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MANDARIN SOFTWARE

CTW

5.12.88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 215

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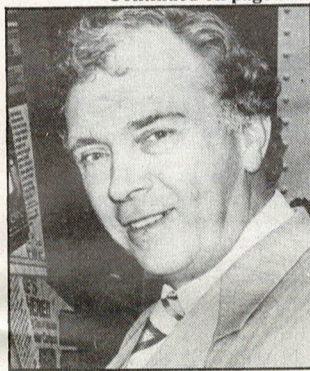
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Elite tunes in to radio advertising

Elite this week launches into a spate of radio advertising for *A Question of Sport*—one week ahead of US Gold's experiment with the medium for *Thunderblade*.

The campaign will run on Capital, BRMB, Beacon, Piccadilly, City and Metro, and consists of around 240 30-second slots. Elite director Brian

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WILCOX: On the airwaves

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MASTERING A DYNASTY

Now that the dust has finally settled on Virgin's complete take-over of Mastertronic, CTW finds out what's in it for both of them and where this new Euro-giant will go next..... 12

BACK TRACKING



TBD boss Norman Smith is leading his firm back into the hardware market with the full range of Atari leisure machines. CTW finds out what took it so long and how bad the memories of Sinclair really are..... 16

THIS IS THE MODEM WORLD

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The mysterious Dagger continues to rant on, viciously attacking all and sundry. Is nobody safe?.... 22

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Amstrad breathes life into PCs

Amstrad last week unveiled a string of cuts across the scarce PC1512 and PC1640 lines - whilst throwing a Christmas present to the trade into the bargain.

News of the cuts came after Amstrad had taken another beating from the City - due to chairman Alan Sugar's announcement that hold-ups on video hardware could affect future profits. In a busy week, it was also revealed that Amstrad is planning to shift more of its production to the UK.

The cuts across Amstrad's two low-end PC lines came into effect for the trade on December 1st. These will not pass through to retail until January 1st - thus, giving dealers a full month to cash in on the extra margin.

Although new trade prices were not available at time of press, retail prices are set to fall from £50 to £250 across all

1512 and 1640 machines other than the two entry level systems - which remain as they were.

The 1512 double drive colour is set to fall £100 to £599 (ex VAT) and the 1640HDE is down £250 to £999 (exc VAT).

Amstrad has learnt in the past that the trade dislikes cuts out of the blue if large volumes of product are still passing through distributor and dealer channels. Thus, 1512 and 1640 stocks have been made deliberately scarce over the past few months - with many pundits actually predicting the death of one or other line.

Distributor ZCL was delighted with the cuts, claiming that as a result a complete re-think on expected volumes over the next couple of months was required.

"It's going to create the same excitement in the two product ranges as there was when they were first launched. They're back in the mass market with a

vengeance," ZCL boss Don Carter told CTW.

Meanwhile, after a slow steady fall over the past few weeks (CTW November 11th) Amstrad's share price took a serious knock early last week, with it residing at a low 154 pence by Wednesday November 30th.

The biggest fall came at the beginning of the week when announcements over product hold-ups spurred some frenzied selling.

The product shortages at this stage, however, appear to be mainly on the non-computer side with video cassette recorders causing most problems. This, in turn, will hinder profits for the first six months of fiscal year 1989.

The lack of City confidence culminated with several brokers revising downwards their profit forecasts.

Amstrad's own broker James Capel cut its forecast for

Continued on page two



SUGAR: Trade happy, City still worrying

Pirates cause City panic

Pirated copies of an Activision title have been causing thousands of pounds of damage to City institutions.

The situation, whilst found amusing by some, last week provoked Mediagenic's European boss Rod Cousens to attack the levels of organisation and disruptive tendency currently enjoyed by counter-feit software producers.

The game in question is *Leisure-suit Larry* which is

apparently a favourite with City dealers, among whom computer games have become increasingly popular since the fall in trading following last year's crash.

Unfortunately, the pirate versions of the game contain a virus which copies itself on to a terminal's hard disk and can eventually erase data. One leading London merchant bank had last week called in a firm of computer security consultants to check its network for the virus.

As the story made it into much of the national press last week, Activision itself was plagued by calls from journals such as *The Financial Times*, *Today*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Mail*.

Cousens commented to CTW: "My reaction is that there's a certain amount of irony in the fact that it's pirated copies that are causing all this damage. Obviously the hackers had the clear intention to be destructive.

"It just shows that all those

bastards in the City are buying pirated software. It's also very worrying because this shows the effectiveness of the pirates' distribution channels. It's about time people started taking some of their responsibilities seriously."

At the time of going to press *Leisure-suit Larry* was still proving a thorn in the side of many major London institutions with some dealers reportedly refusing to use their terminals for fear of damaging any data.

CBM packs up for Xmas

Commodore has put together a range of peripheral packs to back its Christmas push on the Amiga 500.

The four packages variously include a Commodore printer, disk drive, expansion pack and software.

The packs are as follows:



BARRETT: Amiga extras promo

1. The four packages variously include a Commodore printer, disk drive, expansion pack and software.

1. An A1010 external drive and 501 expansion pack (retail £259.97) and is being offered to dealers at £183.68 rather than the normal £208.68 - with *Superbase Personal* (worth £60 retail) thrown in.

2. The MPS 1230 printer and A1010 drive (retail £429.97) is being offered at £214.33 rather than the normal trade price of £264.33 - with *Textcraft* (worth £30 retail) added free.

3. The MPS 1230 printer and 501 expansion pack (retail £439.98) is being offered at £214.33 rather than the normal trade price of £264.33 - with *Superbase Personal* added free.

Superbase Personal added free.

The offer is to all intents an Amiga promotion, but the printer is also compatible with the C64. No time limit has been set for the new prices, but Commodore's UK marketing manager Dean Barrett insisted that they would not go on indefinitely.

"It's really a matter of how long stocks last. The Amiga 500 has done very well this year and we thought that we'd just give an extra incentive to our dealers so that they can really cash in on the current TV advertising," Barrett told CTW.

"If someone's buying a 500 then the chances are that he can be sold some extra peripherals at the same time - thus increasing the dealers' Continued on page two

SubLogic struggles

US software house SubLogic has nearly halved its workforce and experienced a 25 per cent drop in sales for the year ending October 1st.

A deal signed with US Gold back in the summer for SubLogic's arcade-style games coming into Europe has also fallen through.

Some 25 jobs have been axed from SubLogic's total workforce of 55. Sales for 1988 dropped from \$4 million to \$3 million. Profits were apparently "pretty much down near zero" rather than non-existent.

"SubLogic is a strange company in that it is structured in such a way that it doesn't allow itself to get into debt," commented director Stu Moment to CTW.

SubLogic's major success historically has been its *Flight Simulator*, which has sold a claimed 1.5 million copies worldwide.

"There's a whole lot of companies doing flight simulators these days and I suppose we've been hit - back in '79 there were only one or two about."

Most of the job cuts came on the firm's sales side, with a concentration on product development being promised. This increases the likelihood of deals with other firms, but other than admitting that a couple of firms had expressed interest Moment preferred not to comment.

Continued on page two

EMAP tells tales on rival and turns tail on Martech

EMAP has reported rival publisher Newsfield to the Audit Circulation Bureau whilst keeping quiet in the face of legal action from publisher Martech.

The ABC row erupted after Newsfield published out of date figures which were considerably more flattering than the present reality. A furious Martech, meanwhile, was last week setting legal wheels in motion to seek damages

against the company after *Commodore User* had printed an extremely unfavourable review of a pre-production copy of its *Phantom Fighter* game.

Commenting on the Newsfield affair advertising manager Gary Williams offered: "We look upon it as extremely creative accountancy and the whole thing gives advertisers the wrong impression of their titles. We contacted ABC and they've told us that they have

censured them. Unfortunately the bureau is a bit of a toothless tiger and that just means that they've sent them a letter telling them to put the situation right."

Newsfield publisher Franco Frey admitted that his firm had been contacted by ABC but claimed that the whole episode was the result of "a simple lapse on our part".

He continued: "They did indicate that there was a complaint about us and we've

informed them that we're now putting that right as soon as possible. Obviously the new figures are down - around 12 per cent down actually - but that reflects a general trend in the whole computer mag business."

Meanwhile, EMAP was keeping resolutely silent over Martech's allegations which will now almost certainly end in court. Martech boss David Martin, however, had plenty to say on the subject.

He fumed to *CTW*: "We are extremely angry and upset. It's quite obvious that they knew the copy they had was strictly a preview copy. We are acting in the interests of the whole industry and hopefully a prece-



MARTIN: Angered by EMAP

dent will be set."

Last week Martin went to the High Court to seek an injunction to prevent the distribution of *Commodore User*.

He claimed that the judge was sympathetic to the case but that the costs of pulling the magazine at that late stage would have been too high.

Amstrad breathes

Continued from front page
1989 full-year profits from £185 million to £170 million. Kleinwort Benson's estimate fell from £190 million to £175 million.

The news that Amstrad is looking to increase its level of UK production was actually greeted quite encouragingly by the City.

Although details are still scant, Amstrad was last week in the midst of negotiating a deal to make up to 20 per cent of its PC2000 range at GPT - the telecommunications equipment group formed earlier this year by GEC and Plessey.

Elite tunes in

Continued from front page

Wilcox told *CTW* that the total cost of the campaign was approximately £40,000.

The move follows the recent withdrawal of advertising from the traditional consumer press last month and Wilcox described it as "part of our decision to explore new areas of advertising".

He continued: "Assuming this is a success - and we're reasonably sure that it will be - then radio could well figure in our advertising in the future."

That future may be more or less immediate with the firm talking in positive terms about repeating the experiment with its next release *Mike Read's Computer Pop Quiz*.

CBM packs up

Continued from front page

profit." With the deal coming so far into Commodore's Christmas campaign on the Amiga it is unlikely that much marketing effort will be put behind the offers, leaving it mostly up to distributors.

Barrett added, however, that he was hopeful that some kind of POS support could be produced fairly quickly.

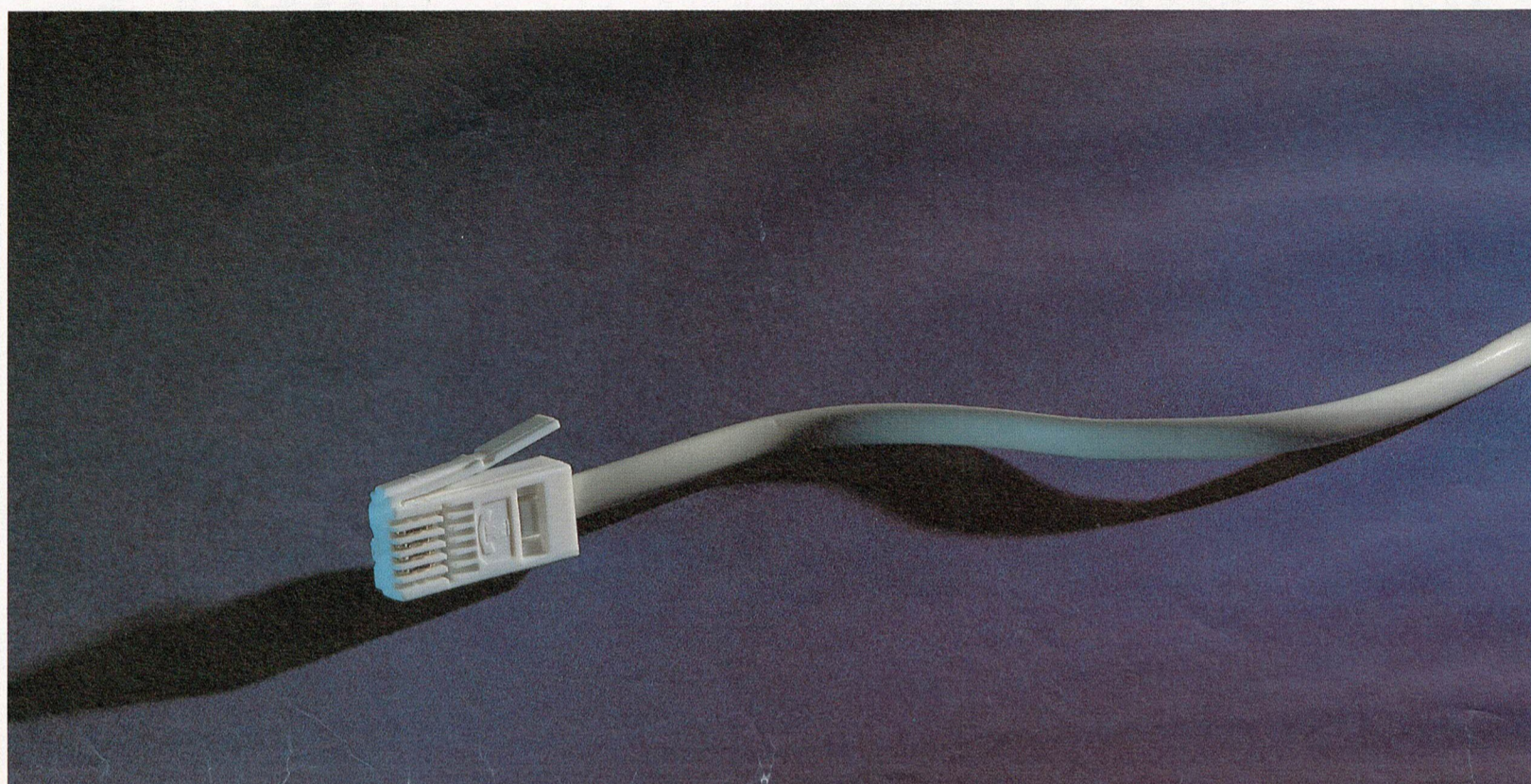
SubLogic struggles

Continued from front page

The Gold deal effectively fell through before it began, with any SubLogic product being made available in the UK coming directly from its UK representative Cliff Crowder.

Moment claimed the deal expired due to Gold "recognising a dip on the 8-bit side", whilst Gold itself claimed it was due to contractual anomalies.

"Basically the contract we initially agreed on here came back from the US looking completely different, so nothing happened," Gold's operations director Tim Chaney told *CTW*.

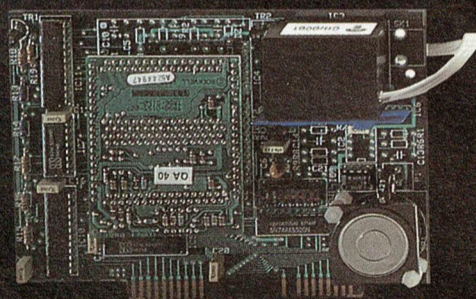


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Auto Retry Transmit Failures	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Manuel Retry Transmit Failures	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Log of Transmissions	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Unlimited Phone Directory	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Receive Fax	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Command-Line Transmit Facility	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Fax View on Screen	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Fax Print to Printer	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Fax Print/Scan to/From Slave Fax M/C	no	no	no	yes	yes
Hotkey Usage	no	no	yes	yes	yes
BABT Approved	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Upgrade Path	S/W	S/W	S/W + H/W	S/W	S/W

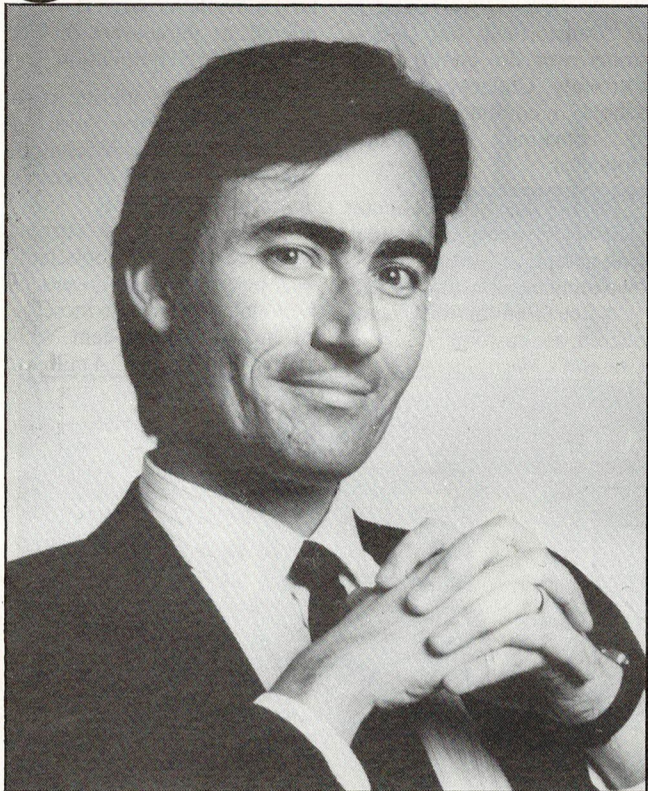
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EA's sales jump up, but US gloom holds back public bid



HAWKINS: Greater desire for profits

Amidst the US leisure market's current gloom, Electronic Arts last week claimed a 1988 turnover of \$60 million – but it's long-awaited flotation bid has once again been put on ice.

