



CTW

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MB Games rolls software dice

Toy giant MB Games is about to launch itself into the European video games market — with a batch of NES games, a largescale TV ad campaign and an independent distribution network.

The Hasbro subsidiary — which turns over around £30 million in the UK — has been an NES publisher in the US for some time. In mid-October, four titles for the Nintendo console will be rolled out across Europe.

Two licensed titles

California Games and Marble Madness — plus the homegrown Digger and Timelords will make up the foursome. A fifth game, Corvette ZR-1, will arrive in January.

MB is intent on establishing itself as a major player in the European publishing world and, with that in mind, is ploughing an impressive amount of cash into supporting its first releases. Specialist press advertising will kick off in September/October, with a £150,000 TV ad campaign following in mid-November.

On the distribution front, MB is to become the first

NES publisher in the UK to go it alone — avoiding an exclusive tie-up with Bandai.

The firm is already understood to have tied up a deal with Centresoft, and is willing to talk to other firms on the computer side of the console business. In the toy world, MB is incredibly well known and will supply product direct, whilst deals with chains such as Dixons and Currys are also believed to be close.

MB's decision not to go with Bandai means that retailers will have more options when it comes to buying stock, and MB itself will have total control over its UK

operation. One source offered that retailers may even get better margins on MB product than Bandai-distributed software.

If successful, MB's route may possibly be followed by other authorised NES publishers, but probably not until the new year.

Whilst key product lines such as Connect 4, Game Of Life, Mousetrap and Twister continue to sell well, MB has taken the plunge into Nintendo publishing because of the impact video games are having in the toy world — and it is adamant that it is totally committed to its new venture.

"I think we're getting more and more credibility as time goes on. People are realising that we're a major company and that selling games is what we're good at. We're here to stay," remarked MB's senior product manager Jeremy Kirk-Smith to CTW.



Dennis coy on console launch

Dennis has confirmed that it is to launch a monthly console title later this year, but is refusing to give any more details.

CTW believes that the title will be launched in September with an October issue. The firm has recently been advertising positions on the new title in the national press, but the role of editor is thought to have been already filled.

It is not clear whether or not the arrival of the new mag will mean the end of console coverage in sister title Zero and Dennis is not shedding even a glimmer of light on the subject.

It is also remaining tight-lipped on the title of the mag and the specific nature of its content.

Managing director Colin Crawford did reveal that he is looking for a circulation of around 50,000 but Teresa Maughan, who will almost certainly be publisher of the launch, refused to add any more details.

When the mystery mag arrives, presuming it is multi-console format, it will be in direct competition with Mean Machines for which EMAP is claiming a current circulation of around 50,000.

ELSPA close to chart deal

The Gallup charts were close to receiving a significant boost last week in the form of a major sponsorship deal with a national retail chain.

It is understood that ELSPA has been approached by an advertising agency about the possibility of sponsorship by one of its new clients.

Although the name of the firm is not even known to ELSPA at this stage, it is a national retail chain of some sort. The deal will apparently involve a six figure sum, and the trade body is also actively seeking offers from other firms.

ELSPA general secretary Roger Bennett told CTW: "The chart would be a very useful thing for a firm to be associated with, ideally it would be an electrical retailer because that would give them a vested interest in the chart."

"We are talking about a substantial six figure sum. This wouldn't necessarily bring any changes to the format of the chart itself because it is already pretty

Continued on back page



Nintendo has forced its way into Supermarket chain Tesco, where it will be lining up alongside Sega. Sega has been part of the Supermarket chain's line-up for over a year now and the store has obviously been pleased with the results. A spokesman for the firm told CTW that Tesco is confident that the success story can be repeated with Nintendo. The chain's line up now consists of Master System, Megadrive and the NES plus software for all three machines — all of which are placed in over 100 stores. Strangely, no one from Nintendo was prepared to comment on the good news.

No show for Neo Geo as launch is put back to '92

SNK has postponed the official UK launch of the leading edge Neo Geo until next year, CTW can reveal.

The machine was due to finally be launched at September's Computer Entertainment Show in London — having actually been previewed the year before.

Specially designed PAL versions were due to start shipping in the UK shortly after the show, but the machine's UK agent Luther De Gale told CTW last week that production delays mean they will not arrive until after Christmas.

