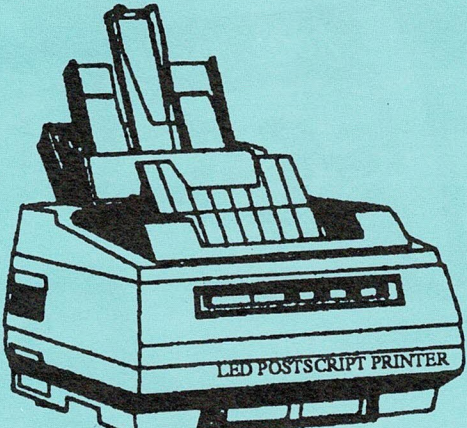
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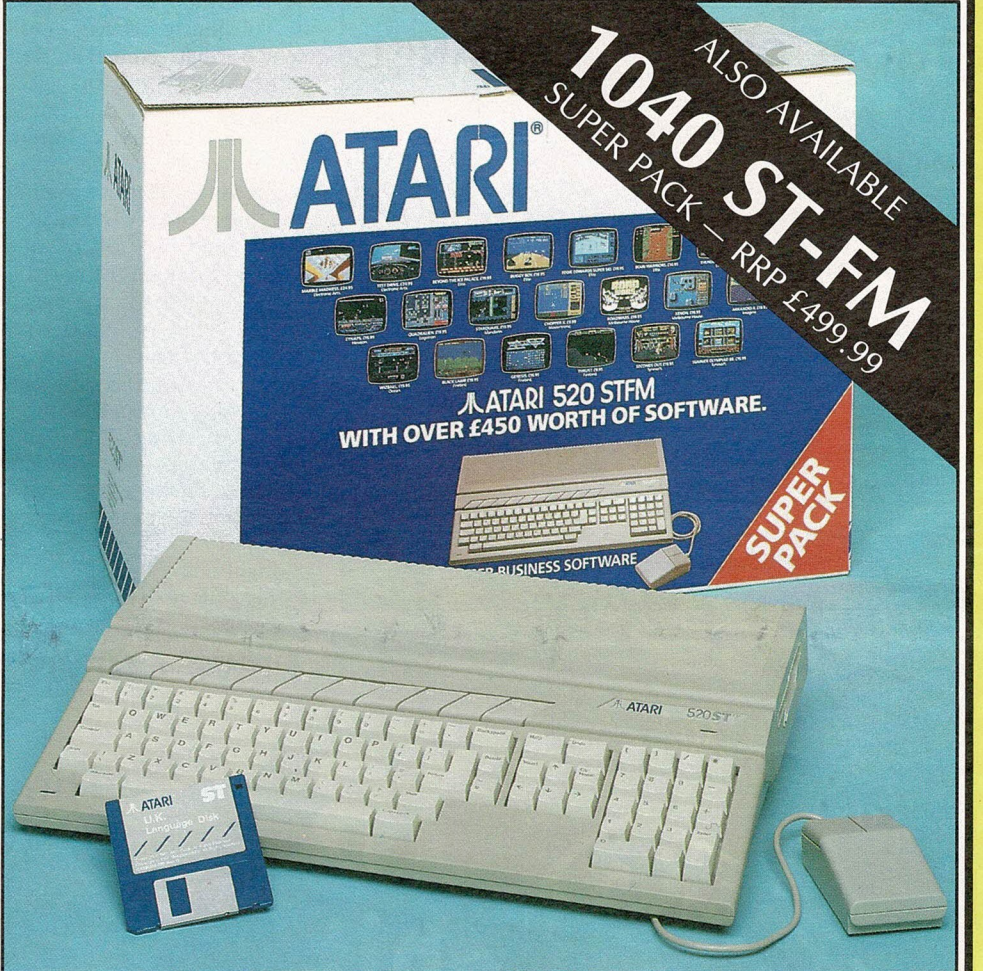
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# TAKING UP THE GOOD GUY GUISE

Amstrad last week put the finishing touches to its marketing framework by slashing prices on its low end PCs. The move has shed a lot of light on an area that was becoming unusually cloudy for the boys from Brentwood. DAVE ROBERTS talks to the distributors about the continuation of the Amstrad effect . . .

With a string of cuts to make even Mrs Thatcher gasp Amstrad has raised the market profile of its 1512 and 1640 ranges to a level not seen since the heady days of '86 when the whole industry seemed to be dancing to the tune of the famous 1512 overtures.

The moves come at a time when doubts about Amstrad were reaching something of a peak and seem to answer a lot of questions. Previously no one seemed quite sure where Amstrad was going. Where was the market for the 2000 range? Would it mean the death of the 1640 range? and

just what was the Sinclair Professional for?

Well that last point may still be something of a mystery, but as far as the PC ranges are concerned markets are now clearly defined, pricing is fiercely competitive and distributors are drooling. Could the Amstrad effect strike again?

Really all that was needed all along was a little bit of faith. When those curious new boxes appeared at this year's PC show competitors and customers alike came, saw and wondered. They looked nice enough, but just who was going to buy them, surely there's no market? Of course there isn't,

replied the believers, Amstrad hasn't thought of one yet.

And so on the sixth day Amstrad created a market. Really it was already there, Amstrad just needed to shuffle its pack a bit to make that apparent. To its undoubted frustration, however, it found its hands tied by the world of D-Ram shortage at the time of its various launches. There would have been no point in slashing prices on the 1512 and 1640 ranges if there were no machines to satisfy the expected clamour.

## Chips with everything

Now though the firm is obviously far more confident on that score. The deal with Micron which gives Amstrad nine per cent of the chip manufacturer's output obviously plays a large part in this newly found peace of mind and Sugar and Co are also clearly unconcerned by one possible cloud on the horizon in the shape of Micron's legal dispute with its major rival Texas Instruments.

The latest moves have certainly made Amstrad flavour of the month in distributorland. All those contacted by CTW last week were greeting the cuts with genuine delight, and perhaps just a touch of relief.

Lightning boss Loretta Cohen offered: "I think the cuts



1640: Better defined role

are important mainly because they will help distinguish the ranges far more clearly. They give the market much clearer definition in areas that I think were a little blurred before. Amstrad realised that and they've sorted it out with the sort of excellent marketing that they always do."

Micro Peripherals managing director Gordon McDowell agreed that the moves

would "help enormously in differentiating between the ranges" while P&P's Amstrad product manager Alan Taylor echoed that the whole episode constituted "a sensible repositioning of the 1640".

But if the firm's low end range is all being shifted slightly down market to accommodate the new 2086 in an area that used to be the 1640's stamping ground, isn't

there a danger that the 1512 range might just fall off the end with its original customers being tempted by the 1640's aggressive pricing? When they all roll over doesn't one fall out?

