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# CTW

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## Domark and Broderbund join forces

**UK independent publisher Domark has struck a reciprocal sales and marketing deal with US leisure giant Broderbund.**

The deal was made at last week's CES in Las Vegas and the first Broderbund product to have the Domark push behind it will be available towards the end of March. Although last week an ebullient Domark was talking openly about the deal, a more cautious Broderbund was refusing to confirm or deny anything.



WHEATLEY: Looking Stateside

The ink was still drying on the contract at the time of going to press so, not surprisingly, details were sketchy. It seems, though, that in the States the Broderbund name will be prominent on the packaging with just a mention of Domark and in the UK the reverse will be true.

Domark joint boss Dominic Wheatley commented to *CTW*:  
Continued on back page

# Giant steps in for Eltec

**Veteran hardware distributor Eltec last week became part of giant multinational combine AB Electronics plc.**

Eltec, which lists Amstrad, Atari, Acorn and Citizen among its clients, will join existing AB trading companies in the newly formed Resale and Distribution Group. Its turnover of £15 million last year will be added to the £200 million turnover that AB already commands.

For now both sides are claiming that Eltec's business will not be overtly affected by the deal with AB taking something of a back seat. At least one member of AB's senior management, however, will be appointed on to the Eltec board.

AB's chairman Peter Phil-

lips OBE commented to *CTW*: "We see Eltec as a good fit for ourselves and we do wish to develop on the side that they are involved in. They will obviously strengthen our market position because they are an established and respected distributor."

"Clearly they will have access to much greater resources than they have in the past and that will be a major benefit for them, it provides a lot of opportunity for progress."

Phillips went on to say that although the firm was interested in expansion into the market covered by Eltec there were no plans for any further acquisitions.

At Eltec, sales and marketing director Roger Purssglove enthused: "It's an exceptional deal for us and given the nature of who the deal is with it pro-

vides us with a lot of opportunities. There is now a terrific feeling of optimism around the company."

He also claimed that it was AB that had approached Eltec with the idea. Like Phillips, however, he was not prepared to disclose details of the sum involved in the deal or indeed to give a profit figure for Eltec last year.

"At this moment we have no plans to add to our product portfolio but there is no doubt that we do now have sufficient resources for expansion into new market places that we've been restricted from in the past."

"They're also looking to grow in retail and distribution and so we are obviously going to help their cause by bringing with us quite a bit of experience and expertise to the AB group", Purssglove continued.



PURSSGLOVE: Expansion opportunities

## CBM taxed by bundles

**Commodore was last week left clearing up whether it had or had not launched an official bundle for the Amiga - whilst shrugging off an official notice that it owes \$74.1 million in unpaid taxes.**

The firm is insisting that the similar Amiga deals currently being offered by several distributors do not signify an official bundle. A standard £479 Amiga bundle is being

put together for a March launch.

The confusion appears to have been caused by the aggressive £399 TenStar Amiga pack made available by SDL at the turn of the year. Commodore claims that distributor pressure led it to pass on contacts for a pool of games available for bundling.

Thus, it seems that ZCL, Lightning, Addons and possibly Microdealer are all offering a pack which includes nine extra titles for a marginal-

ly higher trade price. The titles, however, vary slightly in each case.

Commodore has elected to hold back its own bundle until Easter time with this priced at £479 and the standalone machine remaining at £399.

Commodore's UK marketing manager Dean Barrett offered that the *official* bundle was "still being put together" and that it would differ vastly from the current distributor-led offers.

"We're not that badly plan-

ned that we haven't got our own ideas. The one we're doing will be good value and a definite winner," Barrett told *CTW*.

ZCL offered that its own Profitmaker bundle launched last week had been put together "to fill a three month void". The non-SDL distributor packs differ in that the software can be split and sold separately if desired.

Meanwhile, Commodore in the US has been served with a  
Continued on back page

## Boots bans more boxes

**Boots last week announced to publishers that as from March 31st it will no longer accept software in A5 packaging.**

The A5 ban is a continuation of the joint ruling made by Boots, Smiths and Woolworths last summer attempting to cut down on the increasingly multifarious sizes of software packages.

Boots itself was reluctant to break with tradition and offered a familiar "no comment" on the matter. It is still not clear whether other multiples will follow the example and extend the A5 ban.

The UK's biggest games retailer has also pointed out that "sleeving plain boxes presents several problems and is unacceptable to us". The main problem seems to be that multiples such as Boots master-bag the products and when a box is sleeved this process becomes extremely time consuming.

In a directive sent to all software houses the firm also pointed out that such packaging is "easily tattered". It went on to recommend the use of "magnum style black plastic softboxes which are not only durable but also flexible".

Boots present packaging requirements are as follows:

- Budget - single audio cassette box.
- 8-bit cassette - double audio cassette box.
- 8-bit disk - double audio cassette box or compact disk size case.

Continued on back page

## INSIDE:

### SCAPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Mindscape's bid for British success gained a shot of credibility towards the end of last year with the appointment of erstwhile Virgin Mastertronic man Geoff Heath as the head of its UK set up. *CTW* talked to both Heath and the firm's president Roger Buoy about the continuing American dream and good 'ol rawk 'n' roll..... 11

### LIFE AFTER AMSTRAD

Brentwood veteran Mike Mordecai has finally left the confines of Amstrad Towers to form his own firm called AV Marketing. For now, though, it seems that the only thing to really change is the address with all links with Sugar and Co not exactly severed..... 13

CHARTS 14/

## Comet cuts Z88 by £100

**Retail chain Comet has run into trouble with Cambridge Computer over the chain's current discounting of the Z88 lapheld.**

The standalone version of the machine is on sale in Comet stores at £150 - a full £100 lower than the recommended retail price. This action has worried the rest of the Z88's retail network, lead-

ing Cambridge to make clear it is not happy with the move.

"It is very sad that a major outlet should see fit to take such action without consultation of any kind and in breach of the pricing agreement

between our two companies," commented Cambridge sales manager Paul Streeter.

Comet appears to have had little success with the Z88 in recent months and as such Streeter believes that the store's actions will have minimal overall effect on the machine's business. But the implications of the move are a possible split between the two firms - with Comet being prohibited from selling Z88s in future, and indeed, future lucrative products such as its low-cost satellite receiver.

Comet itself, however, seemed rather surprised by the Cambridge reaction. "It's the standalone product that's been reduced in price and there really are very few left. We're just clearing the shelves to make way for the new £299 pack. It's standard practice to

Continued on back page



COMET: Z88 chopped by £100

# Hewson joins Prose, severs from Gremlin?

**Hewson has signed a Stateside marketing deal with MicroProse, but seems to have ended its deal with Gremlin in the UK.**

The MicroProse deal was sealed at last week's CES in Las Vegas. It involved the setting up of a new MicroProse label called Medalist International which along with Hewson will contain two recently signed US publishers called Paragon and

Software Simulations.

The contracts were signed in a blaze of publicity at the show with MicroProse boss the self-styled 'Wild' Bill Stealey and Hewson boss Andrew Hewson dressing up in Space-man garb and Oxford robes respectively to form the industry's latest and most unlikely double act - 'Wild Bill and Mild Andrew'.

Stealey commented to CTW: "We think they've got

some great arcade products and it's going to be a hell of a deal for both of us. We do the best simulation products there is but Andrew's going to bring me the sort of product that I can take to places where I can't market simulations."

He also revealed that the games would be marketed in "distinctively Hewson packaging" with just a "marketed by Medalist - a division of MicroProse" sticker on each package.

Medalist will be headed up by MicroProse man Gerry Blair. He offered: "Although we're well known for simulation games there are plenty of other gamers out there to be reached and that's where people like Hewson come in."

So far three Hewson games are involved in the deal - *Eliminator*, *Netherworld* and *Exolon*.

At the time of going to press no party was available for comment on the Hewson/Gremlin split rumours but it was indicated by some sources that the Hewson account could now go to sales and marketing firm Active.

Regarding equally strong trade rumours about Ac-



**STEALEY:** Mild English influence colade's possible signing with MicroProse Stealey commented: "We've been courting them as hard as we can but I'm

not looking to do deals. I want partners like Andrew, and I get the feeling that Accolade are still in a deal mode."

# APOLOGIES

**Due to unforeseen technical difficulties, the Federation sincerely apologise for the delay in the launch of Federation of Free Traders. We are now re-scheduling for the end of January whence free trading will commence.**

## **ALL RETAIL TRADERS ARE ADVISED TO:**

- 1. Complete the attached order form.**
- 2. Ensure point of sale material is in position.**
- 3. Prepare yourself for the biggest ST release yet.**
- 4. Have a very prosperous New Year.**

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Please tick if you require Point of Sale

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Company .....

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Flight Lieutenant Richard Barclay,  
Federation Headquarters, c/o Gremlin Graphics,  
32 Ludgate Hill, Birmingham B3 1EH  
Tel: 021 236 9146. Fax: 021 236 0572



## **Nintendo hits back at Atari**

**Predictably, Japanese console giant Nintendo has replied to Atari Games' recent \$100 million lawsuit with legal action of its own.**

Atari Games - which has no affiliation with Atari Corporation - charged Nintendo last month (CTW December 19th) with illegally monopolising the market for home video game cartridges.

Nintendo's counter suit was filed in San Francisco by its US subsidiary. It charges the American software firm with breach of contract, trade mark infringement, unfair competition and racketeering.

Atari Games announced last month that it plans to sell its own cartridges for the massively successful Nintendo. It had previously been required to let Nintendo carry out the actual manufacture of the cartridges in Japan - like the other firms that hold Nintendo licences.

Whilst Atari Games claims Nintendo's policy of being the sole source of cartridges has hampered sales, Nintendo itself claims that this ensures high quality manufacture.

Nintendo offered that it has terminated its licensing agreement with Atari Games and Tengen - an Atari Games subsidiary. The counter suit could also be expanded to include charges of infringement of copyrights and patents.

## **CBM taxed by bundles**

**Continued from front page**

statutory notice of deficiency from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for income taxes of \$74.1 million for the taxable years 1981-1983.

Despite the size of the claimed unpaid sum and the obligatory suspending of Commodore shares the firm itself has responded confidently.

It "strongly disagrees with the notice and will vigorously contest the proposed deficiency". At the same time, it claims that tax reserves are adequate to cover "a realistic resolution" of the problem.

US management has concluded that "the resolution of this proposed deficiency will not have a material adverse impact on the company".