"I am extremely disappointed," remarked De Gale. "We had made some excellent breakthroughs in rental. Most of the big video stores are already renting, and the timing was ideal for us because Nintendo and

Sega don't want their machines rented, and we do."

Around 1,000 Neo Geos filtered into the UK last Christmas season via imports — some of which were adapted for use in this country by De Gale himself.

This year's Neo Geo, however, would have been an official PAL version, which could be hooked up to a TV with no loss of performance. Imports are likely to continue between now and Christmas, but these only work with a monitor and, according to De Gale, "you don't get the full capabilities of the machine".

The Neo Geo was due to arrive at £299, with software ranging from £99-£149. Sales of at least 10,000 units were expected between September and Christmas, plus a good deal of rental business.

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All rise at Future as Format flies

Future has posted a bulging bag of ABCs, with Amiga Format crashing through the 100,000 barrier and all its other leisure titles gathering speed in its slipstream.

Amiga Format's ABC for the six month period ending Jan-June 1991 is 115,158. This shows a 42 per cent rise from the last period's figure of 81,324 and continues the sharp growth of a title which less than two years ago was selling under 40,000.

Future claims that the new figure establishes Amiga Format as the biggest selling British computer magazine for at least six years.

Managing director Chris Anderson commented:

"When the company started, the prospect of anyone creating a new computer magazine capable of selling over 100,000 copies seemed an impossible dream, so this result is especially exhilarating."

ST Format yet again found itself in the shadow of its sister title, but has yet again posted a healthy rise. Its new ABC is 70,258, a rise of 27 per cent on the July-Dec 1990 figure of 55,455.

Perhaps surprisingly, Amstrad Action has also enjoyed a blooming six months, its ABC rising 13 per cent from 31,228 to 35,159 during the very period when Amstrad and its CPC range seemed to be on a severe slide.

Another 8-bit title, Your Sinclair, also posted a figure

to contradict the accepted view of a floundering market. Its new figure is 65,444, up 8 per cent from 60,368.

Future's third 8-bit title, Commodore Format was only launched last year and so posted its first ABC, coming in at 50,135. The firm will undoubtedly be pleased with the opening shot as it puts the mag ahead of Zzap, which, despite a determinedly taciturn Newsfield, is

believed to have a current ABC of around 43,000.

Sega Power also qualified for its first figure during the six months and managed to come in with 20,112. While this does seem a poor result Future would argue that it has already achieved its initial, modest aims and is this month being redesigned ready for growth as Sega itself looks to explode into

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FUTURE' LEISURE MAGAZINES — ABC SUMMARY

Title	Jan-Jun '91	Jul-Dec '90	% growth (on prev. period)
Amiga Format	115,158	81,324	UP 42%
Amstrad Action	35,159	31,228	UP 13%
New Computer Express	20,214	20,204	UP 0.05%
ST Format	70,258	55,455	UP 27%
Your Sinclair	65,444	60,368	UP 8%
Commodore Format	50,135	(First ABC)	
Sega Power	20,112	(First ABC)	

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Dealers shout, Commodore listens, as DOA dispute hots up again

Commodore last week insisted that it had not "retreated to an ivory tower" over its new DOA policy and invited even more dealer comment.

The firm has caused a major stink in the independent retail sector by changing its policy as from July 1st. Before that date any duds would be collected by distributors with new stocks

arriving on the same or next day.

Now, dealers have to send back the DOAs to Commodore itself, at their own expense and then wait "a maximum of 14 days".

CTW and independent dealer body NASCR, have both been contacted by scores of retailers angrily claiming that the new measures are unjust and unnecessary.

NASCR chairman Clive

Bishop commented last week: "The situation is getting worse and worse, every day I'm being contacted by dealers saying that they just can't carry on stocking Commodore's machines."