Taylor at P&P opines: "In time, when end users find out about the cuts, the numbers of 1512s being shifted will go down. But Amstrad will never

Continued on page 27

## THOSE CUTS AT A GLANCE

Model	Old Retail Price	New Retail Price	Difference
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PC1512 SD CM	£549	£499	£50
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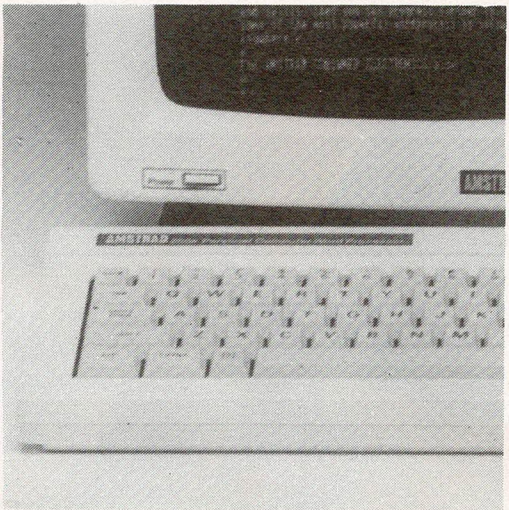
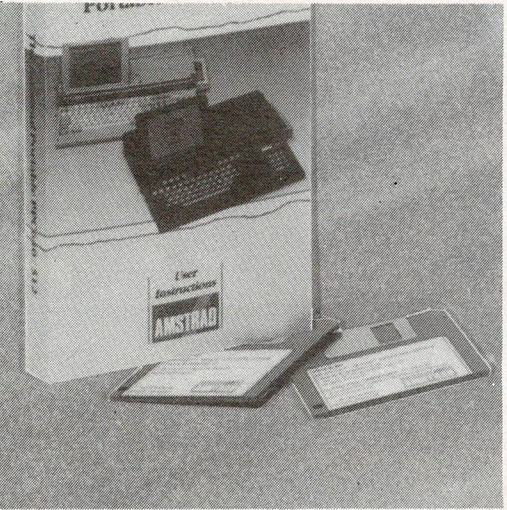
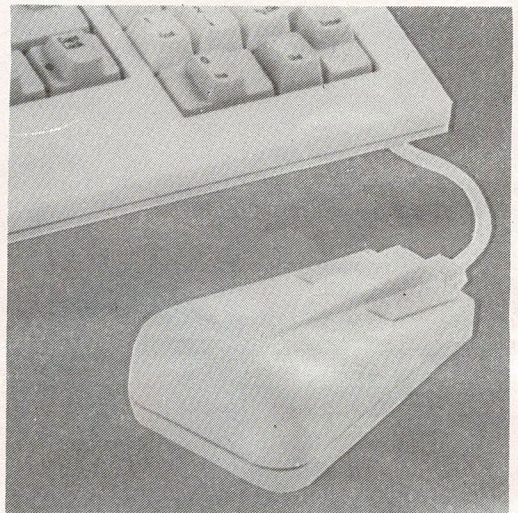
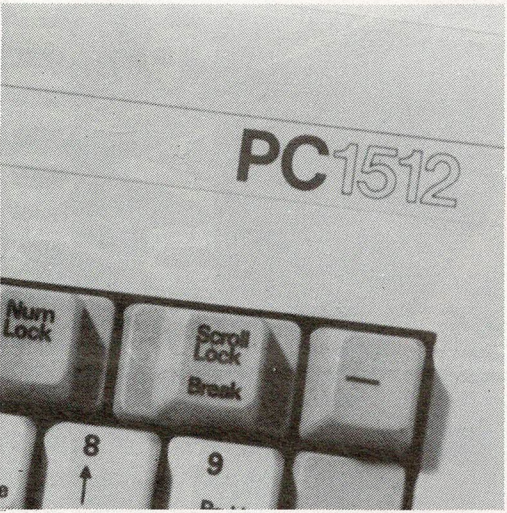
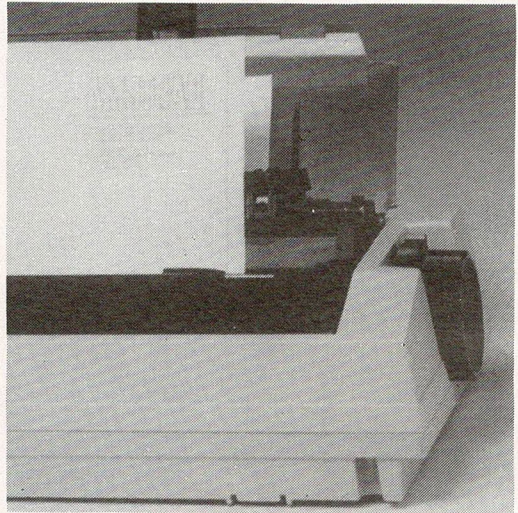
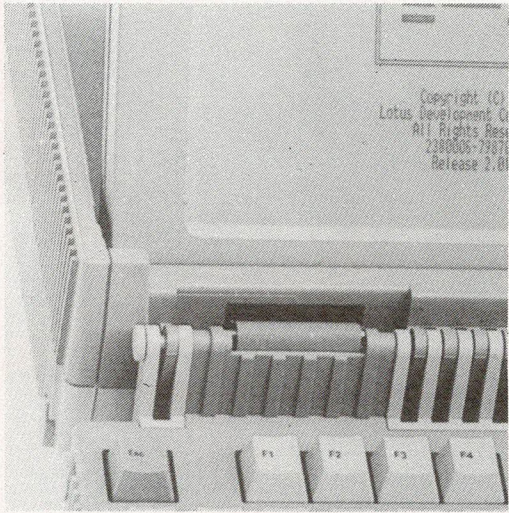
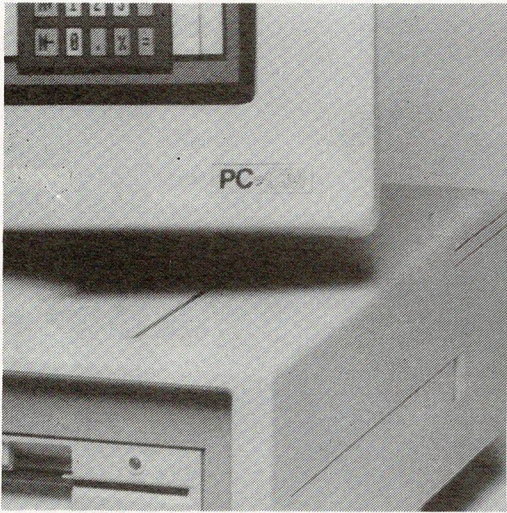
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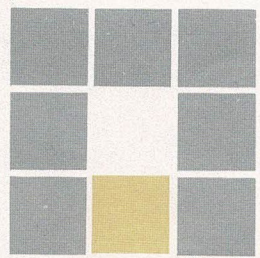
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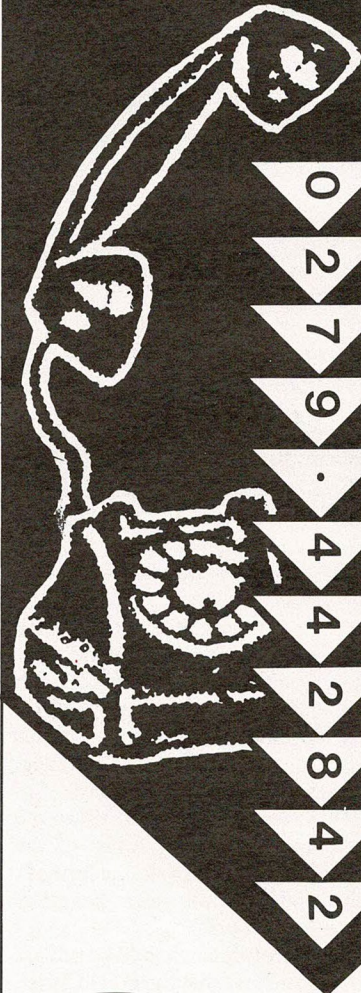
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# THE 1988 CTW CHRISTMAS POLL