# Gold grows to £26m in '88

The US Gold/Centresoft/Gremlin combine has announced a 25 per cent increase in turnover for the year to July 31st, 1988, with US Gold also outlining plans for its 1989 restructuring.

The group's turnover is now £25.8 million compared to a figure for the year ending 31st July 1987 of £20.8 million. The firm is not yet prepared to reveal what its profit is from this figure offering only that it is a "sizeable percentage".

The firm's financial director

Martyn Savage told *CTW*: "Obviously we are very pleased with the figures and they represent a good year for us, but there's still a lot of oil in the ground that hasn't been counted yet and when all that comes in from the States and Europe things will look even better."

US Gold itself contributed 40 per cent to the overall total, which gives the Birmingham firm a turnover of 10.32 million. The last set of figures posted gave the overall group a profit of £1,023,682, but the firm was last week refusing to reveal whether this year's figure is up or down on that

figure.

The group paid £2,701,000 in royalties during the period — a figure which is slightly less than the 86/87 equivalent. Not surprisingly most of those payments came through US Gold itself.

The firm's advertising and marketing spend was up by £783,000 to £1,857,000.

In the restructuring, four "management divisions" have been created which the firm intends to be run "almost as companies within a company". The new divisions are Coin-op (Capcom, Sega, Others), US licences (Epyx, Access, Lucasfilm), Role Playing Wargames

| US GOLD PERCENTAGE OF GROUP |             |         |         |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| 1987/88                     | 1986/87     | 1987/88 | 1986/87 |
| A £25,800,000               | £20,800,000 | 40%     | 37%     |
| B £ 2,701,000               | £ 2,848,000 | 82%     | 87%     |
| C £ 1,857,000               | £ 1,074,000 | 69%     | 67%     |

A — Sales      B — Royalties  
C — Advertising & Marketing — product support

(SSI, AD&D, Intergalactic Development) and Euro Licences (Topsoft, Rainbow Arts).

The firm claimed the restructuring would "formulate well defined lines of management control and responsibility ensuring maximum attention to each licensor's

needs and each customer's requirements for a publisher's services."

Meanwhile, US Gold has also announced that it has won the licences for *Nightmare on Elm Street* and the 1990 World Cup — just as it did in 1986, which saw the release of the infamous *World Cup Carnival*.

## MainLAN sales open up network market

Sales of Sagesoft's low-cost MainLAN network are already nearing £1 million at retail value, claims managing director David Goldman.



GOLDMAN: 4,000 units shipped

In the three months from launch at September's PC Show to the end of December, Sage claims to have shipped over 4,000 units comprising a total retail value of around £750,000.

Sage is currently competing with Amstrad to wake up the network market and significantly increase its size — whilst decreasing product cost and complexity.

"We have no real way of knowing who is selling the most until we see some market

research, and that won't be until February. But what we hear from the trade is that our product is preferred," commented Goldman to *CTW*.

MainLAN — which retails at £199 a unit or £399 for a starter pack — had a shaky start in life when a fault was located. This, however, has now been eradicated.

"That was really a storm in a tea cup. It generated a lot of publicity that it really didn't deserve. But there certainly aren't any problems now," added Goldman.

## Konix picks McCanns

Konix has appointed London agency McCann-Erickson to handle the proposed £2 million advertising campaign for its new games console due to be launched later this month.

The appointment of the agency should help to scupper cynical trade comment that Konix talk of such a large ad spend was based more on fantasy than fact. The console's first preview will be at the Toy Fair at Earls Court on January 28th, with an official launch

following at the European Computer Trade Show in April.

It has also now emerged — according to *Marketing Week* — that the machine will be called the Konix Multisystem. This name seems to support indications given to *CTW* that the console is something of a new concept in gaming machines, involving the ability to transform the console into various appropriate designs.

It would appear that the console can be changed in look by the addition of such extras as a car steering wheel and motorbike handlebars.

## Northamber runs off the trade only tracks

Northamber's policy of trade only distribution was last week thrown into doubt and confusion after *CTW* was presented with evidence of direct dealing.

The evidence came in a copy of a fax sent by Northamber to British Rail outlining details of the pricing of the Epson printer range. The fax ends with the decidedly unambiguous message "we look for-

ward to receiving your further orders".

It was sent to *CTW* by a dealer annoyed at the light the evidence sheds on Northamber's constant claims to be a trade only distributor. When first contacted by *CTW* the firm still insisted it was "purely trade only" later, however, it conceded that there were "grey areas".

Sales director John Martin commented to *CTW*: "We are a trade only distributor, but

obviously sometimes there are areas of confusion with things such as OEM agreements. We are stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea because on the one hand we want to please the manufacturer, but on the other hand we do want to deal exclusively with dealers."

"For now, though, I have absolutely no answer to the comments you've put to me. One can certainly use long words like integrity but at the end of the day you have to ask if we are competing with dealers and the answer is no."

He went on to say that he would be investigating the matter and would make public any findings.

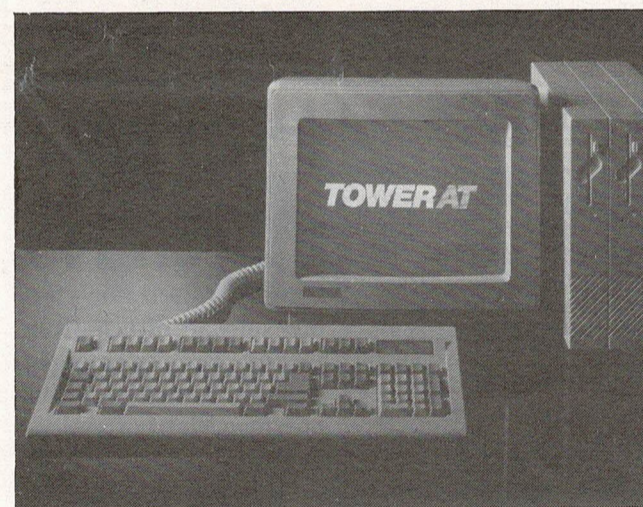
## Tower wrangle wrangles on

The legal wrangle between Schneider and NCR took a further turn last week with both firms giving conflicting updates on the matter.

As revealed exclusively in *CTW* (December 19th), NCR has issued a writ against Schneider and its two UK distributors Greyhound and MSL for trade mark infringement of the Tower name.

Schneider is currently claiming something of a victory, arguing that NCR was unprepared for the initial court hearing last month and had to ask for time to gather together evidence.

"Really we don't know what's happening and we're waiting to see how they wish to proceed. Everybody's using the name and I think they expected us to roll over and pay up," offered Schneider's marketing co-ordinator Cliff Preston.



TOWER AT: The battle goes on

"They had a go at Apricot who couldn't be bothered so then changed the name, but we have a lot riding on it. A lot of machines have already been manufactured in Europe and from a logistical point of view it would be stupid to have different packaging and advertising material for the sake of a

name."

NCR, however, was denying any request for more time. "The case is proceeding normally, and everything is going according to plan. To say that we were unprepared is an inaccurate statement," commented NCR's patent counsel Bob Robinson to *CTW*.

## Instep dragged under by £165K shortfall

Exporting distributor Instep fell into bankruptcy last week insisting that despite debts of £165,000, no one in the computer industry will be badly hurt.

The firm's boss Ian Clark blamed "bad debts" for the bankruptcy but added that the debtors were all from outside the computer world. "We've always had outstanding debts, of course, but this time a lot of them culminated in December and it was just too much", he

continued.

A frank Clark went on to admit that although the firm went under with an impressive turnover of "around £100,000 a month" it was "doing pretty badly towards the end".

"The trouble was that when we started we instigated a new service and did very nicely, but then a hell of a lot of competition came along and our profit margins were eaten away", he commented to *CTW*.

The defunct firm did business with many of the big names in the industry includ-

ing Centresoft, Microdealer and Electronic Arts. Clark claimed: "No one in the industry will be stung, mind you having said that someone's bound to phone saying I owe them a tenner or something so I'd better say I don't owe anyone more than fifty pounds."

Instep had just entered its fifth year of trading and Clark opined that after a month off he would "almost certainly" be back in the leisure computer industry. The creditors meeting for the firm is on January 19th.

# CTW

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## CTW dealer survey due

*CTW* will next week carry out its annual survey into computer retailing with the publication of a two page pull-out questionnaire.

Via a series of detailed questions to be put before *CTW*'s dealer readership the 1989 *CTW* Retailer Survey will seek to produce significant market information on both the leisure and small business markets. The results are due to be published in March.

Topics cover the full spectrum of computer interests, with sections on hardware and software stocking patterns; support; distribution; marketing and advertising; point-of-sale information; customer profiles; computer magazines; retail predictions; and general attitudes to 1989 trading.

Last year's inaugural retailer survey gained 352 replies — around 10% of *CTW*'s retailer readership — and showed the vast amount of trading up that had occurred over the past year with over 90% of leisure dealers also stocking some business products.

A year on, an increase in the number of higher end 286, and possibly even 386, machines carried by typical *CTW* retailers is expected. The survey should also show the enormous strides made by 16-bit leisure software and hardware since last year.

Winners of the various polls last year included Amstrad, Centresoft, Lightning, US Gold, Mastertronic and Microdealer.

# Repositioned ZCL sees sales jump to £6.39m

Distributor ZCL's recent rapid growth has continued, with latest half-year results showing that its turnover is now up to £6.39 million.

Sales for the six months ending December 31st are £200,000 greater than the £6.2 million achieved in the full year previous. Half-year profits of £300,000 were also up on the previous year's twelve month figure of £200,000.

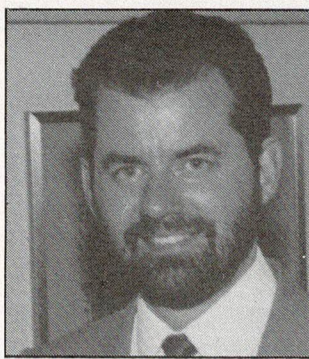
"A lot has come right in the past trading year. We've changed the profile of the company, and in doing so we've gained additional business from a whole host of business

retailers as well as hundreds and hundreds of leisure dealers," commented ZCL boss Don Carter to CTW.

During the six month period ZCL added Amstrad leisure products to its existing Amstrad business range, thus bolstering turnover. It is also one of the major Commodore distributors - with major sales obviously being achieved in the three month run up to Christmas.