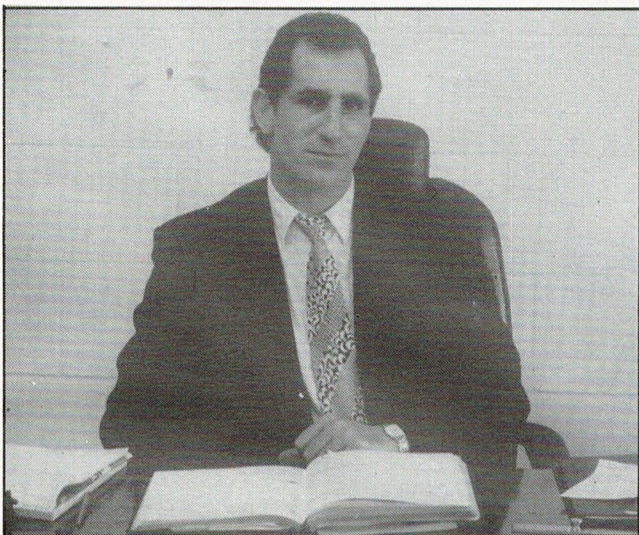
In reply, Commodore insists that it is listening to every single complaint and is taking note of the strong reaction. It has already conceded that machines sold to consumers before July 1st which prove to be DOA will

now be collected free of charge.

National sales manager Kelly Sumner told CTW: "We are listening to everybody and where possible we will be taking the suggestions onboard."

He has also agreed to a meeting with Bishop, and CTW where the controversial issue will be thrashed out. The results of the meeting will be published in next week's issue.

Prism reflects record growth



YOUNG: Core areas doing well

Prism Leisure has announced a record set of financial results for the year ending March 31st 1991, with both profit and turnover on the up.

Pre-tax profit was up 88 per cent to £761,000 compared to the previous year's £405,000. Turnover was up from £10.5 million to £12.5 million — an increase of 19 per cent.

Both of the firm's core operations — music and computer games — experienced a rise in turnover and profit. The firm pointed to its recently launched Pocket Power range of

budget games, and also a liquidation purchase of CDs, records, and cassettes during the winter as two of the key factors.

Prism chairman Geoff Young commented: "We are delighted to announce record pre-tax profits and increased activity in our core music and computer games businesses, particularly in the adverse economic climate which has affected so many other businesses in the leisure sector."

"Even against a backdrop of depressed retail spending we are confident that Prism will produce further improved results in the year ahead."

Microbyte goes on shopping spree

Microbyte has strengthened its claim to be the UK's biggest independent computer chain by announcing the opening of seven new stores — including one in Oxford Street.

The firm has announced

stores in Ilkley, Blackpool, Derby, Carlisle, Middlesbrough and Birmingham as well as the Oxford Street site in London's West End.

The latest list brings the chain's total up to 22, which is double the firm's total of 11 from this time last year.

Microbyte boss Mick Robinson told CTW: "Oxford Street is a very expensive site but we're confident that we can do it, we have a good position in between Virgin Games and the Megastore. We always go for high street stores, stores that are currently going to the wall don't have the high street

presence that we have, it is expensive, but that's where people do their shopping."

"I would say that we've been the biggest independent chain for some time in terms of turnover, but this really illustrates that fact, this time last year we only had 11 stores."

Europress lets go Let's Compute

Europress has suspended publication of its computer comic *Let's Compute* after only 12 issues, with the mag failing to reach the firm's projected circulation targets.

The firm is currently debating whether or not to relaunch the mag with a different format at a later date. Part of the magazine's problem appeared to centre around newstrade shilly-shallying on whether to position it in the comics or computers sections.

If the mag does emerge again, it seems likely that the comic format will be dropped and the price raised. Circulation figures are quoted by the firm as being around the 18,000 mark.