As the leisure market reaches the very peak of its year CTW unveils its inaugural Christmas Poll. Some 50 top independent leisure dealers were asked seven basic questions in order to get a snapshot of this season's state of play. What do retailers expect to be the biggest selling game this Christmas? What will be the biggest selling leisure machine? Who has achieved the best Christmas marketing campaign? STUART DINSEY runs through the poll's results and trends . . .

**A**  
What do you think will be your biggest selling game across all formats during the Christmas period?

Title	Label	Percentage of Vote
1. <i>Operation Wolf</i>	(Ocean)	32%
2. <i>Thunderblade</i>	(US Gold)	28%
3. <i>Afterburner</i>	(Activision)	22%
4. <i>Double Dragon</i>	(Melbourne House)	10%
5. <i>R-Type</i>	(Electric Dreams)	4%
6. <i>Federation Of Free Traders</i>	(Gremlin)	2%
<i>Total Eclipse</i>	(Incentive)	2%

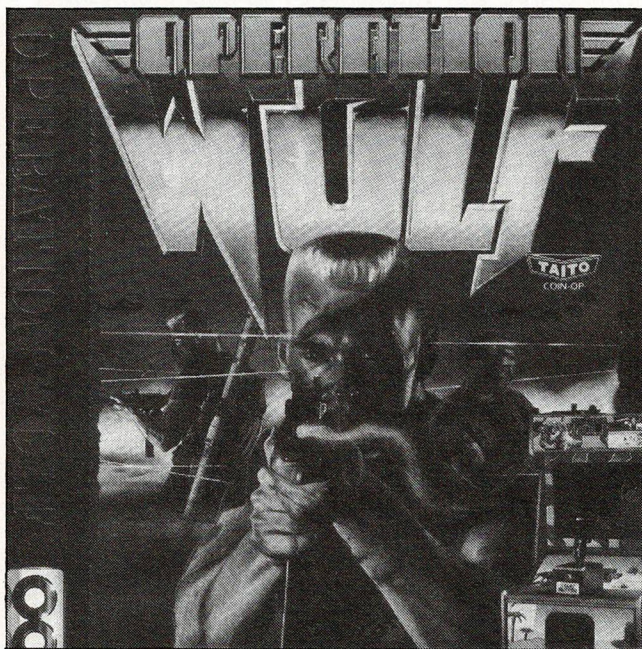
Other than optimists and idiots, everyone has been aware that Christmas '88 would be a three game affair since the spring.

*Operation Wolf*, *Thunderblade* and *Afterburner* are quite simply three of the hottest arcade properties around - each of them gaining a stronger and stronger public awareness throughout the year. And that has been backed up by the retailers, with this trio of titles taking no less than 82 per cent of the total vote.

It is, of course, real sales and Gallup methodology that will eventually lead to one game or another being deemed top title of the year. But it was Ocean and *Operation Wolf* that just

nipped in as the retailers' expected best seller. This is largely attributable to the current strength that Ocean's brand name has in the leisure market, and also proves how much of an improvement there has been in Ocean's programming over the past eighteen months or so. Retailers have been largely confident of Ocean's ability to transfer the speed and originality of the Taito coin-op to home formats, and reviews have generally been good.

But Ocean would be unwise to believe that the CTW Christmas Pollwinner accolade means *Operation Wolf* is sure to clean up the most sales. It was only four per cent ahead of US



OPERATION WOLF: Rivals pipped

Gold's *Thunderblade* - which appears to be benefitting from a late surge of interest following Gold's well planned marketing campaign.

It may surprise some to see Activision's *Afterburner* in third as it has had the glamour backing of TV ads - but these can often be a hit and miss affair. There have also been a few mediocre reviews. That said, it is still a fantastically strong title, with an arguably

higher awareness than *Thunderblade* amongst those that really count - the computer game buying public.

Mastertronic has been hopeful all year that its Technos licence *Double Dragon* could cause something of an upset on the Melbourne House label. But despite the arcade version's popularity it is hard to see the game holding off all three major contenders. The firm made a smart move in

Fifty leisure dealers took part in the 1988 CTW CHRISTMAS POLL. They were: Castle Computers, Judy Computers, Comtazia, GB Microland, Erol Computers, Computer Shop (Dorset), Viking Computers, Virgin (Oxford Street), Software Plus (Ipswich), Faxminster, Software Plus (Southend), Worthing Computer Centre, Microtek, Logic Sales, Software City (Wolverhampton), Silica Shop, Estuary Computers, Computer Plus, Software Plus (Colchester), Tim's Megastore, Computer Shop (Newcastle), Mays Computer Centre, Burton Software, Microgamer, North Notts Computers, Softspot Computers, Crawley Computers, Watchdog Home Entertainment, Video City, Software Plus (Stevenage), Mr Disk, Miles Better Software, Castle Computers (Hanley), Virgin (Brighton), Software City (Stafford), Softsellers, Computer Leisure Centre, Software Plus (Basildon), Alan Heywood Computers, Bits and Bytes (Liverpool), Computer Shop (Cleveland), Double Vision, Topsoft (Cleveland), Software Plus (Liberty Shopping Mall, Basildon), Software Plus (Cambridge), Micro Chip Computer Store, Bits and Bytes (Ipswich), CHIPS, Topsoft (Darlington), ACE Computers.

releasing first versions a week or so before the mad rush - thus, achieving the Gallup number one spot at least for a short while, and cashing in on what could have been a slight hiatus in major releases.

Continuing on this last point, mention should be made of System 3's *Last Ninja II* which was deliberately released a full month or more before the Christmas big guns. With its 'limited edition' pack high in perceived value a later release could well have seen it challenging in the top three come Christmas week. And even after making a November killing it will still be shifting plenty of units by the time of the January sales.