Despite the recent closure of offices in both Japan and France (*CTW* November 28th) and the promise of greater attention being paid in future to profit, EA president Trip Hawkins last week claimed to *CTW* that his company had foreseen the US market shifts and had been affected little.

Hawkins also believes that the pressures US firms are facing aren't necessarily a result of the Nintendo console's dominance – which is the widely held belief.

"That had an effect last year, but not so much this year," he began. "The bigger issue in the US is that over the last two

years there has been a huge increase in the number of products coming in from Europe, as well as Japanese coin-op conversions for the C64 and PC.

"Last year was the best ever for the US games market and I think a lot of companies misread that. We're certainly not expecting the same growth this year as last."

Hawkins claims that EA's turnover for the year ending October 1st reached \$60 million, compared to around \$40 million for 1987. He would not, however, divulge his firm's profit figure.

"Certainly our profits have improved, last year a lot of money was spent setting up things like the European operation. But we, like the whole industry, are setting out to be a little more profit orientated in the future rather than just chasing sales."

This new "profit-orientated" EA will mean less

emphasis on distribution deals, with the firm realising that they are not necessarily the best way to make money.

The new approach has already led to the closing of EA's French and Japanese offices. The French office was acquired along with Version-soft earlier in the year and once its seven programmers were taken on board it ceased to have a use. Japan was closed due to "our instincts for the market not being that good".

The move public has been planned by EA for a long time but after watching the rough reception that Mindscape has had, along with most US computer firms in general of late, it is once again a few months away at least.

"Right now the whole hi-tech sector isn't doing very well in public trading. We're only going to go when the timing is just right, which now looks to be some time in the first half of next year," added Hawkins.

Now Tory MP blasts anti-dumping levy

Following the decision by the European Commission to continue imposing anti-dumping levies on Japanese dot matrix printers, one Tory Euro MP has condemned the move as "blatant protectionism".

Conservative spokesman on international trade in the European Parliament, Bryan Cassidy, is outraged by the continuation of the duties, which could last for up to five years.

Yet European manufacturers of computer printers are hailing the decision as a decisive victory, after claims that Japanese firms have been deliberately underpricing their exports of dot matrix printers to Europe in a bid to buy a market share.

"The Japanese take a mass market approach with lower prices based on the longer pro-

duction runs this approach permits. European manufacturers give the impression of preferring to maintain higher prices by keeping dot matrix printers for the professional and business market. Actions of this sort justify the fears expressed in Japan about fortress Europe after 1992," commented Cassidy.

Provisional levies were placed on 15 Japanese firms last May, and the duties imposed range from nearly 5 per cent to a substantial 47 per cent. Even Japanese companies which have started to increase production at their EEC based plants could face a levy on imported components in the near future.

Japanese firms affected include Fujitsu, Citizen, Brother, NEC and Seiko Epson. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade has opened an inquiry into Japanese complaints about the anti-dumping policy and it is due to take place next week.

Poached duo bolster US Gold personnel

US Gold has strengthened its middle management with the appointment of two new product managers.

Susan Baker has been poached from Elite's sales force to become Gold's European product manager and Bob Mallin has joined from Games Workshop as European product manager for war and role-playing games.

Baker joins Gold after leaving the Birmingham firm in January. "She's a very ambitious girl and at the time she left we didn't have the role she needed. She got a great deal of experience by working effec-

tively as national sales manager for Elite," said Gold's operations director Tim Chaney to *CTW*.

Mallin's appointment is as a replacement to Jerry Howells, who recently left for Croftward – publisher of *CCM* mag *CCI*. As well as working previously for Games Workshop, Mallin has also had experience on Virgin's retail side.

"He knows the market that he's going to be working in inside out, and with these kind of products you need that," added Chaney.

The appointments are expected to help make up some kind of re-structuring within US Gold due for early next year.

Fax mystery fails to ruffle Amstrad

The continuing speculation regarding Amstrad and the fax machine market took a further twist last week.

The firm had to explain why in the current edition of *The Publishers Handbook* by Grosvenor Press International, Amstrad appears as the first entry in the fax machine manufacturers' section.

The Publishers Handbook is a buying guide for the publishing trade. Amstrad's fax machine entry simply included its name, address and phone number.

Amstrad itself, however, simply dismissed the appearance as unimportant. "We certainly haven't sent it into them – none of us would have been bothered to. And we're not making one of them anyway."

"Perhaps it was just one of those things where there are lots of boxes and you just tick them all without really looking. I've just done one for the *Which Computer?* Show – it was a page full of boxes."

Paul Townsend at Grosvenor offered that firms usually send in their own entries for inclusion in the book.

"But I'm not sticking my

neck out and saying that Amstrad sent this one in. There could have been a mistake, but hopefully that section was checked properly," he told *CTW*.

FACSIMILE MACHINES

Amstrad plc,
PO Box 462, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EF
Tel. 0277 228888

British Olivetti Ltd,
73 Mercers Drive, Bradville, Milton Keynes
M13 7HJ Tel. 0908 311555 Telex 826913
Fax 0908 322543 Within the new range of Olivetti facsimile terminals, the TLM 810 is a mid-range programmable facsimile designed to be used by secretaries. It combines reduced dimensions and a modest weight with outstanding operative characteristics and performances including:

There in black and white

More TV and radio ads planned for Which? '89

The ramp-up has started for next year's *Which Computer?* Show with £400,000 being spent on a promotion which includes TV and radio ads.

The show's organiser Cahners Exhibitions is predicting an 18 per cent increase in attendance and claims that the number of exhibitors has gone up 30 per cent to 520.

Show manager Belinda Smith is pitching much of the expected increase as a result of the show's later date. It has been shifted from January to February 21-24th.

"Back in 1987 we had a February date and we had 60,000 people there. February's better because the weather's not as bad and promotional material doesn't get lost in the Christmas rush," she told *CTW*.



WHICH? '88: Slight dip due to earlier date

TV ads on Central and radio spots on London and Midlands stations will run through January and February.

"We're doing the same as we've done in the last two years. It's very difficult to tell if the ads work because they're only reminders – but we think

they do," added Smith.

This year's *Which?* show attracted 51,586, with over 60,000 expected next year. The venue will once again be the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. The entrance fee is £5, or free to those who pre-register.

CTW

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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

Thalamus, 1 Saturn House, Calleva Park,
Aldermaston, Berkshire RG7 4QW

Virgin sets sights on 100K of Segas

Virgin Mastertronic is claiming that UK sales of its Sega console could have reached the magical figure of 100,000 by the end of January.

The claimed UK base was standing at around 50,000

units before the autumn season began, and subsequently sales have been backed by promotions including a £200,000 ratecard TV ad spend.

To back its optimism regarding the console's performance Virgin Mastertronic revealed last week that toy chain Toys 'R'

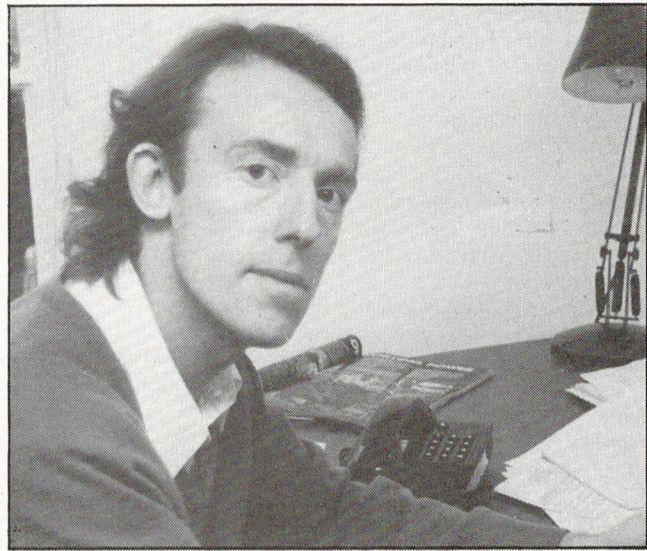
Us had sold 2,000 and ordered a further 1,500 units within two weeks.

"We've been putting a lot through Dixons as well," commented Virgin Mastertronic's managing director Nick Alexander to CTW. "It's obviously very important to reach a base of 100,000 machines if you're going to be considered a serious player in the market."

The Sega is currently experiencing its second Christmas in the UK after a fairly quiet period last year.

"The trouble was we only really got product in very late October last year - so we've only really had the thing for 12-13 months," added Alexander.

"If you look at the figures for things like compact disk players and video recorders you'll find that at the end of their first year on sale a figure of around 50,000 units was achieved. It took a while even for those mass market products."



ALEXANDER: 100K Segas possible

Game giveaways prove Boots' Xmas presence

A flurry of activity at Boots last week saw the launch of its Christmas leisure software offensive and the posting of brighter than expected half-year results.

The country's largest retailer of computer games also last week completed the signing of a £40.8 million cash deal for chemist chain Underwoods.

This could, in theory, massively increase the amount of

leisure software on the high street with the majority of Underwoods' 50 stores set to be transformed into Boots stores over the coming year. Currently Underwoods only dabbles in computer products by stocking the Psion Organiser.

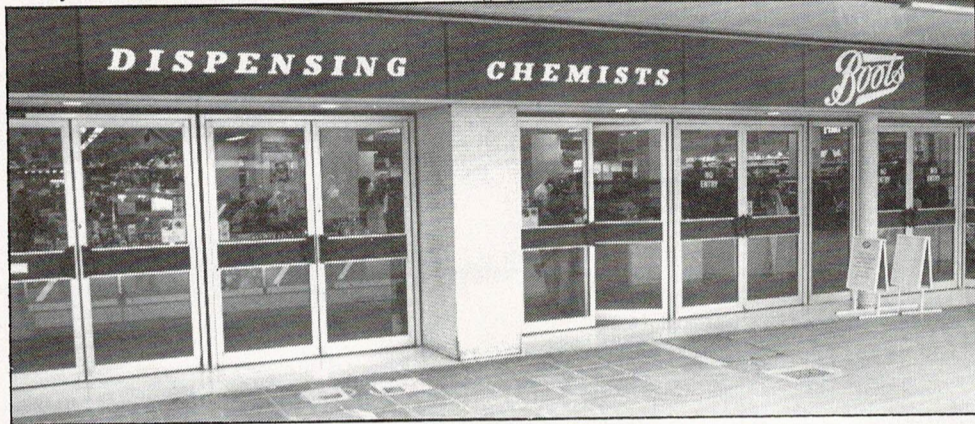
Boots' Christmas computer push began in earnest last week with national advertising for its own exclusive consumer offers.

A free Gremlin title is being offered to customers buying Gremlin's *Mega Games Volume*

One compilation if they send in the relevant form, and similarly a free Kixx game is being offered to purchasers of US Gold's *Giants* compilation.

Also, Boots is offering a two week trip to New York to winners of an exclusive competition inside copies of Ocean's *In Crowd* compilation.

Shrugging off the current retail sector gloom, Boots' half-year performance to the end of September showed an increase of nearly 20 per cent with profits totalling £132.4 million.



BOOTS: Free game promotion

Leisuresoft gains in primary switch

Following USD's decision to get out of primary distribution (CTW November 21st) Thalamus has signed a services deal with Leisuresoft.

Leisuresoft already handles Telecomsoft and Hewson, as well as one other un-named firm. The company is looking to tie up more deals and claims that talks are already underway with several software houses, although nothing will be finalised this side of Christmas.

"We look forward to working with Thalamus as they're obviously a professional outfit. For us primary distribution is just another function and we've just got new premises with the whole of the lower floor taken over for that purpose. As a distribution company we have all the tools and think in an orderly way and can obviously offer a good service

to our customers," Leisuresoft's sales director Tony Adams told CTW.

Thalamus will be using the firm for its complete range of products. "There had been whispers for some time that USD were going to cease offering a primary distribution service, so we had been looking around and had spoken to various people. We decided to go with Leisuresoft because they are an excellent firm which is expanding that side of their business," commented Thalamus boss Paul Cooper.

On the distribution side Leisuresoft has also signed a one-off deal with US software firm Baudville. The company will be handling Baudville's first game called *Dream Zone*, and although the game has supposedly done well in the US Adams admits that "it's going to have a bit of a fight on its hands coming into the market this time of the year".

Limited stays off booze in new promo

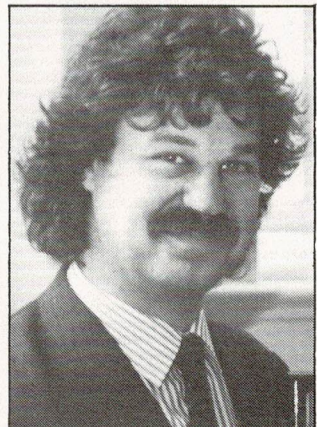
Software Limited is offering dealers £10 Marks and Spencers or Burton Group vouchers with every purchase from SPC's *Harvard* range.

The firm is also offering £5 vouchers for purchasing a product within SPC's *First* range. Software Limited's managing director Alistair Handyside described the offer as "an alternative to 100 per cent proof promotions".

He continued: "We always try and do something like this at this time of year. In the past we've done it with Ashton Tate and MicroPro. This year we've gone with SPC because the *Harvard* range sells well and everyone can join in - anyway

it's different from just plying them all with booze once a year.

The offer runs until December 31st.



HANDYSIDE: Alcohol free, not free alcohol

Croftward catches spy book licence

CCI publisher Croftward is mulling over making its first ever step into games publishing after winning the rights to Peter Wright's controversial *Spycatcher* novel.

Regarding the acquisition of such a licence Croftward publisher Antony Jacobson would only offer that "somebody came to us".

"At this moment we're deciding whether we could develop it ourselves and publish it on our own or whether somebody could be brought in," Jacobson told CTW.

"Obviously we've got to be very careful and we've taken legal advice. What we do

depends on what the government's attitude is - but then we might even decide to fight them."

Croftward is apparently toying with the idea of including part of the actual *Spycatcher* book in the package.

Meanwhile, Jacobson last week revealed the names of the two US Commodore magazines his company brought last month (CTW November 7th).

They are *TransAmi* - claimed to be regarded as "the bible" by Amiga owners in the States - and *Transactor*. Croftward has appointed ex-Mirrorsoft employee Jeannie Lawrence to run the two mags. She will be based in Toronto, Canada.

WordPerfect brings in education cuts

In an attempt to further increase its penetration of the education market WordPerfect has introduced considerable price cuts aimed at educational establishments.

The discounts will apply to volume purchasing only and in order to qualify establishments must use the *WordPerfect* software only on computers controlled by them.

For example with the new pricing scheme a college could equip up to 19 student users with *WordPerfect 5.0* for £920 compared to the recommended retail price of a hefty £8,000 whereas 39 students could be supplied with *WordPerfect Macintosh* for £985 - compared to the original cost of £9,700.

"In the past our education scheme has not been as attractive as it is now, and the new pricing both encourages and simplifies. More and more col-

leges are looking to use professional business software and *WordPerfect* is what's happening outside in the real world. It will train and prepare young people for the work place," the firm's marketing manager David Godwin told CTW.

The company claims that the discounts confirm its strong commitment to education and that *WordPerfect* is already being used in a substantial number of schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

The new pricing follows the recent news that Microsoft is offering education cuts of up to 60 per cent on *Microsoft Word* and *Microsoft Excel* (CTW November 21st), and Godwin admits that "half the reason we're offering the discounts is to put us in line with other competing firms".

In the meantime the WordPerfect Corporation has announced that it is developing an *OS/2* version of its word processor.

USD discovers joy of sticks

Promotion and merchandising firm USD has tied up Dynamic for its first peripherals deal, as well as taking on *Psygnosis* and *Softek*.

The Dynamic deal was originally only for a month, but the firm has decided to continue using USD strategically over the next year, and the other two companies will also only be using USD from time to time.

"None of the deals are for a twelve month period, the firms tend to use us more like magazines in that they will all advertise with one or the other at some point. It's good that they are recognising the importance of marketing in their advertising line-up," USD boss Andy Wood told CTW.

Wood claims that the success of the firm's venture into peripherals has surprised both Dynamic and himself. Indeed Dynamic's Kevin Carson commented that "judging from the orders we've received from distributors it's certainly well worth doing. USD has the necessary contact with the retailers, whilst we have little to do with them as we sell through distributors".