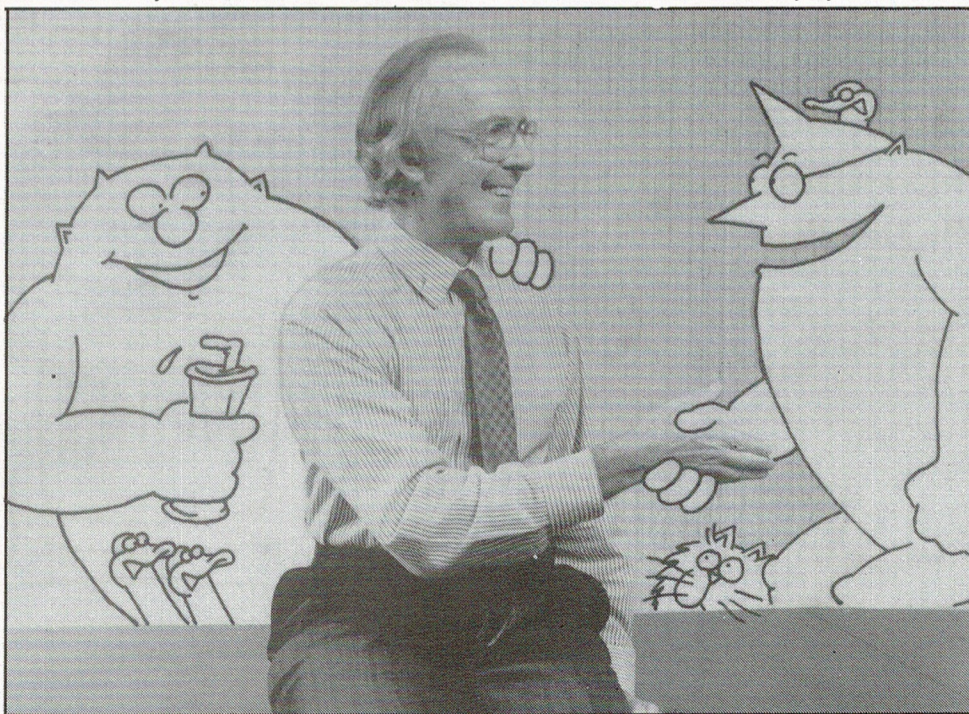
Europress chairman Derek Meakin told CTW: "The circulation hasn't developed the way we had hoped it would. It proved to be a rather strange animal,

the subscriptions were better than on any other title but it didn't sell that well on the news-stands which is essential when you have a

magazine with such a low cover price.

"One of the problems with the news-stands was that they didn't know where to

position it. To produce something that costs less than £1 you need a big circulation which has been proved recently by *Games-X*.



HAPPIER TIMES: Europress boss Derek Meakin and two *Let's Compute* staff

Leisuresoft remains on Virgin territory

Leisuresoft has re-signed its exclusive distribution agreement with Virgin Retail and is confidently looking forward to an expansive year.

The firms have been working together for over four years now with the deal being resigned annually. Both sides agreed that this year there was not much doubt that it would be renewed.

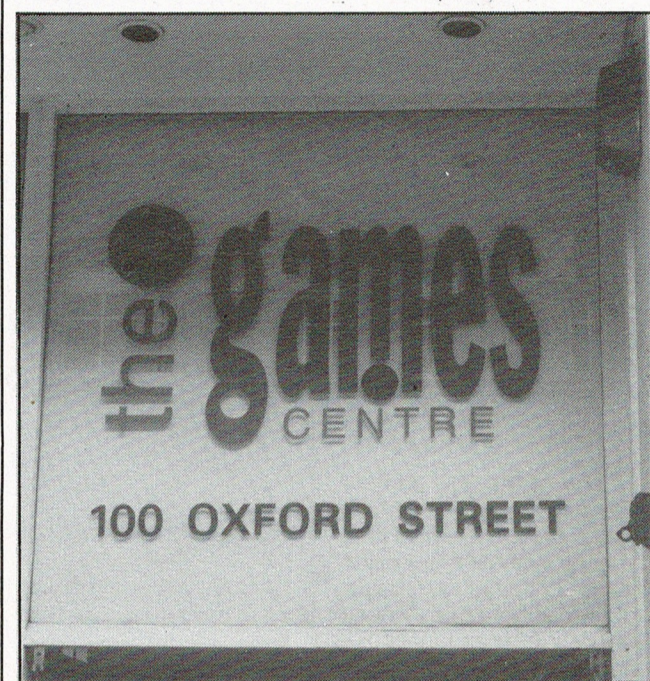
Virgin's Gerry Berkley told CTW: "We're happy with the service they provide and we've agreed terms which suit both of us."

"As things are moving along so quickly here, we need to work with a

distributor that understands Virgin and the way we work. This year we will have a lot more input in the promotional plans with Leisuresoft and the publishers themselves."

Leisuresoft's operations director Liz Welsh offered: "Last year we worked far, far closer with them than ever before. We committed to a commercial campaign using mail shots, consumer advertising and in-store promotions."

"We really do provide them with a very high level of service. They are an extremely important customer for us and as their expansion plans go through, they can only get more important."



VIRGIN: Leisuresoft given thumbs up — again

Nintendo jets onto TV again

Nintendo has rolled out yet another new TV ad — this time specifically supporting its *Solar Jetman* release for the NES.

The new ad is part of a massive marketing campaign which has kept the Nintendo name plastered across the nation's screens all year — be it via NES and Gameboy ads or promotions with snack firms.