As for the also rans, *R Type's* appearance at number five proves the strength of Activision's Christmas line-up with the game possibly suffering from there already being a number of clones around (despite the despatching of Rainbow Arts' *Katakis* in the summer).

Gremlin's highly priced *Federation of Free Traders* gains a mention as does Incentive's *Total Eclipse* - surely even Incentive itself will wonder how any dealer could expect this to be the biggest overall seller at Christmas.

Perhaps that particular shop refuses to sell coin-op conversions.

Continued on page 20

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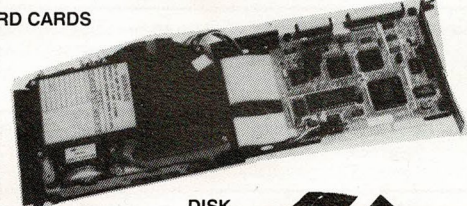
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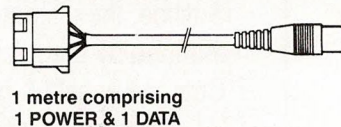
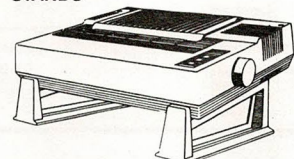
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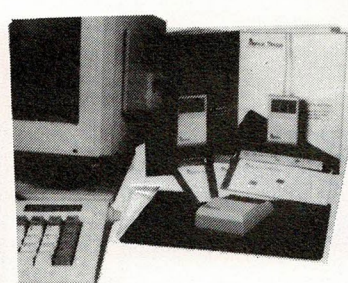
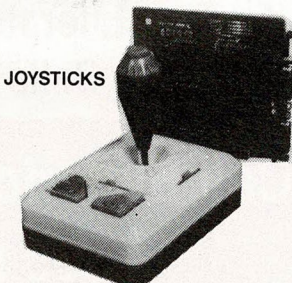
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Telephone 05255 3942 or 5406**



# THE 1988 CTW CHRISTMAS POLL

**B** What do you think has been the best marketed game during the Christmas period?

Title	Label	Percentage of Vote
1. <i>Thunderblade</i>	(US Gold)	28%
2. <i>Afterburner</i>	(Activision)	26%
3. <i>Operation Wolf</i>	(Ocean)	20%
4. <i>Double Dragon</i>	(Melbourne House)	6%
5. <i>Robocop</i>	(Ocean)	6%
6. <i>Lombard RAC Rally</i>	(Mandarin)	2%
7. <i>R-Type</i>	(Electric Dreams)	2%
8. <i>Giants</i>	(US Gold)	2%
9. <i>Last Ninja II</i>	(System 3)	2%
10. <i>Federation Of Free Traders</i>	(Gremlin)	2%
11. <i>Sex Vixens From Outer Space</i>	(Asoft)	2%
12. <i>Nothing</i>		2%

One might have expected the retailers' choice for best marketed game to simply emulate that of expected best seller. But here we see the impact of US Gold's blanket campaign on *Thunderblade* taking effect (obviously *Gauntlet* in '86 and *OutRun* in '87 left the Birmingham giants with a few bob to play with).

The poll fell nicely timing-wise with Gold's announcement in *CTW* of a sudden splurge of *Thunderblade* promotions - such as radio advertising and a limited edition audio cassette featuring The Art Of Noise, and sundry Pepsi and Gold ads. But the consumer monthlies have been packed with *Thunderblade* pull-outs for the last couple of months and the retailers have obviously taken note.

The TV ads helped push

*Afterburner* up into second spot on marketing. But again having spent all that money the firm might just have expected better. If nothing else Activision can argue that its TV experiment could have helped sales of games as a whole this year.

*Operation Wolf* surprisingly slips down to third on marketing, perhaps because Ocean doesn't appear to have done anything unusual on the advertising and promotion front. That tried and tested approach of well designed ads followed by more well designed ads still helped lift *Operation Wolf* well clear of the chasing pack. Again on marketing it was a three horse race, with the fourth best marketed titles

sharing just six per cent of the vote each.

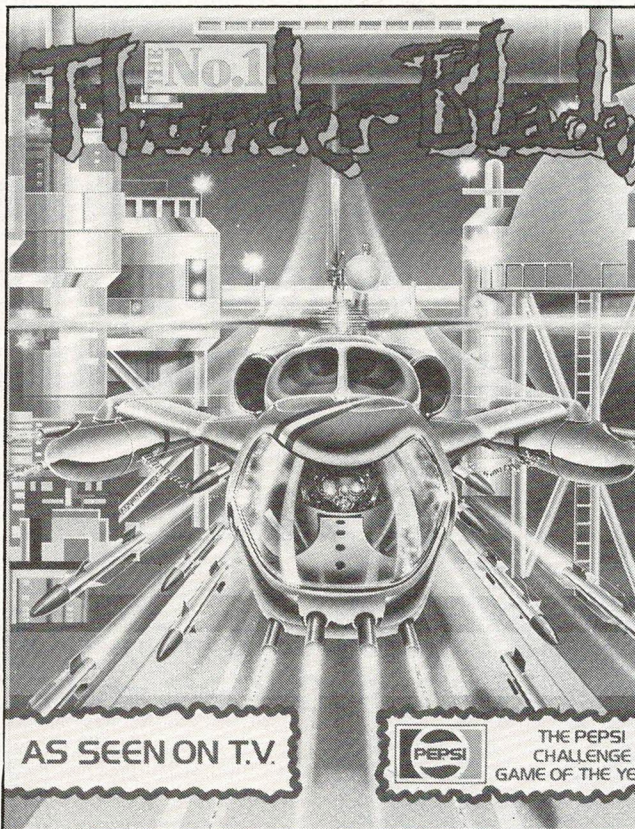
Of the runners up here

Ocean will argue that its *Robocop* film licence is set to do far better than the polls predict. A tie-in with the video might just pull in a few extraneous sales that dealers aren't expecting.

Mandarin will be pleased that all its hard work with *Lombard RAC Rally* (the game that has established the label as a

serious contender) has been in some way repaid via dealer awareness.

And as for the appearance of the *Sex Vixens From Space* import, possibly some considered the recent porn squad raid at Heathrow (*CTW* November 21st) as the best publicity scam of the year.



THUNDERBLADE: Late push rewarded

**C** What company has had the best marketing campaign so far this Christmas?

Company	Percentage of Vote
1. US Gold	48%
2. Ocean	20%
3. Activision	12%
4. Electronic Arts	6%
5. Telecomsoft	4%
6. Code Masters	2%
Mastertronic	2%
MicroProse	2%
Domark	2%
Nobody	2%

As far as best marketed company went US Gold was hugely popular. It achieved nearly half of the entire vote (48 per cent) and here another trend became clear. Those retailers that voted for *Thunderblade* as prospective best seller tended, on the whole, to stick with Gold through each possible question. There is certainly something of a love/hate relationship between Gold and its retailers. It was clearly the most popular on marketing, but with a high number of resigned "US Gold, I suppose" comments, backed by those not voting for it often taking the chance to have a moan.