Other USD accounts include Activision, Domark, Beau Jolly, Grandslam and Palace. "Obviously we're always looking to take on more, but because of the nature of this business we can't really handle more than six new products in one month," offered Wood.

Epyx appoints Bishop as UK representative

As predicted in CTW (17th October) David Bishop has been appointed as the UK representative of US leisure publisher Epyx.

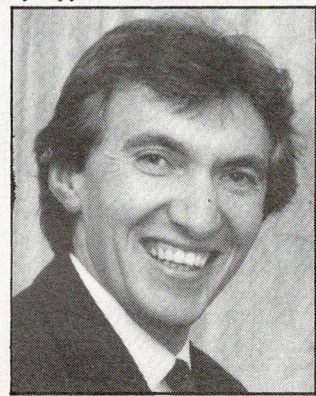
His official job title is software project manager for Europe and is being described by Epyx as a "liaison between

Epyx and the European development community". All parties involved are firmly denying that the move has any reflection or effect on Epyx relationship with US Gold.

Bishop commented to CTW: "I will be seeking out as many development teams as possible over here and working with US Gold on development of products for the US. Epyx also want me to provide them with basic information on what's going on in Europe."

Bishop also denied that his appointment was an indication of any Epyx intent towards setting themselves up in the UK. "I'm the only Epyx employee in this country and the plan is to stay that way," he offered.

US Gold operations director Tim Chaney told CTW: "It's just a technical thing. David's appointment gives me no cause for concern."



CHANNEY: Unworried by Epyx move

15 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS

UPDATE II

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION

SUPPLIER	PRODUCT	AVAILABILITY	COMMENTS
COMMODORE	1 AMIGA A500 + free modulator and Photon Paint	Still O.K. but Plan Ahead.	Christmas started last week. Amiga sales are massive.
COMMODORE	1 64C Hollywood Pack	Still O.K!!!	Congratulations to CBM for producing the pack of the year. Sales are phenomenal.
COMMODORE	1 64C Entertainment Pack	Availability Good	Good steady sales.
COMMODORE	1 1084 Stereo Monitor	Ex-stock but limited	Selling extremely well. At this rate, 2wks. stock left
AMSTRAD/SINCLAIR	2 Plus 2	Ex-stock but only just. No more this year	Sold more last week than last month. 2wks. stock left?
AMSTRAD/SINCLAIR	2 Plus 3	Ex-stock but looking tight for December	Last week the TV effect began, sales trebled and will continue to increase.
AMSTRAD	2 464 6128 2160 Printer	Fair but tight for December	Sales good across the board.

AMSTRAD BUSINESS PRODUCT

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY AND PRICE REDUCTIONS - TRADE 1st DEC - RETAIL 1st JAN 1989

PRODUCT	AVAILABILITY	COMMENTS
PCW 8256 PCW 8512 PCW 9512	2 Ex-stock, no more until January Ex-stock, no more until January Very limited stock	All PCW product continues to sell extremely well especially as we are now back to UK spec. Surprisingly, the 9512 is the current best seller.
PC 1512 S.D. Mono PC 1512 D.D. Colour	2 No stock until 1989 Ex-stock but limited	No price reduction. £100.00 reduction at retail.
PC 1640 S.D. PC 1640 D.D. PC 1640 H.D. Mono Monitor Colour Monitor ECD Monitor 2086 S.D. 2086 D.D. 2086 H.D. Mono Monitor 12" Colour Monitor 14" HRC12 12" HRC14 14"	2 No stock until 1989 Limited stock for Dec. delivery Limited stock, no more until Feb. 1989 Limited stock for Dec. delivery. No more until Feb. 1989 Limited stock, no more until 1989 Stock available in Dec. No more until Feb. 1989 Ex-stock No more available until Feb 1989 Ex-stock Ex-stock Ex-stock No stock available Ex-stock Very limited stock	Trade price reductions apply now giving you 1 month of windfall profit allowing you to clear stocks prior to a 1st. Jan. 1989 retail price drop. 1640 S.D. mono No change 1640 S.D. colour £50 retail price drop 1640 S.D. ECD £100 retail price drop 1640 D.D. mono £50 retail price drop 1640 D.D. colour £100 retail price drop 1640 D.D. ECD £150 retail price drop 1640 H.D. mono £150 retail price drop 1640 H.D. colour £200 retail price drop 1640 H.D. ECD £250 retail price drop 1512 S.D. mono No change 1512 S.D. colour £50 retail price drop 1512 D.D. mono £50 retail price drop 1512 D.D. colour £100 retail price drop £750,000 press advertising campaign begins January 1989.

- 1 ALL PRODUCTS COUNT TOWARDS ZCL HOLDINGS 1989
HONG KONG - CHINA DEALER INCENTIVE**
- 2 ALL PRODUCTS COUNT TOWARDS ZCL HOLDINGS 1989
CARIBBEAN CRUISE DEALER INCENTIVE**

Dear Retailer,

Last week Christmas arrived; the impact of Commodore's T.V. advertising and the Commodore Show improved sales of all Commodore products but the A500 Amiga and 64C Hollywood pack took off vertically!

And what about the Spectrum Plus 2? We sold 1700 in the week; I predict that the Plus 3 will go the same way followed by the 464/6128 range.

At the time of writing this report the news of the astonishing Amstrad PC price reductions has yet to break although I am sure that this issue of CTW is full of it. The difference that the reductions will make is incalculable - certainly anyone who was foolish enough to question Amstrad's commitment to the 1512/1640 range can think again.

However in all of this excitement the news of a £750,000 advertising campaign could get lost. Just digest for a moment the additional PC2086 press campaign starting in January. This mammoth campaign is over and above the PC2000 series T.V. campaign due in February.

So make windfall profit on the 1512/1640 between now and January and look forward to substantial sales of Amstrad PC's from January onward.

Kind Regards

Don Carter

Chairman



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SUPPORT FOR OUR HOME COMPUTERS WILL REACH NEW HEIGHTS THIS CHRISTMAS

It was promised, now here it is. An absolute mountain of TV and press support for Commodore's top-selling home computers, the Amiga 500 and C64.

From the 14th November onwards, we are appearing regularly in virtually every daily national newspaper ... close on half a million pound's worth of advertising.

As people are relaxing over their Sunday papers, there we are again banging home the Commodore message.

Also, on 14th November, we really turn up the volume with our new 50-second TV commercial appearing for the first time on national television.

The commercial will be on the air for a total of four weeks. By Christmas, millions of viewers will have seen for themselves why the Amiga is called the ultimate home computer.

It all points to one thing. Between now and Christmas, there are going to be a lot of Amiga 500 and C64 supporters coming through your doors.

Make sure you're ready for them.

For further information on Commodore home computers or to discuss increasing your stock, please phone (0628) 770088 and ask for Dealer Liaison or call your distributor representative.



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Genic crosses New Frontier

Following Mediagenic's recent signing of two new affiliate labels (CTW November 14th) the firm has now taken on fledgling development house New Frontier Productions.

The new label is headed by erstwhile Infogrames UK boss David Crossweller, who is planning to produce a range of titles over the next two years. As yet no details of the games are available although the first two projects are said to be underway, with several others starting during the next three

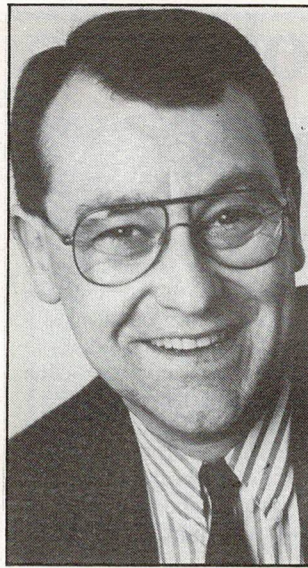
months.

The first releases from New Frontier are due to appear late next summer. "We are not looking to produce two or three games a month, what we're aiming for is a small number of high quality products. We are not the same as a lot of publishers and that is not what we set out to do," Crossweller told CTW.

This latest deal partly fulfils Activision's recent promise of taking on several more affiliate labels, following the signing of Vivid Images and Motion Picture House. "David has pulled together a very talented team,

and we are looking forward to seeing an exceptional product line-up from New Frontier," commented Activision's European vice president Rod Cousins.

Crossweller claims that the formation of his own company was the reason behind his departure from Infogrames. "My contract was running to an end and having previously worked for myself, I wanted to become my own boss again. I had taken Infogrames two or three rungs up the ladder and that's what I'd set out to do, you certainly won't find any scandal."



CROSSELLER: Few releases

Firms club together for Nimrod splurge

Nimrod Holdings last week embarked on a string of television advertisements for its eight computer stores in the Yorkshire region.

The firm - which also owns CDS, Blue Ribbon, Network and Appletree Print - experimented with television last year, but on a smaller scale. This year the firm claims it is spending £100,000.

The campaign is being co-

funded by a host of hardware manufacturers and publishers whose product will feature in the adverts. The three hardware firms involved are Commodore with the Amiga 500, Amstrad with the CPC desk pack and the Sega.

Among the twelve publishers taking part are Melbourne House with *Double Dragon*, Activision with *Afterburner*, Palace with *Barbarian II* and EA with *Powerdrome*.

Interestingly, neither CDS or Blue Ribbon will feature in the campaign. The firm's marketing manager Dave Carlos told CTW that the two labels were involved in the original plans but claimed that the space was over subscribed by publishers and "in-house had to be dropped".

Three 30 second ads and seven 10 second ads make up the campaign. So far the firm has only booked a few definite slots, one of which is Channel Four's *American Football*. The rest of the time the ads will be placed by the TV company itself at Nimrod's approval with a briefing to hit a target audience of 24 year-old males.

Carlos continued: "The campaign worked very well last year and this year we've stepped it up. We've also decided to charge the firms we feature because last year we discovered that their games were selling more - but not necessarily in our shops."

Cascade plans ST cascade

Cascade is lining up a full-price 16-bit disk compilation similar in concept to its *Cassette 50* of a few years back.

Disk 15 will, rather unsurprisingly, feature 15 games most of which have been written specifically for the compilation. The package is initially only available on ST but an Amiga version is planned for January with the PC version following a month later.

Cascade boss Nigel Stevens commented to CTW: "Obviously because of space limitations none of the games are going to set the world on fire but they are good, solid, quality games and the first indications are that the industry is very keen on it."

The ST version of *Disk 15* will be available on December 20th and will retail at £19.95.

Meanwhile, the firm has also announced a licensing deal with the RAF which it claims will result in "the ultimate flight simulator". The as yet untitled product is scheduled for release in May and the RAF royalties will go to its own benevolent fund.

Stevens offered: "There's been a lot of input from the RAF they've been very helpful and through them it's going to turn out to be a highly authentic game."



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Optional: Sheetfeeder, tractor and serial interface.
Speed: 30cps.
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Price: £399



6300
A professional wide bodied daisy wheel printer. 3k buffer, proportional spacing, parallel interface.
Optional: Sheetfeeders and tractor.
Speed: 40cps.
Compatibility: Diablo 630API.
Price: £699



6500
A high speed daisy wheel printer designed specifically for high speed office use. 3k buffer, proportional spacing, parallel interface.
Speed: 60cps.
Compatibility: Diablo 630API.
Price: £899



7100
The 24 pin LQ matrix printer. Dual interfaces, 7k buffer, colour, LCD display.
Optional: Sheetfeeders, tractor and font cards.
Speed: 288cps.
Compatibility: IBM or Diablo 630 or Epson.
Price: £899



7200
The total printing machine Colour or B/W, 360dpi. Dual interfaces, A3 printing.
Optional: Sheet and envelope feeders and font cards.
Speed: 324cps.
Compatibility: IBM or Diablo 630 or Epson.
Price: £1625

All prices are R.R.P Ex VAT. and specifications subject to change at anytime. All trademarks recognised.

Disk drought provokes Amsoft rethink denial

Acute shortages last week forced Amstrad to freeze supplies of its three inch disks and sparked talk of a complete rethink on the future of Amsoft.

Amstrad itself was customarily calm about the situation and dismissed talk of any crisis or repositioning of Amsoft. Software development manager Mike Mordacai told CTW: "Quite simply we've practically run out of the things

and we're just keeping enough for emergency orders and our own use. We're certainly not worried about it, there's really no problem."

Mordacai added that he expected supplies to be flowing again in the middle of September. Currently the Amsoft disks are available through two exclusive distributors SJB and Disk Express.

SJB boss Steven Burke's line did differ slightly to that of

Mordacai but was far from critical of Amstrad. He told CTW that he was told last week that the line was being frozen so that the firm could have a physical count of the disks in stock and consider the feasibility of the brand.

"All sensible companies rationalise products and Amstrad will be taking stock of the situation and then they'll sit down and think "shall we or shan't we", commented Burke.

He added that he was

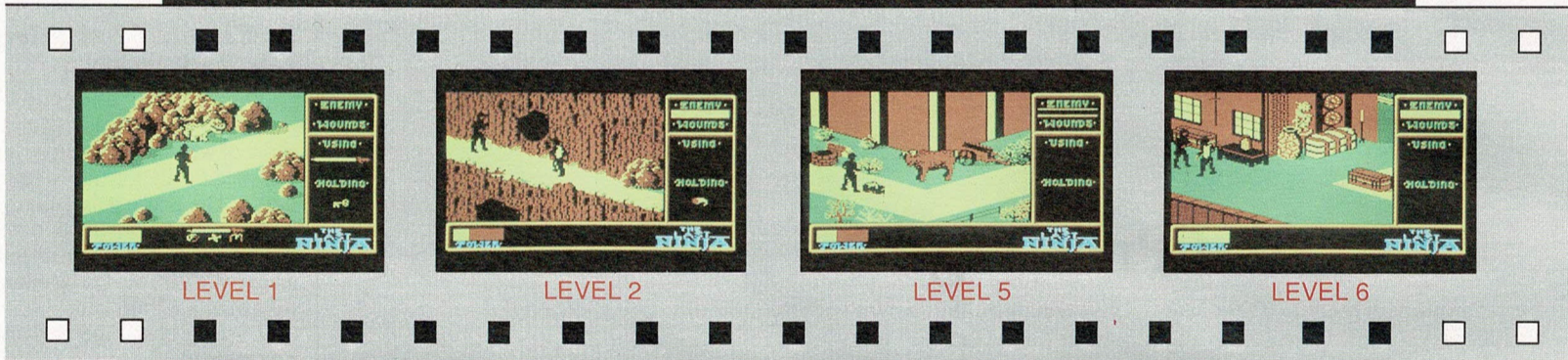
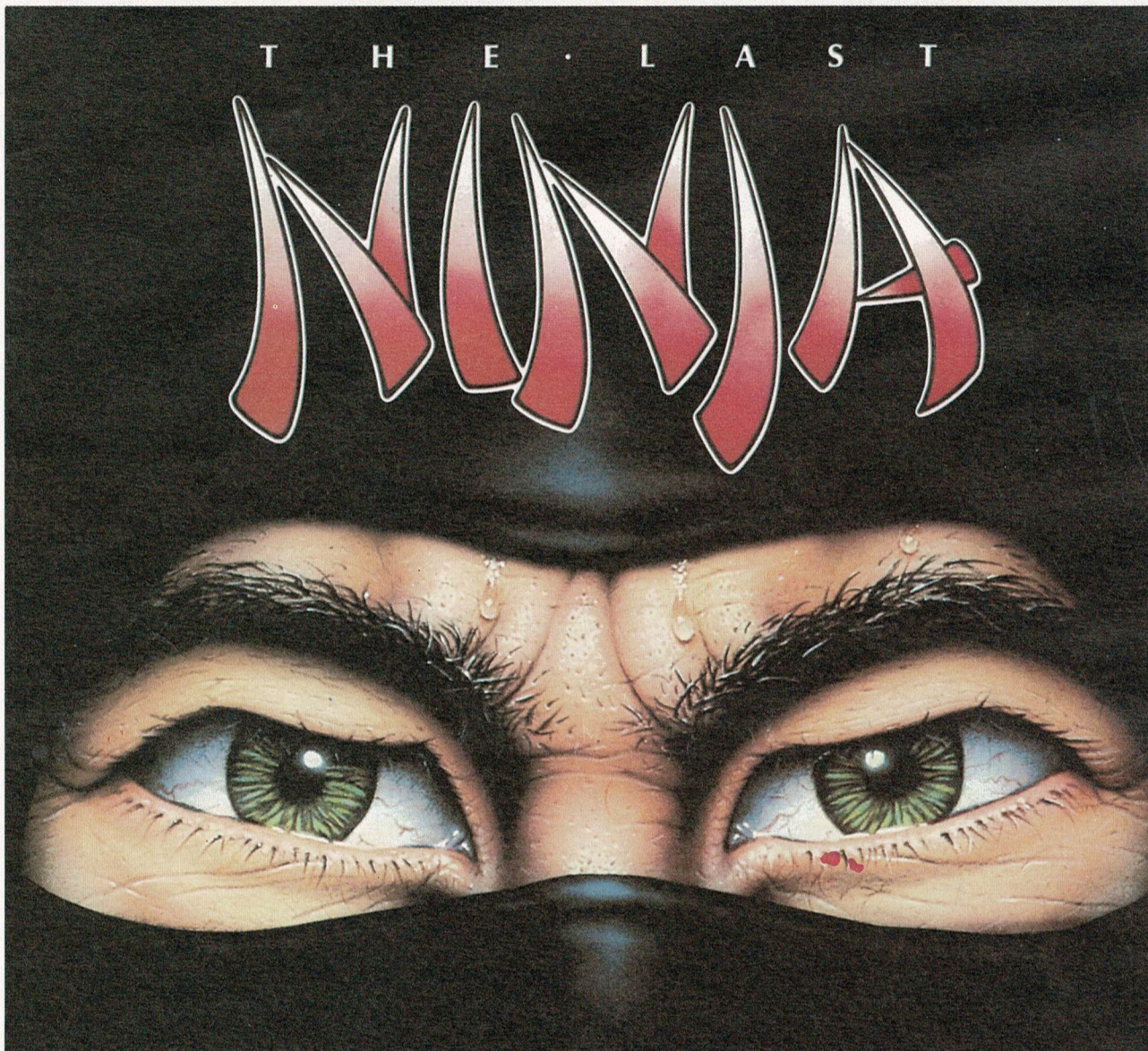
confident that the situation was very much temporary and went as far as to predict that stock would be available again in "a week or two" - a belief that clashes somewhat with Mordacai's view of the situation.

