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23-5-88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 187

Symons returns

to Acorn

Hugh Symons has been appointed as Acorn's third distributor - nearly a year after being dropped.

Acorn's decision is based on its desire to push the Archimedes into vertical markets such as health, education and corporates. Hugh Symons will be taking on the entire Acorn range and joins Kelator and the recently appointed AB European Marketing as a supplier.

Last June at the time of the Archimedes launch Hugh Symons along with 3SL and Akhter were dropped followed by Eltec in September. Hugh Symons is the first to be taken back into the fold.

The re-organisation came about after problems with direct selling and distributors

Continued on back page

£100 Amiga chop denied

Commodore has vehemently ruled out the prospect of a £100 Amiga 500 price cut starting July 1st.

This is despite a widespread trade expectation of

such a move, fuelled by reliable sources.

Essentially, CBM is arguing that since the price difference between the Amiga and ST has been halved by Atari's recent £100 price hike, there is less pressure for an Amiga cut. Additionally,

there is the perennial concern that a lower UK price could damage sales into its far more lucrative European markets such as Germany.

Speaking from Acapulco, Mexico, Commodore's vice president for Northern and Western Europe Kristian

Andersen told CTW: "I talk to a lot of people who say 'your machine is so much better than the Atari ST. If you bring it down to £399 you'll kill Atari'. But instead of us bringing it down, they've brought it up. So what's the difference?"

Though there is just £100 between the machines, the problem for Commodore is that £399 is a consumer mass market pricepoint. By contrast £499 - even for a better machine - is just too steep for general leisure market appeal.

Additionally, the ST has its £400 worth of bundled software. Though as yet not noticeably popular with the trade it represents a strong deal for the consumer.

Yet when it was put to Andersen that Commodore needed to respond to the Atari Summer pack, he said: "We don't give a shit about Atari or what they're doing. We just concentrate on putting

out our product at our price, and on hitting our targets."

Despite the denials, there are still those who are convinced that a £100 cut is on the cards. CTW was told several times last week that the Amiga will be sold at £399 at the Commodore Show on June 3-5th, with the new price becoming official from July 1st.

If true, the date tallies with the beginning of Commodore's financial year. It is expected that the firm will be initiating an enormous promotional and marketing campaign in an attempt to regain ground lost so disastrously in the UK in 1985-7. It is also believed that software is currently being hunted out for inclusion in a bundle. A new price on the Amiga, a concerted push for business distribution and perhaps a new bundle to rekindle the C64 would appear to be central to

Continued on back page



A500: No cut looming, says Commodore

INSIDE

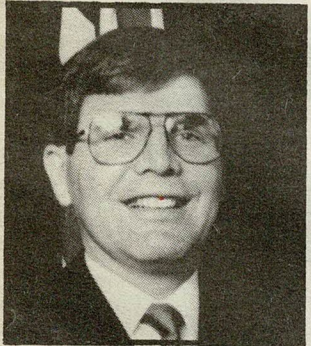
HYPE AND GLORY

Music industry marketing firm Bullet is now representing the likes of Softtek and Mirrorsoft as well as Spandau Ballet and Bros. Computer game dealers are being visited by reps armed to the teeth with promotional hardware such as posters and cardboard cut outs. Boss Barry Evans tells all to CTW..... 11

THE REEL THING

The people responsible for running off the staggering numbers of tapes and disks produced each year talk about the problems and advantages of the creeping 16-bit take-over. CTW lends an ear..... 16

SPA FOR THE COURSE



Bill Stealey - director and treasurer of the Software Publishers Association in the US and boss of MicroProse - outlines the set up and aims of the trade body. Calls are being made for a British version but Stealey warns that co-operation and co-ordination are the main ingredients for success..... 19

CHARTS & SOFT OPTIONS 21

IBM hunts out cloners

Clone manufacturers were last week facing the prospect of IBM demanding patent royalties dating as far back as 1982.

Firms marketing IBM compatible machines are being told that they must pay one per cent of total sales by the end of the year if they have broken any of IBM's patents. It is likely that the major

clone manufacturers have been careful enough with their development to avoid outright patent infringement, thus leaving IBM to fight hard for any payment demanded. The small cloners, however, may have rushed product in order to cash in on PC demand. They face, at best, lengthy legal machinations if they contest IBM's claims.

The UK's largest clone manufacturer, Amstrad,

reacted immediately to IBM's sudden fervour. "Our view is that we wish them the best of luck as long as they don't come knocking on our door," came the immediate Brentwood response. "We just didn't infringe anything because we've been careful. The small people might be worried because they haven't had the resources to avoid infringement."

IBM is stating that it will accept payments of one per

cent of sales made up until April this year. If these are not forthcoming by the end of the year then the rate will be raised. Sales made after April 1st will be subject to the recently introduced maximum rate of five per cent.

In turn, those companies planning PS/2 clones will not be able to licence IBM's patents until they have paid monies owed on PC sales.

Many clone manufacturers

Continued on back page

Activision re-emerges

Activision last week changed its worldwide name to Mediagenic, whilst announcing its first profitable twelve months in five years.

An incredible pre-tax swing of nearly \$19 million has taken the US publisher from a \$14.6 million loss in the year ending March 31st 1987 to a \$3.6 million profit in the year ending March 31st 1988.

The name Mediagenic has been chosen to symbolise the firm's expanding and diversifying product lines. The Activision name will continue as an entertainment software brand. It will be part of Mediagenic's newly formed entertainment division headed up by Dick Lehrberg in the US.

The presentation tools division, run by Stan Roach, will publish software and utilities

for the Apple IIGS, the Macintosh HyperCard, and PCs.

This will be bolstered shortly by the merger of US PC software house Z Soft into Mediagenic. The Atlanta, Georgia based firm publishes PC Paint Brush, which has sold a claimed 700,000 units in the US and is currently developing OS/2 packages.

"The name Activision is synonymous with literally tens of millions of units of video games and computer entertainment software. With our increased diversification into presentation tools the name Activision doesn't fit what we are anymore," Geoff Mulligan, president of Mediagenic International (formerly Activision International), told CTW.

The worldwide re-positioning was announced via extravagant launches in

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Hit pack problem attacked



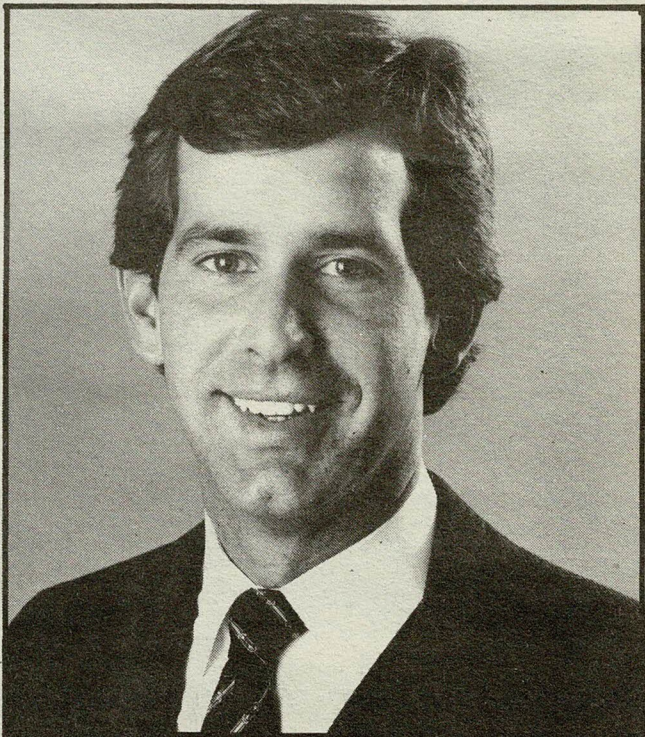
CHANEY: Pack policy changed
The current trend for ever larger 8-bit game compilations has been labelled "negative and thus damaging" by US Gold.

The firm is worried that the spate of six and ten product packs featuring increasingly younger titles could seriously damage the full-price market.

As a result, it has announced a new policy for the future. No titles will be included on UK compilations less than nine months after their release as a standalone title.

Also, the retail price for boxed compilations containing five or more titles will be a set minimum of £12.99 on cassette and £14.99 on disk.

Continued on page two



MULLIGAN: Major changes, profits at last

Atari blames DRAMs for quashed profits

Atari last week reported first quarter figures with sales up by 50 per cent on the corresponding period last year, but blamed minimal profits on the DRAM shortage.

The company's absorption of high prices for DRAM chips during the period is apparently the reason for profits of only \$32,000. This

strengthens Atari's argument that its eventual price increases on the ST were a direct result of the DRAM problem.

Cynics had suggested that Atari was simply cashing in on the increasing popularity of the machine. It would appear though that sustaining the extra cost had virtually negated the possibility of a rise in profits.

Atari's president Sam Tramiel commented: "The Atari

computer and video game segment generated significant increases in sales volume. The continuing shortage of DRAMs has negatively impacted operating margins for the period."

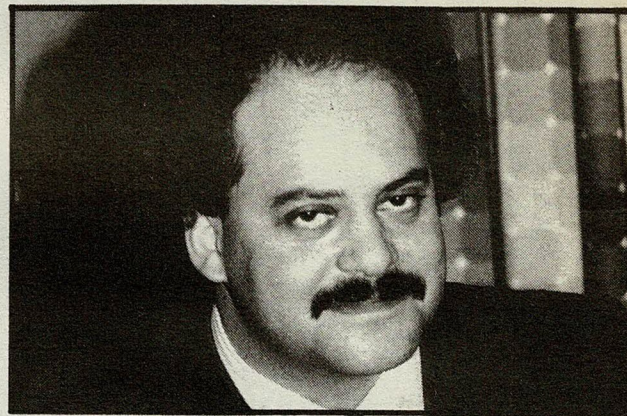
Without the Federated retail chain Atari posted sales of \$97.7 million compared to \$65.1 million for the first quarter last year. Net income was \$15,290,000 compared to \$15,258,000. Federated - which Atari acquired last year

- lost over \$9 million on sales of \$71.5 million.

Atari is saying that further attempts are being made to reduce costs for the US chain. No figures are available from Atari for last year's corresponding figures but the chain lost £8.2 million in the last quarter of last year. That though included the peak selling time of the year.

Tramiel claimed that the chain is "approaching a break even point". "We foresee a small loss or small profit in the second and third quarters," he said. Atari, including Federated, reported profits of \$5.7 million.

Meanwhile, Atari's trade preview due to be held at the



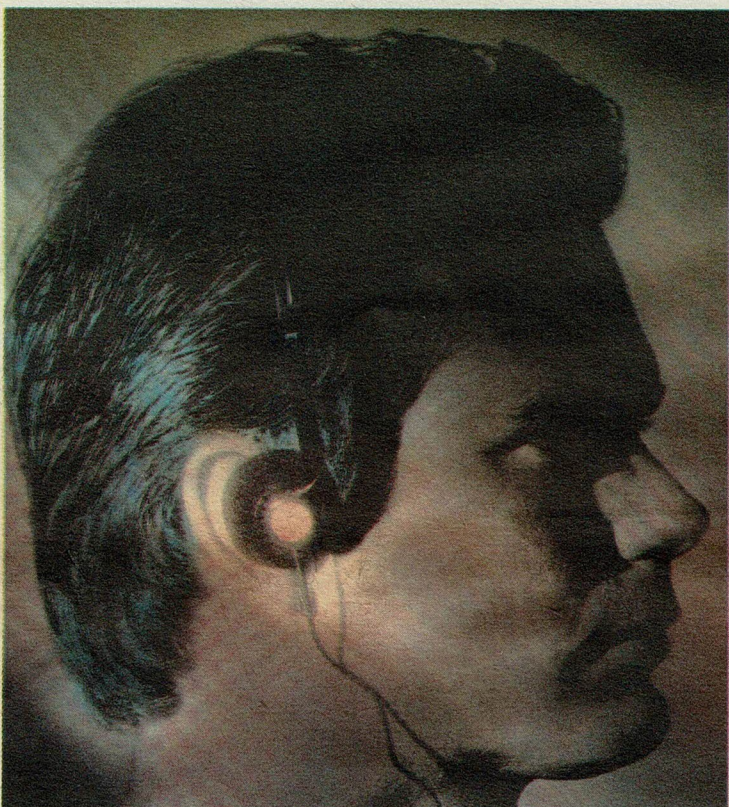
TRAMIEL: DRAM shortages cut profits

Cafe Royal next Thursday has attracted a strong business interest. The likes of Lotus, Ashton Tate, Borland, MicroPro, Precision and Blyth will be exhibiting product for

the Atari PC2.

A spokesman for Atari offered: "Atari seem to be doing well in the computer industry - maybe they all want to join in..."

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?



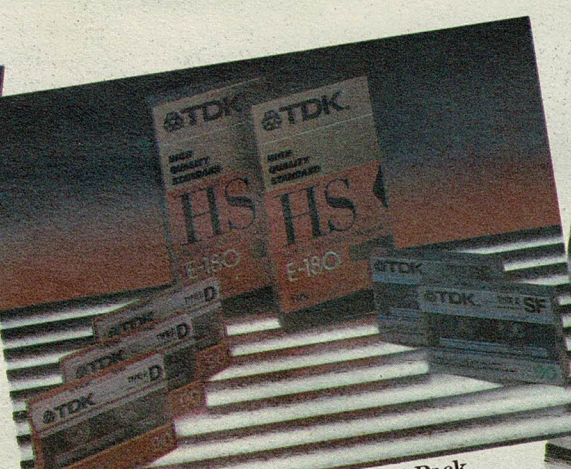
He features in TDK's current floppy disk promotion - wanted by every dealer who sells computer supplies.