Dealers' reasons for choosing Gold will be heavily swayed by the enormous amount of



product advertising it indulges in. And added to this is the Pepsi deal which, whilst often seeming to lack purpose, has done a lot of good in 'street-cred' terms.

Wherever Gold comes out top one can expect Ocean not to be too far behind, and vice versa. This was highlighted again with a fifth of the dealers believing Ocean was best on marketing - large scale advertising looms large yet again.

The marketing section at last gives mentions to some firms who otherwise might have wondered whether Christmas was really worth all the effort. Electronic Arts will be pleased that in only its second Christmas it is at least building up some retailer following. The Code Masters appearance, meanwhile, is something of an achievement for a budget label (Mastertronic's appearance being mixed in with Melbourne House) and is likely to be due to its full-price push on *Four Soccer Simulators* and its long-time trade advertising campaign.

Continued on page 22

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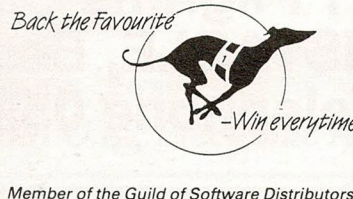
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# THE 1988 CTW CHRISTMAS POLL

## D What do you think will be the biggest selling leisure machine by volume this Christmas?

Machine	Percentage of Vote
1. Commodore 64	40%
2. Atari ST	22%
3. Amiga 500	20%
4. Sega	10%
5. Spectrum +2	4%
6. VCS 2600	2%



C64: Bundles appreciated

Even in recognition of the fact that this poll was taken amongst independent computer retailers, it is still something of a shock to see the trusty old C64 sitting comfortably at the top of the poll for prospective best selling machine.

Reasons? It is clear that the two bundles Commodore has put together for the machine - the Hollywood pack and the Family Entertainment pack - are performing very well. Commodore has claimed all along that these two are the best bundles it has ever concocted, and whilst sales are unlikely to

achieve the highest levels of yesteryear it could well be proved right.

The 16-bit duo of Atari ST and Amiga 500 are clearly products finally achieving some of their volume sales potential. The ST sneaked in front at the last, but surely the most relevant point must be that 42 per cent of the dealers contacted believed that one or other of these two machines would be their biggest selling games system.

"This section is somewhat quirky in its revelations, proved by the appalling performance of the Ghost of Christmas past -

the Spectrum. The +2 managed just 4 per cent of the vote, whilst the +3 gained no mention at all. Obviously, many retailers are firmly of the belief that if the Spectrum does remain the biggest selling games machine this Christmas it will be the multiples who clean up. One even gets the impression that a large proportion of indies aren't bothering to stock the Spectrum and thus compete with the promos and price-cuts of Dixons and Comet.

TV ads or no TV ads it is still rather unlikely that the Amiga will come out in third place overall on Christmas volume. Its position in the CTW poll, then, serves to prove that it is indies that are making the sales. This might just have something to do with the fact that still only a handful of multiples are convinced enough to actually stock Commodore's flagship.

## E What do you think will be the best selling compilation this Christmas?

Title	Label	Percentage of Vote
1. <i>Giants</i>	(US Gold)	60%
2. <i>In Crowd</i>	(Ocean)	14%
3. <i>Taito Coin-ops</i>	(Imagine)	10%
4. <i>Supreme Challenge</i>	(Beau Jolly)	8%
5. <i>Fists 'n' Throttles</i>	(Elite)	8%
6. <i>Don't Know</i>		6%

With its only major challenger (Ocean's *In Crowd*) unreleased and largely unpublicised, US Gold's *Giants* ran away with the accolade of dealers' choice for best selling compilation.

Even with its eight games and six Gallup number ones the Ocean package will be hard pushed to beat the five-title Gold effort. This will mainly be due to the inclusion of a certain game called *OutRun* - a game

which has only to be mentioned to dealers and pound signs click up in front of their eyes.

Once the Ocean marketing machine gets into full force, though, one can expect the predicted gap in sales to be massively reduced. Ocean creamed it on compilations sales last year and has *Taito Coin-ops* (10 per cent) and the strangely unmentioned *Game, Set and Match 2* to back its attack this year.

Elite gained a deal of support with its *Fists 'n' Throttles*, whilst the similar performance of Beau Jolly's strong *Supreme Challenge* proves how hard the compilation market has become.

Continued on page 24



GIANTS: OutRun resurrected

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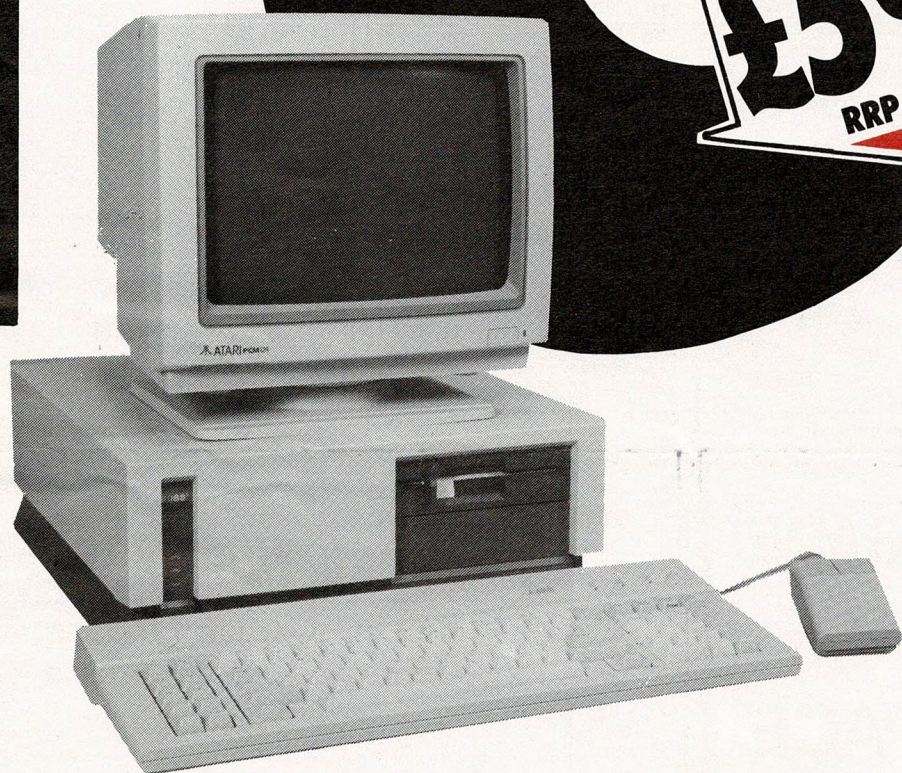
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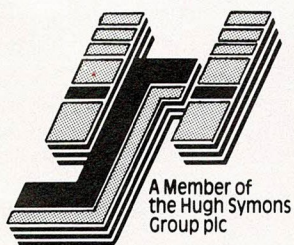