Burke continued: "For now there's nothing we can do because we simply haven't got the product, but without wishing to sound blasé I do think that instead of dealers moaning about Amstrad who have lined their pockets, they should do something more positive like concentrate on other lines with higher margins - advance ordering might help as well.



BURKE: "There's no stitch up" "Of course it came as a shock to us and it's having a seriously bad effect on us to the

tune of £150,000 a month. But it's not a case of being dropped in it, there's no stitch up here."



THE LAST NINJA ... THE STATE OF THE MARTIAL ARTS

The secrets of the Ninjitsu way had been jealously guarded for centuries, only once every decade were the scrolls seen at the ritual of the White Ninja.

None coveted these secrets more than the evil Shogun. Seizing the opportunity of the ritual he sprang a fiendish trap that destroyed the brotherhood, except for one ... You. The Last Ninja.

Your sworn oath is to recover the scrolls, you travel to the mystical lands of the Shogun. Already his guards are mastering the ways of the Ninjitsu.

To reach the Shogun's Palace you must use all your weapon craft and fighting skills as you travel through dangerous wastelands, magnificent gardens then descend into the direst dungeons before the final confrontation ... You cannot fail. You are the Last Ninja.

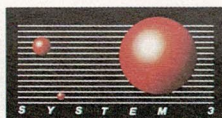
BBC Micro Cassette\$9.95 Acorn Electron Cassette.....\$9.95
 BBC Micro 5 1/4" Disc\$11.95 BBC Master Compact 3 1/2" Disc.....\$14.95
(Compatible with the BBC B, B+ and Master Series computers)

Please make cheques payable to "Superior Software Ltd".
 (The screen pictures show the BBC Micro version of the game.)

THE LAST NINJA, one of the greatest No. 1 hits on the Commodore computer, is now available for the BBC Micro/Master and Acorn Electron computers, under licence from System 3/Activision (UK) Ltd.



(Acornsoft is a registered trademark of Acorn Computers Ltd. Superior Software Ltd is a registered user.)
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Hants adds Archimedes

Hampshire Local Education Authority has joined the increasing band of educational bodies opting for the Acorn Archimedes.

Hampshire will be equipping its schools with over 1,000 Archimedes machines in its 114 secondary schools and Vth form colleges. This is claimed to be just the first phase of investment, with the authority looking for further support from local businesses.

"The Archimedes RISC technology is so far advanced that it is unlikely to be outmoded for some years to come. Also whilst providing continuity with existing BBC and Master Series computers used extensively in our schools, the Archimedes provides new avenues for computer applications in schools yet to be explored," commented Hampshire's advisor for educational computing Graham Bevis.

In the meantime the Halifax Building Society is helping the education of future recruits by providing over £50,000 worth of Acorn computers to schools in the Calderdale region.

The machines will be used for information technology training and Acorn is claiming that this latest venture will be the first in a number of companies investing in the education of future employees.

CBM backs industry night '88

Commodore is set to become the first hardware firm to ever appear at the leisure industry's annual industry dinner.

The already sold out event - which takes place at the Portman Hotel, London on December 15th - appears to have quashed any fears that there were about the popularity of such an event.

A new serious image is being promised for the evening, which will see the launch of the games industry's 1989 charity - autistic children - and the presentation of numerous awards for programming excellence, Gallup-recorded sales and services to the industry.

The 1988 InDin will also see the announcement of the prestigious CTW Retailer of the Year and CTW Distributor of the Year winners.

TO ALL RETAILERS

HAVE A

SEGA

CHRISTMAS

ALL THE HITS

**INCLUDING:-
AFTERBURNER
THUNDERBLADE**

NEW

**& DOUBLE
DRAGON**

“The other full-price new entry on the ‘CT50’, ‘Thunder Blade’, from Sega is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that over a year after its initial launch, a considerable base of Sega console users has been set up by Mastertronic’s distribution, ready to receive ‘hot’ new product. Secondly, the ability to release titles such as ‘Thunder Blade’ before they are available in the general market is bound to bring success, especially when, as in this case, they are widely tipped as a Christmas best-seller. Both processes could see Sega’s market share grow even further.”

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FROM



MASTERTRONIC

THE TEAM

SNIPPETS

After a barrage of releases about new signings by its major rivals promo firm **USD** has been spurred into totting up its chart performances again. It decided to point out that distributor **Microdealer's** top seven titles for the 8-bit chart published on December 3rd were all USD-backed. These were: *Double Dragon: R-Type (Sp)*, *Double Dragon (C64)*, *Last Ninja II (Sp)*, *Pacmania (C64)*, *Pacmania (Sp)*, *Armalyte (C64)* and *Return of the Jedi (Sp)* . . . **Mastertronic** was whooping with delight over the performance of its first ever arcade licence last week. The Technos title *Double Dragon* on Spectrum and Commodore 64 both entered their respective Gallup charts at number one . . . US leisure giant **Epyx** is already looking forward to the next **Consumer Electronics Show** in Las Vegas on January 7th. It seems to have got a bit over excited, though — an invitation to its stand said "we would like to give you a guided tour of our 1969 products". Surely the games market is still too young for nostalgia? . . . **Centresoft** has calmed trade anxiety over the lack of taste of the firm's latest Christmas promotional gift. *CTW* received a flood of one call from a shocked and outraged dealer over Centresoft's Christmas cracker containing a card saying 'bang' that came packaged with US Gold's

Chernobyl game. "Sick, sick, sick," ejaculated our very own Mr Angry. Apparently, though, the coupling of the game and gimmick was purely coincidental with all free games being chosen at random from the Centresoft shelves . . . **Code Masters** is reporting a good response to its new budget game price of £2.99. The initial ship-out on its first five titles at the new price was apparently 30 per cent ahead of expectations . . . **Tandy** was celebrating the opening of its 250th store last week, which is situated on the Tottenham Court Road. The firm is pitching this latest outlet as the flagship of its development into the 1990's and a clear sign of its intention to become the largest electronic retailer in the UK . . .

A computer 'play-in' for parents, teachers and pupils was recently held by educational software specialists **ESM**. As well as attempting to overcome the fear factor of computers, the firm was also promoting its latest product, a Colour Screenprint which offers instant colour print-outs . . . **Mitsubishi** is adding to its MH Series of hand-held scanners, with a new entry-level A6 model. The MH105 connects to PC, XT or AT computers and can be used for desktop publishing, document image processing and security character recognition and is priced at £99 . . . A new rival to the Psion Organiser is now being sold by **MBS** at a special introductory price of £69.95. The Casio SF4000 Digital



Casio's Psion challenger



The first steps to overcoming technofear

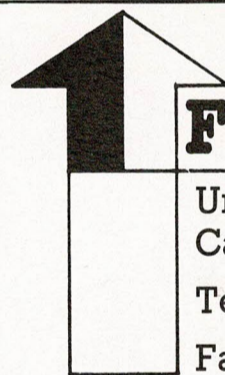
Diary includes a schedule keeper, calendar, address book and memo pad and is claimed to only take five minutes to learn how to use . . .

Those wonderful people at **Inmac** have come up with yet another computer essential. This time the firm is offering a range of laptop carrying bags and being made from high grade black nylon not only do they keep machines snug, they're weather and scuff resistant as well. At around £50 who could ask for more? . . .

For the second year running **Tecmar** has named **Frontline**

as International Distributor of the Year. The award was presented at the Comdex Fall, and unsurprisingly goes to the firm with the highest volume of Tecmar sales outside the US . . . Following a recent expansion of its product range, **Real Time Developments** has appointed Geoff Craddock as products division manager. The ex-Plessey man is now responsible for the production, supply and maintenance support of all RTD products . . . In a bid to get publicity a **Tandon Data Pac** was recently run over by a 7.5 tonne truck,

and it will come as no surprise to discover that all the information on the Pac survived, which should help users sleep more easily . . . A new Danish subsidiary has been opened by **Seiko Epson**. The firm is called Epson Danmark and will be handling the marketing, sales, distribution service and support of all Epson's computers and printers in the country . . . Paris based **DDI/Logistick**, an Amstrad PCW specialist, has linked up with the UK through marketing firm Spies International. Spies will be promoting DDI as major supply company for all computer product requirements . . . A new Archimedes disk drive system has been launched by Surrey based **Cumana**. The drive offers a choice of 5.25 inch and 3.5 inch systems. Both models are 80 track double sided with internal power supply, whilst the 5.25 inch version comes with software to allow formatting of 360K MS DOS disks . . . A new faxing service has been launched by **Micronet**, which operates through the firms InterLink gateway to TelecomGold. Text messages can now be sent to any of the two million Group III fax machines worldwide. Other features of the service includes: free notification of delivery or non-delivery, a free cover sheet plus the date and time sent . . .



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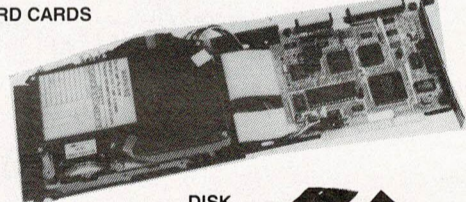
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DATA SWITCHBOXES —
MANUAL/AUTO

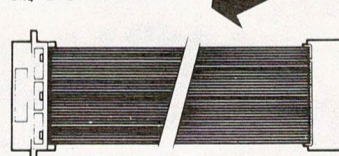


HARD CARDS



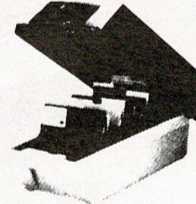
SURGE PROTECTORS

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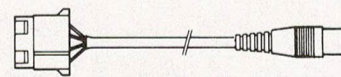
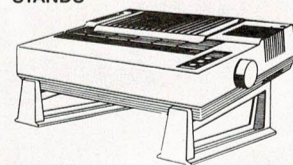
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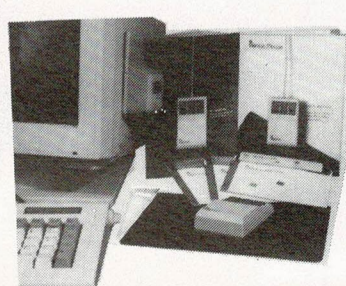
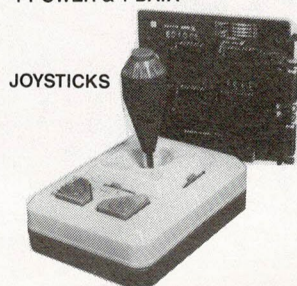
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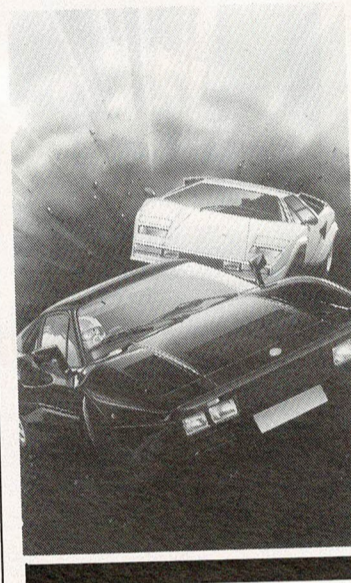
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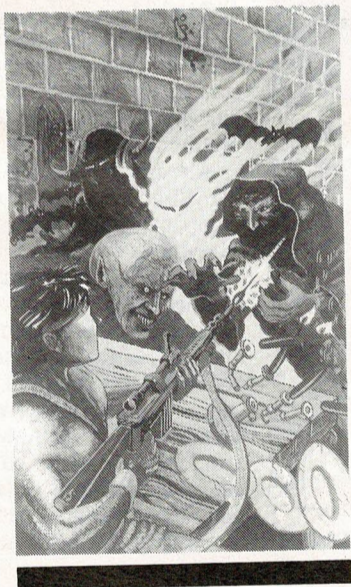
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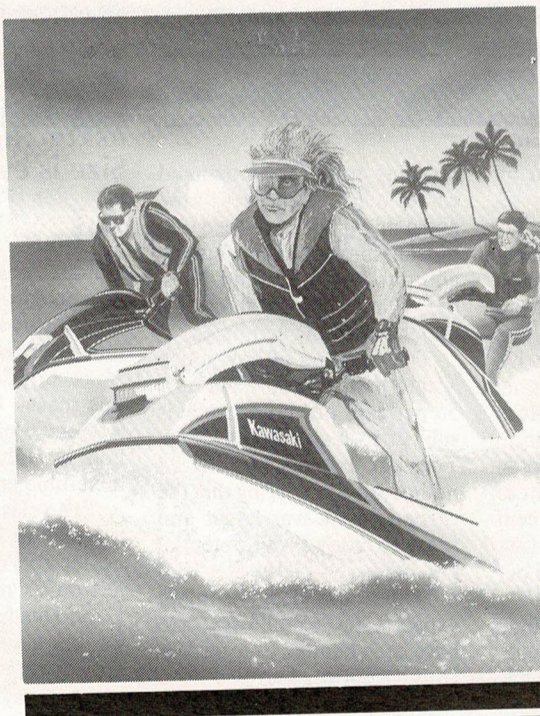
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THE MEN WHO WOULD BE KINGS

Or are they already? Messers Alexander, Herman, Sharam and Heath reckon they're on for a £30-35 million turnover by July next year. If achieved, Virgin Mastertronic could be arguing by then that it is the biggest leisure software and distribution firm in the world. But it has no greater profile in the market than its five closest rivals and Virgin itself has long been classed a struggler rather than a championship contender. STUART DINSEY reports . . .

It says something about the whole Virgin Group's attitude to business that one of its dashing division MDs – Nick Alexander of Virgin Mastertronic – should want to play pinball before letting the journalist and photographer that he's just entertained return home. If he'd been called Norman he'd probably never have got the job in the first place.

There are no airs and graces in a Virgin office, they all put the bins out and you can't tell the marketing team from the YTS workers. It's probably something to do with the firm's roots being in the trendy world of record publishing.

After three attempts Alexander finally won his pinball game and so officially ended the CTW visit. In the same way, Virgin itself is effectively making its third attempt at getting it exactly right in the leisure computer market.

First off, there was just Virgin Games – the potential giant that turned over every now and then but never quite managed to rouse. Things started to look better when 45 per cent of budget specialist Mastertronic was bought last autumn but still the formula for supposed world domination wasn't quite right.

Come October 1988 and Virgin Mastertronic was born – a strategical alliance created by Virgin's 100 per cent control of Mastertronic, a beast far more successful than Virgin would ever be on its own.

So the third attempt begins – but by buying its way onto the Mastertronic name it has actually reached the destination that it so craved already. It now has a major share of the budget market, a strong name in the 16-bit market (Melbourne House), a handy hardware distribution deal with Sega for its console and software distribution into 1,500 stores via a joint venture with Entertainment UK (formerly Record Merchandisers).