Why?

Because if you* purchase any combination of TDK 3 1/2" or 5 1/4" floppy disks before 17th June 1988 you will automatically receive the special gifts shown below.



3 Elegant TDK Limited Edition Audio Cassettes
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Hit pack

Continued from front page

"We thought that if products continue to go on to compilations so quickly after full-price release we could ultimately lose the confidence of the consumer. He may decide to simply wait," commented US Gold's operations director Tim Chaney to CTW.

He added that a fair amount of unrest amongst dealers had also been building, with many complaining of stock becoming redundant far too soon.

WH Smiths' buyer, Ian Laurie, was particularly pleased with Gold's decision to increase compilations' pricing to £12.99. He offered that six to ten game packs stuffed with recent games for less than £10 "made a mockery" of the original single product price.

Lee Ginty, boss of distributor Microdealer commented: "Anything that the large software houses can do to lengthen the shelf-life of product can only be a good thing for retailers and the industry as a whole."

Activision

Continued from front page

London and New York within 24 hours of each other. Receptionists at the UK offices were answering "Mediagenic Activision" the very next day.

Sales during the fourth quarter ending March 1988 increased by 185 per cent from \$4.6 million to \$13.1 million. Profit during this period was \$874,000 compared to a \$7.9 million loss the year previous. Net sales for the full fiscal year rose 70 per cent from \$26.6 million to \$45.3 million.

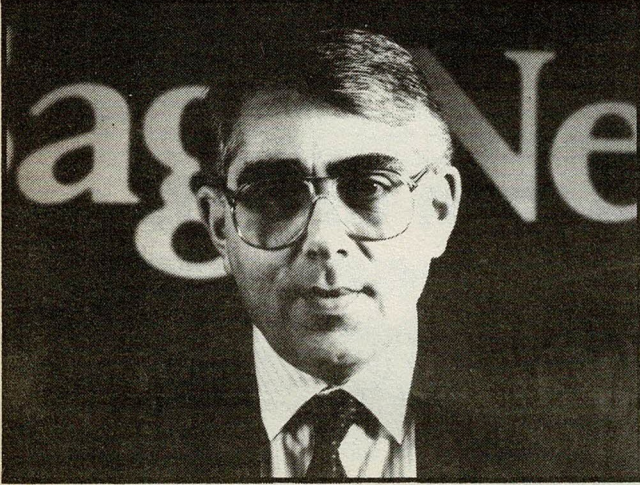
The announcements last week mean that there will be the usual degree of reorganisation and reshuffling for the UK operation. An experienced non-entertainment figure will be appointed to run the presentation tools division in the UK. Rod Cousens remains ultimate boss, his official job title being vice president Europe of Mediagenic International.

Mulligan revealed that Activision International (Europe, Japan and Australia) had made up 26 per cent of Activision's worldwide business. Activision UK made up some 75 per cent of Activision International's business.

Non-entertainment product currently accounts for less than five per cent of Activision International's business. This is expected to be more like 30 per cent by next year.

Sage lashes low-cost gloom as profits soar

Sagesoft last week announced its best ever half-year results and hit out at claims that the predicted boom in low-cost software has failed to meet expectations.



GOLDMAN: Boosting low cost sector with record figures

The firm also revealed that it is still in no hurry to restart its plans for a USM placing shelved in December. This was due to the City crash in October and any move is unlikely to be made until autumn at the earliest.

Subject to an official audit, Sagesoft has turned in a pre-tax profit exceeding £1 million for the six months ending March 31st 1988. This compares to a £1.2 million profit for the full 1987 financial year. Half-year turnover is expected to total nearly £3 million. This compares to the preceding full year's sales of £3.5 million.

Sagesoft's managing director David Goldman refuted recent claims from trade sec-

tors that low-cost software in general has underperformed.

"That's a load of rubbish and we're here to prove it. What these people are really saying is that a lot of people didn't make it in the low-cost market - we did," he told CTW.

"I think we've succeeded because we're marketing led rather than product led. So many of these other firms are run by technicians, software engineers or programmers. I'm not a technician and I never will be."

Sagesoft's Businesswise PC software made up over half of the firm's sales. Goldman made special mention of the SageNet low-cost network, claiming that 5,000 £149 entry packs had been sold since

launch at the PCW Show in September.

New products are being lined up for launch in the autumn, but other than a push into overseas markets all details were withheld. An increase in the firm's non-software business such as maintenance and training is also planned.

On any future USM bid Goldman offered, "There's no pressure on us to do anything. We're a very cash positive company and we've no need to raise money quickly. We can afford to wait until market conditions are perfect."

The planned January move was set to raise £5 million via the selling off of 30 per cent of the company.

Irish supplier takes on CBM

Commodore has added Video and Computer Tape Wholesale to its distribution network in Ireland.

The Belfast based firm is officially being called a business distributor but it will also have access to consumer products.

VCTW joins Tomorrow's World as an Irish CBM distributor. It currently exclusively represents Mastertronic's budget range.

Despite the firm's obvious leisure bias, CBM is hoping that VCTW will ultimately concentrate on business product, particularly the Amiga System 500 and recently cut PC1.

"We felt we needed their specialist knowledge of the Irish marketplace. We've still got a very good working relationship with Tomorrow's World, though," commented CBM UK's marketing manager Dean Barrett.

The deal signals VCTW's first move into hardware and boss Ken Hearn claims that it will work exclusively with Commodore. An Apricot distributorship was recently offered and turned down.

"I think I can only give allegiance to one. As far as I'm concerned that's the only way you can do a job right," said Hearn.

He expects the firm's business to increase by 50-75 per cent as a result of the new account.

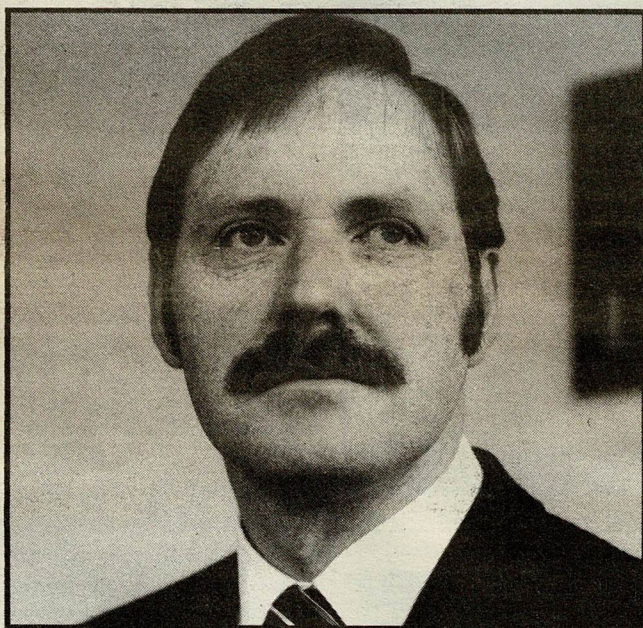
Bill scrutiny leaves hope for publishers

The loophole in the current Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill which has left business software under threat of renting looked set to be closed up last week.

It also emerged that the latest development surrounding the complex Bill would actually leave both business and leisure software with full rental protection - for the time being at least.

The problem concerns Clause 63 of the Bill. This gives the public the right to rent out software a year after its release. This would give games software protection that it doesn't currently have whilst placing business software at a risk it doesn't currently have. Clause 18, meanwhile, simply outlaws the renting of software altogether.

David Fraser, chairman of the British Micro Federation, told CTW last week that "the signs are encouraging" regarding the government's understanding of the problem.



FRASER: "The government has had a change of heart"

It seemed likely at time of press that whilst Clause 18 remained unchanged any mention of software in Clause 63 would be pulled. This would be replaced by a sub-clause allowing the Secretary of State to come to a decision about the 12 month rule some time in the future. Any addi-

tion could then be made without requiring the Bill to travel through the Lords and Commons again.

"The government has had a change of heart. I don't want to count our chickens before they hatch, so to speak, but it's looking like it will all work out very well," added Fraser.

Show's Pepsi tonic

The PC Show in September has received the useful tonic of gaining sponsorship from giant multi-national Pepsi Cola.



PEPSI: PC Show deal in the can

Though the deal is limited to the video wall on display at the show, it represents another move towards mass market acceptance for the leisure software industry.

The six by six metres screen will run continuous games and videos throughout the show, backed by smaller monitors in the entrance area. The video wall will also feature the final of the games championship being held dur-

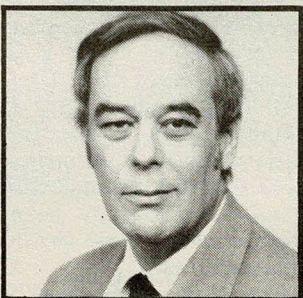
ing the show. The winners of the individual Spectrum and Commodore 64 sections will play out the decider on STs.

A series of short conferences are being lined up for the show, covering such topics as computing for small businesses. Show organiser Montbuild is also considering holding a mini version of the recent Computer Arena event, probably on the Thursday afternoon of the show.

Samsung satisfied as two more sign

Samsung is claiming to have at last finished its distributor hunt after adding a further two firms last week.

The signing of deals with Logitek and CPU Peripherals



MADDERN: Distribution wrapped up

brings Samsung's distributor total up to five. The two newcomers join Hugh Symons, Ideal Hardware and Pronto.

Manchester firm Logitek will be taking Samsung into the upmarket areas that the Korean firm believes it could improve in. Logitek already handles such firms as Altos, Wyse and 3Com.

CPU's appointment signals its first move into system distribution. Previously it has only carried peripherals. Major accounts include Citizen, Panasonic, Hitachi and Western Digital.

"Our original intention was to go with a limited number of distributors and we're sticking with that. I can't see us

adding any more. We think that we've now got enough to cover the UK marketplace," commented Samsung's UK business development manager Derrick Maddern to CTW.

He added that he was unworried by the prospect of Amstrad attacking Samsung's mid-market position with more powerful machines later this year.

"I see it as as much of a threat as Toshiba did when Amstrad launched their portable. Their machines simply won't affect us just like they didn't affect Toshiba. Amstrad are good for the market and I wish them every success."

CTW

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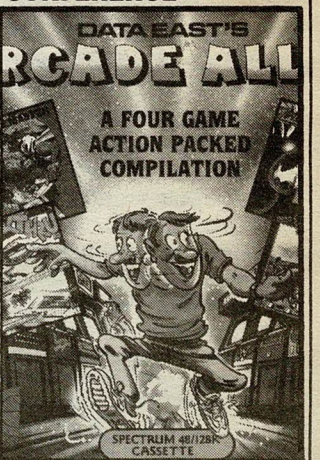
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NEXT WEEK:

COMPENDIUM CONFERENCE



Last week US Gold changed its policy on games compilations. In effect Gold games won't be appearing on a compilation for at least nine months after they are first released and even then the minimum price will be £12.99. This is sure to bring dealers and distributors some relief. They have long been left holding stocks of games which are palpably unsellable. It's one of the main causes of mistrust for publishers. Next week the software houses, distributors, multiples and independents give their reaction to this new development and the future of compilations.....

Amstrad defends modem

Amstrad last week criticised the accuracy of modem market research, whilst allaying trade fears about a continued shortage of its MC2400.

The firm claims that figures showing sales and market share for its modem range "bear no resemblance" to true performance.

All market research firms are being criticised equally. For its part, Romtec gave

Amstrad a 7.1 per cent share of the modem market in units terms during February. It was the fifth largest vendor behind Dowty (21 per cent), Hayes (16.6 per cent), Miracle (14.4 per cent) and Pace (13.7 per cent).

"A vast amount of product has been sold in comparison to what the market research firms reckon," commented Amstrad's software and peripherals development manager Peter Roback to CTW.

He particularly disagreed

with the figures given to Amstrad's £199 MC2400 card modem. Romtec gave it a market share in unit terms of less than 3 per cent. The top five sellers were the Dowty Quattro (12 per cent), Hayes' Smart Modem 1200 (10.3 per cent), the Pace Linnet (7.2), Amstrad's PC modem card (5.5) and Toshiba's V21/22/23 (4.7).

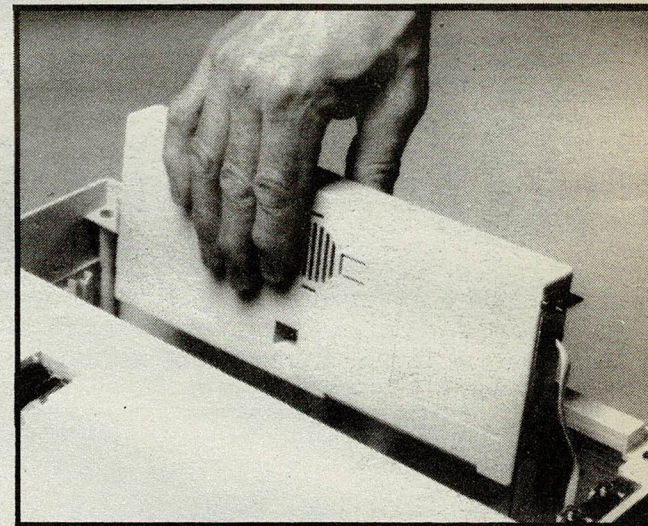
Whilst claiming that sales of the MC2400 have actually been higher than reportedm Roback admitted that maximum sales had been held

back by limited supplies.

It is promised, however, that this shortage will be "completely eradicated by the middle of June if not earlier".