It lasts for 30 seconds and is running exclusively on TV-AM. Produced by Geers Gross, the commercial features a "wise-cracking astronaut complaining about an alien-in-pursuit and his jinxed mission".

The ad will apparently achieve several hundred TVRs through the midsummer period, with new campaigns across the entire ITV network being planned for the Christmas run-in.

SDL signs up US specialist

SDL was bubbling over last week, having signed up US Amiga peripherals firm GVP.

The firm will be supplying GVP's range of A500 and A2000 hard disks, accelerators and cards. SDL is already, rather bullishly, claiming it as the 'most important partnership for the UK in 1991'.

Products include the Series II A500 50Mb hard drive which retails for £599 (inc vat), a 105 Mb hard drive for £799 (inc vat), and 52Mb hard card which retails at £479.

A spokesman for the firm commented: "We already

have the UK's largest range of Amiga peripherals, from the world's leading Amiga hardware developers — ICD, Vortex, and Microbotics. However, the majority of these are aimed at the A500 market, for some time we've been looking for a product range that encompasses the A1500, 2000, and 3000 market. GVP gives us just such a range, whilst also having the design engineering and build quality that we needed."

"For every need, be it price, performance, technical superiority or state of the art technology, SDL now has the peripheral to match."

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c 1991.

New Jersey set to clean up software

The State of New Jersey looks set to pass a law which will attempt to further eradicate any traces of racism or fascism of any kind from computer software.

Assemblymen Cohen and Spadaro have recommended a new piece of legislation which states that anyone "producing, distributing or dispensing,

including through a computer network, any videogame which promotes, encourages, recreates, depicts or otherwise displays an act of genocide or the killing of people based upon their race, colour, religion or ethnicity is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree".

If, as seems likely, the new law is passed in the State, anyone found guilty could face a fine of \$7,500 plus up to 18 months in prison.

Also, anyone under the

age of 18 who commits any of the offences will be required to attend a course of study, of at least 20 hours duration, covering the Holocaust, genocide, racism and "other suitable topics".

The course would include "documentary footage which graphically portrays survivors and victims of Nazi concentration camps".

The recommendation goes on to point out that games with "blatantly neo-nazi themes" have appeared

in Europe.

If the law does go through then, whilst only being enforceable in New Jersey, it could have far wider ramifications as publishers would not wish to cut the State out of their potential market.

And while the law is aimed squarely at the underground videogame nasties that are available in Europe, publishers may also have to look at some traditional war games plus more modern titles such as *Attack Iraq*.

Pirate lands in fine mess

Another software pirate has been brought to justice, resulting in a £2,000 fine.

John Smith of Humberston Computer Services in Humberston pleaded guilty to 15 charges of copyright infringement. As well as the

fine, he was also ordered to pay £500 costs.

Smith was nabbed when officers posing as customers bought copies of computer games on discs for £2 each.

Subsequently, raids by trading standards officials uncovered over 2,000 discs and copying equipment.

Star shows up with new batch

Star has announced five new dot matrix printers to be launched at the Business Computing Show in September.

Four of the printers are from the firm's forthcoming Pro-to-Col series replacing the existing Professional Series of FR-10, FR-15, XB24-10, and XB24-15.

The new series comprises two nine pin models the ZA-200, and ZA-250 with 10 inch and 15 inch carriages respectively. The series is completed by the XB24-200 and 250 — 24 pin 10 and 15 inch carriage printers.

Each of the new printers offers full colour capability as standard. The firm claims to have increased durability and build quality with heavy duty components. Prices have yet to be announced.

The fifth new printer from the firm is the LC-20, which is

a successor to the LC-10. Aimed at the small business home and education markets, the printer has all the features of the LC-10 as

well as a new sound absorbing case and increased speed. The firm already claims to have sold two million LC-10s worldwide.



THE LC-10: Making way for the LC-20

Genic tees up US firm

Audiogenic has signed up with US firm Microleague to market and distribute what it claims to be the world's first interactive golf tutor.

The firm is hoping to sign up other products from the US publisher, but for the moment it will be concentrating on *Personal Pro*, which was apparently designed by golfing legend Robert Mack (?).

The title allows the user to examine and correct their golf swing by answering questions and answers about it, which will then be analysed by the computer.