ZCL intends to increase its sales force over the next few weeks, but is not currently looking for any new accounts.

"In distribution profitability is determined not by gross profit but by how tight and how



CARTER: Record profits

efficient the whole company is. We want to be as lean and efficient as possible - and we certainly don't want to risk running ourselves too thin on any product line," added Carter.

## Profits perk up Corvus

Network firm Corvus (UK) was predicting last week that its US parent would soon announce a return to profitability.

Although the firm's figures were not officially available at time of press, a net profit somewhere between \$50,000 and \$200,000 is expected to be announced for the three month period ending November 1988. This is from expected sales of around \$4.4 million.

The profit figure will be revealed from financial data filed under requirements of the US Chapter 11 credit protection law. Corvus (US) has been

operating under Chapter 11 since July.

Corvus insisted that it was suffering nothing more than "cash flow problems" when it filed for Chapter 11 - rather than the firm being on the brink of bankruptcy, as is normally the case. Debts at the time were believed to be standing at around the \$1 million mark.

"The profit will certainly be small," said Corvus' European general manager Tony Gibbon. "We're looking at around one cent per share compared with the 11 cents a share we made a year ago. But it sure beats the hell out of recording a loss."

## Opus rushes into Russia

In a bid to forge closer links with Russia, Opus has provided two computers to assist the relief operation in earthquake stricken Armenia.

The machines were offered to the Moscow based International Computer Club, a fledgling organisation co-founded by Opus in association with Russian airline Aeroflot and the National Moscow Bank.

The Surrey based firm was reticent to give details of the new organisation, although it is believed to be primarily concerned with education.

## Chrysalis changes

Teque Design's new games label has been forced to change its name following objections from record firm Chrysalis over its use of the same name (CTW December 19th).

The firm will be changing the spelling of its name to Krisalis Software, following a recent meeting between the two companies, although the original spelling will appear on the 16-bit label's first release *Prison*.

The Chrysalis Group originally threatened legal action, claiming that the activities of the new firm would have inevitably been confused with its own operations.

"In the circumstances a change in spelling was the practical and sensible way to resolve the problem. The *Prison* program will have the original spelling because they were so far advanced on that product, but the company will gradually phase it out," commented the Chrysalis Group's company secretary Peter Caisley to CTW.

Teque Designs appears happy with the arrangement: "It was all very amicable and we're very optimistic about the name change. I don't think it will cause any problems as they've allowed us time to get *Prison* out, and everyone in the industry knows who we are and where we are," offered the firm's director Sean Hollingsworth.

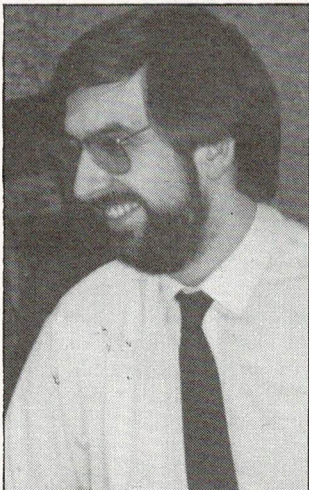
## Harris returns

Virgin Mastertronic's former software director Ron Harris has re-emerged with the formation of his own firm Matrix Developments.

Harris quit Virgin a couple of months ago blaming changes to his proposed role within the firm, whilst insisting it was an amicable departure. In fact, he is still working for the firm on several projects.

Matrix is a software development house claiming to offer a more US-style service than most similar UK outfits.

"We're trying to get contracts like anyone else, but, for example, we can actually design a game specifically to tie in with a licence. We'll put the whole thing together and even help on marketing," Harris told CTW.



HARRIS: New venture

# WI to offer take-away at Which? show

Walters International will use the forthcoming *Which Computer? Show* as the springboard for its new 286 portable PC.

The new machine is 14 inches wide, 13 inches deep and four inches high. It has a clock speed of 6/12 Mhz (switchable) and a 1 Mb memory on board expandable to 4 Mb.

The portable also boasts cold cathode fluorescent tube (CCFT) which the firm claims will give a "revolutionary new screen for superior clarity and definition".

Linda Petursdottir (better known as Miss World) will be at the firm's stand at the show on February 21st to help launch the product, which will retail at £2,020.

# Hints and prices dropped at Viglen

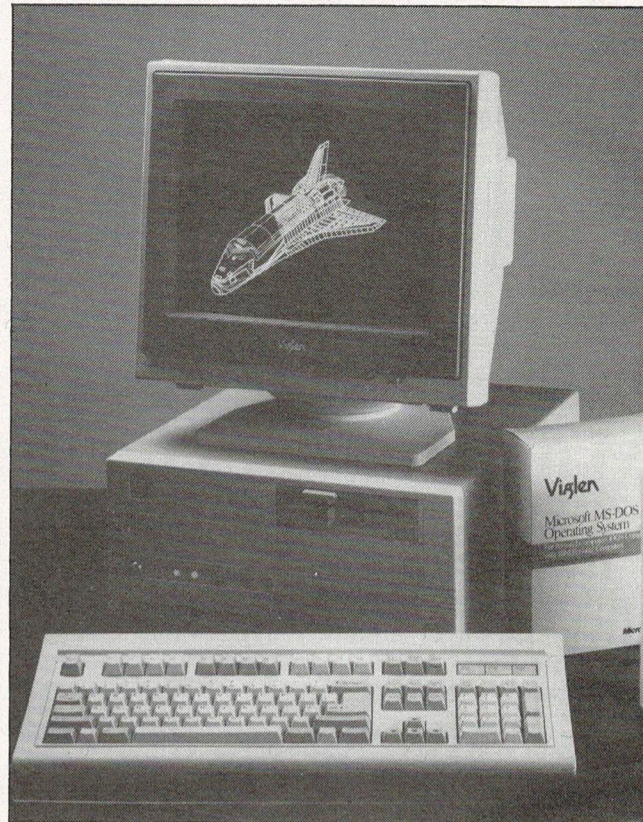
PC manufacturer Viglen has indicated that it may be prepared to drop its direct selling-only policy and appoint a distributor sometime in 1989.

The news came as it announced the availability of an upgraded version of its entry level VIG 1 PC. The new model now runs at 12 MHz with a 15 MHz version available, which it claims will run faster than most IBM AT computers.

The firm's sales manager Ray Davies told CTW the idea behind the changes was to present a "three pronged attack". "The machine is now of a higher spec, more reliable and more competitively priced," he offered.

The old version retailed at £896 plus VAT with the new model now available at £789. Davies claimed that this was because dealing in larger volume had given Viglen "better buying power".

Currently the firm only deals with about 20 dealers, with most of its trade coming through dealing directly with government institutions. Now, though, the firm is considering stepping up its contact with the world of independents.



VIG 1: Cut and thrust

"We would like to appoint a distributor but we would have to change our whole way of doing business. It would mean whole new methods of advertising and higher retail prices to allow for profit margins,

Davies explained. Davies added that the plans would not come to fruition for at least six months and that even then Viglen would still aim to continue its direct business with its major clients.

# Gem extends to get its fax right

Gem Distribution has made its biggest ever step into the hardware market with the addition of a fax card range.

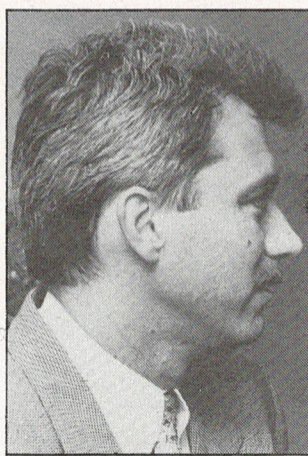
The four model C-Fax line from Ideal Hardware spin-off Communicate has been added to Gem's range of software and peripherals.

The cards range from £199 to £599 with varying functionality. They are BABT approved and run in background, leaving the computer itself to continue normal duties.

"The main thing for us with this is that it give us more diversification of product - and we're looking for more things in that vein," commented Gem director Paul Donnelly to CTW.

It is unlikely, however, that Gem will be making any move into full blown hardware distribution in the near future.

"It's all about allocation of resources really. Our revenue is calculated per square foot of warehouse space and we can make more money selling fax cards than printers," added Donnelly.



DONNELLY: Fax cards added

# Database forms US sales outfit

Database last week announced the setting up of its own distribution company in the US, claiming a spend of \$250,000.

Based on Oakhurst, California, Top Ten Distribution will handle product from Database Software, and sister company Mandarin Software. There will be no UK appointments. Instead six Americans will be heading the venture, although there will apparently be "a high level of control from its British base".

The announcement was

timed to chime with last week's CES in Las Vegas, where the first two products to be distributed by the new company - *Lombard RAC Rally* and *Mini Office Personal* - were on display, prior to gaining general release.

"We have opted for the distribution route rather than the usual licensing arrangement because it will see instant returns and controlled sales through distribution. The problem with licensing is that it can take up to 12 months before the product actually gets on the market," commented Databases's Peter Holme.



HOLME: US moves

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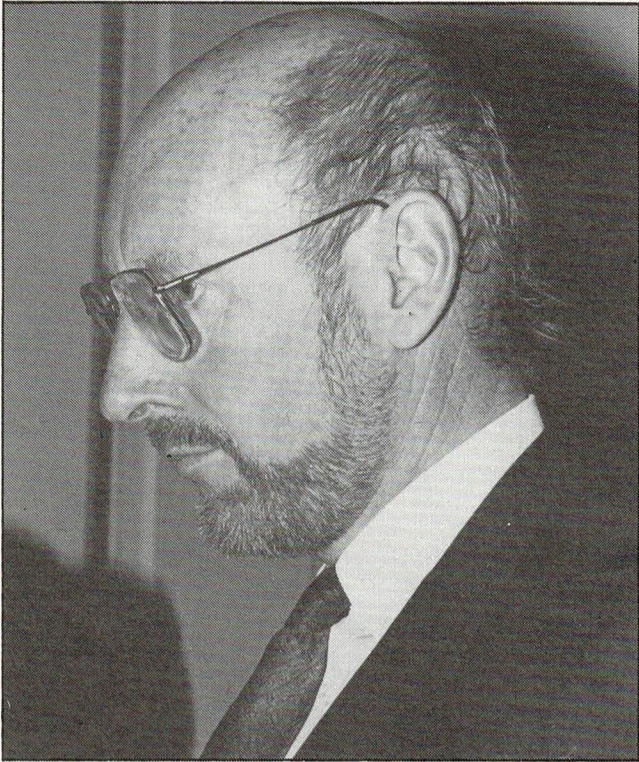
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# SNIPPETS



SINCLAIR: WSI unveiling

Sir Clive Sinclair's chip firm **Anamartic** is due to finally unveil its "revolutionary" waferscale integration (WSI) memory device next month. It will be shown in public for the first time at the International Solid State Circuit Conference in New York on February 15-17th. The WSI device, in the form of a six inch diameter wafer, is able to store 200 megabits of memory...