Amstrad argues that, as ever, initial demand has far outstripped supplies and that it takes a while to fully ramp up production.

"Demand for our modem has been very good and this has created a back-order situation, But that situation will be satisfied in the very near future," added Roback.



MC2400: Shortage over soon

Newsfield rebuilds after EMAP attack

Newsfield has reacted to the departure of its Crash and Zzap editors Julian Rignall and Steve Jarrett with various internal promotions and the re-appointment of former Crash editor Barnaby Page.

Page is being drafted in as a "roving sub-editor" on all the publisher's computer titles, it new horror mag *The Fear* and an unconfirmed consumer video title. Since his departure from *Crash* earlier in the year he has been working for *Computer News*.

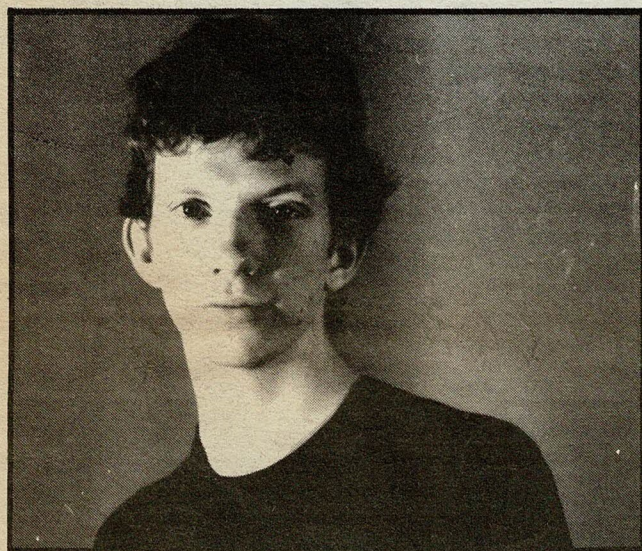
Crash and *Zzap* will now be edited by the relatively inexperienced Dominic Handy

and Gordon Houghton respectively. Whilst Handy has been with Newsfield for three years, Houghton only joined the company last Christmas. Kati Hamza will be taking over the position of assistant editor on *Crash* - she too has only been with Newsfield a short time.

On Page rejoining, director Oliver Frey commented: "To be fair I think he was disillusioned that publishers in London weren't quite up to the electronic means that we are. It's disappointing to go from computer input to typewriters . . ."

Page told CTW: "You get a perspective on a company after you've left it. Newsfield is at the point where it has some fine ideas. It's going to be successful outside the computer area."

On the possibility of a video publication Frey declined to comment, saying that no firm plans have yet been laid, trade suggestion indicate that a new consumer title is planned, although a launch isn't likely for some months.



PAGE: Back to Ludlow

Duo kicks soccer genre into play

The well tried and tested football boss game will again be making its appearance on the shelves this summer.

Addictive's long awaited *Football Manager 2* and D&H Games' much vaunted *Football Director 2* will be available on all major formats by the beginning of the next soccer season. Whilst *Football Manager* has become one of the industry's all time best sellers

Football Director has only been available through mail order. Nevertheless, it has made frequent visits into the bottom half of various Gallup charts.

D&H Games will be putting the new game through the trade with some distributors apparently showing interest. Director John de Salis told CTW: "We've much improved the packaging because a lot of shops wouldn't have taken it for that reason alone.

"In this market football fanatics will buy all the games available. I spoke to one who had 60 games. That's why there's so many titles - people know they sell."

He claimed that the game will not be in competition with Addictive's offering. "It's not really the same type of game. We appeal to the football fanatics whilst their's is mainly for the kiddies. It's a different age group.

Football Director II is available now for the Spectrum with all the other major formats including PCs following in August. *Football Manager II* is being launched across the board on June 17th.

A1 turn-off

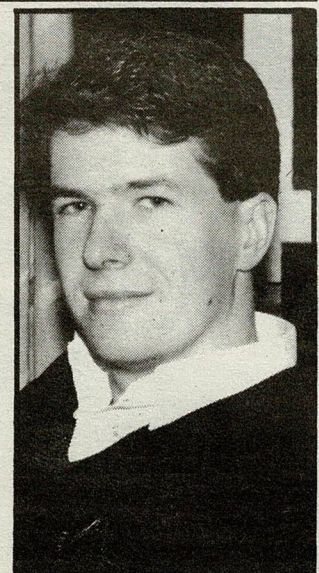
Maynard International's budget label Top Ten has transferred its sales efforts from A1 Distribution to its own offices.

This, claims the firm, will give its products a higher profile amongst dealers and bullish noises are being made about increasing chart presence and market share. A1 is continuing to distribute Top Ten product.

"Hopefully sales are going

to increase because we're going to have our finger on the pulse," said product manager Darryl Still. "This is significant for us because it means we're expanding and becoming more self sufficient."

Still added that negotiations are currently underway with Mastertonic for Top Ten games to be taken into the 187 Woolworths stores which take software. Currently, Woolworths take the Top Ten range into its 50 "grade one" branches.



STILL: Sales changes

Softek: Euro switch

Softek has reorganised its European operation with the appointment of exclusive distributors for France and Spain, whilst negotiations are going on in Germany.

FIL will be publishing and distributing Softek's products in France. Formerly Softek was in agreement with Ariola-soft for that market and Germany. Ariola pulled out of France just after apparently insisting that any German deal would have to include France. Softek is saying that it wasn't performing anyway.

Similarly, the firm has stated that Erbe in Spain was not handling its products properly and so a new deal has been signed with Dro Soft. They will include all its full price products including licences and its budget label Micro Selection.

"Product wasn't selling in Spain after the price point for full price dropped to £4," said boss Tim Langdell. "They weren't doing as much games advertising and what they did was in a budget style with 12 games on one page."

Whilst full price games in Spain were once above the £10 mark, they have been forced down to only £1-£2 above budget. Langdell claimed that he had been under the impression that this would lead to a doubling of sales when in fact it led to a "falling off".

Acorn alights on DTP bandwagon

Acorn has teamed up with GST to join in the current penchant for DTP.

The publisher of the successful *1st Word* word-processor will be working with Acorn to produce a package similar to its *Timeworks* DTP software which is already available for PC and ST formats.

The new package is scheduled to appear towards the end of the year and a pricepoint of around £100 is being targeted.

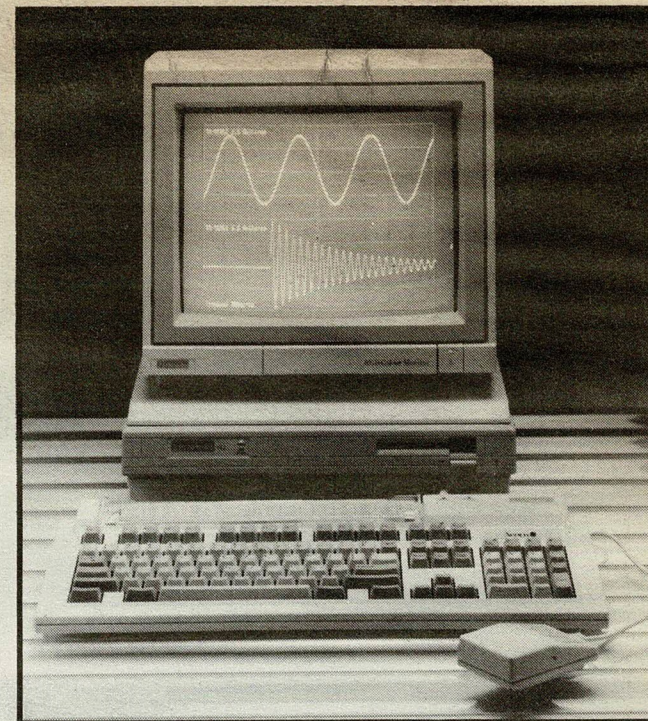
"The way in which it'll be offered to the end-user is still being discussed. It could be a complete system or just a piece of software," com-

mented Acorn's corporate communications manager Michael Page to CTW.

The number of packages available for the Archimedes recently topped 200. These include GST's *1st Word Plus*, which offers some limited DTP facilities itself.

"It's obviously important for us to have a range of personal productivity products for the machine. Full DTP is fast becoming one of the things people want the most," added Page.

Meanwhile, Acorn recently appointed DP Business Consultants in Scunthorpe as its first regional training centre. It will provide application-specific instruction for Archimedes users.



ARCHIMEDES: DTP on the way.

New home micro waits on industry judgement

Three former employees of Sinclair Research have produced the prototype for a completely new home computer.

At the moment, Flare Technology is opening its doors for the computer press to ponder over the new machine - called Flare One. The firm is hoping for a manufacturer to take an interest although it is understood that both Amstrad and Atari have already been approached and have shown little enthusiasm.

Flare claims that if a deal is tied up soon the machine will be available for the Christmas

market at around £200. Flare One is being pitched as a machine with Amiga-like graphics and speed, whilst sound is being paraded as its major feature.

Under development for the last two years' the machine runs 3.5" software, although that could be changed depending on the details of any agreement with a manufacturer. Despite the firm's plans for Christmas availability no software houses have yet been approached to write for the machine.

Director John Mathieson commented: "This is a very advanced home computer with synthesiser and it's

ahead of anything else on the market. It's not just a games machine but also a creative music tool. We're looking for a partner who will take this to market."

Flare One will include built-in music software as well as a paint program. It's being aimed not only at the games market but also at the home music sector.

Mathieson, along with the other partners Ben Cheese and Martin Brennan were design engineers for Sinclair Research. The firm claims that if no manufacturing deals are forthcoming then "certain aspects of the development are very sellable anyway".



WHO'S BEHIND BRITAIN'S CHEAPEST PC?

Dealers frown on Impossible mix-up

Dealers were left scowling last week as an old US Gold game appeared as both a budget re-release and magazine freebie at the same time.

Impossible Mission has been licensed to Mastertronic and was released recently on the Ricochet label at £1.99. Meanwhile, the current issue of Future Publishing's *Ace* has the full game cover-

mounted. The magazine only costs £1.50.

Whilst all attempted to play down the importance of the game's double appearance, US Gold firmly laid the blame at Mastertronic's door.

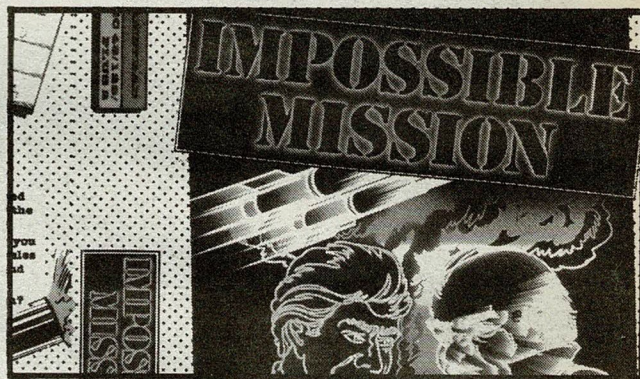
"*Impossible Mission's* re-release on budget was due some two months ago and therefore the timing collision between the release of the budget game and our giveaway with *Ace* is due to Mastertronic's delay," said the firm.

Mastertronic's marketing manager Mandy Slater preferred not to comment other than offering that the firm had been unaware of the US Gold/*Ace* tie-up at the time of the game's re-release.

Several dealers have complained that *Ace* appearing just days after the game has left stock virtually dead. "They're going to be impossible to sell," said Hughie Tayvurn of Software Centre II in Preston.

"But I don't think we've been duped. I think there's just been a big error. I spoke to *Ace* and Mastertronic and neither knew anything about it."

Future's publisher Chris Anderson told CTW that he too had only become aware of the mix-up once it was too late. He offered that it could harm his magazine's promotion and also that "if I was a dealer I suppose I'd be annoyed".



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION: Freebie and budget mix-up

Games weekly looms again?

Not for the first time, rumours were last week blowing through the industry that another games based consumer weekly publication is on the way.

Fingers are pointing toward Focus - publisher of *Popular Computing Weekly* - although it is adamant that no launch has been planned. It is understood, though, that Focus has been looking at the possibility of launching a magazine entitled *Games Week*.

Managing editor of *Popular*, Brendan Gore, commented to CTW: "There's no launch, there's no nothing." He admitted, however, that a weekly had been considered. "It's an area which we are looking at in the same way that we have looked into many other areas."

Graeme Kidd, Gary Penn and Ciaran Brennan - formerly of Newsfield - were considering a launch of a weekly last September. Apparently the name *Games Week* has already been registered by Kidd.



POP: Sister planned?

Allders adds A500 to business push

Department store chain Allders has decided to take on the Amiga System 500 bundle, thus confirming its recently announced desire to "move upmarket".

This follows Harrods' decision to stock Commodore's entry level PC1 following the near £200 cut announced a few weeks ago. The prestigious London store already takes the Amiga 500.

Following discussions ear-



SYSTEM 500: Into Allders

Two pulled up by ASA

Two computer firms found themselves under the frown of the Advertising Standards Authority in its latest report.

Cheetah Marketing was criticised for unavailability of product. A member of the public complained that despite seeing various advertisements for the MK7VA MIDI keyboard it was not yet available. Cheetah offered that technical difficulties had delayed distribution and withdrew the ad.

A complaint was also upheld against Compsoft. In a brochure it had claimed that its software was for "IBM and all compatible microcomputers". The complainant had bought *Book Worker* and found that it didn't run on his IBM compatible Tandon PCA 20. Compsoft was asked to qualify its claim in future brochures.