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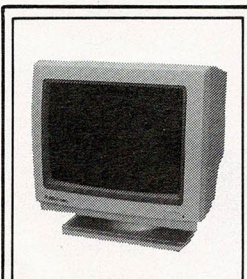
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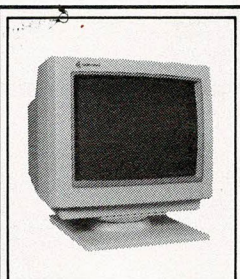
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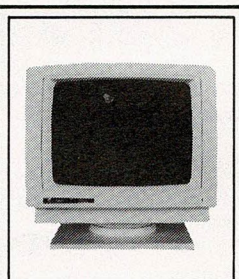
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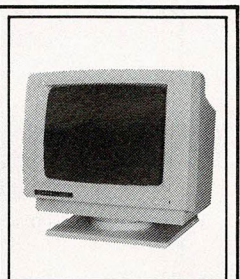
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# THE 1988 CTW CHRISTMAS POLL

## F What will be the best selling games console this Christmas?

Company	Percentage of Vote
1. Sega	90%
2. Atari VCS 2600	6%
3. Don't Know	4%

Nintendo look away now, for this is not a pretty sight. In fact, there is nothing for Nintendo to see at all - not a single retailer believed that the king of the US games market would sell the most consoles in the UK this Christmas.

Whilst the alarm bells should at least be ringing to a degree as a result of this performance, perhaps not all is lost. It has clearly been Nintendo's intention all along that its main thrust should come from multiples and catalogues, and any success there would not show up here. Also, the tie-up with Centresoft had only just moved into gear when the poll was carried out.

Even so, one would be unwise to try and predict that overall the Sega will not be the biggest selling console in the UK this year. Mastertronic's knowledge of the market, the strong software titles (*Afterburner*, *OutRun*, *Thunderblade*, etc.) and the TV ads helped it gain a massive 90 per cent of the vote. And this isn't a case of

a games machine being sold exclusively through indies - Toys 'R' Us recently ordered some 3,500 units in the space of just two weeks.

Atari has put far more emphasis behind its consoles this season, there were even a few TV ads. Whilst only six per cent of retailers believed that the VCS (no mention for the XE) would be the biggest selling console this year, few at Atari's Slough HQ will be panicking. The machines are selling enough to warrant their marketing spend, they're just not gaining the same volumes as the Sega.

And what of Nintendo? The Centresoft tie-up was a much needed move into the indies market, but it was late and the outlay required for a dealer to take the product is expensive.

Nintendo itself will argue that it is big enough to worry about cracking the independent sector next time around - but the Sega-lead is getting bigger by the minute.

## G Is business up, down, or about the same as this time last year?

1. Up	60%
2. Same	12%
3. Down	10%
4. Not Applicable	10%
5. Don't Know	8%

## Of those dealers claiming business is up, is this due mainly to the surge in 16-bit software sales?

1. Yes	70%
2. No	30%

Mirroring the feeling amongst the majority of publishers and distributors, some 60 per cent of the retailers taking part in the poll believed business to be up on this time last year - and if there is ever a time for business to be up Christmas is it.

Only 10 per cent of retailers felt that times had become harder since Christmas '87, with just a couple of per cent more than that feeling that things were roughly the same. Considering the amount of money that has been spent on arcade

licences, TV, radio and press ads this year it seems more important than ever that volumes do go up - even then, actually making money from some of the properties around this year might be a difficult task.

To no one's great surprise the leisure market Messiah, 16-bit, was pinpointed as one of the major reasons for the upswing in business. Over two-thirds of all the retailers (70 per cent) felt that business was up on this time last year due to ST Amiga and PC sales.



SEGA: Dealers united

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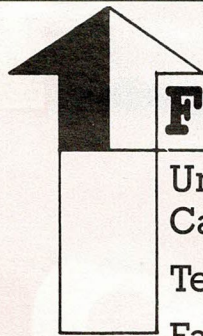
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TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	8.95
2	1	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	9.95
3	NE	AFTERBURNER	ACTIVISION	9.99
4	3	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	2.99
5	7	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
6	13	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
7	10	COMMANDO	ENCORE	2.99
8	6	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAM	9.99
9	2	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.99
10	14	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
11	30	GAME SET AND MATCH 2	OCEAN	12.95
12	9	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
13	36	POWERPLAY	PLAYERS	1.99
14	23	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
15	RE	ACE 2	CASCADE	2.99
16	NE	GIANTS	US GOLD	2.99
17	4	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
18	11	PRO SKATEBOARD SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
19	24	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	2.99
20	15	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99

# C64 TOP 20

1	NE	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	8.95
2	NE	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAM	19.99
2	1	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	9.95
3	2	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.99
4	40	ACE 2	CASCADE	2.99
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8	NE	MICROPROSE SOCCER	MICROPROSE	14.95
9	9	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	12	GAME SET AND MATCH 2	OCEAN	12.95
11	15	FOOTBALL OF THE YEAR	KIXX	2.99
12	3	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
13	RE	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
14	5	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	2.99
15	RE	FISTS 'N' THROTTLES	ELITE	12.99
16	13	TAITO COIN-OPS	OCEAN	12.95
17	6	PRO SKI SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	2.99
18	RE	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
19	RE	BIGGLES	FIREBIRD	2.99
20	21	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99

# AMSTRAD TOP 10

1	NE	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	8.95
2	4	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.95
3	1	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	1.99
4	8	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
5	3	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
6	5	COMMANDO	ENCORE	2.99
7	20	FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR	KIXX	2.99
8	2	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
9	RE	ACE 2	CASCADE	2.99
10	11	TURBO BOAT SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99

# ATARI ST TOP 5

1	1	AFTERBURNER	ACTIVISION	19.99
2	RE	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAM	19.99
3	3	LOMBARD RAC RALLY	MANDARIN	24.95
4	8	HOSTAGES	INFOGRAMES	24.95
5	2	ELITE	FIREBIRD	24.95

# AMIGA TOP 5

1	1	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.95
2	3	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.95
3	4	ROCKET RANGER	MIRRORSOFT	29.99
4	5	BATTLE CHESS	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
5		NESPEED BALL	MIRRORSOFT	24.95

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	42.3	42.1	44.1	45.6	27.2	28.6	29.3	31.2
COMMODORE 64	23.3	23.5	22.9	22.2	24.3	23.4	24.4	24.1
AMSTRAD	16.3	17.0	18.5	19.6	17.8	18.0	18.9	17.7
ATARI ST	7.7	5.9	4.1	3.1	7.9	8.9	7.0	6.5
AMIGA	2.9	2.9	2.7	1.1	5.5	4.5	4.7	3.3
BBC	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3	3.7	2.5	2.5	2.8
COMMODORE 16	1.4	1.8	1.5	2.4	2.4	2.0	2.5	2.9
ATARI	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.0	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.5
ELECTRON	0.5	1.5	1.3	0.9	1.4	2.3	2.7	1.6

## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
141	96	106	119

# Soft options

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



△ **GREMLIN: Techno Cop** (STAgSpAm64-£7.99-£19.99) A road sequence simulation which is not completely dissimilar from *OutRun*, although predictably claimed to be better. This is Gremlin's major Christmas release, which seems like a typical case of putting all your eggs in one basket.