**Atari** was bit miffed last week to discover that organisers had been touting UK managing director Bob

Gleadow as a possible speaker at the **Computer Arena** due to be held in Majorca in March. Apparently, he will not be attending and never had any intention of appearing or making a speech...

Industry veteran **Dave Carlos** has left **CDS**, where he was marketing manager, to enable him to become a full-time committed Christian. **Mal Thomas**, previously with PR firm **Intermediates**, is his replacement...

**Dell Computer Corporation** has launched a Value Added

Remarketer (VAR) programme, which 25 VARs are already poised to join. Unlike many other major PC manufacturers, **Dell** will supply all of its VARs direct...

Erstwhile Amstrad man **Mike Mordecai's** new venture **AV Marketing** has announced its first client that isn't Amstrad. The firm is **Paperback Software**, which is run by another Brentwood old boy **William Poel**. AV will be selling Paperback's products on to distributors. Meanwhile Paperback has lost its sales manager **Jane Nolan** to **Future Publishing**. She has been replaced by **Alan Smith** and **Gerard Byrne**. Nolan will control Future's mail order operation...

**Mindscape** has won the rights to three more Sega coin-op licences in the US. *Afterburner*, *Shinobi* and *Action Fighter* will be released on the C64, PC, Amiga and ST retailing between \$29.95 and \$49.95. Meanwhile, Mindscape had five future releases on view at last week's CES in Las Vegas. They were *Hostage*, *Aussie Games*, *Sgt. Slaughter's Mat Wars*, *Combat Course* and *International Team Sports*...

**Dennis Publishing** has announced the appointment of three senior editorial staff for *MacUser* and *DTP*. **Eileen Drapiza Dorrnan** is now the editor of *MacUser*. **Alison Hjul** has been promoted to managing editor of both *DTP* and *MacUser*, stepping up

from her previous position as editor of *DTP*. And **Andy Robson** has been promoted to acting editor of *DTP* from his role as deputy editor. This move is with an eye to taking on full responsibility later in the year...

**CDS** is claiming that its latest product *Football Director* - which comes via a licensing arrangement between **D & H Games** and **CDS Software** - is so realistic that it brings true to life football into the warmth of your own home. For those wishing to draw their own conclusions *FD* is available for the BBC on both cassette and disk, priced at £9.99 and £14.99 respectively...

**Sigma Press** is due to publish a detailed book on PCs, which apparently shows readers how to do things with their machine that they never thought possible. It will be marketed and distributed by **John Wiley and Sons Limited**. The book, written by **Clive Smith**, retails at £11.75...

**Acorn** has made two key marketing appointments: **Warwick Hirst**, previously with **Torch**, joins as industry marketing manager; while **Frank Burdett** has been appointed higher education adviser. He joins from **Bath College of Higher Education**, where he was a lecturer...

**Electric Distribution** has moved. Now residing in **Cambridgeshire**, the chaps sit counting out their claimed profits. Since 1987 the

company has increased its sales by 300 per cent - a further 200 per cent is predicted for 1989...

Those thoughtful people at **Inmac** have come up with another must - a height adjustable printer stand. An extra paper catching accessory costs £19, but for all those bargain hunters all orders placed before the end of January get it thrown in free. The stand itself costs £119...

**Richard Branson's** airline **Virgin Atlantic** has ordered 50 **Psion Organisers**, bundled with a specialist software pack to streamline in-flight services such as duty goods. The hand-held computer will be used on **Virgin's** two **Boeing 747s** in early April...

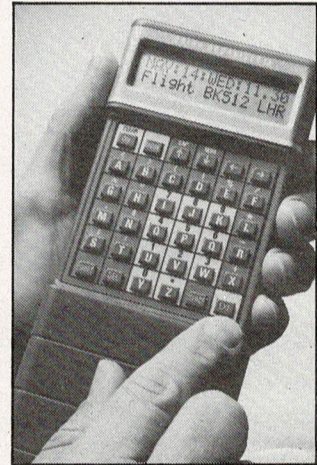
**Sapphire International** has announced a major restructuring of its operational divisions. Each of **Sapphire's** five divisions is

now a limited company in its own right, operating under the **Sapphire** group umbrella. The latest addition - **Spottiswoode and Spottiswoode** - has changed its name to **Sapphire Spottiswoode**, however **Clare Spottiswoode** remains the manager. The other four companies encompassed under the umbrella are now **Sapphire DataEase**, **Sapphire Graphics Software**, **Sapphire Training**, and **Sapphire Financial systems**...

In a devastating show of generosity, **Code Masters** is offering free copies of its poster calendar to anyone requesting such an item. Enquiries should be made to **Bruce Everiss**...

**Ceratech Electronics** has released two new mice from **MSC Technologies** in the States. The **PC mouse II** includes, among other things, **Ultra-Res 2000** for user selectable resolution and dynamic acceleration - all for £105. **Omnimouse** includes designer pop-up menus and retails at £65...

**Logitech** has launched a hand-held micro scanner, called **ScanMan**, for the **Macintosh**. The scanner allows the incorporation of graphics, photos, drawings, etc., into all documents. The **ScanMan for Mac** kit includes the scanner, an **SCSI** interface box plus power plug, cable and transformer, the desk accessory software and the application software. It retails at £395...