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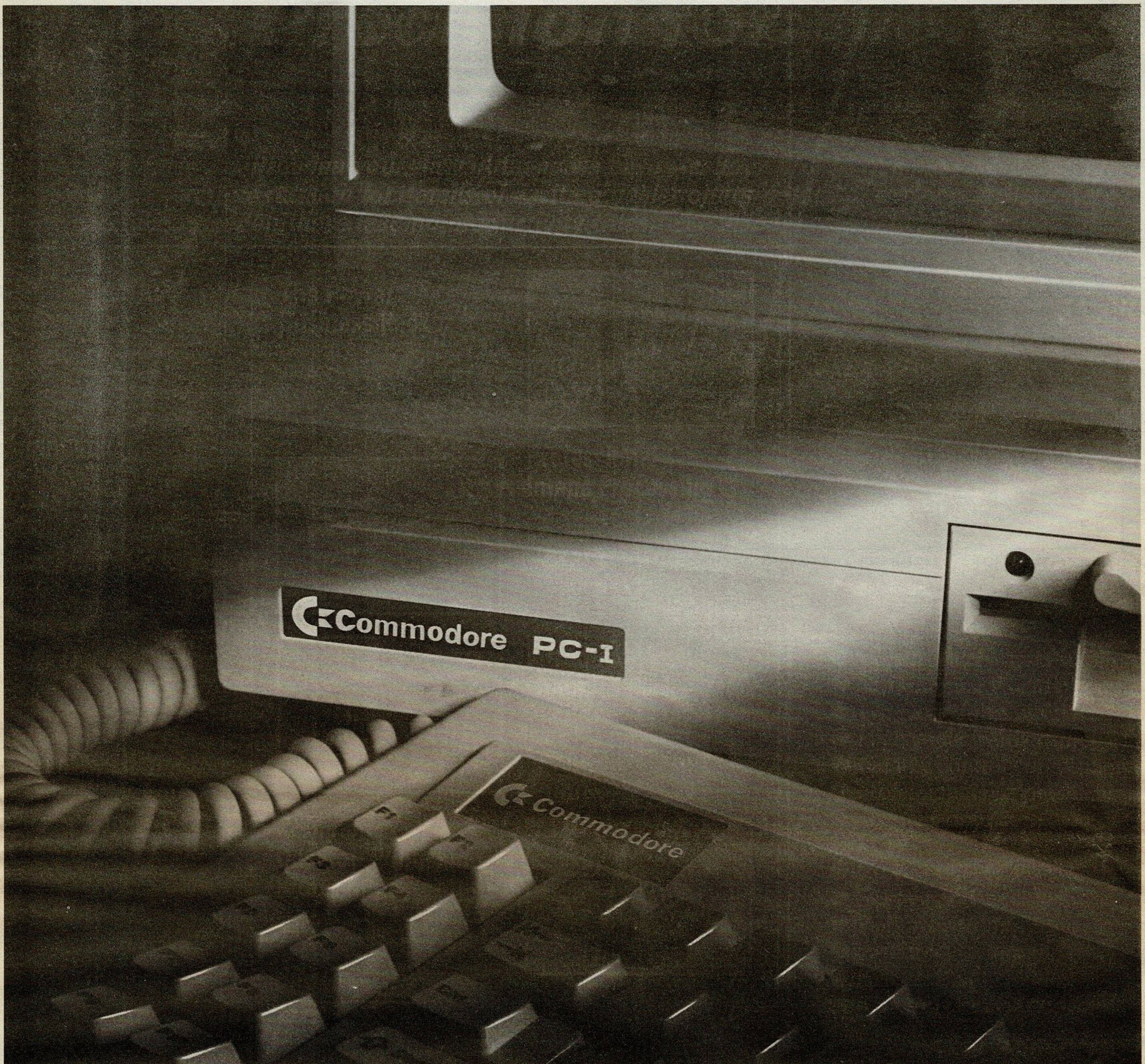
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Commodore

SNIPPETS



Software Ltd's Ken Jordon receives the Borland award whilst noting the similarity between his and Denis Maran's suit.

Borland has awarded Software Limited the accolade of Distributor Of The Year. Software Limited was first appointed by Borland in March '87 and has seemingly "more than met the required sales targets".

Licensor extraordinaire Domark will be launching *The Empire Strikes Back* in July. Based on a plot from the enormous movie of the same name this was programmed by the same team responsible for its predecessor, *Star Wars*. The important and very

complex issue of software renting - which is being discussed at length via the current Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill - has made it onto TV. FAST and a local ITV news team recently confronted Q-Tronics in Tottenham Court Road, London after hiring out packages such as *Fleet Street Publisher*, Microsoft's *Chart* and Compsort's *Delta*. On camera, the dealer stated that he was not concerned about the threat of people copying rented software. A spot check a couple of days later,

however, revealed that the outlet had seen the error of its ways and stopped renting . . . Amidst tales of success for Infogrames' *Captain Blood* from both Microdealer and WH Smiths comes further proof. Last week the the ST-only game managed to appear at number 27 in Gallup's all formats combined top 40 (open market) . . . Newsfield has received "a few complaints" for publishing the culminating screen shot of Anco's *Strip Poker II Plus* in *The Games Machine*. Complaints presumably

objected to a picture of a completely naked woman in a magazine not necessarily being read by a "mature" audience . . . Budget veteran Atlantis has started putting its products through Microdealer after much effort and persuasion. The distributor, which historically has never been over keen on budget, has taken its lowest range of £1.99 products including *Cerius* and *Anarchy Zone* . . .

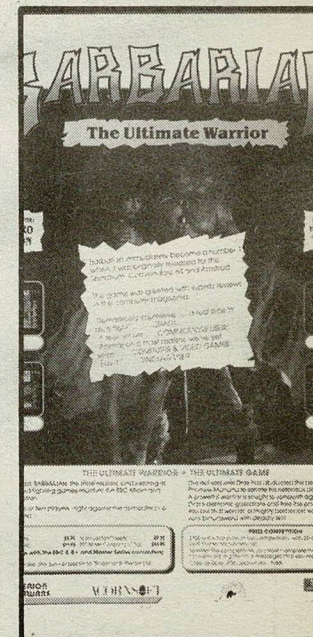
Network specialist Torus has launched a low-cost version of its *Tapestry* software. *Tapestry* 6-pack is aimed at the small business which is unlikely to expand its network beyond six users. The pack is being exclusively distributed by DDL and retails for £495. For those that do expand quickly, an upgrade will be available . . .

Milton Keynes based Immediate Business Systems has completed a deal with retail chain Tie Rack for more than one hundred Epson PX4 portable machines. Tie Rack plans to install a machine in each of its shops in order to keep up with orders, prices and the like.

Another dealer incentive scheme came to its conclusion last week - this time by Electronic Arts. Three dealers have won a trip for two on the Orient Express to Paris. They are Software Supersavers (Romford); Avon Computer Exchange (Bedminster) and Bits & Bytes (Liverpool) . . . The British Electronics Week Tobie Awards voted Acorn's Archimedes best new technology of the year. Readers of *Electronic Times*, *What's New In Engineering* and *Electronic Engineering* cast the votes . . .

According to the Department of Trade and Industry poor quality software is costing British industry £1 billion a year. The DTI concludes that this isn't a case of the British software industry being at fault but is an international problem . . .

CPU Peripherals has been appointed by Hitachi as a distributor of its range of colour monitors . . . Acorn User has deemed Superior's *Barbarian* ad (concocted by Palace) to be a trifle salacious for its readers. A suitable solution was found by blotting out of the offending areas . . .



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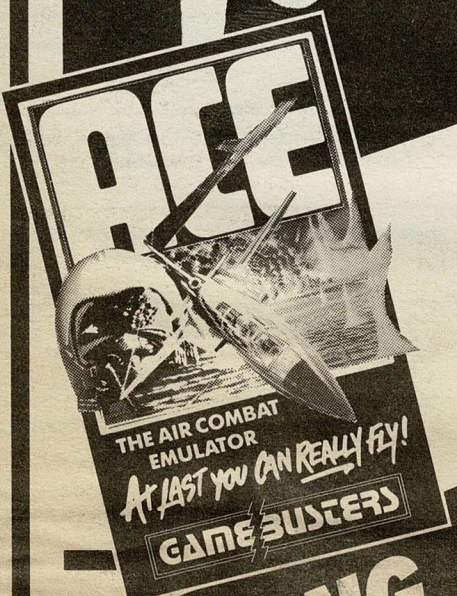
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Barry Paul	Cash with order	£100	Cash with order	45%	Securicor	24 hours	Telesales	Full range	We Are The Champions (Ocean)	No
Budget Top Rack	By arrangement	50 Units	Negotiable	30% upwards	Van/ Mail Order	Next day	Reps, mail order	450+	Alky Ollie (Budget Top Rack)	Peripherals
Capital	Cash with first order	No	7 days to 30 days	No	Securicor	Same day	Telesales	2,000	Target Renegade (Ocean)	Peripherals
Capri Marketing	Cash with first order	No	Negotiable	N/A	Van/ Courier	24hrs+	24 hr Answer Service	2000+	Ghostbusters (Ricochet)	Hardware/ Peripherals
Centresoft	Pre-pay or application	None	15th of month following invoice	35-45%	Securicor	Next day	Telesales	5,000+	Out Run US Gold	Peripherals
Columbus	Cash with references	No	15th of month	35%+	Vans and Courier	24hrs	Telesales, vansales	2000	Impossible Mission (Ricochet)	Peripherals
Exeter Software	Cheque with first order	No	30 days	40%	Courier	Overnight	Telesales,	2,500	Target Renegade (Ocean)	Peripherals
Gem	Yes	None	Negotiable	Negotiable	Courier	1-24 hours	Telesales, Vansales	600	Out Run (US Gold)	Peripherals
Greyhound	Yes	None	30 days	Up to 45%	Courier	Next day	Telesales	2000+	Out Run (US Gold)	Peripherals
Lazer	Cash with order	None	15th of following month	40%	Courier	Next day	Telesales on the Van	2500	Dungeon Master (Mirrorsoft)	Peripherals
Leisuresoft	References with cash	None	30 days	30-45%	Courier	Next day	Telesales,	5500	Target Renegade (Ocean)	Peripherals
Microdealer International	Cash with order	10 tapes	7 days 14 days 30 days	35%-85%	Courier	Next day AM Same day (London)	Telesales 6 days (including Saturday morning)	5,000+	Captain Blood (Infogrames)	Top 30 Peripherals
Midland Record Co	Cash with order	£50	30 days	50-80%	Courier	24 hours	Telesales	1,000	Way of the Exploding Fist (Ricochet)	Peripherals
Prism Leisure	References or cash	£100	30 days net	40-80%	Securicor	Next day	Telesales	2000	Football Manager (Addictive)	No
R & R	References or cash	No	20th of month following	40%	Courier	Next day	Telesales	4000	Yogi Bear (Alternative)	Peripherals
SDL	Cash with order or application	None	7th of month following	35%-40%	Courier	Next day	Telesales	1,500	Dungeon Master (Mirrorsoft)	All Atari and Commodore Amiga
Software Express	Yes	None	14 days	30-40%	Courier	Next day	Telesales, Import service	500+	Captain Blood (Infogrames)	No
Swift	Cash then references	None	30 days	30-85%	Courier	24hrs +	Telesales	400+	Yabba-Dabba-Doo (Quicksilver)	Joystick repairs
TBD	Cash with order or application	15 tapes	14 days net, 7 day settlement	40%	Securicor	Next day guaranteed AM	Telesales	1,500	We are the Champions (Ocean)	Peripherals
Twang	References or cash	No	30 days	30-40%	Courier/vans	Same/ next day	Telesales & 4 field reps	1,500	Metal Army (Players)	Peripherals
Wonderbridge	Cash with order	No	20th of month following	40%	Courier	24 hours	Telesales	500	Out Run (US Gold)	No
Zapsoft	Trade References	£50	15th of month following	45%	Courier	Next day	Telesales	400	Out Run (US Gold)	Commodore, Atari, Sega



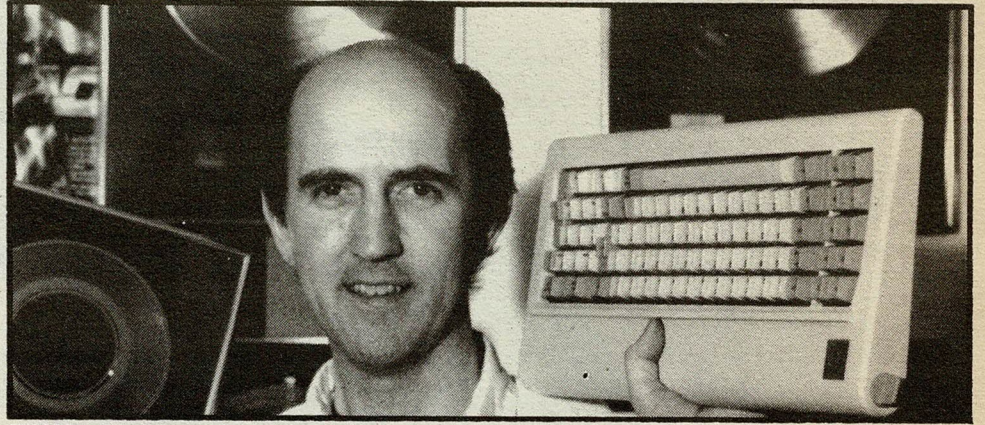
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PUMP UP THE VOLUMES

Record industry marketing maestro Barry Evans is hoping to hit the software industry with a bang. His firm Bullet will be visiting some 250 dealers every fortnight to persuade them that this game or that is going to sell in droves. COLIN CAMPBELL listens to the best of music marketing madness and suffers the inevitable comparisons with the less glamorous world of games software. . .