Oh, of course, there is Virgin's own contribution to all this – Leisure Genius (that was bought in too a few years back) and the Virgin label itself (it's last major release prior to this Christmas being the averagely successful *Action Force II* back in February).

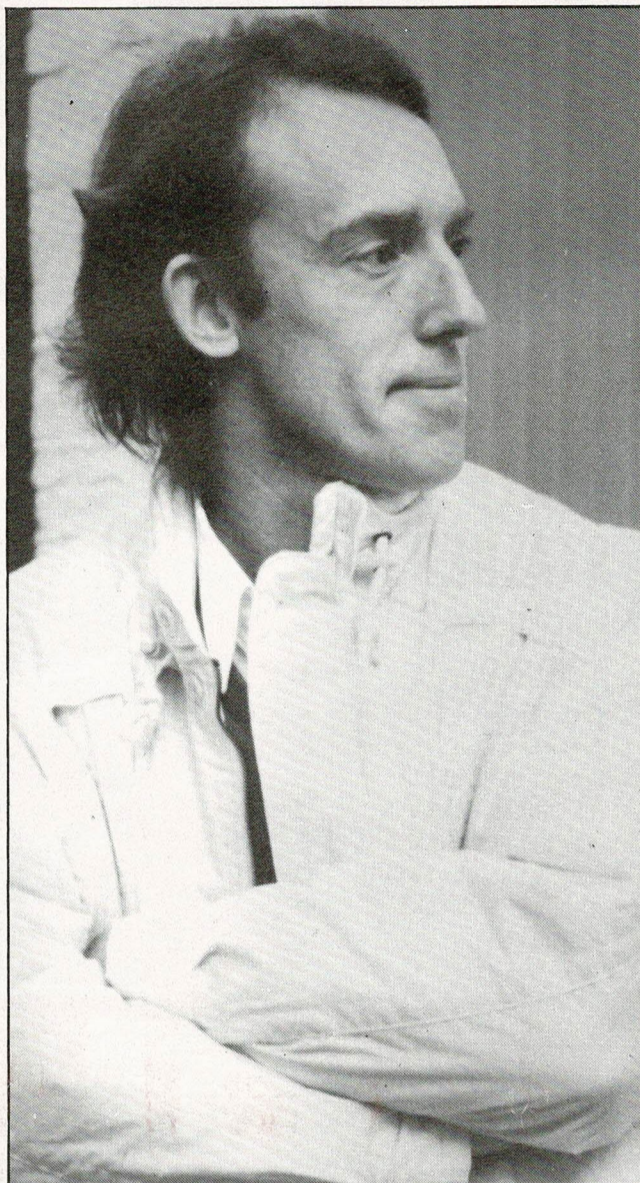
Buy hook, buy crook

When looking at Virgin's now strong position in the market one simply can't help getting the feeling it's cheated.

Alexander, of course, laughs at such a monstrous slur. "My main objective two years ago was to move from 3-5 per cent market share to 12-15 per cent.

"It's a classic case of two and two making five, or in this case, nearer 10."

Geoff Heath



ALEXANDER: Pinball Wizard

And I planned to do that by acquisition as we knew we couldn't do it organically.

"If you look at any successful company you'll find that a large part of it comes from acquisition. Any business school will tell you that it's much better to buy existing organisations than start from scratch. We felt that with Virgin holding a 12 per cent share of the record market we ought to have a minimum of 10 per cent of the software market. In fact, we've ended up with 20-25 per cent."

The thought that Virgin Mastertronic is currently gobbling up to a quarter of the UK leisure market would probably make a lot of its competitors choke – providing, of course, that they believed the said claim.

So, having achieved its aims via the buying of Mastertronic one immediately asks what did the acquired get out of it? Buying power and security seem to be the answers.

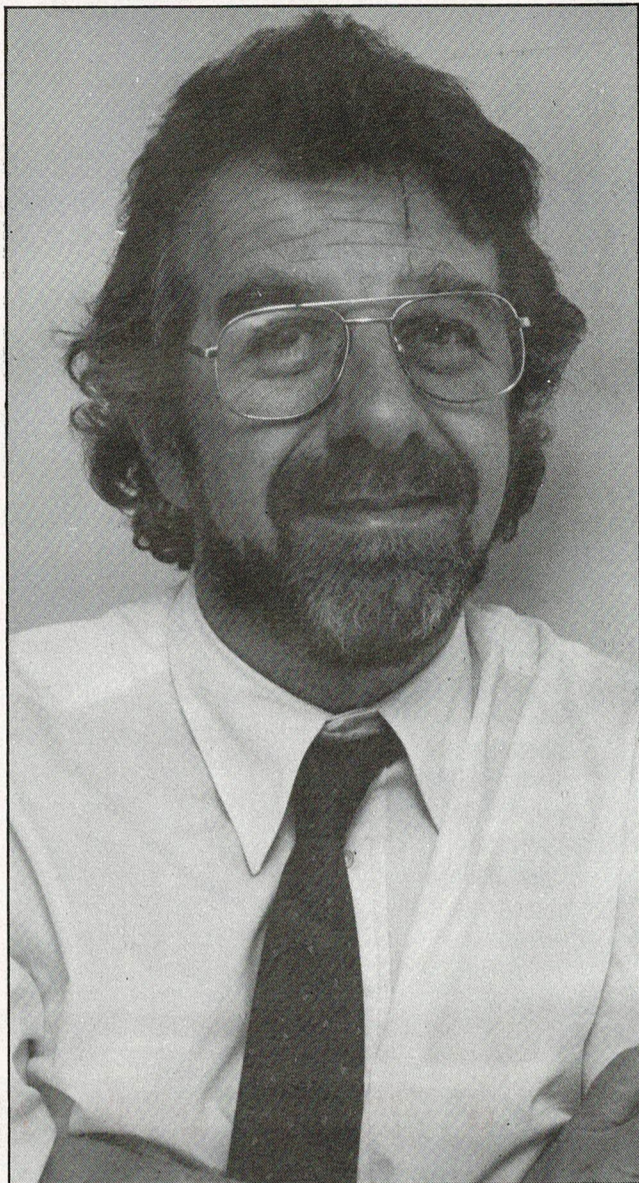
The meteoric rise of Mastertronic – and more poignantly the signing of the Sega distribution deal – had brought pressures. For example, some £7.5 million of Sega stock was ordered at the tail end of the summer. An organisation such as Mastertronic, working largely off budget software and slim distribution margins at this stage, simply could not have coped with this on its own. And to make sure that the £7.5 million isn't wasted a bob or two has to be spent on creating a demand for the product. Last year the Sega was

nowhere near the in-demand games machine that it is now, and it might just have been that Mastertronic couldn't actually afford to buy that many. Thus, there was no point scaling out a major marketing campaign.

The question of how much Virgin paid for the remaining 55 per cent of Mastertronic is subject to a strange cover-up. The first 45 per cent cost £4 million, so considering that the second chunk was larger and Mastertronic's profit potential had increased vastly after winning the Sega deal we might expect some £6 million extra to have been handed over for Virgin's complete control.

This, however, seems rather unlikely. Mastertronic did gain a lot from Virgin's intervention, namely the sorting out of some rather painful cash-flow problems. Some are even saying that nothing, yes nothing, was actually handed over. Alexander, meanwhile, simply shook his head vociferously at this notion. "It did cost us – but I'm not saying how much," he offered defiantly.

The efficient marketing of the Sega system in the UK is obviously the major product of the Virgin Mastertronic alliance. It is fairly motoring along this Christmas with an installed base of 50-60,000 units possibly set to reach the magical 100,000 by the time the January sales have finished. There has also been the setting up of subsidiaries in France and Germany – something else Mastertronic would have found rather expensive to do on its own.



HEATH: Playing with a bigger toy
Size is everything

Mastertronic's turnover in 1987 was around £10 million, Alexander claims that its bought-in partner was around three to three and a half times the size of Virgin's software division. Even though this makes for an impressive total the projected £30-35 million by July 1989 seems an incredible jump to make.

"It's a classic case of two and two making five, or in this case nearer 10," offers Virgin Mastertronic's marketing director Geoff Heath. If you're looking for clues as to how such a growth curve can be achieved there is only one place to look – you've guessed it, the Sega yet again.

After building it's name by pioneering the art of publishing software at £1.99 it is now the imported Japanese games machine that is the jewel in the Tronic crown.

It has been marketed like software rather than hardware. It's not the ZCLs, Lightnings and Hugh Symons that are shifting the Sega but the Centresofts and Microdealers – the games distributors.

"Our view always was that we would market the Sega as a games machine not as a computer, and also not as a toy – which is what Nintendo discovered they should have done all along," says Heath.

Certainly, few would argue that the Sega is having the best of the £100 console market. It certainly doesn't do the machine any harm that just about all the biggest arcade games are coming from Sega

these days – *OutRun*, *Afterburner*, *R-Type*, *Space Harrier* and *Enduro Racer* are just a handful of the games that have meant Mastertronic stepping up from a life of selling £2 games to £20 games. It must be loving those higher margins.

Indeed, whilst Mastertronic has been dipping its finger into every conceivable shape, make and colour of pie going it has seen its budget position eroded. Code Masters started the rot a couple of years ago by proving that there is room for newcomers to come in from nowhere and do well. Mastertronic, after once lording it easily with just Firebird Silver for company, now scraps it out with any number of Code Masters' clones and major publisher re-release labels.

Not that Mastertronic is overly worried about its position. Eggs were scattered early via the acquisition of Melbourne House, opening the door into the again high margin world of 16-bit.

Cash 'n' carry on

Budget has by no means been forsaken, but the need to succeed therein has been lessened. "If you're only in budget and you're running the whole business on budget margins, then I find it very hard to see how to make any money at all," says Heath candidly. It's a point that has been reflected of late with the number of budget labels shifting prices up to £2.99, or even dabbling with the odd full-price release.

With it's range of full-price labels Virgin Mastertronic is

also counting on being one of the first firms to cash in on any future 16-bit budget boom that may eventually happen. Melbourne House, Leisure Genius and Virgin (a re-birth is being promised) will all have back-catalogues to be pillaged.

Despite its own efforts Mastertronic concedes that there isn't really a budget 16-bit market at present – Alexander, though, reckons 1990 will be the year prices start tumbling.

The world domination masterplan ends with a little thing called Arcadia. In fact, it's actually a very big thing. It's just that everything that goes on regarding the arcade division tends to go in the States and – despite Alexander's denials – one could be correct in surmising that not a lot has actually happened yet other than the spending of lots of Mastertronic's hard-earned cash.

Yet another reason for Virgin's new daddy role appears, and yet again it centres around money. Alexander describes what Arcadia has been through so far as a "building process" – which is a euphemism for 'lots of money spent, not much made yet'.

The emphasis here should be on the yet. A Nintendo-style *Super Select* ten game cabinet, *Magic Johnson's Fastbreak Basketball* and a soccer game are soon to hit the US – the basketball game apparently being a surefire character licence specifically designed with our US brethren in mind.

Alexander views Arcadia like Virgin did its US record company. "You can't go into everything and make money straight away. This is long-term business." And long-term business is, of course, something that only a few companies – those the size of Virgin generally – can afford to invest in. Heath admits that Mastertronic had not expected Arcadia to take as long as it is to get fully off the ground, although he is confident of its ultimate potential.

So what are we left with when surveying what has to be the software market's biggest marriage of the year? It's simple really. Virgin has got its major role in the market which it couldn't have achieved otherwise and Mastertronic, whilst ultimately losing its independence, has been given the chance to chase rainbows which otherwise may have stayed out of reach, or even turned into rainclouds.

"We still call the shots in terms of what we ourselves are doing. We've just been given a bigger toy to play with," says Heath succinctly.

"You can't go into everything and make money straight away. This is long-term business."

Nick Alexander

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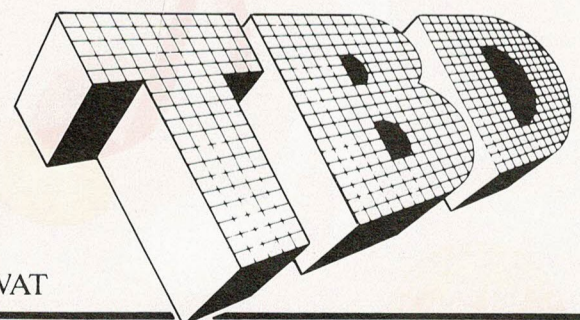
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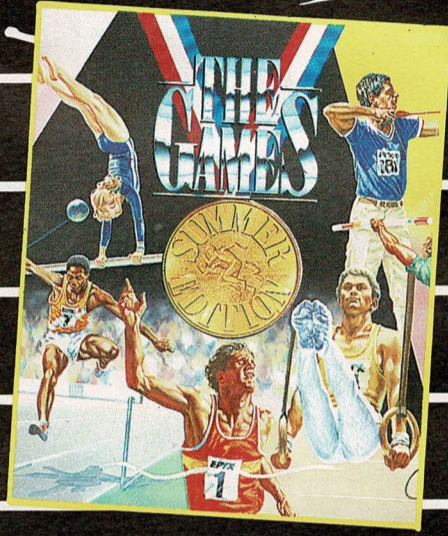
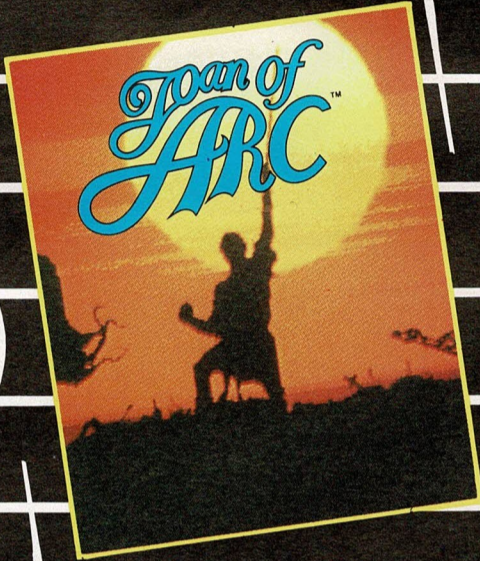


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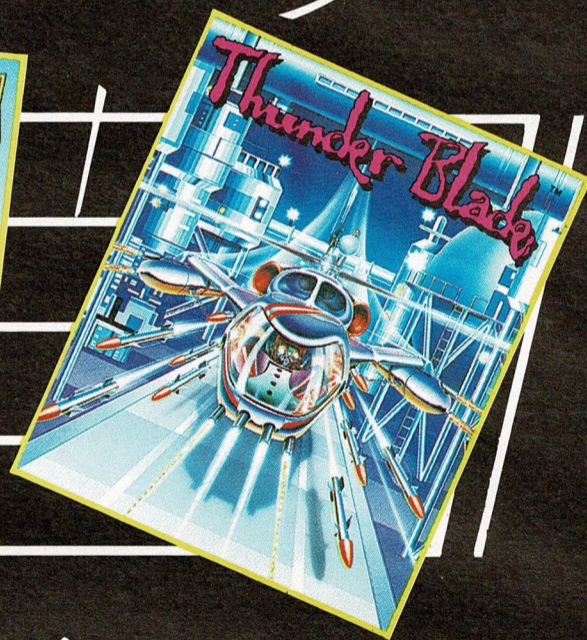
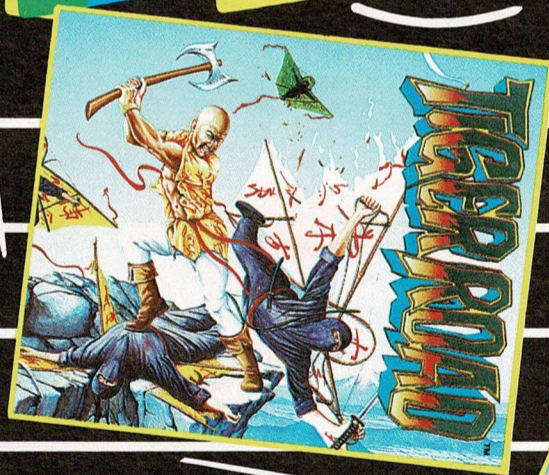
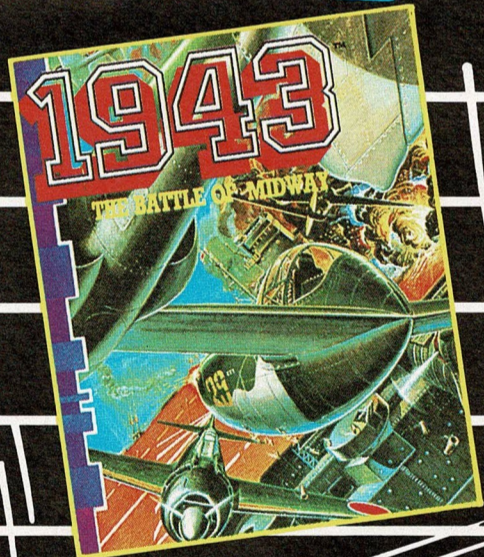
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TBD'S SORT OF HOMECOMING

TBD has finally returned to hardware after a conspicuous two year absence. Whilst licking past wounds the firm has been busy putting together a complete package for its video/record dealers and is confident that the Atari console will find its perfect niche. KELLY BESWICK gets the low down from the hardware market's prodigal son...