PSION'S ORGANISER: Virginal

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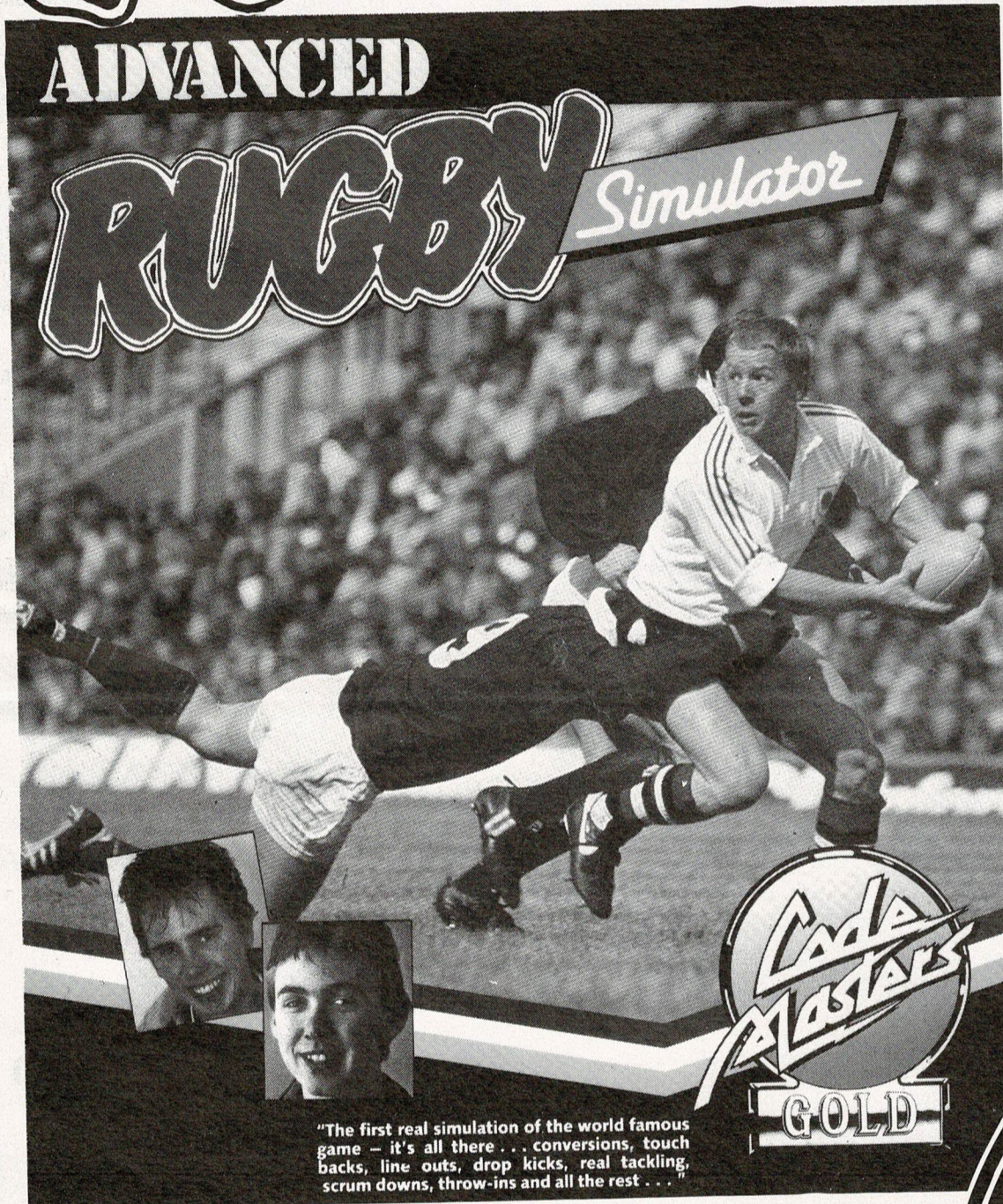
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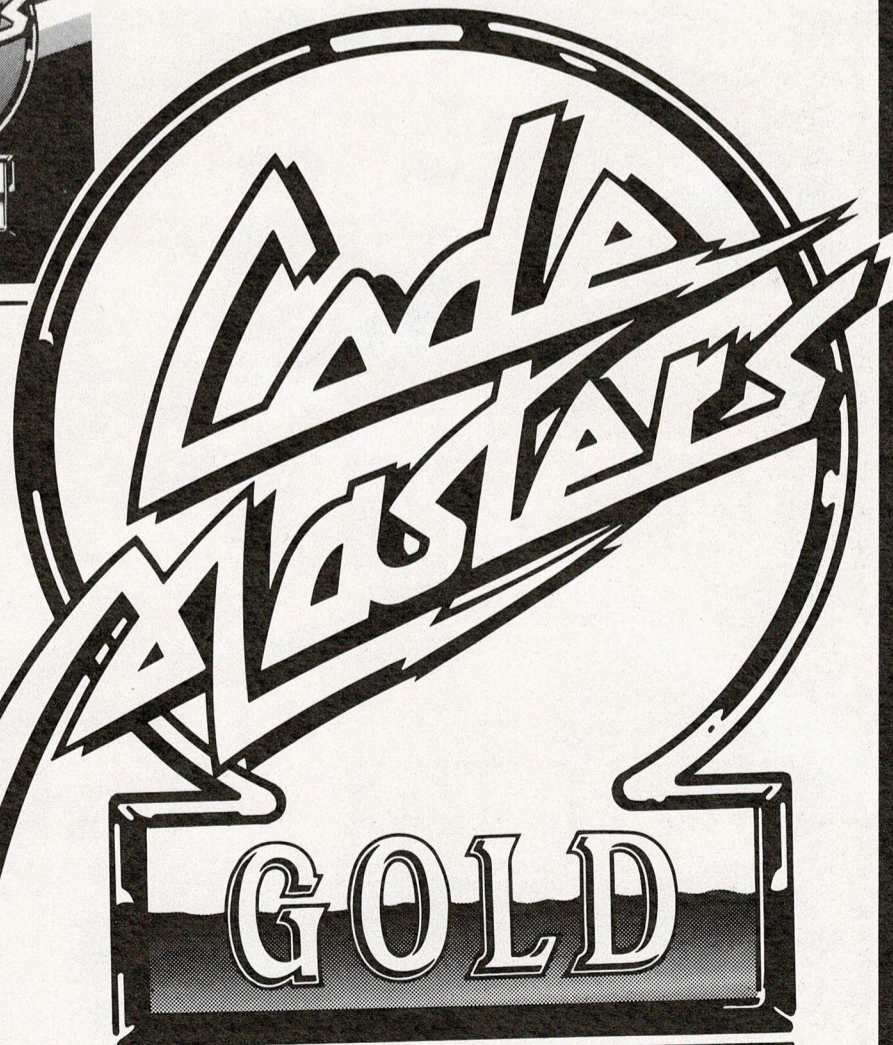
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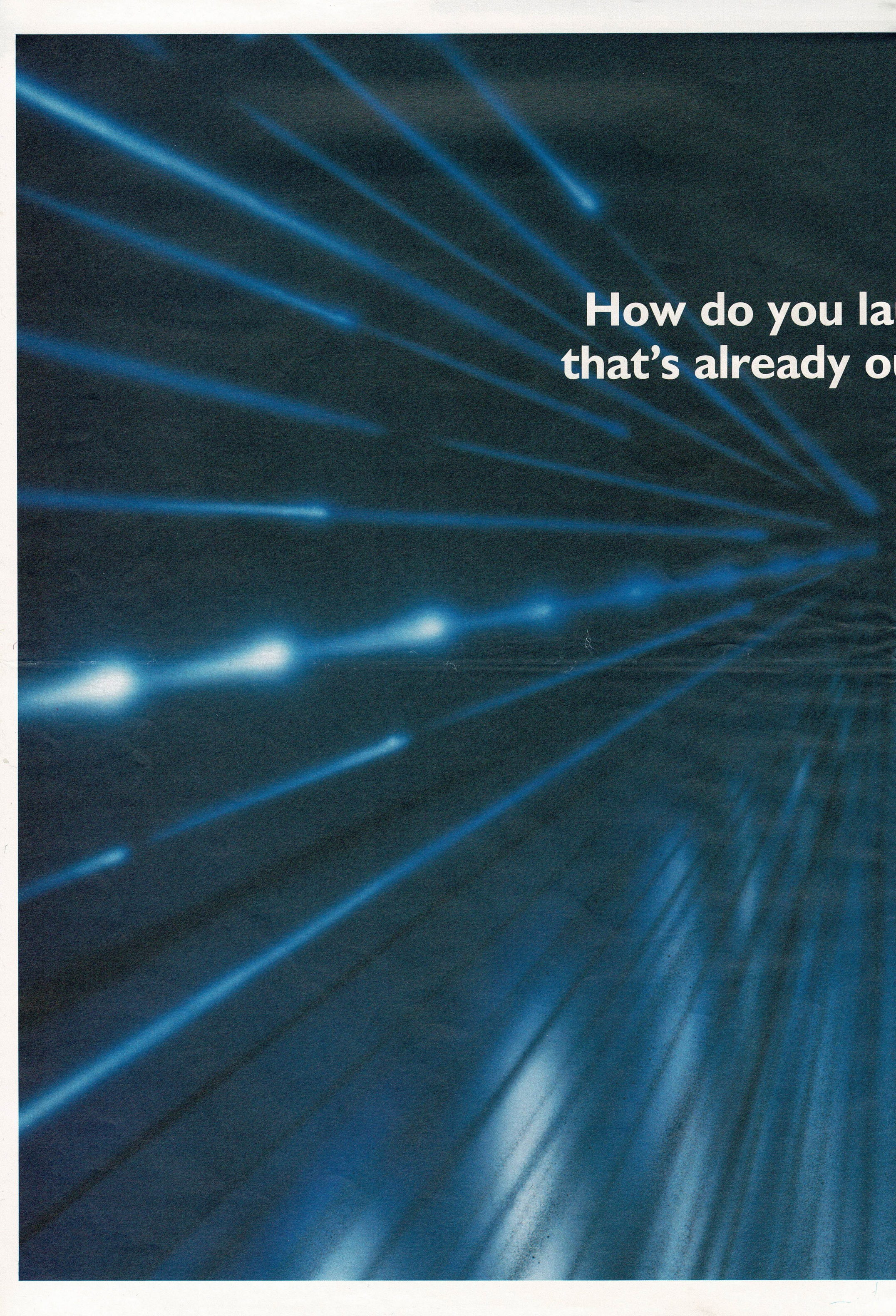
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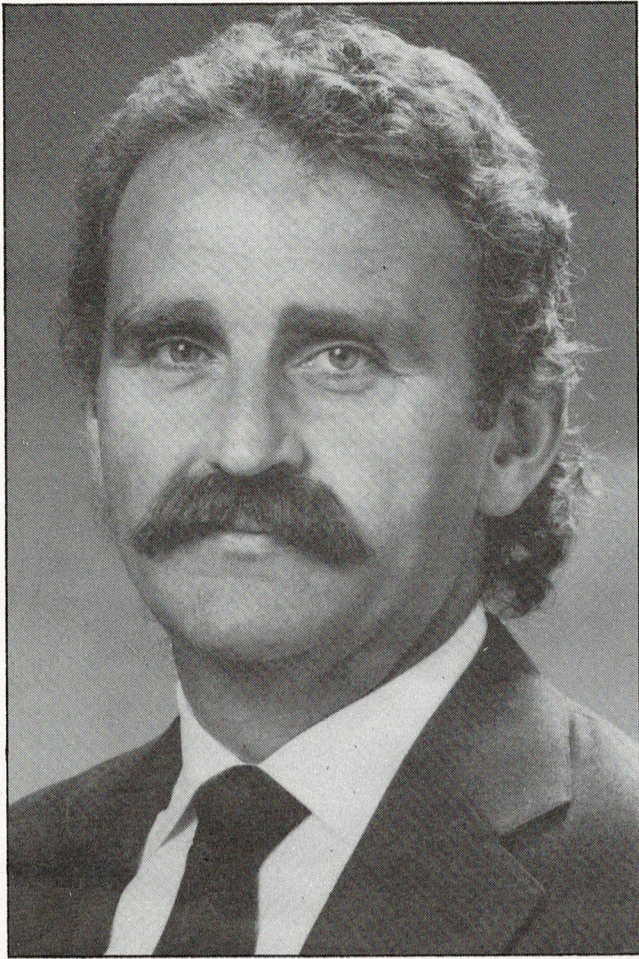
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# IT'S ALL ROCK AND ROLL TO ME

Everyone knew US giant Mindscape was coming to the UK, but few guessed in advance that Virgin Mastertronic's erstwhile marketing director Geoff Heath would be leading the charge. KELLY BESWICK spoke to Mindscape president Roger Buoy and Heath about the UK operation, the UK firm's task in hand and good old fashioned rock 'n' roll . . .



**BUOY: UK, the world — then Bristol City**

On the surface, Mindscape's boss Roger Buoy looks like the archetypal American.

He exudes the air of a rich and successful US businessman, moustachioed and tanned, sporting check jacket and casual slacks. His deep drawl confirms the initial impression, but as the old cliché goes, first impressions can be very misleading.

It's only when he starts to down the pints of bitter and gets on to his favourite subjects — rock and roll and Bristol City football club — that you start to realise that Buoy is not what he initially seems, for here is a true Bristol lad at heart.

The fact that Mindscape has finally set up its UK operation

comes as a great satisfaction to Buoy, who left England in the mid-60s to seek his fame and fortune in the land of opportunity. The story sounds hackneyed, but according to Buoy true.

At the time he realised that as a computer programmer the chances of making it big in the UK were small, so when a US firm offered to increase his salary eight-fold it proved to be an offer he couldn't refuse. Nevertheless, Buoy has remained loyal to his roots, the fact that his firm now has a UK base means that he can visit his mother more often. True success on his home ground would represent the culmination of his achievements. All that would be left then is his

desire to own the Bristol club, and who knows? Maxwell has done both.

Heading the UK set-up is erstwhile Virgin Mastertronic marketing director Geoff Heath. The two men appear to share a great affinity and not only for the computer software industry. "Geoff knows everything there is to know about 50s and 60s rock and roll and that certainly had an influence on my choice. We've dealt with each other for four to five years, but more importantly we get on well together as people," offered Buoy.

Indeed Buoy's passion for music appears to have had a considerable influence on his approach to the software market. "Really this business is just like rock and roll. When it comes down to it what you're talking about is having hits. No matter how you go about it it's the hits that count."

Buoy is confident that Heath is the right man to spearhead Mindscape's UK assault, and judging by his past experience Heath would certainly appear to have the right credentials (not least of which was working in close association with John Lennon and Paul McCartney in the early seventies, says Buoy).

"Also, I did set Activision up so I'm not unused to new situations. There is no magic formula to establishing a business, basically you need a desk, telephone and a good range of products. I think there are certainly some untapped gems in the Mindscape catalogue," offered Heath.