EVANS: On the record

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Barry Evans probably enjoys boasting about being responsible for some of the biggest marketing successes in the 'music biz' this decade. Without the efforts of his company — Bullet — the likes of Wham, Bros, Culture Club and (wait for it) Black Lace might never have happened.

Wham's first waxing Young Guns was flagging at the bottom end of the charts. Instead of giving up on the band the record company, In-nervision, drafted in Bullet to bolster support amongst the retailers and to slap up some point of sale material.

That record ended up in the top five and the two band members are now worth well in excess of £20 million. Most people need a bullet like they need a hole in the head, but the subtext of the Wham story is that if you want to get ahead, get Bullet. And now that bullet is being targeted at the software world.

Single minded

Bullet's office is the sort of place the Beeb used to make afternoon workplace soap operas about. Impressive accolades in the form of gold discs hang all over the wall along with miles of tacky posters of pop groups past and present. It's just a house in west London, though with a tiny aroma of glamour.

'Music biz' people (and Evans is no exception) are forever wailing about the illogical nature of the industry. Marketing can never be an exact science but in a world where only five per cent of 7 inch singles make a profit, you can see their point.

A move into the software industry was of course inevitable. Evans claims that this industry hasn't enough money to sustain an on the road support team and so a record industry company diversifying into software is the only solution.

Machinations of on the road support involve a sales rep swanning in armed with POS material which will presumably make its effect with the consumer. A personal rapport eventually develops between dealer and rep and the rep's client (the software house) gains the upper hand.

If Evans is to be believed then individual software companies do not have a high profile amongst dealers. Rather, it's individual games which feature in his mind. "We're about giving our clients a relationship with the independent retail market. The maximum corporate profile leads to a good dealer relationship and that increases

Continued on page 14

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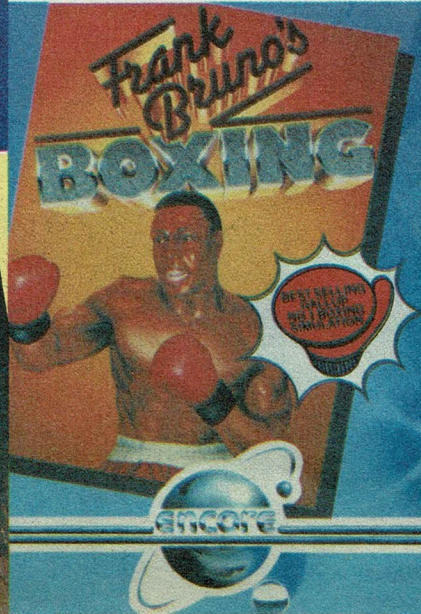
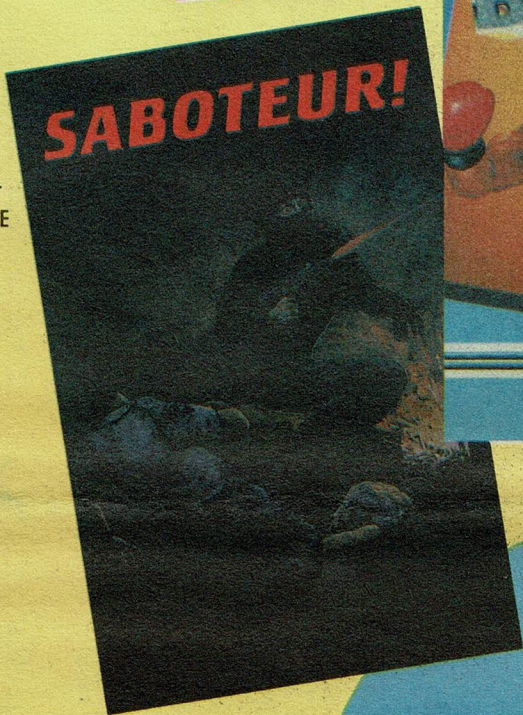


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PUMP UP THE VOLUMES

the likelihood of individual retailers stocking more games.

"What we've found is that most software companies' corporate profile is quite poor. Dealers will relate to games and their names but not to one company. This is because the software companies have not undertaken much in corporate image building. Most of that has been aimed at distributors."

Thus far, Bullet has undertaken work for Palace (*Barbarian*), Activision (*Enduro Racer*, *Last Ninja*) and Softek

(*Garfield*) amongst others which include Mirrorsoft and Telecomsoft. It has 12 on the road reps who visit 250 stores every fortnight.

Evans also subscribes to the industry's much cherished theory that there is a core of 300 or so dealers nationwide that count. However, that list is forever changing. When Bullet was approached by Activision in its early milk runs into software, it was presented with a dealer list described as "highly inaccurate".

This, declares Evans, is more proof that software

houses don't have much contact with the retailers. That's a theory which the retailers themselves enjoy subscribing to, although it can't be denied that most publishers have made efforts through such as USD and now Bullet.

Charts would be a fine thing

What warms Bullet to the software market is (inevitably) its well-worn similarities with the record industry. Just for the record Evans runs through them again:

"The target market is similar and they both have a healthy independent retail sector. The chart life of the game is also similar, i.e. four to eight weeks."

Charts feature prominently in Bullet thinking. In its own industry a record company will pay a small fee and then chart bonuses for every ten places gained. A number one hit will provide ample pickings. But since the Gallup software chart is supported less than in the record market and is cruder, software publishers are charged a flat rate for services.

As well as the personal rapport being developed betwixt dealer and rep there are other

services. Bullet will come to know how different stores function. Some stack software on shelving leaving little room for posters. So cardboard stand up cut outs and window stickers are used. Also, a relationship has been struck with Bulletin 1000 to take Bullet videos.

Television ads are produced by Bullet for pop compilation albums so a quick POS video presumably isn't a problem. One which is favoured is the trusty old competition. That is brought in when sales of a game are starting to flag.

Softek's *Garfield* was slipping after a healthy but short run. Evans started a competi-

tion for those cuddly Garfield toys and apparently sales bumped again.

But it's the dealer himself who is seen as the target rather than the consumer. "The dealer is important in influencing the consumer purchase. Reviews are helpful but to a great extent they've been devalued by too many bad games getting good reviews."

"The retailer has personal knowledge and he doesn't want to sell a duff game to a regular customer. If he does they'll go elsewhere. You have to make sure the retailer is enthused about your game."

From the software houses that theory of course collapses if the game isn't so hot after all. But still, it must give even the worst game a boost.

A bad game won't be judged or vetoed by Bullet.

BULLET

Evans states that it's not his place and the line is only drawn on bad taste. For a company that has represented Black Lace the threshold must be pretty low.

Marketing weak

For all the creative marketing ideas and downright scams there is no guarantee of success. After eight years in business and a period before then with EMI Evans is as well qualified as anyone to agree.

"There are too many variables in marketing and promotion to say anything definitive. All you can say is that the likelihood is that by understanding these processes the interest will increase. Every single and every game is unique and there are no definitive rules as to how the market will react."

He goes on: "Apart from the obvious marketing and promotion activities, timing is essential. You can release something three times and it'll do nothing — but on the fourth time it'll go to number one. The only difference is opportunity and timing."

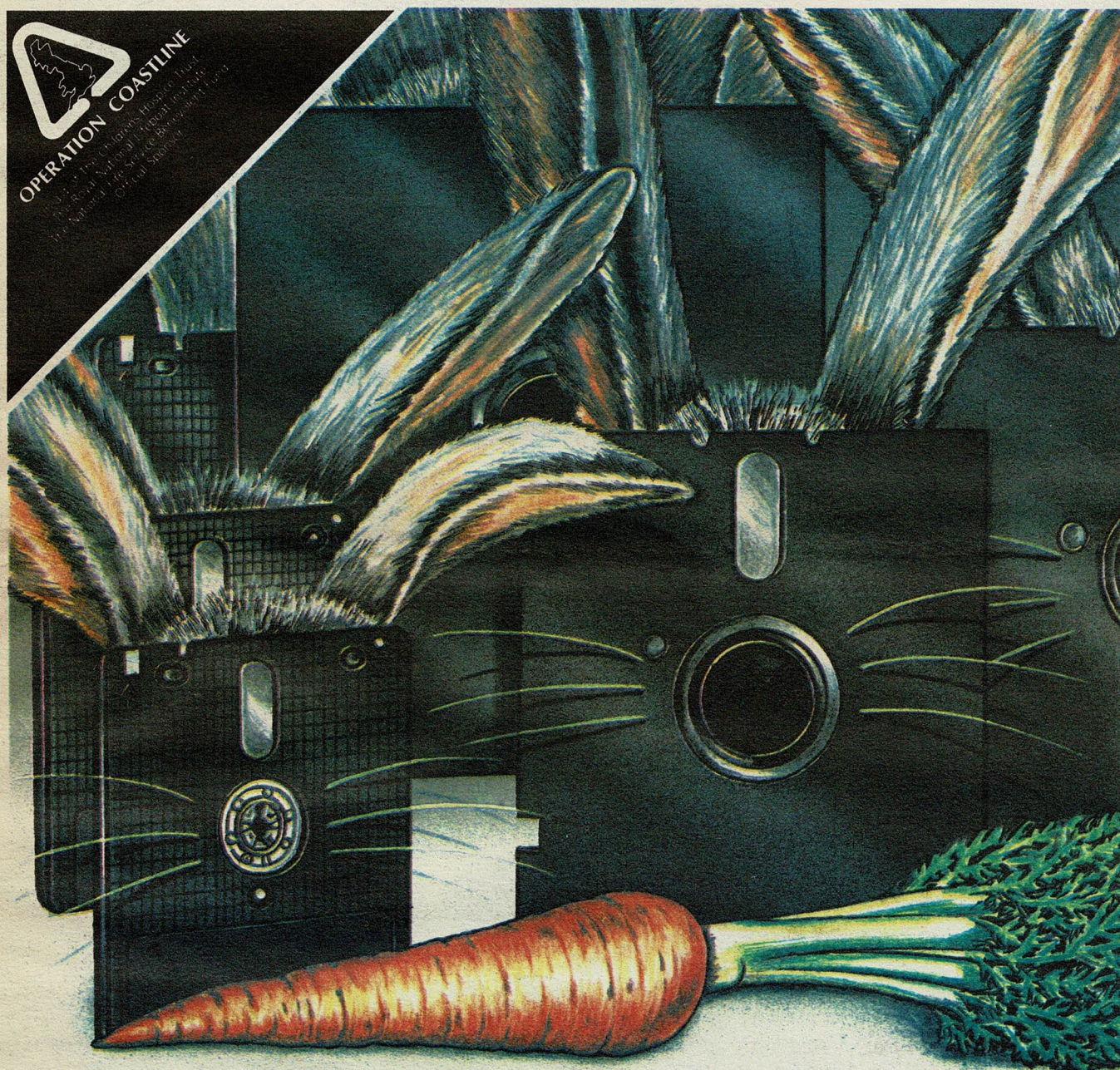
Like in any other leisure medium the spirit of the moment dictates what is a success. Those who can make educated guesses as to what the public will demand by the time a project is finished won't go far wrong. "If a game is released at the point where that type is fashionable then it can be a hugely different result to what might have happened six or even three months previously. Promotion and marketing is the key but not the whole story."

The distributors aren't capable of spending time and money on such ventures as Bullet, USD and Active Sales and Marketing undertake. But it's important that there is a close relationship between both sectors. That mutual understanding goes as far as Bullet carrying stock in the car and billing it over to the dealers' choice of distributor.

Up to a point Bullet acts as a shuttle for the distributor and Evans is more than ready to stress that he's not out to tread on their toes.

Its most ambitious plans though are to increase the profile of the Gallup chart and

Continued on page 23



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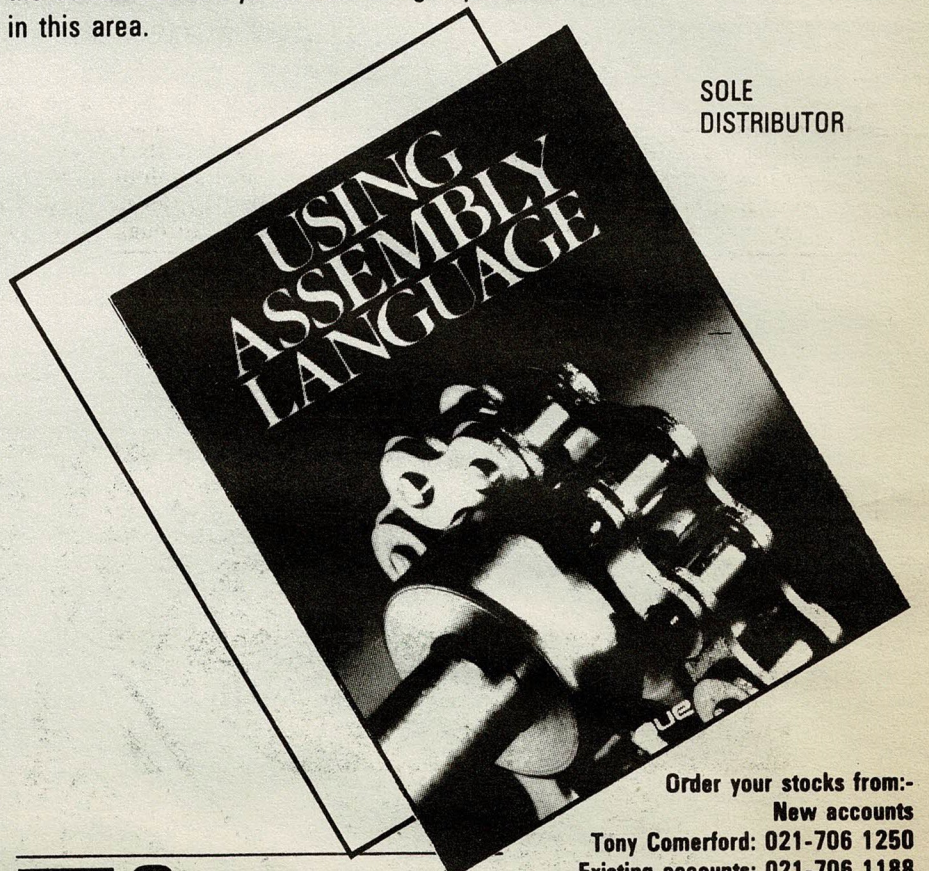
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COPING WITH CHANGES IN THE COPY MAKERS' WORLD

Duplicators are another sector of the industry who have something to say about the slow decline of 8-bit and the rise of 16-bit. Whilst there is obviously still a crust to be made out of tapes some companies are phasing out that side of it and concentrating on disks. CTW talks to a cross section . . .