McWILLIAM & SMITH: Putting Sinclair troubles behind them

The TBD philosophy can be described quite simply - low-key. This approach unsurprisingly mirrors the character of its boss Norman Smith, a phlegmatic man who appears to have little time for the usual ballyhoo and hype that tends to go with this business.

The Stoke on Trent based firm has in the past gone about its business shying away from the full public glare, and the fact that TBD's return to the hardware market after a two year absence has increased its profile seems to irritate Smith considerably.

All had previously been pretty quiet on the TBD front, having originally opted out of hardware after an acrimonious split with Amstrad. The decision to take on Atari's full range of leisure machines has come at a time when the firm's parent company John Menzies has stepped up its commitment to the ST. It would hardly seem presumptuous to conclude that this has been a major factor in prompting TBD's unexpected return, yet the company insists that it had made the decision to support Atari before Menzies, and did in fact influence Menzies' decision.

Smith's low-key approach does tend to belie the dynamics behind the company's decision to take on Atari. The company originally started life as a record distributor, later moving into the video market and it is these traditional links that TBD is looking to exploit in creating a one stop shop for home leisure entertainment. In the past this concept has been much flaunted and if TBD can get it off the ground then the pickings could be very lucrative.

"We are offering retailers the opportunity to get involved in

the whole leisure entertainment market. It is difficult to convince some dealers to diversify, but it's a good commercial decision. The people growing out of the record and video market are more worldly than those around a few years ago, and with a little hands-on help we expect they can sell computer hardware," offered sales and marketing director David McWilliam.

Out of the Atari range TBD is backing the console to be the most popular amongst its dealers. "For £40 you can just pick it up off the counter and away you go. The Atari console is as flexible as a cassette - it's an affordable impulse purchase."

Over the past year the company has been putting together an umbrella merchandising pack which includes cassettes sell-through videos, CDs, budget software and in due course the Atari console. McWilliam is confident of the package's success, having already carried out intensive tests at a chain of video library stores in Birmingham.

Atari to Timbuktoo

"Basically we select what goes in from our range of best sellers, providing the expertise to produce a package that can sell from Portsmouth to Timbuktoo. We've found a way of flogging product to all and sundry and what we're saying is you give us the space and staff and we'll manage the rest. If it works in a video library who knows, maybe even the local fish and chip shop?"

Indeed, McWilliam considers the possibilities to be endless and is even talking about approaching BP in the hope of getting the TBD package into garage forecourts.

TBD has certainly taken its time getting back into har-

dware and here is one subject that does reveal a decided chink in Smith's apparent apathetic armour, barely attempting to conceal his bitterness regarding the aforementioned split.

Throughout 1985 and 1986 TBD was sole distributor for Sinclair, but the subsequent demise of the company and the transfer of its product range to Amstrad left TBD "up a creek without a paddle". Smith claims that whilst Amstrad was insisting that it hadn't bought the warranty on existing product, Sinclair was acting as if it had been sold.

Smith describes the whole situation as "a messy business", and clearly took it very personally. "Amstrad changed the rules and behaved very dishonourably, which created a lot of resentment with our customers and cost us a lot of money. Without the problem of litigation it was impossible for us to tell our independent customers why we were taking a harder stance. I think TBD did more than its call of duty, but it left me feeling completely drained, whilst our relationship with the customer had been jaded."

So in 1986 TBD fled the field to quietly lick its wounds taking the decision to concentrate on the video and record market. The firm continued to handle software, but primarily for large chains. Smith freely admits that its indie base has slipped considerably over the past two years, "we still do deals with some independents, but we can hardly be classified as a main supplier."

Yet Smith seems decidedly unperturbed by the company's distinct lack of independent computer dealers. As far as Smith is concerned the way forward is what he describes as the "non-traditional route", as

outlined by McWilliam above.

This is not TBD's first association with Atari, having handled its original video games machine about five years ago. But as the machine faded out it decided not to stick with Atari.

"In the past Atari management changed more often than the English weather, and at the end of the day there was still no guarantee of who would take responsibility for faulty products. But over the past two years Atari has got its act together and they made it clear to us that they saw a place for someone to fill the middle ground," commented McWilliam.

The company is not ruling out the possibility of taking other brands of hardware in the future. Smith claims that TBD has already been approached by Commodore, but decided to decline the offer commenting that "the volume of business to the amount of effort would not be satisfactory".

Seeking Sega

The Sega, however, could be looming on the TBD horizon, with Menzies already taking it direct. "Obviously Sega and Nintendo are going to be battling it out, but the Sega looks a good option and we have a lot of faith in it. Of course we'd take it if we were approached."

TBD is also looking to supply the Atari range to other chains outside Menzies. The company currently supplies WH Smiths with software, and whilst the store does stock the ST, it's supplied direct from Atari. "We're obviously interested in helping Smiths with supplies and should they decide on us for the ST then we'd be only too pleased to

Continued on page 27

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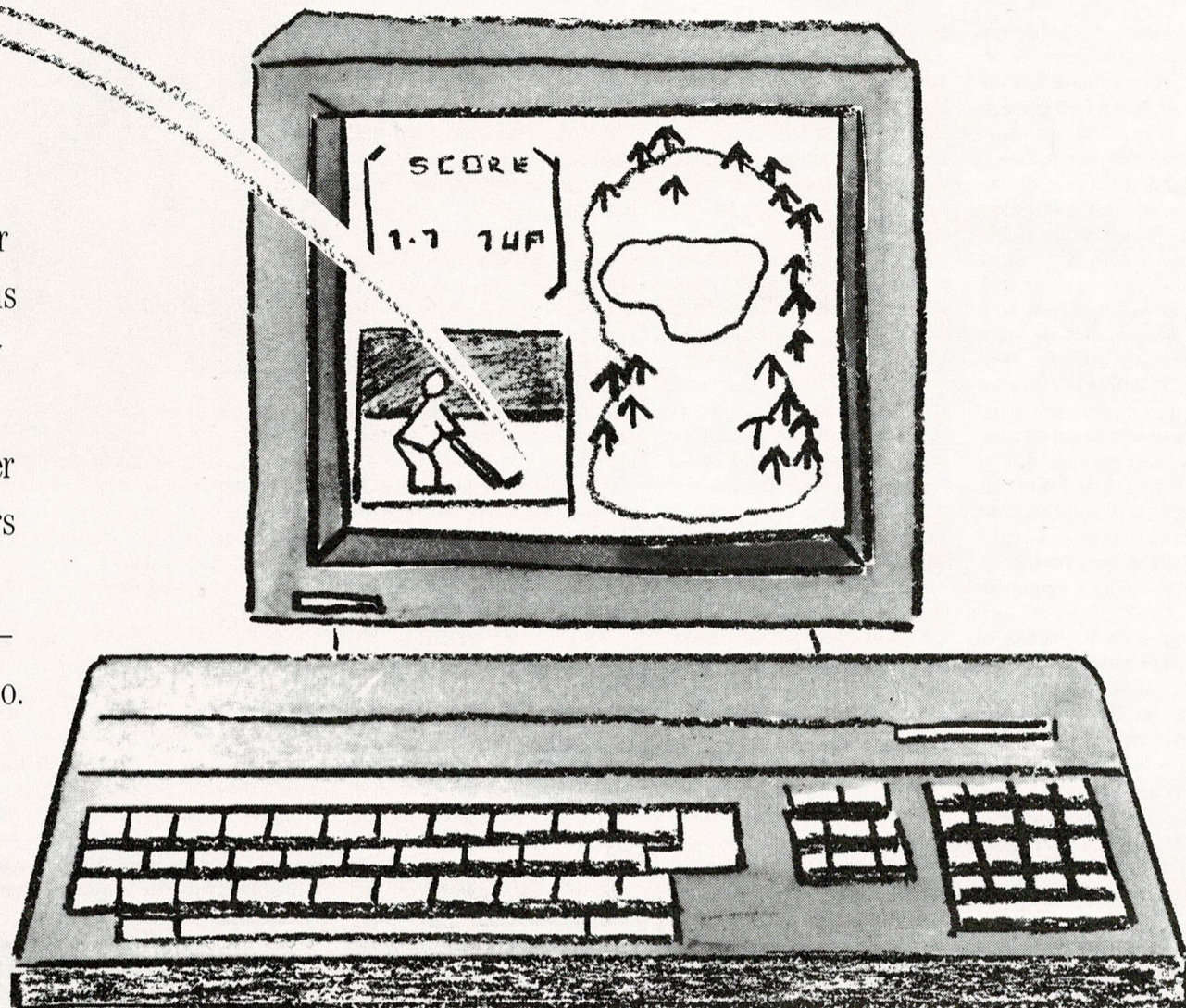
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MUST THE SHOW GO ON?

Atari's Christmas Show recently came and went with Atari itself making its first appearance for three shows. But whilst Atari has developed into a sophisticated hardware manufacturer with products ranging from £15 wargames to ATs and 386s, its very own show remains the same — rowdy and full of young bargain hunters. KELLY BESWICK came, saw and returned worn out . . .

The most noticeable thing about this year's Atari Christmas Show was the number of spots. Some enterprising person could have made a fortune setting up a small stand dedicated to the treatment of this pubescent problem. It certainly would have been a darn sight more interesting than what appeared to be a hoard of market stall traders busy indulging in a quick bit of box shifting.

The exhibitors seemed pretty happy, as did most of the visitors loaded down with their STs, and carrier bags full of games. It all seemed a bit far removed from the official Atari stand, which was making a valiant effort to portray a decidedly more upmarket image.

Such an effort in the face of so much tack was indeed brave. In fact, Atari hasn't even attended the last three of its shows, and the decision to officially show its face at the Ally Pally was an obvious attempt to give the event more kudos.

Whether the Christmas Show was the best place for Atari to adopt a more business-like stance is debatable? The

sound of Frosty the Snowman tinkering away on an ST in the background, along with what must surely be the most unconvincing and miserable looking Father Christmas manically accosting unsuspecting children, hardly added to the desired image.

Amongst the rabble (or was it rubble?) the Atari stand looked completely out of place, with the only people bothering to make a visit being the trade and press. Perhaps one area that did arouse a flicker of interest amongst a public intent on snapping up cheap leisure consumables was the preview of Atari's latest games venture on its Battlescapes label.

The first game of this label is *Borodino* and it was supposed to be available for the Show. Unfortunately, packaging problems had resulted in a delay, so the hoards of frantic shoppers had to satisfy themselves with just looking.

Game for a life

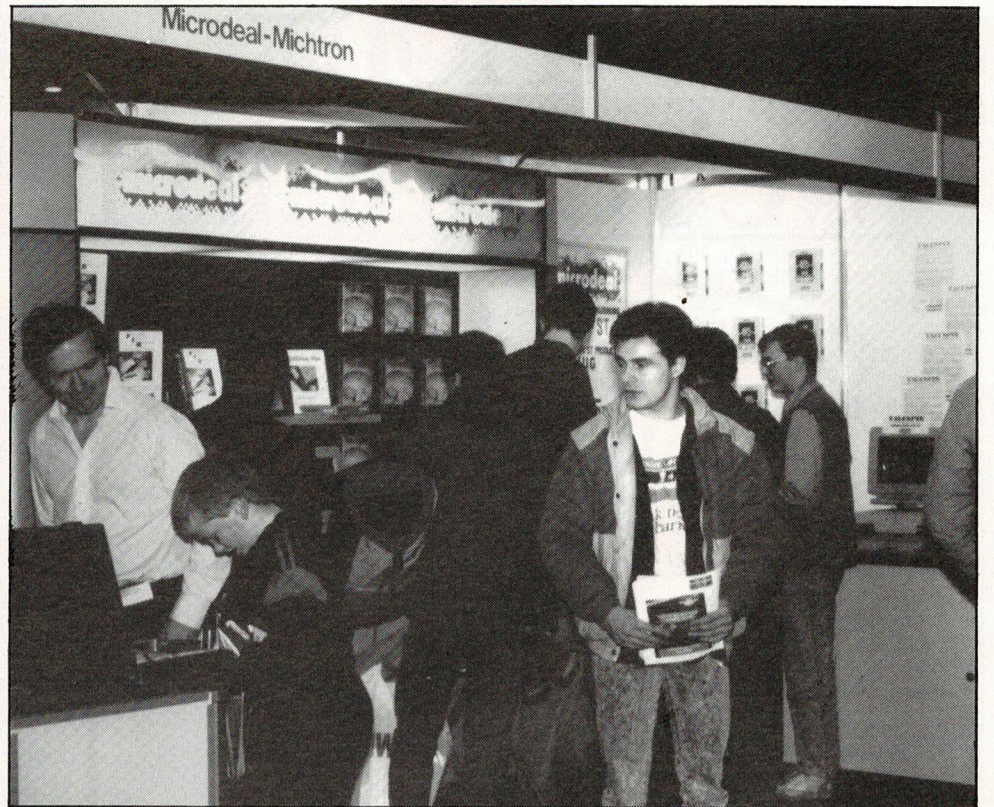
In the past Atarisoft has made games to support the Atari hardware, but according to marketing man Darryl Still,

"the firm is now intent on making money out of games software. We want our games to be seen in their own right and completely separate from the hardware. Atari has stepped up its commitment in that area and things will be happening over the next few months".

"We have three more Battlescape games up our sleeve, but dozens more in our heads. If we get our act together we should be bringing out about one a month," offered Still. *Armada*, *Trafalger* and *Roman Empire* are the next releases in Battlescape's line-up. The firm is also plugging its Arcade and Mind-game labels, which will respectively bring out *Grand Prix* and the mysteriously named *Go-Moku/Renju* some vague time in the new year.

There were certainly no crowds around the Atari PCs, whilst previews of the firm's new spreadsheet, database and desktop publishing packages were practically ignored.

"Really what we want is a user show that will also attract the business market, maybe something like the PC Show where business and leisure are split. I think we need to get



Frenzied punters clamour around the Microdeal stand

away from this being purely a box shifting exercise and I'm confident that Database can do that if we work together," claims Still.

Atari's DTP package should be available just before Christmas. It's called *Calamus* and will sell for around £400. "*Calamus* has been around in Germany for a while and there's a couple of little Germanisms that need to be ironed out. Also the Atari staff have needed a bit of time to get acquainted with the product."

Adimans, a German Data-

base is also being translated, along with a spreadsheet called *LDW*. Both products are expected to be ready for shipping around February, which led Still to announce, "there are so many strings to the ST's bow there's really nothing it can't do".

It was difficult to concentrate on Still's upmarket claims with the sound of whizz-bang-boom emanating the arcade hall, and various Atari staff playing at undercover detectives in a vain attempt to stop "the little buggers" stealing the

software.