## Staff that dreams are made of

Both men are reticent to say how many staff the UK offices will employ. The general philosophy appears to be start small and grow. "Product is the key to starting a

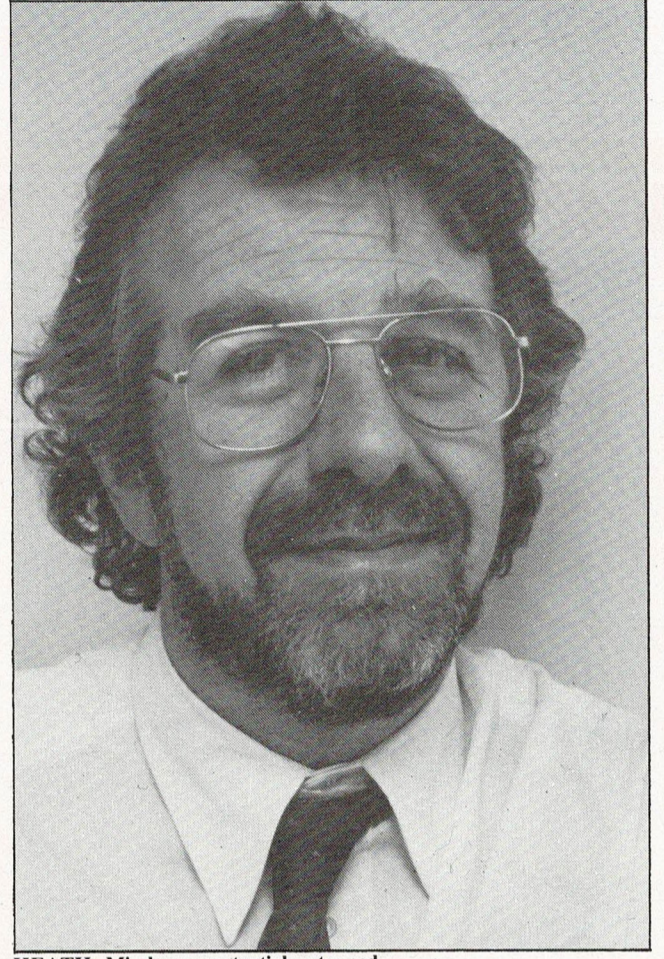
company and there's no point in having an infrastructure of people sitting around doing nothing, but we should be up and running quickly," believes Heath.

Mindscape is making no big song and dance about its UK entry, and it certainly isn't professing to boldly go where no US firm has gone before. Buoy has no plans to sell direct and is content just supplying product to the likes of Centresoft, TBD and Microdealer. "I think distributors are an essential part of the business, taking on a lot of responsibility and assuming a risk. They plug into the retailers and I don't think the industry could run without them. By coming to the UK we're not taking a missionary outlook — the system already works well."

Buoy freely admits that in comparison to the likes of Mediagenic and Electronic Arts, Mindscape is small and that the firm's international revenue in comparison is "miniscule". Indeed Mindscape's finances have been suffering of late with the firm posting a \$192,000 loss for its first full quarter as a public company. Buoy seems unperturbed by the changes in the company's fortunes and does not believe they will have any effect on the UK division.

"Okay the third and fourth quarter have not been good, but we're more than adequately funded with very good cash and credit facilities. We've just started to get Nintendo products, and since they're only available on allocation we've been waiting since July. I'm looking forward to a good first quarter, and it's always been our intention to open up over here, and we're funded to do a good job."

In citing the reasons for Mindscape's poor performance Buoy argues that last year the US software market



**HEATH: Mindscape potential untapped**

was very slow to awake and that business only began to pick up in late November. He continually mentions the damage caused by Nintendo, claiming that the increasing competition had taken a larger share of the software market than anyone thought. Despite the troubles Buoy claims that there has been a lot of buying activity in the US. "Investors realise that the Mindscape stock is depressed and that it's way below value. So now is obviously a good time to buy".

According to Buoy the Sussex based offices will be operating as "a self contained unit. Geoff will be responsible for the entire set up, building the firm from the ground up". Historically, Mindscape has

always done business in Europe dealing with Worldwide in Scandinavia, Rushware in Germany and Ubisoft in France. Heath will now be responsible for Mindscape product in Europe, an area which Buoy believes the firm has not exploited to the full. At the moment the firm will be staying with those companies "that it's appropriate to stay with, but we are hoping to build an indigenous European business".

## Long live rock and roll

So for the time being some existing deals will continue, whilst others will be taken up by Mindscape UK. Just what,

Continued on page 15

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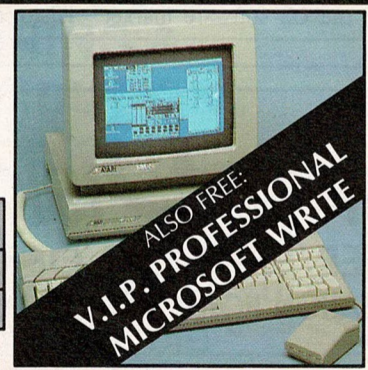
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# EVERYTHING CHANGES — YET EVERYTHING STAYS THE SAME

Until recently Mike Mordecai was software sales manager at Amstrad, but a few days before Christmas everything changed. Well, at least it seemed that everything changed — what with most of Mordecai's staff being made redundant and him leaving too. But as DAVE ROBERTS discovers, with the formation of a new firm called AV Marketing there seems to have been little change at all . . .



MORDECAI: New firm, same products

Mike Mordecai is an Amstrad man with a difference. He certainly shares many qualities (if that's the right word) with the boys from Brentwood, he realises the importance of marketing, he believes computing in the property of the masses not the computer literate elite and boffins building barriers of techno-fear annoy him.

But there are differences. For a start he is not totally incommunicado and certainly does not have the traditional Amstrad mistrust of the press, he also tends to laugh a lot — something which is not generally an Amstrad trademark when dealing with the outside world.

There is of course one more vital factor that prevents him from being classified a true Amstrad man — he no longer works for them.

He left in somewhat confusing circumstances just before Christmas as a number of redundancies were made at the firm. He is very keen, however, to stress that he was not part of those peculiarly Victorian pre-Christmas lay-offs (I'm sure if

there had been snow on the ground the encumbered staff would have been duly despatched into it on Christmas Eve itself in true Dickensian style).

"I had been at Amstrad for over eight years and I just reached the stage where I wanted to try something on my own. I had some discussions with Malcolm Miller and we came to an agreement."

Sounds straightforward enough, but as Mordecai admits there is slightly more to it than that. Certainly it is his staff on the software side that seem to have constituted a large part of the recent redundancies and it now seems that the department only contains a skeleton sales team to take any orders not soaked up by Mordecai's new venture AV Marketing (the AV incidentally stands for Added Value) which will act as a primary distributor for business software and whose first client is, to no great surprise, is, Amstrad.

It is also true to say that the software division has never rested too comfortably within the walls of Brentwood Towers.

Two years ago it decided to give up publishing completely in the leisure field and recently there has been talk of the whole operation being gradually run down.

Mordecai offers: "The main problem was that the software department wasn't making as much money per capita as, say, the hardware department and that worried Amstrad. It's like CTW publishing the *Beano* every week, it's something they could do without."

## Intensive care

It seems then that Amstrad wanted the space filled by Mordecai and his team taken by a more intensively profitable area of the business and now it seems its software activities can carry on as normal, but with all the headaches and risks firmly shut out of the Amstrad domain.

Mordecai claims he will be doing exactly the same job he was doing at Amstrad only on the outside. "I've spoken to about 10 distributors that I have dealt with a lot and their response has been really posi-

tive, all of them say they're going to be working with me."

Understandably he would rather not name names until stronger commitments than encouraging words have been made, but it is clear that at least one of his old customers will be in his corner to start with. That firm is Gem, an outfit which Mordecai has always been strongly associated with and obviously feels a great affinity with. They can often be seen sharing the odd champagne top or nine in the luscious hostleries of Harlow.

Now AV Marketing is setting up in Gem's old warehouse. "There was some carpenter bloke in there but he didn't want it so we're moving in," explains Mordecai in true corporate fashion.

He realises that with the backing of Amstrad and the support of so many distributors he has the perfect springboard for the new venture and that other people setting up their own business are not always as fortunate.

"Obviously many people start out with nothing at all. I

Continued on page 15

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# ALL FORMATS TOP 40

| TW | LW | WK | Title                  | Publisher       | Formats           |
|----|----|----|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1  | 1  | 5  | OPERATION WOLF         | OCEAN           | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 2  | 2  | 3  | ROBOCOP                | OCEAN           | SP CD AM          |
| 3  | 6  | 46 | GHOSTBUSTERS           | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM AT PS    |
| 4  | 4  | 6  | DOUBLE DRAGON          | MELBOURNE HOUSE | SP CD ST AG       |
| 5  | 3  | 5  | AFTER BURNER           | ACTIVISION      | SP CD AM ST       |
| 6  | 5  | 4  | THUNDER BLADE          | US GOLD         | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 7  | RE | 1  | THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR  | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 8  | 8  | 5  | GIANTS                 | US GOLD         | SP CD AM          |
| 9  | RE | 2  | FALCON                 | MIRRORSOFT      |                   |
| 10 | 17 | 11 | END ZONE               | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 11 | 9  | 13 | JOE BLADE 2            | PLAYERS         | SP CD AM BB EL ST |
| 12 | 26 | 32 | YOGI BEAR              | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 13 | 39 | 9  | SKOOLDAZE              | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD             |
| 14 | RE | 5  | BMX NINJA              | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 15 | RE | 31 | GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR   | CODE MASTERS    | SP AM             |
| 16 | 10 | 11 | ADVANCED PINBALL SIM   | CODE MASTERS    | SP AM             |
| 17 | 12 | 17 | BOMB JACK              | ENCORE          | SP CD AM BB       |
| 18 | RE | 49 | BMX SIMULATOR          | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 19 | 24 | 4  | R-TYPE                 | ELECTRIC DREAMS | SP CD AM ST       |
| 20 | 13 | 6  | COMMANDO               | ENCORE          | SP CD AM          |
| 21 | 11 | 9  | FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR | KIXX            | SP CD AM C1 ST AG |
| 22 | RE | 2  | POPEYE                 | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 23 | 14 | 18 | GAUNTLET               | KIXX            | SP CD AM AT PS ST |
| 24 | RE | 2  | YABBA DABBA DOO        | BUGBYTE         | SP CD AM          |
| 25 | RE | 1  | WAY OF THE ?????????   | KIXX            | SP CD AM          |
| 26 | RE | 1  | BACK TO SKOOL          | ALTERNATIVE     | SP                |
| 27 | 22 | 4  | KNIGHTMARE             | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM PS ST    |
| 28 | 34 | 48 | SUPER STUNTMAN         | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 29 | 19 | 27 | AIR WOLF               | ENCORE          | SP CD AM BB ST AT |
| 30 | 21 | 8  | PRO SKATEBOARD SIM     | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD             |
| 31 | RE | 1  | BIG FOOT               | CODE MASTERS    | SP AM             |
| 32 | 7  | 25 | EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE   | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 33 | RE | 30 | ACE                    | CASCADE         | SP CD AM          |
| 34 | RE | 47 | TRAP DOOR              | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 35 | RE | 8  | CAULDREN               | FIREBIRD        | SP CD AM          |
| 36 | 27 | 27 | FOOTBALL MANAGER 2     | ADDICTIVE       | SP CD AM ST AG    |
| 37 | RE | 1  | CLASSIC ARCADIA        | ALTERNATIVE     | SP CD AM          |
| 38 | 23 | 2  | ACE 2                  | CASCADE         | SP CD AM          |
| 39 | RE | 55 | ATV SIMULATOR          | CODE MASTERS    | SP CD AM          |
| 40 | 16 | 52 | KIK START 2            | MASTERTRONIC    | SP CD AM AG       |

## SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

| Publisher        | Units sold (%) |           |           |            |
|------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|                  | This week      | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| ALTERNATIVE      | 12.8           | 8.3       | 7.6       | 12.5       |
| CODE MASTERS     | 11.2           | 10.1      | 9.3       | 9.2        |
| MASTERTRONIC     | 10.8           | 10.2      | 10.3      | 13.6       |
| OCEAN            | 9.8            | 10.2      | 3.6       | 3.6        |
| FIREBIRD         | 7.1            | 7.8       | 9.3       | 8.0        |
| US GOLD          | 5.2            | 5.6       | 3.2       | 4.0        |
| KIXX             | 3.8            | 4.5       | 4.5       | 2.5        |
| ENCORE           | 1.2            | 5.2       | 6.1       | 3.0        |
| PLAYERS          | 2.8            | 3.9       | 4.2       | 3.5        |
| ACTIVISION       | 2.9            | 3.0       | 1.8       | —          |
| MIRRORSOFT       | 1.5            | 1.3       | 1.4       | —          |
| MELBOURNE HOUSE  | 1.8            | 2.5       | 3.0       | —          |
| CASCADE          | 1.2            | 2.5       | 2.8       | 1.8        |
| ELECTRIC DREAMS  | 1.2            | 1.1       | 1.1       | —          |
| BUGBYTE          | 1.1            | 1.2       | 1.1       | —          |
| SEGA             | 1.1            | 1.4       | 1.5       | —          |
| DOMARK           | 1.0            | 1.1       | 1.1       | —          |
| GREMLIN GRAPHICS | 1.0            | 1.5       | 1.2       | —          |
| MICROPROSE       | 1.0            | 0.9       | 1.3       | 0.1        |
| RACK-IT          | 1.0            | 1.0       | 1.2       | 0.9        |
| ATLANTIS         | 0.8            | —         | —         | —          |
| ELITE            | 3.3            | 1.1       | 1.7       | 1.3        |
| SUPERIOR         | 0.3            | —         | —         | —          |
| ADDICTIVE        | 0.7            | 0.9       | 1.5       | —          |
| BEAU JOLLY       | 0.7            | —         | —         | —          |

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

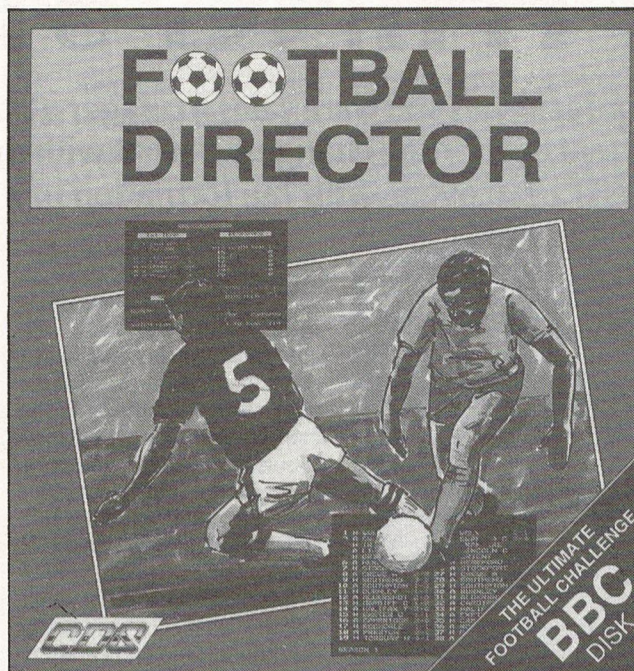
| Machine      | Units sold (%) |           |           |            | Titles sold (%) |           |           |            |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|              | This week      | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago | This week       | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| SPECTRUM     | 44.4           | 44.8      | 42.3      | 45.2       | 21.9            | 27.5      | 27.2      | 31.3       |
| COMMODORE 64 | 20.9           | 23.6      | 23.3      | 24.3       | 22.7            | 21.8      | 24.3      | 24.7       |
| AMSTRAD      | 16.9           | 16.6      | 16.3      | 17.2       | 17.3            | 17.9      | 17.8      | 19.6       |
| ATARI ST     | 4.4            | 4.6       | 7.7       | 4.0        | 6.7             | 3.6       | 7.9       | 8.0        |
| AMIGA        | 3.0            | 3.0       | 2.9       | 3.2        | 5.8             | 5.0       | 5.5       | 3.6        |
| ATARI        | 2.7            | 1.1       | 1.1       | 1.6        | 4.7             | 3.5       | 3.3       | 1.8        |
| BBC          | 1.4            | 1.4       | 1.6       | 0.6        | 2.8             | 3.1       | 3.7       | 2.1        |
| COMMODORE 16 | 1.4            | 1.6       | 1.4       | 2.1        | 2.8             | 2.3       | 2.4       | 2.7        |
| ELECTRON     | 1.1            | 0.8       | 0.5       | 0.6        | 2.5             | 2.5       | 1.4       | 1.5        |

## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

| Units Sold |           |           |            |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| This week  | Last week | 4 wks ago | 12 wks ago |
| 261        | 185       | 141       | 71         |

# 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.



**ACCOLADE:** *Grand Prix Circuit* (C64-£14.95) *T.K.O.* (C64-£9.95). Two strong titles, but don't expect to see them on the Spectrum or Amstrad for a while (if ever) now that Accolade and EA are parting.

**ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Project Firestart* (C64 -£14.95). No messing on the publicity for this little number. "It plays like a science fiction, horror and suspense movie, complete with movie animation, close-ups and fades and a musical score that increases tension and excitement". Phew, if only we could understand what it's actually about.

**HEWSON:** *Netherworld* (SpAm - £9.99-£14.99) Hewson has always been one of the best shoot-em-up developers and *Netherworld* doesn't appear to break with tradition all that much. In fact, Hewson's games have been generally good over the past few months,

but there's possibly something lacking on the old profile front.

**US GOLD:** *Joan of Arc* (Ag - £24.99), *The Games - Winter Edition* (ST - £19.99), *Tiger Road* (STAG - £19.99). *Joan of Arc* is another one of those epic graphic adventures that can either miss the mark completely or sell by the bucketful. *Tiger Road* seems to have been around for ages but should do well, whilst *The Games - Winter Edition* finally makes it onto 16-bit. Everyone laughed when the 8-bit versions came out in the summer, well at least this time it's out when there's skiing on the telly - even if the Olympics themselves were held last year.

**ACTIVISION:** *Afterburner* (MSX-£9.99) It's certainly nice to see the old turkey format being supported with a strong title. This will no doubt have a high penetration rate with the three remaining users.

**ELECTRIC DREAMS:** *Super Hang-On* (Ag-£24.99) Rip-roaring motorbike sim comprising a nice strong title to beef up new year Amiga software sales.

**SYSTEM 3:** *IK+* (Ag-£24.99) This was quite simply the best martial arts game to appear on the St last year and as long as System 3 meets its usual high standard of graphics, gameplay and originality then this should do very well indeed.

**ANCO:** *Highway Hawks* (Ag-£19.95), *Winter Events* (At-£7.95-£14.99), *Emerald Mines* (C64-£7.95) Despite popular opinion Anco does release titles other than almost-controversial strip poker efforts. The trouble is, there's no scandal thus less coverage (excuse the pun).

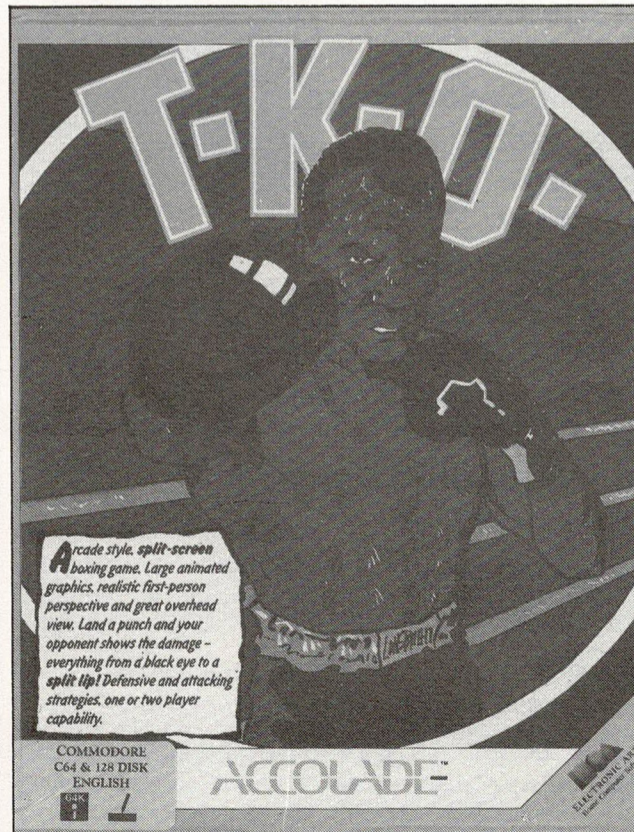
**CODE MASTERS:** *Advanced Ski Simulator* (Ag-£19.99) Notice the £20 price? Whatever happened to all the hopes, dreams and optimism of the publicity kings of budgetland? Well, you see, someone told them you have to make a profit to survive. By Code Masters' original arguments back in '86 when it was selling '£10 games at £2' *Advanced Ski* on the Amiga is nominally worth £100.