Software duplication is one of those areas which is full of wisened and haggard industry veterans who have seen it all, survived everything and are more than willing to tell any passer-by their tale.

The problems of yesteryear have passed by to be filled by newer ones which need to be dealt with. Roguish and sometimes plain stupid software publishers have pretty much gone now and duplicators are fast on their feet with the ones that are left. Now they have to deal with the albatross of quickly changing hardware technology.

And it's the slow grind of the 16-bit revolution which inevitably pre-occupies most. There are those who are "pleased to see the back" of cassettes and feel more secure with the 3.5 inch format. But of course the cassette is here for a while yet.

There is a slight shift in duplicating with the cassette format being neglected by some of the smaller operations. A large slice of that business is tied up by the big guns. That is, the likes of Ablex and Kiltdale.

What these companies actually do is about as uninteresting as you can get. Just reeling off trillions upon squillions of tapes and disks can't be the most satisfying of jobs. And it is becoming increasingly complicated.

The main culprit here is the guts of the ST. Different specifications mean that a lowest common denominator needs to be found (by the programmer) to work on them all. It is the duplicators that check all this and need to chase the publishers and hardware manufacturers when quirks arise.

Problems have arisen in the past with the ST. Late last year some leading games were failing to load on certain STs because the programmers had not been informed or had ignored Atari's warning of techno changes (depending on who's to be believed).

Pedicular pedantry

"We have a pedantic production process which we have to go through," said Discopy's David Hartley. "Some programmers on the ST don't

appreciate the varying internals of different models."

Top Copy's John Juleff pointed out that it is a programmer's problem rather than a duplicator's. "The insides of the ST changes so much, those changes shouldn't be of any concern to us because we only duplicate. It doesn't worry us unduly — but it is a pain."

Nevertheless, Top Copy, like all the other duplicators, needs to go through the process of checking and testing all the different specifications. Top Copy is one of those firms which is phasing out its tape business and concentrating more on the disk side. One of the reasons is that "disks are much easier than cassettes and cassettes are mechanically less reliable."

Cambridgeshire based Protoscan's boss Mike Hall agrees that duplicators are having to bear too much of the ST specification problem. "We end up having to sort it out and we're constantly up and down to Atari sorting out problems which really haven't got anything to do with us."

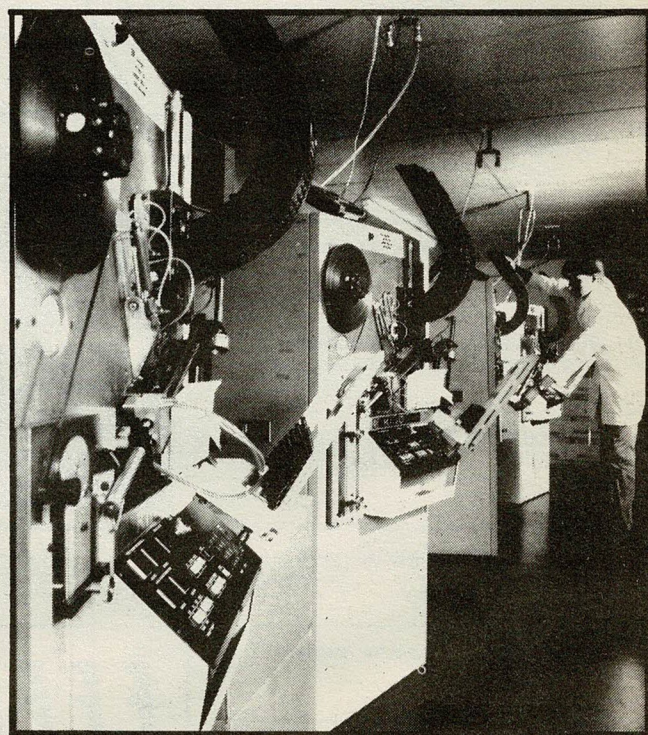
No doubt the majority of programmers and publishers

are scrupulous in their checking and rechecking with the duplicators acting as a safety net. No other machine, though, seems to experience these problems as much as the Atari ST.

Kiltdale's Jim Wilmer pointed out that there wouldn't be a problem "if people gave us the parameters". He felt that a bigger problem lay in the complicated tangle of "esoteric" protection. "It causes a headache and it ends up costing a fortune," he said.

The prices of 3.5" disks — as with all the other sizes — are entirely dependent on fluctuations of supply. All the duplicators are adamant that they won't touch the dodgy Far Eastern imports even though it's a lot cheaper than going to the established companies. The going price for a blank disk can be anything between 50p and £1.

"We won't touch Taiwanese," stated Hartley. "If you get a problem it could work out to be the most expensive disk of all. The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of a cheap price has gone."



DUPLICATION: The reel thing

For this reason, many solely use Amsoft for suppliers of the notoriously expensive 3" disk.

Medium is the message

Data Duplication offers an all-in service of duplication and packaging for a disk in a CD type box. Boss Julian Jones offered: "You can't go and get your media from Hong Kong because you haven't got any history of the

quality. Anybody can quote prices for silly products but we'll use other people who don't cause problems."

With some of these firms moving away from a traditional base of tape duplication to 3.5" and 5.25" there are more opportunities to win business accounts. And that is a much easier life than the hurly burly style of games. Business orders aren't quite so 'here and now' as games.

It's been known for games

Continued on page 23

TOTAL CAPABILITY IN DATA DUPLICATION

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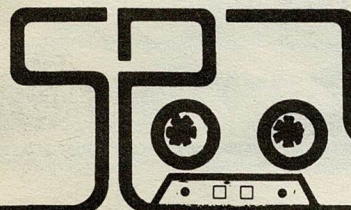
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ABLEX	2.5m tapes 1m disks	12m tapes 3m disks	C8-30p	250	1/4	48 hours	Ocean, US Gold, Gremlin, Amstrad, Martech, Sagesoft, Virgin, Imagine.	Jeff Johnson	0952 680131
APPLETREE	200K both	1.2m	18-28p C5-C30	250 tapes 100 disks	1/10	72 hours	Confidential	Stuart Briggs	0302 890000
COS	750K tapes Disks not in-house	7m	16p ave.	None	35/65	24-48 hours	Confidential	Mike Clark	01-609 8771
DATA CLONE	500K tapes 250K disks	1.5m	25-35p	500	40/60	10 working days	Two major ones	John Barnham	01-494 41353
DATA DUPLICATION	350K tapes 950K disks	3m tapes 600K disks	C15-19P+ C25-20P+	None	1/5	24 hours +	Activision, Electric Dreams, Mirrorsoft, Prism, Thalamus, Incentive	Mark Norsworthy	07356 77421
DELACY	100K tapes	N/A	20-30p	500	Tapes only	72 hours	Alternative	Mr Midson	0977 795544
DISC COPY	2.2m disks	7.8m	5.25" — 38p 3.5" — 36p	None	Disk only	Next day/ 24 hours	Telecom, Elite, Electronic Arts	David Hartly Diane Mooney	0604 760261
KILDALE LTD	1m tapes 250K disks	15m	Dependent on type	50 tapes 100 disks	1/4	48 hours	Confidential	Jim Wilmer	0242 525458
LOADPLAN	310K disks	2-3m disks	Dependent on type	500	Disk only	4-6 days	Confidential	Nick Williams	01-200 7733
MICROBYTE DUPLICATORS	450K tapes 150K disks	1.2m tapes 1m disks	20-22p	None	1/1	1-3 days	Softek, PSS	Doug Brotchie	0451 607700
PRECISION DATA DUPLICATION	500K tapes 100K disks	4m tapes	C15-25p	None	1/5	24 hours - urgent	Code Masters, Alternative, Tynesoft, Database, Cascade	Keith Miller Roy Harrison	0532 526422
PROTOSCAN	250K disks	N/A	3.5" — 77p	None	Disk only	48 hours	Mastertronic, Mirrorsoft, Telecomsoft	Mike Hall	0480 495520
SOUNDS GOOD	150K tapes	240K	C10 — 23p C15 — 25p	50	Tapes only	48 hours	Top Ten, Audiogenic, Godax	Daryl Still	0734 302600
SPOOL DATA	1.2m tapes 600K disks	15m tapes 2m disks	C15 — 20p	200	1/4	24 hours	Elite, Grand Slam, US Gold, Alternative, Tynesoft	Roy Varley	0244 817602
TAPE DUPLICATION COMPANY	1.6m tapes 100K disks	12m	20p	500	1/1	24 hours	Amstrad	Tony Denning	01-609 0087
TOP COPY	250K disks	250K tapes 1.5m disks	Varies	100	Disk only	3-4 days	Confidential	John Juleff	0726 68188

This table is meant to provide an at-a-glance guide to software duplication: it is not a comprehensive guide to duplicators

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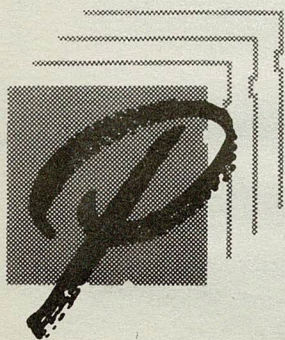
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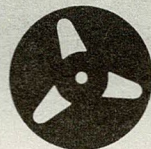
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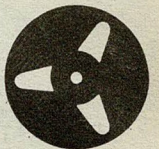
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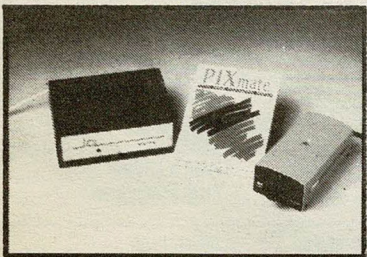
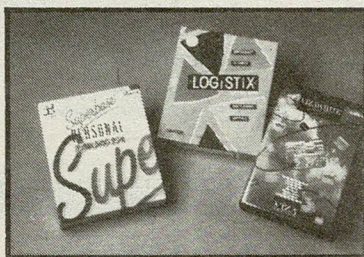
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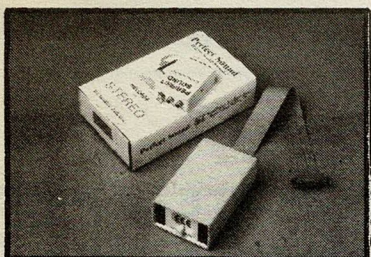
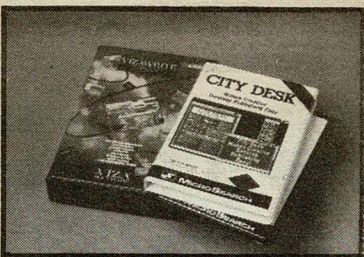
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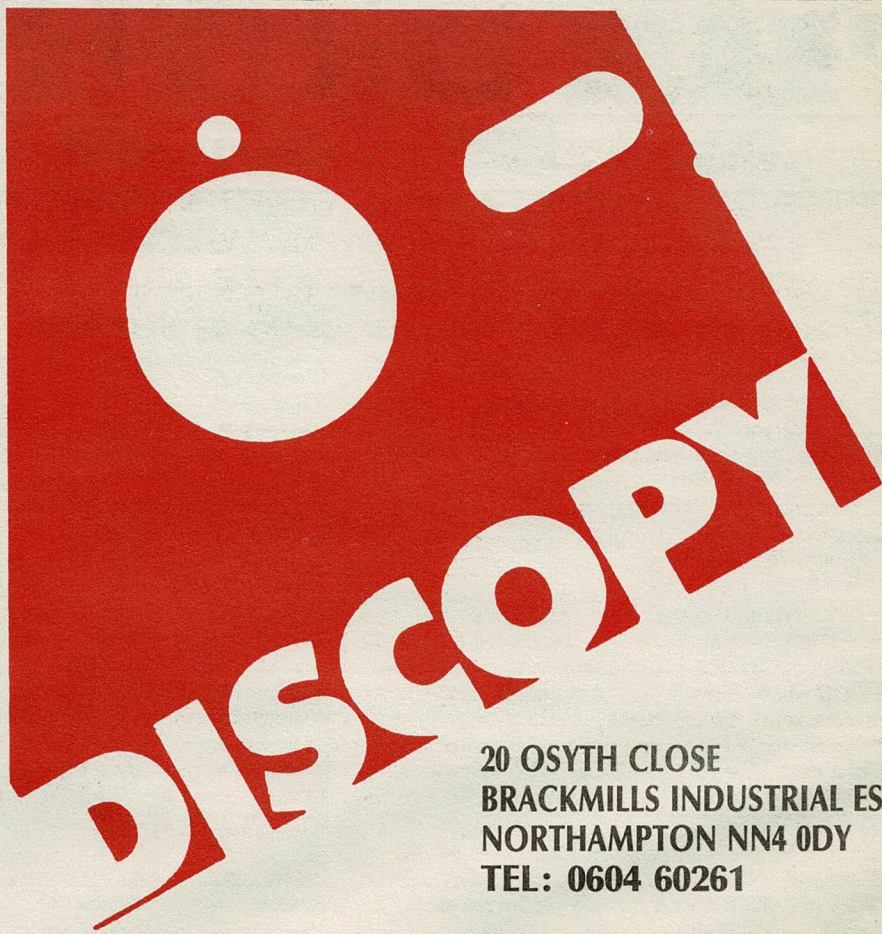
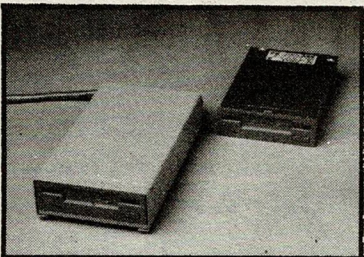
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SPA FOR THE COURSE II

T'other week, C&VG's editor Eugene Lacey filed a piece for CTW all about the recent Software Publishers Association spring forum in California. This has prompted requests for further information about the SPA from those interested in seeing a Brit equivalent. So we asked SPA director and treasurer **BILL STEALEY** (better known as the gung holier than thou boss of MicroProse) to explain the workings of the trade body. . .