△ **BEAU JOLLY: Computer Hits Volume 2** (ST-£19.95) The firm's first foray into the 16-bit market featuring four decent games *Tetris*, *Tracker*, *Joe Blade* and *Tau Ceti* - which isn't half bad for under twenty quid.

△ **BEAU JOLLY: Ten Computer Hits Volume 5** (Am-£12.95-£16.95) A more typical release from the K-Tel of the computer world. This little bundle contains such goodies as *Tarzan*, *Mystery of the Nile*, *Dark Sceptre* and *Mega Apocalypse*.

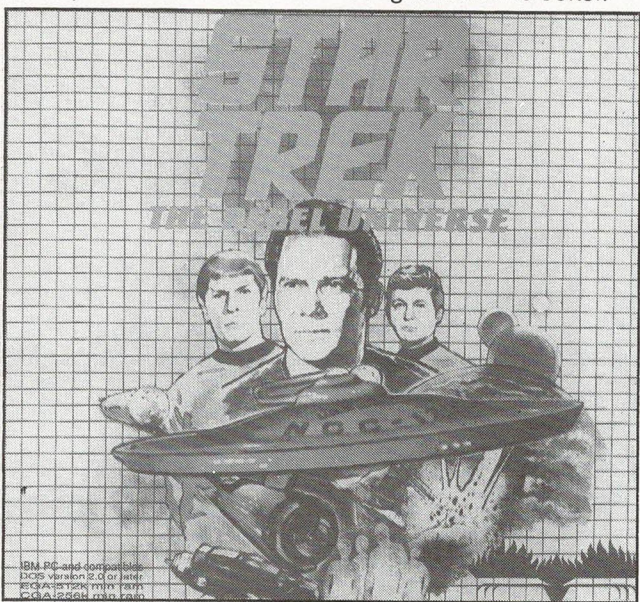
△ **ARCADE: Disk 15** (ST £19.95) Based on the old cassette 50 ideas and obvious recognition of the firm's increasing commitment to the 16-bit market. The game's a mixture of shoot em-ups, board games and adventures and is designed to appeal to the novice ST owner.

△ **MASTERTRONIC: El Sid** (SpAm-£1.99) Originally released by an unknown Spanish software house, but never made it over here as a full-price title. Enthusiastically described as a medieval 'thingy' which involves considerable hacking and

considerable slaying.

△ **MASTERTRONIC: Werewolves of London** (SpAm64: £1.99) An original title that should have come out on the Ariolasoft label, Viz Designs. As the title tends to suggest it's an innovative scenario of rampant werewolves munching their way through the metropolis.

△ **RICOCHE: Hacker** (STAgSpAm64-£1.99-£9.99) An Activision re-



release that made the top five about three years ago.

△ **RICOCHE: Manic Miner** (SpAm64 £1.99) A Software Projects creation that originally caused a bit of a stir featuring Arthur Scargill as the lead character. Oh what humour there is in this industry of ours.

△ **SILVERBIRD: Pasteman Pat** (SpAm64MSX-£1.99) What, more humour? The title is a

stunningly original play on words — must have taken ages to think of. The hero must paste up posters and fend of the baddies.

△ **RAINBIRD: Universal Military Simulation** (AgMac-£24.95-£34.95) Rainbird's first war game, and it's already done pretty well on the ST. The firm is also bringing out additional scenario disks of the *American Civil War* and the *Vietnam War* which are priced at £12.95.

△ **FIREBIRD: Star Trek** (IBM-£24.95) BT has had a few difficulties with this one, having to constantly have each stage and format of the game approved by Paramount Pictures which has resulted in the long delays. The *Star Trek* saga has caused much mirth over the years — this can be continued by asking when the 8-bit versions are due.

△ **OCEAN: Robocop** (SpAm64-£9.95-£14.95) The game of the film which is now a video, with Ocean doing a close-promotion deal with the video firm. Obviously a good licence to tie up, with the film's theme suiting a conversion to macho-game.

△ **OCEAN: Batman: The Caped Crusader** (SpAm64STAg £9.95-£24.95) A comic strip simulation featuring the Caped Crusader along with arch rivals the Penguin and the Joker.

This is in no way related to the *Batman* Ocean released a couple of years back.

△ **MARTECH: Phantom Fighter** (AgPC-£19.99-£24.99) The first release of the fledgling Irish programming team Emerald Software, which is also developing *Running Man* for Grandslam and *The Deep* for US Gold. Whatever you do, don't mention its availability to *Commodore User*.

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





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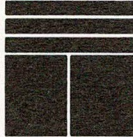
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**SPEAKEASY**

**When is an Amstrad not quite an Amstrad?**

Hi there - I've just invented a new acronym - you know, one of those catchy collections of letters we so often

use to baffle the punters (or so they think). It's YAACP. And in case you didn't guess, it stands for (wait for it)

Yet Another Amstrad Compatibility Problem.

So what has the company we love to hate done to us this time you may ask in fear and trepidation.

Well, it seems that Dear Al's recent television experiences may have gone to his head. Hey Al - 1992 is still 4 years away - so we don't much appreciate you trying to unload your surplus German 8512s on us.

In case you've not been the lucky recipient of this continental largesse yet, you will no doubt find as we have that you are the proud stockist of a computer in a box with German writing all over it, with a printer with the interesting name of "AMSTRAD Matrix Drucker" - a keyboard that says "AMSTRAD 256K Personal Computer" on the top label and "SCHNEIDER 512K Personal Computer JOYCE" underneath.

You will probably also find that, like ours, you have in fact got a complete set of German labels under the hastily (and badly) stuck on British ones.

The handbook was at least British but you will have the exciting prospect of explaining to your punters why they can't fit an interface to the back

**SPEAKEASY**

because of the totally different sockets you will find there.

It makes me glad I'm no longer an Approved Amstrad Dealer.