**TYNESOFT:** *Winter Olympiad* (PC-£24.95) Do you realise that this is the fourth winter events simulation to appear in this week's Soft Options? And only last week we had *Alpine Games* from Atlantis. One wonders if some sly ski manufacturing conglomerate took over the whole market when nobody was looking.

**SEGA:** *Lord of the Sword*, *OutRun 3D*, *Captain Silver* (Sg-£24.95), *Monopoly* (Sg-£29.95), *Y's* (Sg-£32.95) A welcome batch of new titles for all the new Sega owners already bored with the games they got for Christmas.

**CDS:** *Football Director* (BBC-£9.99-£12.99) Following on from Superior's licensing deals for games such as *Last Ninja* on the Beeb, CDS had got hold of D & H's successful football management title. This will immediately become the best text-only footie game available for the trusty old machine.

**RACK-IT:** *Steel* (C64-£2.99) Yes, some original budget releases are still appearing. This droids and spacestation effort accounts itself well and is by the team that wrote *Slayer*.



**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.

# EVERYTHING CHANGES

Continued from page 13  
remember when I first started at Amstrad and I went to visit this little outfit that had just been set up by a couple of blokes and we refused to give them a credit limit - that firm was Gem."

Now it's all change with Mordecai admitting that "in about four years time I'd like us to have the same sort of standing and respect as Gem have got now."

For now, though, AV Marketing consists of just Mordecai and an assistant and just the one (admittedly rather size-

able) client. Mordecai claims he is currently in negotiations with a few more manufacturers and expects to have one or two announcements to make in the near future.

## Pain reliever

One announcement he insists he will not be making is that of a move into the leisure market. "I really am only interested in PC software, games and 8-bit software are such a pain. I've seen so many people go under because of them. Little headaches I'm prepared to put up with but head-

daches like that I can do without."

He is equally adamant that he will only deal with distributors and has no desire to have any contact with dealers themselves.

The full range of Amstrad software and peripherals will be available from AV at the same price as Amstrad which is itself, of course, ready to supply any orders it receives. This arrangement begs two questions; where does the profit margin come in? And why bother using AV at all when all the goods are available from the manufacturer anyway?

Regarding the profits Mordecai offers: "That's where

Amstrad's generosity comes in." Obviously then some special prices have been worked out for the Brentwood old boy, quite how it will work with other manufacturers remains to be seen.

As to why AV should be used at all, Mordecai puts it down to personality. "A lot of people are used to me and like dealing with me, they know how to treat me, they know that they can swear their heads off at me and it's not going to upset me. So if they all want to continue doing business with me then they'll be using AV, if not of course then they can just as easily go direct to Amstrad."

With Amstrad's record and

reputation is not in customer relations it is not inconceivable that the man may have a point and that many people will be more than glad to cut down as much as possible on direct dealings with the Brentwood beastie boys.

One possible problem facing Mordacai could be if they shift up the price range in people's taste in PCs translates to the choice of software they choose to use with their machines.

AV will be dealing with very much low cost software with Amstrad itself specialising in selling off old versions of popular packages at extremely competitive prices. It is still not

clear whether a market that is only now coming round to spending £800 plus on a PC will be ready to use a package that has become outdated.

An irrepressible Mordecai is loudly confident: "In many cases these machines are going to first time users and for a start they often won't know the difference between the versions and also they may well want a basic version just to find out what the thing is all about."

So with bags of confidence, a clutch of supportive distributors and an ally in Amstrad Mordecai knows that if AV Marketing meets with anything but success there will be no excuses.

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*"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.*

## ROCK AND ROLL

exactly, has not yet been decided, as is the case with Mirrorsoft. In the past all of Mindscape's 16-bit products were handled by Mirrorsoft on a two year contract that expired in July. "We've had a great relationship with Mirrorsoft, and they have some product that has become part of the Mirrorsoft culture. That won't change, some of it will stay where it is," offered Buoy.

Mindscape UK's first release will be the much touted *Willow*, the game of the George Lucas fantasy extravaganza film. Whilst the film has been panned by critics in the US, Buoy claims that it is doing "unbelievable business" and is subsequently trumpeting *Willow* like it was the first game-of-the-film ever to be released.

Heath will be responsible for the whole Mindscape catalogue including the firm's education and business range. "The education market in the UK is currently going through a revolution with many schools switching over to PCs. It is becoming more and more important and will be an additional dimension to the business", offered Heath.

Buoy admits that in the past the education and business market had not been a big part of the firm's business, and last year sales from these products only made up 18 per cent. "But we've made a start and that side is certainly growing. We've got three new business products with *Numbers Up*, *Money Mate* and *Contact Mate*, whilst on the education side we have everything from basic maths to language and literacy courses".

Having laid down their provisional plans for Mindscape's UK assault Buoy and Heath quickly slip back into discussing their favourite subject. Before the firm went public in the US Buoy regularly organised rock and roll concerts under the Mindscape banner, with the likes of Sam and Dave, Ricky Nelson and Bo Diddley heading the all star line ups. Buoy is not ruling out organising such an event over here, indeed with Heath's past who knows who could be on the bill?

In the meantime, both Buoy and Heath will be concentrating their energies on creating those elusive hits - software that not just sells, but sells in huge quantity throughout the US, UK and Europe.

But can Geoff and Roger really be the John and Paul of the software industry? Somehow *Money Mate* just doesn't have the same ring as *Penny Lane*.

# Ocean tidal wave takes Gallup top two at Xmas

Ocean claimed the top two places in Gallup's Christmas chart with both US Gold and Activision failing to live up to the festive hype.

The chart covered the two week period between 19th-31st December and the top two places belonged to *Operation Wolf* and *Robocop*. In third place was budget title *Ghost-*

*busters* from Mastertronic followed by *Double Dragon* from Melbourne House at number four and Activision's *Afterburner* and US Gold's *Thunderblade* at five and six respectively.

Before Christmas it was widely believed to be a three horse race between *Operation Wolf*, *Afterburner* and *Thunderblade* but that forecast was upset by the surprise success of film licence *Robocop* and the

longevity of *Double Dragon* which was released before the main bulk of big Christmas titles.

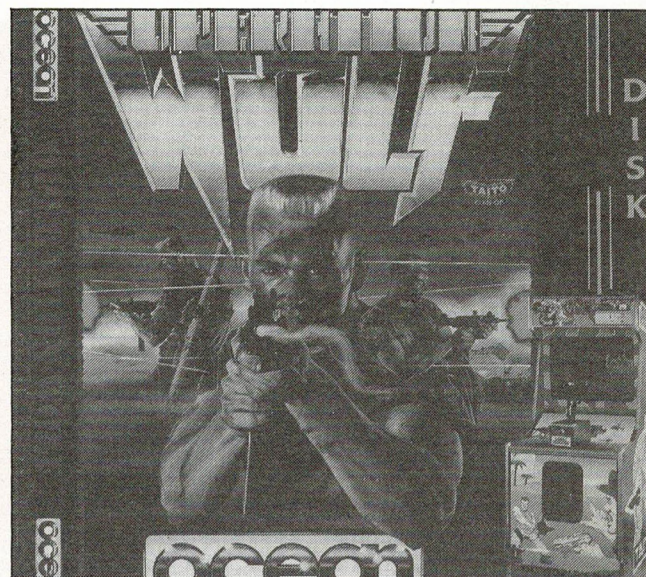
Also something of a surprise is the appearance of budget title *Ghostbusters* in the number three position and, indeed, two other budget titles in the top ten. This is despite the biggest ever marketing spend on full price product and the budget success being a tad antiquated and largely

unpromoted.

A successful Christmas for 16-bit is indicated by Mirrorsoft taking 2.3 per cent of the market share with just two titles, both of which are only available on 16-bit formats.

The full Christmas top ten was as follows:

1. *Operation Wolf* (Ocean)
2. *Robocop* (Ocean)
3. *Ghostbusters* (Mastertronic)
4. *Double Dragon* (Melbourne House)
5. *Afterburner* (Activision)
6. *Thunder Blade* (US Gold)
7. *Through The Trap Door* (Alternative)
8. *Giants* (US Gold)
9. *Falcon* (Mirrorsoft)
10. *End Zone* (Alternative)



OPERATION WOLF: Number 1 with a bullet

## Forces joined

Continued from front page

"We have learned from other people's mistakes that it is better to use the American name large over there and just add the Domark name on so that after a while people get used to us. It has to be a gradual thing rather than suddenly presenting them with this rather odd, individual English firm."

He went on to describe Broderbund as "a lovely company with a lovely name" and added that he was "absolutely delighted" with the tie-up. Broderbund already has a similar deal with French publisher Loriciels which covers some European territory, so for now the Domark deal is confined to "certainly Britain with the possibility of some more European countries later".

Four or five games will be involved in the first year of the deal with Domark believing that its "Bond and *Trivial Pursuit* type games" will fare the best in the US. The Broderbund titles to appear in the UK will be on the entertainment side rather than from its productivity portfolio.

Broderbund's current turnover is around \$40 million, Domark's is somewhat smaller.

## Comet cuts

Continued from front page

discount things like display models," offered the chain. Nevertheless Cambridge remained upset. "I can't quite see the reasoning behind what they're doing - what's the point of suddenly whopping the price back up? They've hardly ordered any of the new packs at all," said a spokesman.

"The real point of the matter is that they've done all this without any consultation whatsoever. We don't like to see our product dumped onto the market and it effects our relationships with everybody else."

Ironically, Comet shared the exclusive retailing rights to the Z88 when it first appeared at the end of 1987.

## Boots bans

Continued from front page

- 8-bit compilations - softbox size (182x152mm), artwork should be landscape.
- 16-bit and IBM PC compatible - softbox size (182x152mm), artwork must be portrait or compact disk size case.

Another recommendation was that "all loose leaflets are either bagged or shrink-wrapped together (separate from the cassette or disk) so as to minimize the risk of loss in-store".

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