We can credit much of the dynamic growth of the software industry in the United States to the presence of the Software Publishers Association (SPA) and its commitment to the interests of all software publishers. Ever since Ken Wasch, executive director of the Software Publishers Association, gave his presentation at last year's PCW show, British software companies have been requesting additional information about the US-based trade association through MicroProse's UK office. As a member of the SPA's board of directors, I wanted to take this opportunity to outline the growth objectives and activities of this dynamic organisation.

The SPA was established in April 1984 by 25 micro-computer software publishers who had identified a need for an objective organisation to promote the growth of the industry. The SPA has expanded rapidly and now represents more than 300 US firms — a true cross-section of the software industry, with business, education and consumer companies forming the nucleus.

Full membership is open to any firm that publishes soft-

ware for personal computers. Association membership is available to non-publishers of software that have a commitment to expanding the software market (ie magazines, computer hardware companies, distributors, retailers, etc).

The SPA's rapid growth can be attributed to strong leadership and a responsiveness to the needs of the membership and convince them to one of the first issues addressed by the SPA and it remains the number one threat to the growth of the industry. Every software publisher is affected by the illegal copying and distribution of copyrighted software.

Painless steal

The SPA has responded with a two-pronged attack. Using public service announcements, the SPA at first concentrated on a national campaign to educate the public about the ramifications of software piracy — using the analogy that it is no different than stealing from someone's wallet. The campaign focused on public awareness of piracy as a federal offence punishable by fines and imprisonment.

The message was strong and effective, and the SPA is continuing those efforts. But the SPA realised that education and public awareness do not reach everyone and the organisation has turned to litigation when necessary.

Each spring and fall the SPA sponsors a symposium for full and associate members. This year's four-day spring event was attended by more than 800 individuals and included more than 30 panel sessions with topics ranging from "Obtaining financing" and "Writing a business plan" to "Trade practices in Japan" and "Entertainment software trends". These sessions provide a unique opportunity for software publishers to share ideas, discuss issues, plan strategies, network and even have a little fun (see Eugene Lacey's report in CTW May 2nd).

The success of the SPA's Data Program, monitored by an independent third party, is a sign of the confidence member firms have in their trade organisation. More than 80 per cent of the membership reports monthly on company software sales in various categories. Each month participants receive overall figures that indicate sales trends in



STEALEY: Co-operation is needed

the industry in more than 50 market segments.

Although it took years to gain the trust of the membership and convince them to divulge highly confidential information, the persistence paid off with a program that has proven its worth in many ways. It provides critical insight into a volatile marketplace.

Action-oriented SPA committees provide leadership roles in promoting the growth

SPA: facts and figures

According to Ken Wasch, the full time executive director of the SPA, "the glue that holds the organisation together" is the market data and information that it provides for its members.

Members submit sales data to Arthur Andersen Inc — America's largest accountancy firm — which independently audits the information to provide sales charts and other market information. However, in order to receive information you have to submit figures. There is no additional charge for this information.

Cost of Membership: This is based on turnover, starting at \$500 up to a ceiling of \$10,000. European and other software publishers can join for half price. The fees pay for the SPA's Washington office with a full time staff and director. Membership of the body has snowballed from 25 companies when it was formed in 1985 to more than 230 Full Member Companies, and 75 Associate Member Companies.

of the industry. The education committee implemented Computer Learning Month last October — perhaps the most successful computer public-awareness campaign ever! The committee was able to generate real enthusiasm among parents, teachers and students of all ages and a whole new generation of computer users was born.

The consumer software committee is establishing an SPA Speakers' Bureau to de-

monstrate the benefits and variety of consumer software to national organisations, and is working with the education committee to expand the focus of Computer Learning Month.

The SPA has become a guiding force for the US software industry in only four years of operation. Industry communications are enhanced by the SPA News, published monthly with hard news, Continued on page 23

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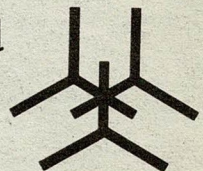
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3	1	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
4	4	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
5	6	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	5	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
7	24	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
8	9	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
9	16	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
10	12	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
11	25	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
12	10	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
13	7	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
14	11	ATV SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
15	RE	BMX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
16	13	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
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C64 TOP 20

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3	NE	ALIENS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
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6	5	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
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16	16	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
17	28	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
18	29	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
19	13	MATCH DAY 2	OCEAN	8.95
20	24	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99

AMSTRAD TOP 10

1	1	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
2	2	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
3	3	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
4	7	BMX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
5	4	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	5	DAN DARE	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
7	NE	METAL ARMY	PLAYERS	1.99
8	8	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	RE	3D STARFIGHTER	CODE MASTERS	1.99
10	9	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

1	1	CAPTAIN BLOOD	INFOGRADES	24.95
2	NE	FOUNDATIONS WASTE	EXOCET	24.95
3	8	IKARI WARRIORS	ELITE	14.99
4	2	DUNGEON MASTER	MIRRORSOFT	24.99
5	5	CARRIER COMMAND	RAINBIRD	24.95

AMIGA TOP 5

1	NE	WIZBALL	OCEAN	19.95
2	NE	DRUM STUDIO	PLAYERS	9.95
3	4	SIDEWINDER	MASTERTRONIC	9.95
4	NE	BMX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	14.95
5	NE	SOCCER SUPREMO	CRYSYS	14.95

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
SPECTRUM	44.6	46.1	48.6	47.5	27.9	28.3	28.3	30.0
COMMODORE 64	22.6	23.8	21.5	23.5	25.8	26.3	24.5	23.2
AMSTRAD	18.9	17.3	16.0	15.9	18.9	19.0	17.6	19.1
ATARI ST	4.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	6.9	6.0	6.5	5.9
BBC	1.9	1.8	2.1	1.9	3.8	3.5	4.0	2.6
ATARI	1.9	1.3	1.2	1.3	2.9	2.4	2.9	3.8
COMMODORE 16	1.9	1.9	2.4	1.7	2.5	3.1	4.3	4.2
AMIGA	1.1	1.5	1.0	1.2	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.1
ELECTRON	0.9	1.3	1.8	1.4	2.3	2.6	3.1	3.0

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
91	95	133	98

Soft options

SOFT OPTIONS carries salient details of leisure software titles just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software houses wishing to be included should fax (0438-310001) or phone (0438-310185) through details ten days prior to our publication date.

▲ AMERICANA: *Beachhead* (Sp64 - £1.99) With this following hard on the heels of *Bruce Lee* it looks like Americana could be picking itself up at last with some strong titles. It may be a tad old, but then so are *Ghostbusters*, *Fist* and *Steve Davis*, and they haven't fared too badly. **▲ THE EDGE:** *Garfield* (+3 - £14.99) After what seemed like an age (and was) *Garfield* proceeded to dumbfound all the critics by actually sitting in the top ten for a fair while. The +3 version will no doubt take its fair share of the few sales that are out there. **▲ ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *The Bard's Tale* (64 - £9.95) The Tolkienesque adventure finally makes its way onto the C64 in the UK. It will be worth the wait for a few but their joy is unlikely to be registered in chartsville. **▲ ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Starfleet* (AgSTPC64 - £14.95-£24.95) This Interstel strategy space simulation did wonderful things in the US. In a scenario very similar to *Star Trek* the player commands one of 36 galactic cruisers in a bid to protect the Alliance (aka the Federation) from the Krellan Zaldron warships (aka the Klingons). **▲ ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Carriers of War, Europe Ablaze, Battlefront, Battle in Normandy, Russia, American Civil War, The Halls of Montezuma* (all 64 - £18.95), *Rommel* (64Ag - £18.95-£24.95) EA's recent tie-up with Strategic Studies Group results in the simultaneous release of no fewer than eight war games and *Reach for the Stars* - a war game set in space. Presumably, the idea is to release them all at the same time because they are long shelf-life products rather than three week wonders.

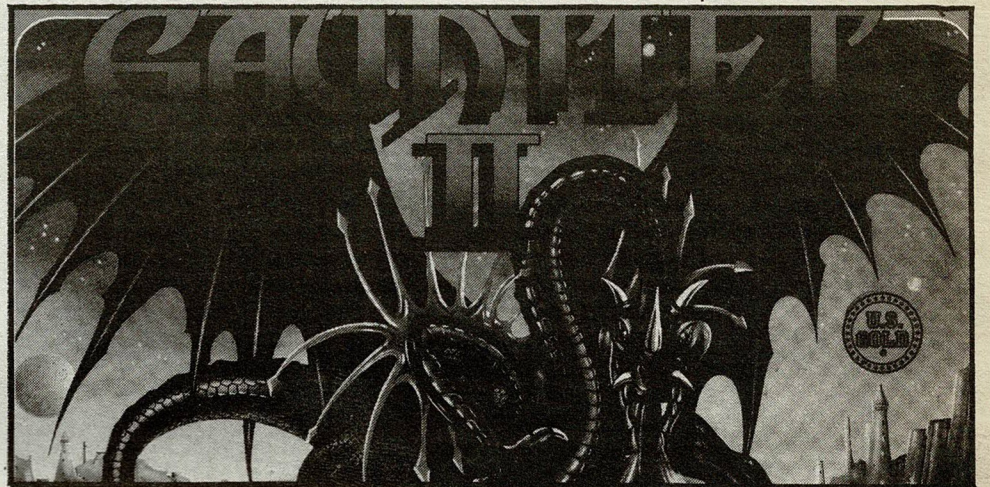
▲ GAMEBUSTERS: *Ace* (SpAm64C16PC - £2.99-£4.99) This is Cascade's first budget offering (that's why the label name didn't ring any bells) and it's not a bad one at all. One of the most successful flight simulators re-priced at £2.99 must be considered good value for money. And the PC version coming out at just £4.99 certainly bucks the current thinking

that budget 16-bit product should cost more than a tenner. **▲ LEISURE GENIUS:** *Monopoly Deluxe* (64 - £12.95) Waddington's board game has clocked up UK sales of 35 million since its launch but dealers would be well advised to be conservative in their buying. This version holds true to the original and falls into the 'steady seller' category. Keep one on the shelves. **▲ THE MICRO SELECTION:** *Shadow Skimmer, Xecutor* (Sp - £2.99). Neither did much as full price products but they were well received. Softek has been promising great things for its budget label and at least one of these should pull its market share up. **▲ MIRRORSOFT:** *Dark Castle* (64 - £8.99-£12.99) Mirrorsoft at last proves that it has not wholly forsaken the 8-bit market, but there's no sexy licence or smash-em-up here. It's another adventure. **▲**

MIRRORSOFT: *The Three Stooges* (Ag - £29.99) Comedy is a difficult thing to transfer onto computer and Mirrorsoft will be hoping it has rather more success with this than it did with *Andy Capp*. Considering the hype and the long wait good initial sales, at least, would seem certain. If the gameplay can live up to the excellent graphics then this one could be around for ages.