**Peter Winterbottom**  
Honeysett Computers  
Hereford

- This question of imported PCWs was first raised a couple of months back (CTW October 10th) when Micro Peripherals announced that it had, in fact, frozen stocks of the range due to dealer complaints.

A couple of weeks later Micro Peripherals began selling the PCWs again. This was because Amstrad had apparently made available some kind of dongle which effectively eradicated any compatibility problems regarding peripheral interfaces.

Other distributors, meanwhile, had just carried on selling the imported machines regardless - and presumably, still are.

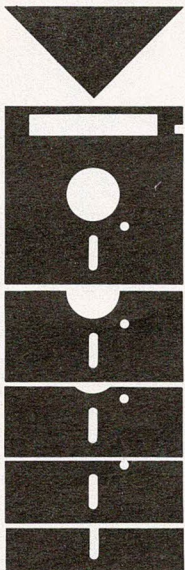
Amstrad itself argues that the German stock is simply due to a short-term supply hiatus here coupled with a slight surplus across the water.

It could be argued, of course, that it is better that distributors and dealers have German PCW stock than no stock at all.

All dealers buying PCWs of this kind, however, should make sure that the required dongle is supplied at the same time.

And yes, there might just be a few complaints from consumers realising that their Amstrad machine has got Schneider slapped all over it. But as long as the things work normally there shouldn't be too many problems.

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**A mogul writes**

Thank you very much indeed for mentioning my, and the company's, name - again - in your illustrious magazine. It is, however, with enormous regret that I have to place a complaint - I am the chairman of the wonderful Abbot organisation; not just a mere manager as suggested in your *Ain't No Mountain High Enough* article (issue 213).

Do not fear though, I have no illusions of obtaining "Poel Position" in your Speakeasy column inches - well not until we have something else to harp on about, that is!

**Yours faithfully,**  
**Mark Willis**  
**Chairman**  
**Abbot Computer Products Limited**  
**Great Malvern**

- Terribly sorry, but obviously when dealing with such large multinational conglomerates as the Abbot organisation it is often easy to lose oneself in the encumbent corporate machinery.

Thus, keeping track of each of Abbot's fifteen thousand worldwide staff and their respective job titles can sometimes become a tad difficult.

By the way, where is Great Malvern?

**SPEAKEASY**

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

Please write to the Speakeasy Editor, CTW, BTC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2DX.



## THE GOOD GUY GUISE

Continued from page 14

drop a product — you only have to look at the continuing success of their word processors to see that.”

All the distributors agree that the cuts are substantial enough to have a real affect on the sales of the ranges, with some going further than others. ZCL boss Don Carter even suggested that it could spark the same sort of interest the machines enjoyed when they were first launched.

A tad optimistic perhaps, but his enthusiasm is uncontrollable. He continues:

“Anyone who thought that Amstrad was about to discontinue the 1512 and 1640 ranges can think again. Amstrad now have a PC at every price point from £399 to £999. It’s a logical move and the impact at retail will be massive. The opposition simply won’t get a look in.”

### Stock aids

Carter also put forward the view that although stocks are still low Amstrad’s track record tends to indicate that having created the demand it will have the means to fulfil it.

Most of the distributors

went along with that line but it is clear that they will be a lot happier when they are counting the machines in through the door. And dealers are no doubt hoping that moment comes sooner than later in order for them to make as big a Christmas bonus as possible from the month’s delay Amstrad has put on the discounts reaching retail level.

For now Amstrad’s resolution is that stocks will really ramp up in the new year. Both distributors and dealers are hoping that the promise last for longer than most new year resolutions.

As far as the distributors are concerned, though, Amstrad seems to be the sort of firm that

makes things work out right and for now they are busily competing to see who can come up with the most bullish quote about how they are going to have Amstrad PCs coming out of their ears in January. ‘If we all believe hard enough it has to come true’ seems to be the general line.

The invisible factor in the whole deal of course is the new 2000 range. Indeed, for now apart from a few unconfirmed sightings (did anyone ever find out where those leads really led to at the PC show?) the 2000 range is just plain invisible. But when it does arrive the true benefit of the cuts will begin to emerge.

For despite all the current

headlines, press releases and general bullishness from Amstrad, one of the major reasons for the discounts could well be to put the old ranges on auto pilot. At such low prices the machine will surely sell themselves leaving Amstrad more time, resources and effort to put into the really challenging task of launching a new upmarket range.

But for now all eyes are very much on a range that is far from new and McDowell at Micro-P believes this will remain the case for some time. “So far the sales of the 1640 haven’t been affected by the arrival of the new 2086 machines, which perhaps aren’t taking off quite as people expected. I don’t

really see that situation changing.”

He also points out that the cuts have been executed perfectly. No-one has been left with any great stocks of machines bought at old prices (although a main reason for that is beyond Amstrad’s control) and the trade has a month to sell any machines that do come through at increased margins.

Through aggressive and clear marketing Amstrad has put the old guard right back in the spotlight with distributors and dealers giving the move a standing ovation. Now if it could just get some of the machines through there’ll be no holding the sales.

## Limited cuts

Continued from front page  
down its importance. “Really it’s not a huge part of our turnover, you can hardly compare an 80p game to a £2,000 laser jet printer. Over the coming year we will be looking at our various lines and be pushing those which have given us the highest yield, we’ve dipped our toes into the games software water and who knows,” commented Handyside.

Although Handyside could give no indication of when future titles will be released, and did not even know when the firm had last produced a game, he was adamant that it is not winding down the operation. “Our two labels have sold a reasonable number, and its contribution to the business has been okay.”

The firm will still continue as a leisure distributor, claiming that “things seem to work better on that level.”

## Mirrorsoft loses

Continued from front page  
now they feel it’s time to move on. That’s it though, life goes on at Mirrorsoft.

“It’s important to remember that I don’t view all this in a negative light, I see it as an opportunity. And obviously we will now be going through a restructuring at Mirrorsoft.”

Quite what form this restructuring will take is not yet clear. But although the simultaneous departure of two directors would seem to indicate something significant in the offing, Bilotta claimed that no really substantial changes were due. He also denied that the partings indicated any lack of satisfaction with Mirrorsoft’s performance in the business market.

## EMAP’s blunder

Continued from front page  
publisher Terry Pratt to CTW.

The publication is planning to run a major apology in the contents page of its next issue — which will also include a strong warning about the dangers of drug abuse.

Such was the level of media exposure EMAP’s *faux pas* gained via *Watchdog* that the next day Tory MP Ken Hind (West Lancashire) began rampaging about the need to “punish” those responsible — this view was aired several times on radio news programmes last week.

Pratt preferred not to reveal who had directly been responsible for the competition, offering only that the person involved was currently “hanging his head in shame”.

It was made clear, however, that *Sinclair User’s* editor Graham Taylor had not actually seen the competition page until it was too late.

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

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

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

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

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

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