Spot the bawl

Database, the show's organiser, didn't seem too enthralled by the event either. "I hate these bloody things, just look at the spotty little sods. Christ we've got three days of this," seemed to be the general feeling. Excitement was definitely thin on the ground, which must be why everyone was so impressed when Queen's Brian May turned up with Anita Dobson hunting

Continued on page 27

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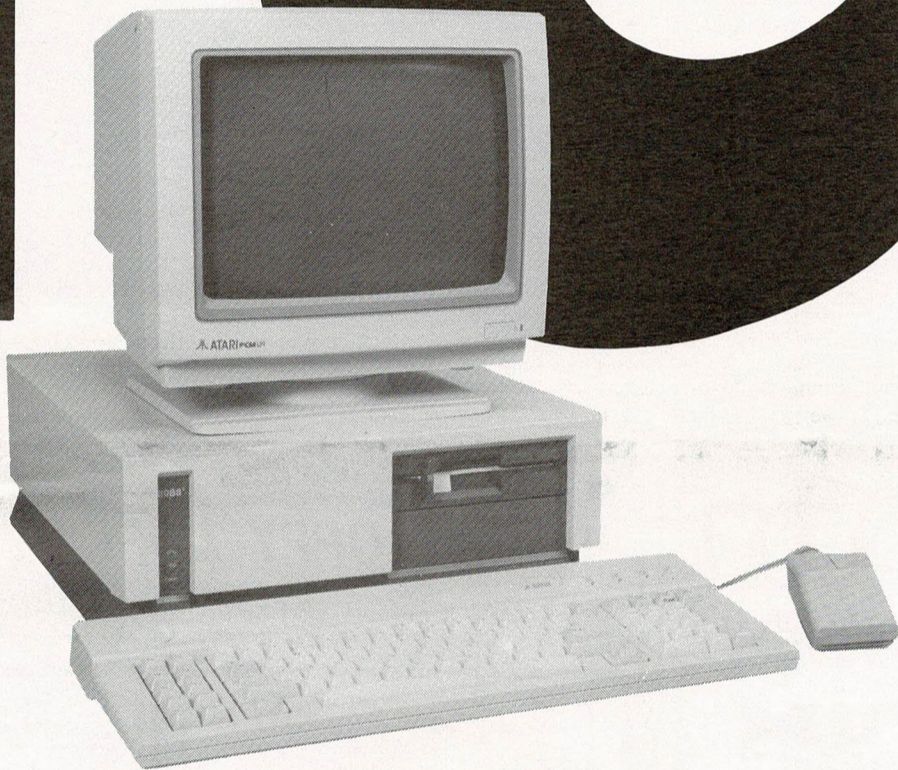
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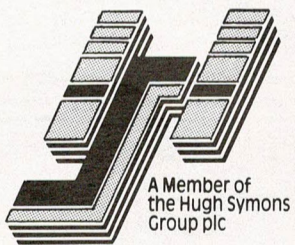


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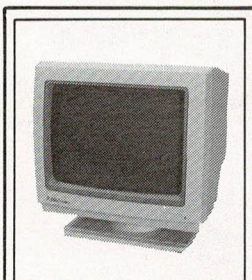
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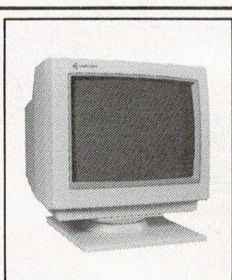
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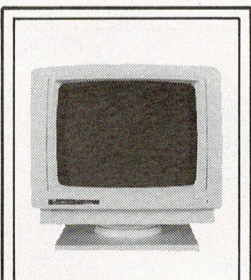
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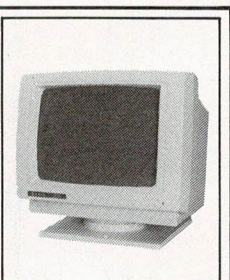
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COMMING UP FROM BEHIND

How does a dealer sell a modem if he doesn't really know what the benefit of one is? How does a dealer explain an online service if he doesn't really understand it himself? How does a dealer interested in comms get started? PETER TOOTILL is the man with all the answers . . .

Selling modems is a different proposition from the more usual computer accessories. The average micro owner can readily understand the uses of a printer or a hard disk, but a modem is different.

It is not so much an end in itself, only a means to an end. It doesn't do anything directly, it enables you to use online services - such as Prestel and Telecom Gold.

Another problem for dealers is that the technology is likely to be new to them and may seem difficult to comprehend. Again, they understand the use of a printer and how to sell it, but here there's a lot of new jargon and complex concepts. There may be a fear of excessive after sales support if users themselves find it hard to get to grips with the problems of the online world.

Despite all this, comms is a subject that is getting more and more interest these days. One proof is the entry of Amstrad into the market with a couple of modems: a PC card type and the new SM2400 standalone model (the latter was covered in CTW on September 19th) and, of course, the PPC with its built-in modem. Amstrad is not known for entering dwindling markets! It

obviously believes that there is money to be made, so there must be something in it for dealers. In that case, what can they do to find out about this new world of comms?

Fortunately there are a number of things. For example, modem manufacturer Pace has produced the *Pace Communications Guide* which is available free to dealers. As well as details of Pace products (and a price comparison chart), it covers such things as details of connecting cables, lists of online systems and even includes a demonstration disk. The disk contains a demo version of *DataTalk*, a comms package for IBM PC clones. This, when used with a Pace modem, will allow you to call up a demo area on Microlink (a system, based on Telecom Gold, aimed at the home and small business user).

The penalty area

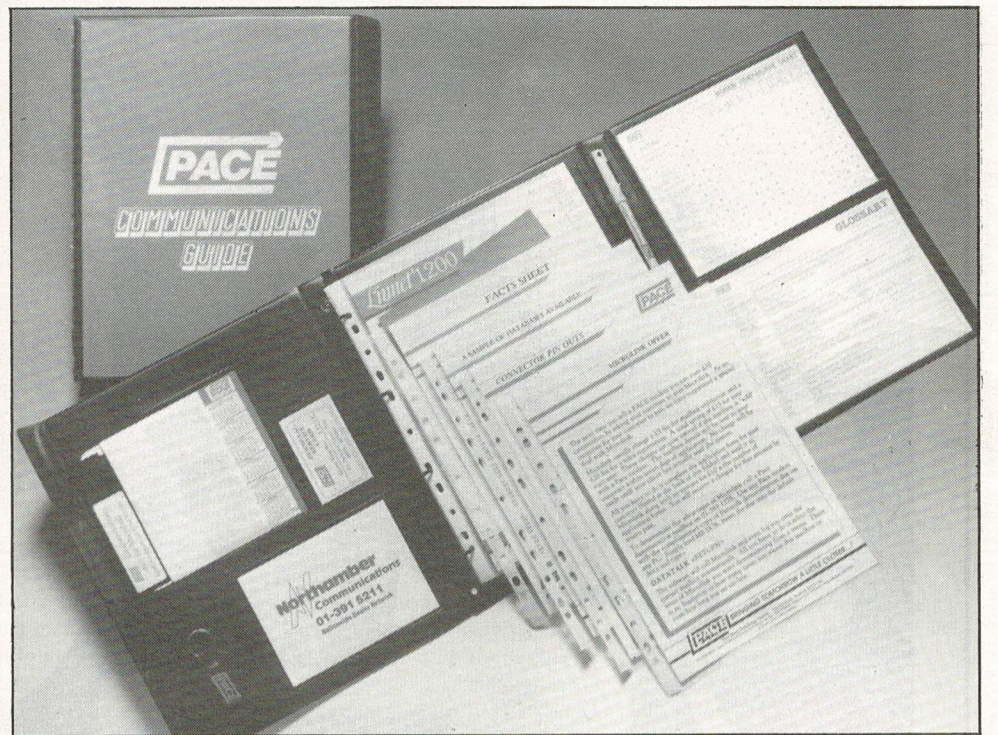
The Pace guide doesn't give any help with the jargon of the comms world - such things as bits, bauds, parity and the like. Fortunately, though, others plug this gap. Philips, Case and BT all have free guides that give a useful introduction to the jargon for those that want to delve a bit more. Comput-ed, which specialises in budget priced

training videos on microcomputer topics, has produced a video on comms. It's aimed more at business users, but it gives a good general introduction.

The two main commercial online systems that are likely to be of interest to home and small business users, Prestel (which includes Micronet) and Microlink (which, as mentioned above, is based on Telecom Gold) both have free demonstration areas. These can be used to whet the appetites of potential customers.

However, what would be more useful is a disk based demonstration package (interactive would be best) that could be left running on a PC in the showroom. Unfortunately nothing like this is available as yet, although Micronet is working on one. By the way, if you are to demonstrate Prestel on an IBM clone, you really need an EGA system. CGA can't cope with both the viewdata graphics and the eight colours at the same time.

One thing that stops many people getting into comms is fear of the costs - they worry about making massive contributions to BT's dividends. They needn't. Prestel and Microlink are generally available at local call



PACE COMMUNICATION GUIDE: Free to dealers

rates - around 50p an hour off peak, hardly bank breaking.

Personal Computer World.

The subs bench

The most popular non-commercial systems are bulletin board systems (BBSs). BBSs are now common and, again, are available in the local call area for many people - many companies include details with modems and software and there are also lists in some magazines such as

Of course commercial systems have costs over and above the cost of the telephone call. Subscriptions usually work out at around £3 to £5 a month and time charges are usually a few pence a minute. Another popular commercial system called CIX

is based on a London phone number, so call charges can be higher, but time charges are low. In most cases, as long as the systems are used carefully, costs need not be high.

Until recently there has been little incentive for dealers to sign people up for on-line services. However, Microlink have recently introduced a

Continued on page 27

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PART TWO: THE FIRST CUT

THE DAGGER makes his second appearance in *CTW*, variously masticating over the role of sex in the leisure market and not letting the fax get in the way of a good story . . .

The Dagger can't help but notice how one of those interesting little battles in the software business has opened up a very interesting area for discussion. I refer, of course, to the brou-ha going on about Microdealer International 'grey importing' a title from the US before the official UK publisher Electronic Arts has formally released the product over here.

Microdealer boss Lee Ginty may well be delighted that his company can provide such a snappy service to his retailers, but it looks like a case of winning a skirmish and in doing so making so much noise that the sleeping giant may be roused to wake from his slumber and . . . Misunderstandings like this can start a war.

Grey importing is a delicious phrase. It implies all sorts of cloak-and-dagger subterfuges. The last time I recall it being used was in the days when Sinclair was owned by its namesake and there was a bit of bother across the Iron Curtain - Poland I think it was. Yes, Poland in the days of Solidarity, when some bright sparks bought Spectrums in the UK and carried them across the borders, thus saving a small pram full of glotti's or blott-outs or whatever passes for currency there (It's zloty - Ed).

Basically it's a case where one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist. Where Ginty gloats, Mark Lewis of EA has to be restrained from sending in someone to realign his kneecaps. When Lewis says: 'it's too bad they're doing it', what he really means is: 'You cheap scumbag, we're gonna do everything short of corporate suicide to make sure we exterminate you and your business.'

It is well known, of course, that distributors generally get about 50 to 55 per cent off the RRP of a product, and then pass on anything from a 20 per cent to a 40 per cent margin to the retailer - about 30-35 seems to be the average. The saga raises the question, what exactly does the distributor *do* to get more than half the cost of a game put in his hands? The programmer can expect a royalty of about five per cent. It's rather unfair in the cold light of day. The creative impetus isn't being suitably rewarded, whilst the actions of profit motivated distributors are treated with rather more generosity than is appropriate. EA may well have dropped a time bomb into the UK industry by cutting out distributors. Doubtless distributors like Microdealer are stung. But there is one consolation for Ye Olde-Fashioned Distributor. The bomb won't go off if no one draws attention to it (although it's unlikely to go away).

But being greedy for even more may not be the best strategy.

Andrew Beale's letters about payment difficulties with Softek make fascinating reading. Will the great Doctor Langdell (known as 'Timmy' to his few friends) actually rouse himself to answer? Poor Andrew - in a hundred years time it will become apparent that games programmers are the chimney sweeps of our generation. Funny, because with all that technical know-how, you'd think they'd have worked that out for themselves by now. How come they're so slow? Clock batteries run down?

What the hell has happened to *California Games* on the Atari ST? US Gold, the would-be publishers, have run through every excuse in the book since the game was supposed to be launched during the summer. Ever since then it's always been 'It'll be out at the end of this month'. Now they just seem to have lost interest and are talking about next year. Bully for them. Extremely frustrating, boring and downright bloody infuriating for everybody else. No wonder the US Gold name is getting such a lot of stick these days.

It's absolutely fascinating how much junk mail a regular sort of industry person like The Dagger gets. Most of it gets binned of course. But more recently I've had opportunity to bin acres (OK, I'm slightly exaggerating) of Fax paper - most of it from US Gold and Gremlin Graphics. It's obvious what's happened. Some bright young marketing whizz came up with a great idea - let's tell everyone what's going on by Fax, because everyone reads a Fax addressed to them.

The first time round, it's true. I was an avid reader of US Gold's release schedules, until it got so confusing I just lost interest. Now I'd like to have an 'Auto-Bin' button on my Fax machine. Ink behind which lurks mediocre information about titles which otherwise wouldn't glean even the faintest interest. Selling by Fax is boring and wasteful. My advice is - don't bother.

Anyone who wants to get into the DTP market may be put off by the exorbitant prices charged by the Californians for the privilege of using their Apple-emblazoned equipment. But if you happen to be in New York then I suggest you give local dealers a look around. My New York contact tells me that you can wander

down to 380 Park Avenue South and pick up a Mac SE (20 MByte with keyboard) for \$2,699 (£1,500) - as against \$2,700 in the UK. Or a Mac II with two drives, 40 MByte hard drive and colour monitor at \$5,035 (£2,800) - where the UK price is £5,000 all in. So how come Apple makes the rest of the world pay through the nose for its ludicrously expensive ad themes? And, when the Americans cottoned on to what was happening, how come Apple didn't reduce prices globally? Call 0101 212 6500 and place your orders now - the only extra is a small thing called tax which you may be inclined to pay when you bring your goods through Customs. Meanwhile, if you want to hire a Mac for a week you pay £140 from a Mac Centre - perhaps there are a few retailers who might be able to offer that service a bit cheaper?

Just one more pointed barb this week. How come so much 8256 software doesn't run on the 9512? It's bad for the market's image when *Scrabble*, *Academy*, *Catch 23* (great title!) *et al* only work on one of the famed machines. How are you supposed to explain why this should be so to a customer just wandered in off the street? The publisher couldn't be bothered for twenty quid? Sure, and I don't mind if Margaret Thatcher gets a fourth term. You get what you deserve, and it works both ways.

The Dagger would like to join OASIS - the Organisation against Sexism in Software - right away please. No doubt about it, the computer industry is populated by blokes who seem to insist on staying at the same level of emotional development as a cuckoo. I refer, naturellement, to those who create adverts which attempt to sell computer games by having people dress up as though they were on their way to a butcher's orgy. Too butch or not too butch at all, that's the question, and personally I'd say it's a joke if it wasn't. I'll drink to (and from) OASIS. Anyway, sex doesn't seem to make much difference. *Vixen*, strip pokers galore, Sammy Fox, Maria Whatsit, *Game Over* ads - the fact is the promise of sex isn't very interesting when it's so obvious. Most computer gamers are far too busy tapping away at their keyboards to notice that tree trunk legs bloke trying to look like he's youthful, and as for that side-kick he has with shiny metal saucers over her breasts . . .

The views expressed herein are not necessarily held by *CTW* - in fact, we love everyone, honest.

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4	4	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
5	12	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	NE	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAM	9.99
7	6	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
8	33	RETURN OF THE JEDI	DOMARK	9.95
9	25	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	32	COMMANDO	ENCORE	2.99
11	6	PRO SKATEBOARD SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
12	??	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
13	10	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
14	19	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
15	8	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
16	4	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
17	15	FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
18	20	FORMULA GRAND PRIX	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
19	RE	AIRBORNE RANGER	MICROPROSE	9.95
20	14	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99

C64 TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	9.95
2	1	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.99
3	3	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
4	NE	EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SIM	AUDIOGENIC	9.95
5	5	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	2.99
6	7	PRO SKI SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
7	RE	COMMANDO	ENCORE	2.99
8	10	ARMALYTE	THALAMUS	9.95
9	2	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	11	SKOOLDAZE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
11	12	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
12	RE	GAME SET AND MATCH 2	OCEAN	12.95
13	24	TAITO COIN-OPS	OCEAN	12.95
14	RE	COMBAT LYNX	ENCORE	1.99
15	8	FOOTBALL OF THE YEAR	KIXX	2.99
16	16	PRO SKATEBOARD SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
17	RE	LEADERBOARD	KIXX	2.99
18	RE	ON THE BENCH	CULT	1.99
19	RE	RETURN OF THE JEDI	DOMARK	9.95
20	32	ACE	CASCADE	2.99

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2	11	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
3	1	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
4	2	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.95
5	16	COMMANDO	ENCORE	2.99
6	10	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
7	17	COMBAT LYNX	ENCORE	1.99
8	RE	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
9	RE	ATV SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	4	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	AFTERBURNER	ACTIVISION	19.99
2	1	ELITE	FIREBIRD	24.95
3	2	LOMBARD RAC RALLY	MANDARIN	24.95
4	NE	INTERNATIONAL KARATE	SYSTEMS 3	19.95
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AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	1	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.95
2	3	PACMANIA	GRAND SLAM	19.95
3	5	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.95
4	2	ROCKET RANGER	MIRRORSOFT	29.99
5	4	BATTLE CHESS	ELECTRONIC ARTS	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	42.1	43.6	43.4	45.9	28.6	28.6	29.3
COMMODORE 64	23.5	22.3	25.3	22.4	23.4	23.8	24.2	23.7
AMSTRAD	17.0	17.0	17.5	19.3	18.0	17.1	18.0	17.7
ATARI ST	5.9	4.9	5.4	2.5	8.9	8.0	8.4	6.4
AMIGA	2.9	3.5	3.9	2.1	4.5	4.7	5.1	3.4
COMMODORE 16	1.8	2.0	1.5	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	3.6
ELECTRON	1.5	1.0	3.6	1.2	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.2
BBC	1.4	1.6	3.8	1.3	2.6	3.1	2.7	2.9
ATARI	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.0	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.5
MSX	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.4	1.2	1.2	0.9

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
96	92	87	102

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.