▲ OCEAN: *Platoon* (STPC - £19.95) Loud noises are being made about an all out attack on the 16-bit market and big titles such as this are leading the way. In fact, this is arguably the biggest 8-bit title of 1988 so far. If the scope for improved graphics and suchlike is used and the original gameplay is kept it should do very well indeed. **▲ PLAYERS:** *Sword Slayer* (SpAm64 - £1.99); *Star Trooper* (Am - £1.99); *Tanium* (XE/XL - £1.99). No awards for originality here but for £1.99 you can't go far wrong. That's the theory anyway. **▲ RAINBIRD:** *Jinxter* (Mac - £34.95) Now here is a rarity, a game on Apple's Macintosh. If there is a viable market for leisure product on such machines

the highbrow adventuring provided by Magnetic Scrolls should address it well. **▲ SILVERBIRD:** *Beach Buggy Simulator* (SpAm64 - £1.99) Put together a Code Masters style title and a game akin to Elite's current full-price effort *Buggy Boy* and what have you got? A game that should sell at £1.99 with the minimum of effort. **▲ SILVERBIRD:** *American Road Race* (64XE/XL - £1.99) This is a budget game that should sell by name alone as long as the programming is up to scratch. Publishers are slowly learning that the sexier the game title, the better the reception from those impressionable young budget buyers. **▲ TOP TEN:** *Good Luck, Snookered* (Sp - £1.99) The first title is a straight poker simulator whilst the second is an outright rip-off of the popular pub triv machine *Radio One's Give Us A Break*. Unfortunately no one told the programmer that red, yellow, blue and black aren't the only scoring colours in snooker. What happened to the green, brown and pink? A whole nation awaits. **▲ VIRGIN:** *Action Force II* (Sp+3 - £8.95-£14.95) Virgin makes further use of its Hasbro toy licence by giving the good guys a second run out against the bad guys. This one, by all accounts, seems to be something of a rarity in games publishing terms in that it is actually an improvement on the first effort. It might even provide Virgin with some much needed chart action. **▲ US GOLD:** *Desolator* (SpAm64 - £8.99-£14.99) There seems to be a bit of a revival for vertically scrolling smash-em-ups at the moment, with Elite's *Ikari Warriors* doing particularly well. This is something of the same style in a *Commando-meets-Gauntlet* mixture of Fists and rooms. **▲ US GOLD:** *Gauntlet II* (ST - £19.99) Though never on a par with the original, the 8-bit versions of this follow-up did very well. The ST version should at least match that success, but don't expect it to be sitting alongside *Out Run* at the top of the ST chart.



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

PUMP UP THE VOLUMES

Continued from page 14

— it would follow — the industry as a whole. He hopes that Saturday morning children's television shows and local radio programmes will use the chart. That though seems to be a difficult ideal with public resistance to "video games" still apparent. Those Code Master chappies seem to be the only ones to have gained any publicity worth noting — but that's another story.

"As long as the media feels that the chart is up to date and accurate they will take it. But because of the predominance of budget in CTNs and multi-

ples the independent dealers don't see what they are selling performing in the charts."

The fact that it is issued two weeks after the sales doesn't help. Evans has been having tentative talks with market research supremo Simon Treasure on the possibilities of the Gallup chart — but these things tend to take time.

BULLET

The similarities and differences between the record industry and its poorer cousin are being tested again . . .

COPING WITH CHANGES IN THE COPY MAKERS' WORLD

Continued from page 16

publishers to want their run yesterday but the business people will sometimes wait a week. Duplicators are still at the mercy of their clients who might give them an extraordinarily large order on Friday afternoon. In these cases extra hands get drafted in and it's a simple case of coping with the situation.

Companies with leisure and business accounts have the luxury of being able to put back the business run by a couple of days if a large games order swamps them. "We pull in people at the drop of a

hat," said Juleff. "A phone call is all that is needed to ask someone if they mind a few days' delay, and we've never had anybody get shitty."

Hall bemoaned the problems an unexpected order can cause. "We get product in at 4pm on a Friday and they want it for Monday morning. It just means we have to work through the weekend. The games market is much more active and you have to be able to react in 24 hours."

Recently, Protoscan installed a claimed £100,000 "state of the art" duplication system. The computerised mons-

ter is apparently useful for special tweaks and unusual formats.

Abnormalities come up fairly regularly in the higher end of the market although not so much in the games end. Loadplan, for instance, recently received an order from the Ford Motor Company for a specialised software package consisting of 80 disks. One thousand of those were run off.

Poor seasons

Over eager software houses are apparently a thing of the past now. It was a problem for well clued up duplicators who were approached by small opera-

tions wanting a run of 25,000 games at a good rate. The argument that it's not their problem doesn't stack up if the title is (almost) obviously not going to cut it and if the software house is depending heavily on good sales.

In those circumstances a word in the publisher's ear was usually appropriate. "Software houses are much more professional now and the smaller ones are dropping out," said Jones. "In the early days the initial run was big — sometimes 25,000. Now it's more like 5,000 and 10,000. They know that they don't need large numbers straight away. Stock control is much better."

The seasonality of the market is of course a factor. At this time of the year deals are starting to be done although the big run offs won't be tied up until August or September. Few large software houses will entrust their entire run off to one company no matter how reliable it is. Exclusive deals are almost non-existent with large companies, although smaller operations won't bother to work with more than one.

Apple Tree Duplication for example is part of the CDS group and is pitching itself as duplicator for the smaller companies. It runs off small amounts of the ever present *Football Director* for D&H Games, for example.

Apple Tree is a fairly new operation and the market for duplication is still growing. There is still a seasonal lull, but all are certain that production is set to increase across disk based product with the mainstay cassette business holding steady.

SPA FOR THE COURSE

Continued from page 19

company features and guest columns. Industry promotion results from the SPA's "Excellence in Software Awards" and Sales Certification programs.

Recent additions to the staff will increase public relations and market research efforts and, as the organisation grows, it will play a more prominent role in voicing industry concerns about legislative issues. The SPA's greatest strength is that it aggressively pursues the agenda outlined by its membership.

SPA spur

Hopefully, the success of the SPA in the States can serve as motivation and inspiration for the software industry in the United Kingdom as it actively works to create a group with comparable goals and impact.

Perhaps the single most important factor which must be present for success is a sincere spirit of co-operation to achieve common goals. This is more difficult than it sounds because our industry is still so young, dynamic, aggressive and fiercely competitive.

For more information about the SPA, I would encourage interested people to contact Mr Ken Wasch, our Executive Director, and his very helpful staff at: Software Publishers Association, 1101 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 901, Washington, DC 20036, USA. Telephone: (202) 452-1600.

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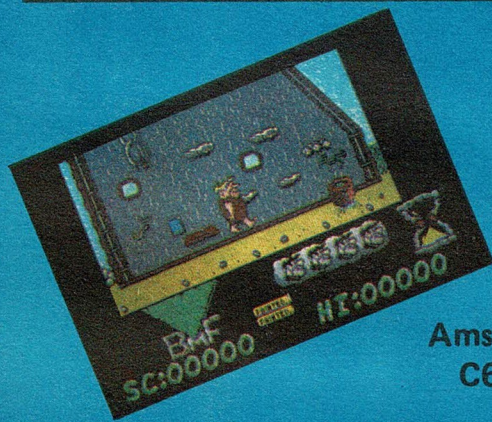
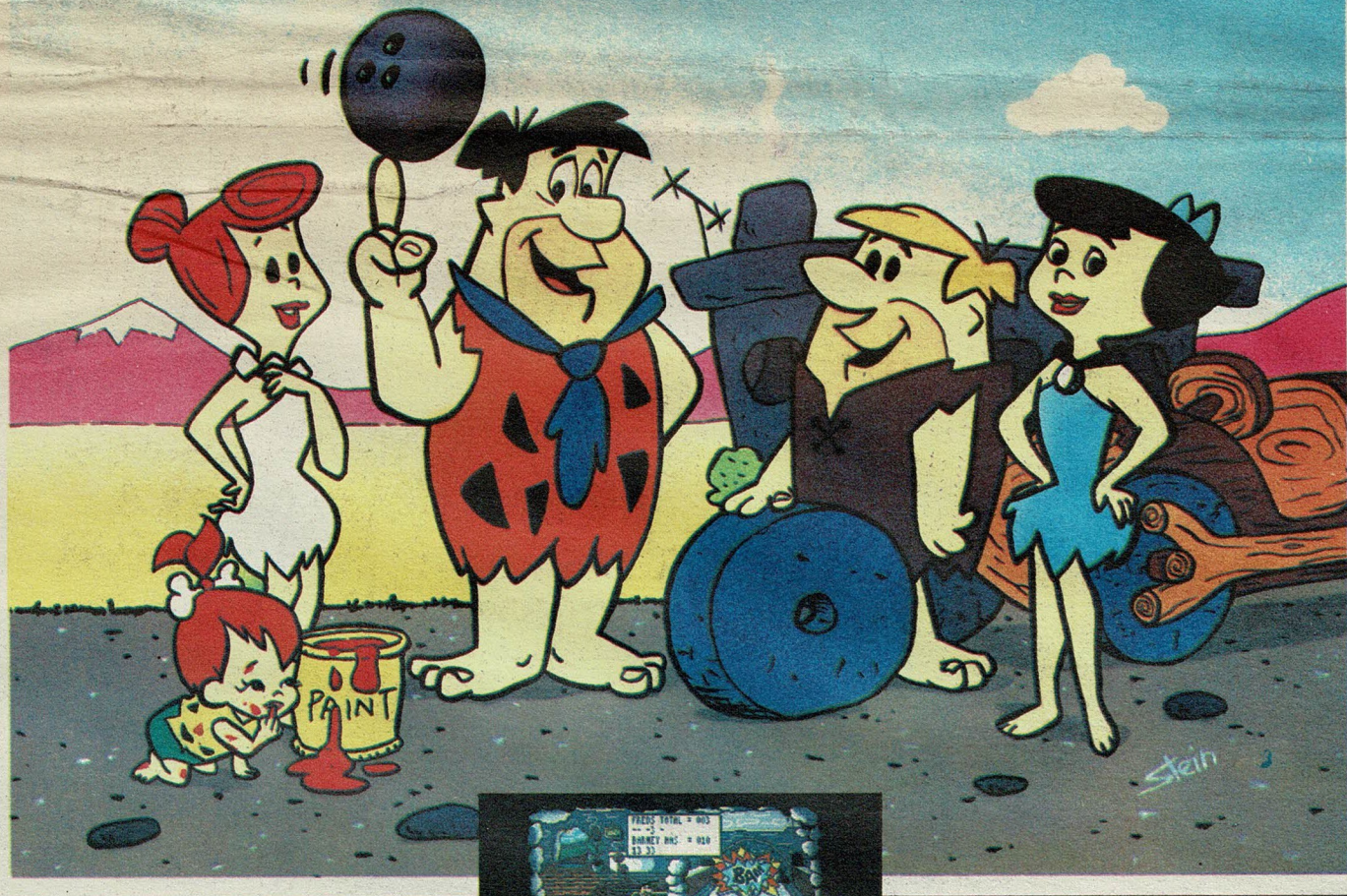
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Grand Slam arouses slumbering Bug Byte

A new price point, new logo and recently acquired back catalogue were the ingredients for Grand Slam's re-launch of budget label Bug Byte last week.

A selection of old Domark and Datasoft games as well as Grand Slam's back catalogue will be launched at a rate of

six a month. The current product schedule stretches into the middle of next year.

Also, Bug Byte's traditional price point of £2.99 has been cut to £1.99 - a price point which the CTN sector is more comfortable with despite a recent surge in £2.99 labels. The firm's boss Stephen Hall told CTW that the new logo combines the Grand Slam identity with Bug Byte's independence.

The Domark titles which Grand Slam has acquired include the likes of *A View to a Kill*, *Friday the 13th*, *Split Personalities* and *Eureka*. Those Datasoft titles which have already been published as budget games through Americana won't be re-appearing as Bug Byte titles.

The possibility of budget compilations exists although Hall could not say what the price would be.

"The brand name is recognised and it has a good past reputation. I want to put it at the forefront of the budget market," offered Hall. The label has been doing virtually nothing since the beginning of the year with only a handful of MSX releases.

"We haven't actively been marketing it whilst we get everything into position. We're really in a nice position with product lined up until mid-

'89," he said.

For Domark, joint boss Mark Strachan said "We are a full price software house and most of these games - such as *View to a Kill* - are very old and have already been on compilations. I'm delighted to have them published by someone who knows the market as well as Stephen does."

Bug Byte was one of the pioneering software houses before it was bought by Argus Press Software (now Grand Slam). Despite having little in the way of recent chart success it still has a high profile with the public. According to a recent Gallup report on brand recognition Bug Byte surprisingly came ahead of



HALL: Budget rethink the likes of *Firebird*, *Code Masters* and *Elite*.

Amiga chop

Continued from front page Commodore's plans.

Meantime, it emerged last week that there has indeed been high level examination of the possibility of a C64 console. This has been prompted by the extraordinary success of Nintendo in the States. The idea has not been ruled out, but appears unlikely.

"Yes, our US company is very concerned about Nintendo and the sales they've done. But I'm against a console because in the end you screw the consumer. They would then only be able to use the 64 as a games machine, whereas people now use it for far more than that. It's the first step in programming and that's important."

Symons returns

Continued from front page

undercutting dealers. The changes were viewed as a "tidying up" operation. Both firms are pointing out that Hugh Symons' experience with Acorn product has put them in good stead.

"We have a dealer base of 1200 which we'll be addressing earnestly," said Hugh Symons' marketing manager Geoff Storer. "Because we are familiar with Acorn's range we are serious contenders for distribution."

He added: "We see a lot of potential in RISC technology and obviously there is an appeal to quite a few vertical markets. Although the Archimedes has a high price it's got a lot going for it."

IBM

Continued from front page

will be dismayed and surprised by this move. Most have viewed IBM's lack of objection in the past as an assurance that they were in the clear.

Indeed, defence lawyers will be using this line of argument saying that since IBM hadn't challenged anyone in the past it was a fair assumption that it never would. For its part, IBM is adamant that legal action will be taken where necessary.

It is saying that clone companies should not be surprised by these moves because it has always maintained that it will protect its intellectual properties. Amstrad noted that IBM would not be "waving its stick" if it didn't mean business.

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