Audiogenic boss Peter Calver told CTW: "Basically it works on the assumption that not every one has got the perfect golf swing. It's a serious title, it's not a game. There's certainly a big market for it in the US, they shipped 10,000 copies of it in the first three weeks."



No, we're not going to resort to any cheap sexist gags about Fatima Whitbread (left) looking a little bit like a bloke, or mention the stubble. We're simply going to say that Acorn has signed a sponsorship deal with the Chafford Hundred Athletic Club, of which Ms Whitbread is the president. The deal runs for two years, and will apparently involve personal appearances by other famous athletes such as Linford Christie, and John Regis at various Acorn events and in promotional material.



ATTENTION ALL DISTRIBUTORS AND RETAILERS!!!

Zeppelin Games Latest Releases Available This Week...

IO Available: Commodore 64 £3.99

"The definitive Shoot-em-Up" — **C&VG**

"IO has to be one of the most impressive Shoot-em-Ups released on the 64"

— **Commodore User Screen Star**

"The visuals are superb with some terrific landscapes and loads of gorgeous sprites whizzing around" — **Zzap!64**

Created by superb programming team Stevenson & Hare, IO is the classic Shoot-em-Up.

BOUNCING HEADS Available: Commodore 64 £3.99

Beat the clock and bounce your disembodied Head around a myriad of trap filled platforms, blasting intelligent opponents into oblivion.

Test your arcade skills against the devious mind of a computer programmer and see who comes out on top.

Bouncing Heads — persons with reactions of soggy rice pudding need not apply, only the sharpest can survive!

MONUMENT Available: Amstrad £3.99

The attack on the colony by mechanised combat units was as savage an end as any in recorded history.

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FRED Available: Atari XL/XE £2.99

Unga Bunga! Fred is a real stone age rock star.

Being a little bolder than the rest of his tribe and bored with banging skulls together, Fred embarks on the ultimate quest to find the real meaning of caveman life.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

Well that's what Nick Alexander, lapsed Virgin and now Sega's European supremo, would have us believe. DAVE ROBERTS checks out the foundations on which the confidence is built...

What is extremely difficult and, now, vitally important to bear in mind, is that we are sitting in Sega offices and that Nick Alexander is a Sega employee.

The comforting thing is that he keeps forgetting as well. It's understandable really. The familiar red logo is everywhere and the Virgin atmosphere and, if you like, attitude still prevails.

The logos will, in time, be banished. The rest, according to Alexander, will stay for good.

Because the other, even more important thing to remember, is that in virtually everything but name, these have actually been Sega offices, and Alexander a Sega employee, for at least two years.

It was only through a thoroughly admirable sense of decency, that he has waited until the relationship is a permanent one to announce that he is no longer a Virgin.

The first fumbblings that lead to a true consummation began at last January's Las Vegas CES. Sega made the first approach, but was far from brash or brazen.

Its initial suggestion was that Virgin should join in a "joint venture". Virgin employees being so determinedly rock 'n' roll probably thought that they were being an elicit smoke.

Perhaps surprisingly then, the firm was not tempted straight away. Alexander remembers: "Virgin was quite reluctant and didn't really enter the discussions at first. But as we got further and further into the contract, there was an increasing divergence in view between Virgin's desire for reasonable return on investment and Sega's desire for long term market share."

This divergence was caused by two things — a slim, nearly anorexic, margin for the distributor and the need for a huge marketing budget to build the brand.

Basically, Virgin was doing the job of a manufacturer in Europe, but with the margin of a wholesaler.

"So Virgin decided that the clash of interest could be reduced by renegotiating the distribution contract and making it more long term. Sega, however, were reluctant to do that without being more directly involved so that led to discussions about working together over here."

"But during the course of the talks, the senior parties on both sides found that they were likely to have considerable differences in their views on what the operating strategy should be and that led to Sega making Virgin an offer for the whole business. That was around April/May time."

During this time, when no one was sure who was going to be in charge, Alexander and his team kept out of negotiations and got on with the business of winning the FA Cup, or something.

"Our only involvement was providing information rather than selling ourselves to Sega or getting the best deal for Virgin. Besides, we had a job to do."

Alexander also reveals that "negotiations were not always smooth". As a revelation it probably ranks up alongside the 'Robert Maxwell sometimes shouts at people' exclusive for shock value.