△ **INFOGRAMES:** *Captain Blood* (Ag-£24.95) It certainly created a stir on the ST and is bound to be pretty big on the Amiga. Nevertheless it's just possible that the game's impact could have been even greater if the release of each format hadn't been so staggered.

△ **FIREBIRD:** *Flying Shark* (ST-£24.95) A fighter plane shoot-'em-up from Taito. A lone fighter has to battle it out against an entire war machine spewing death and destruction into the skies. The odds don't look good.

△ **LEVEL 9:** *Ingrid's back!* (Sp64AmMsxXE/XL-£14.95). Now the 8-bit versions of the continuing saga of Ingrid Bottomlow. A three part adventure which takes the sloane gnome to uncharted territory in a bid to save her home town.

△ **MICROPROSE:** *MicroProse Soccer* (64-£14.95-£19.95) The firm's first sports simulation and a definite move away from its usual gung-ho war/flight type games. It was created by Sensible Software and was being hailed as one of the best of its kind even before MicroProse got hold of it.

△ **MIRRORSOFT:** *F16 Falcon* (ST-£24.99) After nearly ten months, this much vaunted flight simulation finally makes it to the ST. It's apparently so realistic that its being used as a military training aid.

△ **MASTERTRONIC:** *Camelot Warrior* (SpAm64-£1.99) Originally released by Spanish software house Dynamic, but it never made it over here. Being a journey of no return with secrets dotted around the game it hardly seems surprising.

△ **MASTERTRONIC:** *Star Farce* (Sp-£1.99) An original shoot-'em-up title in which the Earth has gone paranoid and starts attacking everything in the skies. It all sounds pretty realistic.

△ **RICOCHET:** *Ball Blazer* (XE/XL-£1.99). Battle for a ball against a host of Droid players. And when you get it? Well you blast it to bits with moving goalbeams. It hardly seems worth the effort.

△ **US GOLD:** *Thunderblade* (64STAg-£9.99-£19.99). Being hyped by the firm as the

big 'T' and certainly a hot contender for the Christmas number one. It's bound to be a biggie, but then again so are a few others.

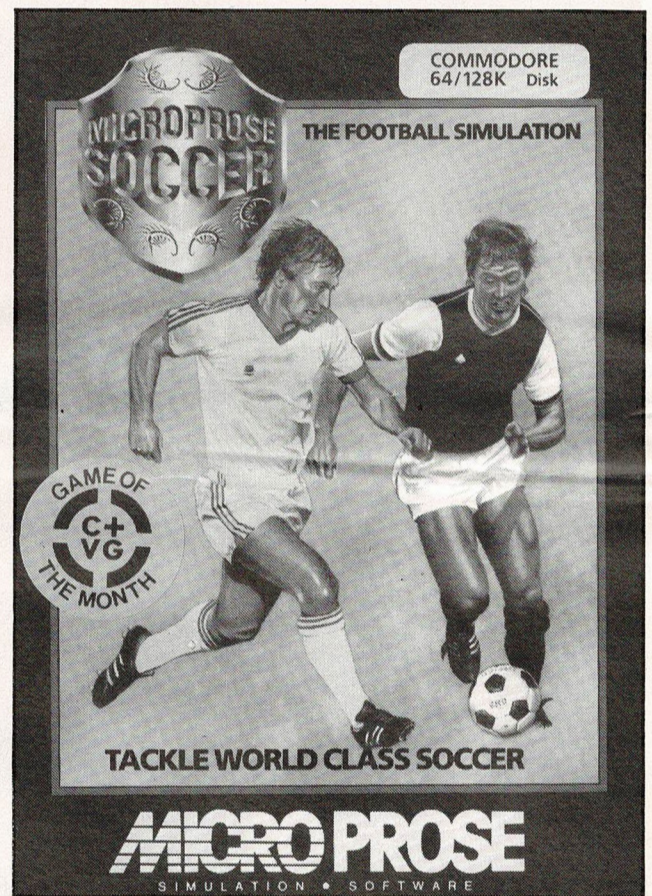
△ **US GOLD:** *Out Run* (MSX-£9.99). It's still being churned out on every conceivable format, despite its recent entry into compilationland. It should keep the two existing MSX owners happy.

△ **EPYX:** *The Games Summer Edition* (64PC £9.99-£19.99). The follow up to the brilliantly timed *Winter Edition* and includes such exciting events as archery, rings, velodrome cycling and hammer throwing. One can't help feeling this would have done better if released in September.

that beats this will win the league.

△ **CODE MASTERS:** *Treasure Island Dizzy* (SpAm-£2.99), *BMX Freestyle* (SpAm-£2.99), *Ninja Massacre* (Am-£2.99), *Super Hero* (C64-£2.99) and *Big Foot* (SpAm-£2.99). The Coders hit the streets with their first full batch of games at the new higher price of £2.99. And what do we have, a mixture of BMXs and Ninjas, surely not? At least we know that despite the firm's pigeon steps upmarket nothing's changed really.

△ **ATLANTIS:** *Periscope Up* (At-£1.99), *Aquasquad* (Sp-£1.99). It's never been one to be fighting it out at the top of the budget market share charts, but for such a small outfit



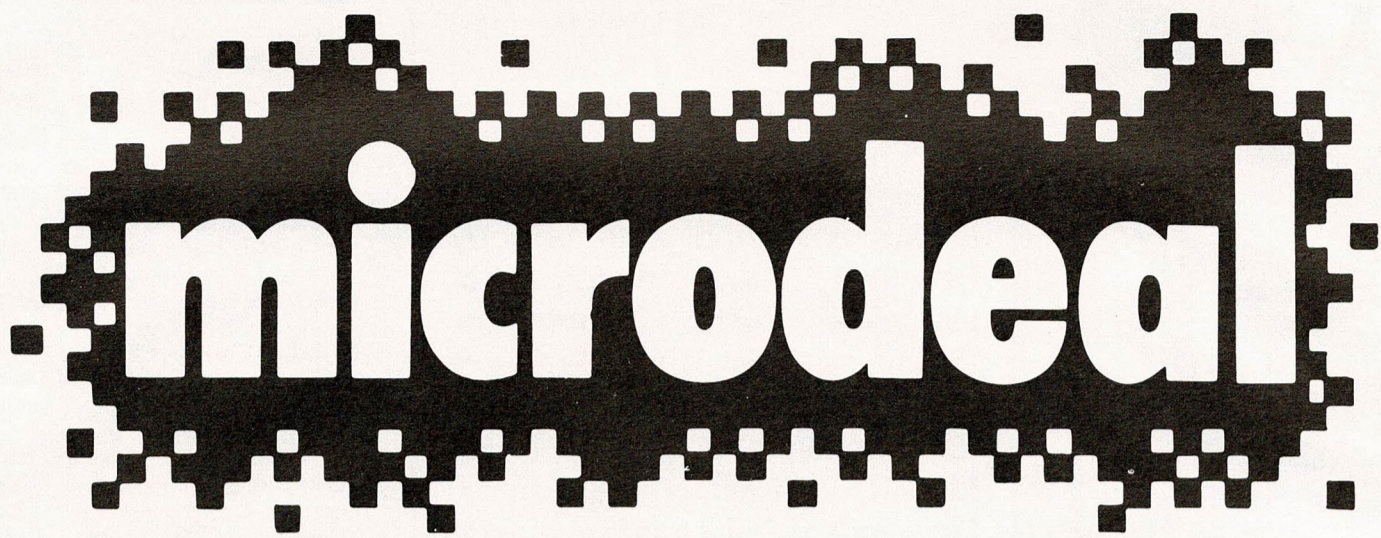
△ **ALTERNATIVE:** *Star Paws* (Sp64-£1.99). *Through the Trap Door* (SpAm64-£1.99). Two cutesie little numbers from Alternative. *Star Paws* is the likely tale of Captain Rover Pawstrong and his death defying mission to destroy the Tasty Space Griffins.

△ **OCEAN:** *Operation Wolf* (SpC64-£8.95-£14.95). This is the big one as far as Ocean is concerned and seems to have been trailed as one of the Christmas '88 majors since about this time last year. The consumer mag reviews have been kind so far and *Afterburner* and *Thunderblade* will be pushed to match its sales expectations. As they say about Liverpool in the football world, the one

Atlantis has actually had a reasonable year. It is even planning a move into the world of 16-bit with some ST conversions. Watch this space and all that.

△ **TYNESOFT:** *Mega Pack* (STAg-£24.95), *Circus Games* (STAgPCSp+3 - £8.95-£24.95). Apart from the appallingly predictable title, Tynesoft's 16-bit compilation looks to be a good package, particularly as it includes the received *Winter Olympiad*. *Circus Games* has arrived just as Martech plans its own Big Top simulator. Just like buses these game themes, nothing new for ages then two similar games come along at the same time.

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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TBD'S HOMECOMING

Continued from page 16

help. We've had a happy four year trading history with them, which must mean that somewhere in the chain things are going well."

Earlier this year TBD made known its intent to step up its commitment to primary distribution with the signing of Code Masters. At the time the company was looking to tie up further deals, but admits that so far no other software houses have come forward.

Again Smith seems to have taken this situation rather personally. "We spoke to several firms and they know who they are, but sadly they have either

gone to other people or decided to do it themselves. I don't believe they're getting satisfactory service and I certainly don't think it's doing their credibility any good. So once we've licked the wounds of 1988 we'll be talking to software houses again. I don't intend to let 1989 go down the tube."

TBD's move into hardware has come rather late in the year for the Christmas market, with most dealers having already made their commitment. Smith stresses, however, that "we are not a four minute wonder, we are making a long term investment opening doors for

retailers". Nevertheless the company has earmarked £10,000 for promoting the Atari range in the lead up to Christmas - although the bulk of its advertising revenue will be spent promoting the whole TBD package.

The company has obviously had plenty of time to evaluate its position in the market, and whilst it is sticking to style by refusing to shout its plans from the highest hilltop the firm does seem quietly confident.

As a parting shot Smith offered, "we're not a company known for drumming up our egos. And I certainly don't need the front page of CTW to help me sleep at night."

Thanks Norm.

MUST THE SHOW GO ON?

Continued from page 18

out a cheap ST for his son.

The Lombard RAC Rally had a large presence at the show, being the latest (and best) release from Database's games label Mandarin. As well as a rally car adorning the foyer the firm is hyping up the game by having the race winner, Maru Alen, play a ten-year-old computer whizz-kid on the Saturday morning TV programme *Motor Mouth*.

For those seeking out the new and exciting at the show the going was tough. Precision Software probably had the most to offer, with the release of its *Superbase Professional*

Version 3 for the ST. This enhanced package features such joys as automatic multiline transaction handling as well as extensive comms facilities and costs £249.95. Also available for the first time was *Superbase Personal 2*, which adds mail merge and a word processing feature to the original version and is priced at £99.95.

Precision's marketing manager Alison Rutherford claimed that despite appearances the quality of person visiting the stand was good. "They seem to have a general understanding of what they want to do and are realising the poten-

tial of the ST as a more serious machine."

Gay abandon

This must have come as some relief to Atari, which probably felt like giving up the serious user pitch as a bit of a lost cause. Yet Adamsoft was also fitting in with the Atari mode promoting the imminent launch of two new education packages. Once again the software was supposed to be released at the show, but "packaging problems" had caused delays. *Higher Mathematics* is designed to fit in with the 'O' level GCSE course, whilst *Concept of Statistics* is supposed to be a more general product. They will both be priced at £14.95.

Atari is clearly pitching the 1040 at the education sector and Still claims that it is already "the unofficially accepted standard amongst teachers, who are forcing many educational authorities to opt for the ST". Atari is also keen to stress the music capabilities of the machine and hence the presence of Colin Gay - and before you ask who? He's supposed to be the UK's number one in making music with the ST - which explains the Christmas music and various poppy tunes that were played all day.

Atari looked and obviously felt like a fish out of water, and whilst it clearly doesn't want to bite the hand that feeds it, the show no longer fits in with its desired image.

All the signs suggest that this is the last year of the Atari Christmas Show as we know it. Next year the spots could be less in evidence and the suits should be coming to the fore. Or at least that's the plan.

COMING UP FROM BEHIND

Continued from page 20

£10 commission for every subscriber they introduce and Micronet seem set to follow suit.

Personally, I believe that the number of people who will buy a modem just because it's the next logical peripheral to get are few (at least at this time). The customer will have to be shown what can be done with one. This needs homework on the part of the dealer, but also better support for the dealer from the commercial online systems themselves.

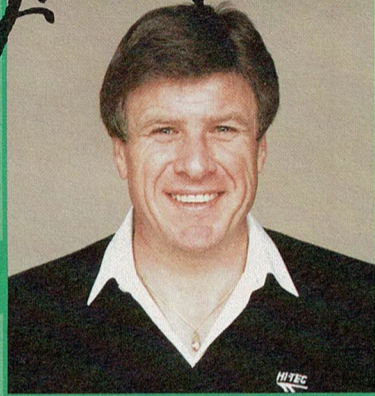
What is needed are such things as demo disks, point of sale literature, sales incentives and above all education. Once the dealer is *au fait* with the wide range of facilities available, he or she can assess a customer's needs and sell them an online system to suit, whether it be business or hobby orientated.

Then they will also be able to sell the modem and software (and maybe even the micro) they need to use it. In the meantime the guide and booklets mentioned above are a worthwhile starting point.

Telephone numbers for dealers wishing to investigate the comms world further:

Case (0923 58000);
Philips (0206 575115);
Micronet (01-278 3143);
Microlink (061 456 8383);
Pace (0274 488 211);
Comput-ed (0626 867 247);
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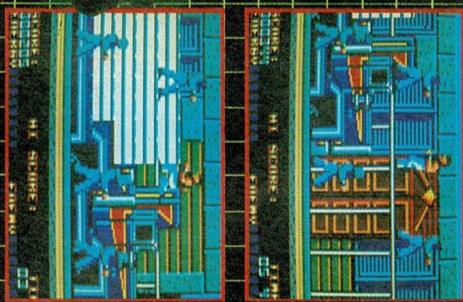
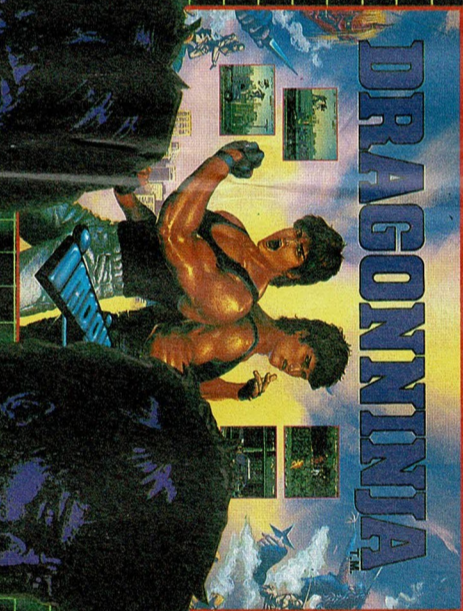
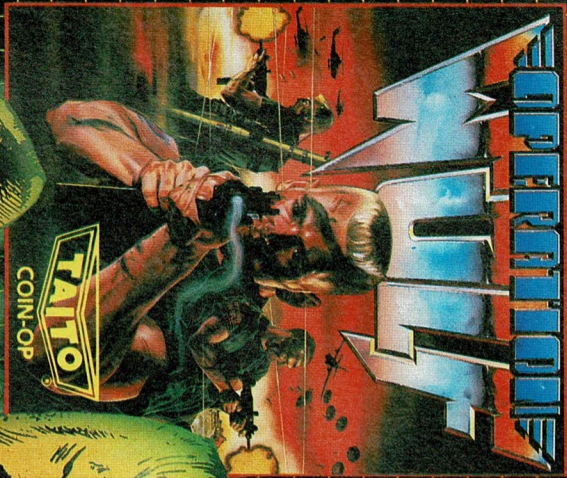
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