We are talking here, or rather they were talking there, about a business that in Europe will have a turnover of £250 million over the next 12 months and, at the current rate of growth is set to be worth £1 billion just two years after that.

"We do all have questions in our minds about what it will be like to work for a Japanese company."

Nick Alexander

Couple that with the fact that the corporate cultures of Virgin and Sega seem poles apart and a lively exchange of views, at the very least, must be expected. Thankfully, the £40-45 million buy-out does seem to genuinely please everyone.

Sega gets control of its European destiny, Alexander and his team carry on doing a job they have proved themselves worthy of and Virgin gets to concentrate on publishing — plus a tidy sum.

Myth taken for identity

But the whole negotiation situation illustrates a potential problem for Alexander and his team. Working for Virgin, it is assumed, you are almost obliged to be wacky, crazy (yawn), alternative etc.

It would not be surprising if all employees had a clause in their contracts: "Everyday, I will do something completely zany to prove my contempt for traditional corporate mores."

And Sega, well, we don't really know that much about the culture of Sega. But it is a Japanese firm, and we all know what they're like don't we?

Well according to Alexander no, we don't. And we haven't really got much of a clue about Virgin.

"We do all have questions in our minds about what it will be like to work for a Japanese company. Fortunately we've been working with these guys for a few years already so we've got a pretty good idea."

"The idea of this major culture clash is, of course, what the outside world would assume judging from the archetypal image of Virgin and the archetypal image of a Japanese company."

"But over the years, particularly around the time of

going public, Virgin has gained a lot of disciplines and the sort of management controls that Sega imposes are really not that different to the ones imposed by Virgin."

He stops his bow-tie from spinning to emphasise the seriousness of the point. "Anyway, Sega is not a typical Japanese company, they very much respect the culture of the countries in which they operate."

"And also the Virgin image is greatly exaggerated. Richard Branson doesn't come round saying 'take that tie off and do something silly'."

Presumably, Sega has also bought Virgin Mastertronic because it likes the people, the job they do and the way they do it, so to make enormous changes would be curious.

In fact, for now, playing



ALEXANDER: The real work starts now

spot the difference since the buy-out is a very taxing game.

According to Alexander: "I report to a Japanese chap rather than an Englishman but everything else is the same."

That may well be so but it would make for a short article so let's press a bit more. What about the European subsidiaries in France, Germany and Spain for instance?

"There will be a Japanese liaison officer installed at those territories. All the orders will still be placed through us but the goods themselves are shipped directly to the countries and it will be useful having someone who speaks the language on the spot to smooth things through."

"What there will definitely not be in any of the territories is a shadow managing director."

To that list of Germany, France and Spain, Austria can now be added. It opened up for business this week and was included in the buy-out.

Ending in tiers

This gang of four forms one layer of what is now a three tier European Sega

set up.

The four directly owned and directly controlled offices, formerly part of Virgin Mastertronic now part of Sega Europe (the new name has actually yet to be decided but that seems a good guess), report directly to Alexander and the London office.

In Italy, Benelux and Scandinavia, Sega has appointed its own distributors, autonomous firms already established in the territory. These relationships will stay in place.

Alexander himself claims that "Sega is doing particularly well in areas where there is a Virgin (now Sega Europe) office" so wouldn't it make sense to gradually establish such offices in all territories, either through acquisition or simply ditching the distributor?

terest has gone and so I will be able to spend all my time concentrating on actually pushing the market forward."

Another difference that could actually affect dealers and consumers is that Alexander will be able to carry larger stocks than previously.

"One of the great difficulties in the marketplace is that it's growing so fast that it's very, very difficult to get a handle on what volumes are actually going to be needed six months down the road."

He is hoping that the new access to larger inventories will actually ease stock shortages during the busy periods. But then he's also probably hoping that Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy really exist.

The orders for this year are already in and it is only on Gamegear that there may be a problem. With a following wind and a few begging letters, Alexander reckons he can secure 120,000 for the UK.

Unfortunately, he believes that he could sell 150-170,000.

For the Master System, Alexander is predicting 350,000 sales and is confident of achieving both demand and supply.

For the Megadrive, the official prediction at the moment is around 160,000 units but Alexander believes that the figure could rise significantly.

"The market for the Megadrive is just so buoyant at the moment. It's selling at least one for every two Master Systems. We're also going to be doing some advertisements which will feature the Megadrive and if it's selling like it is without ads then once we start to plug it we could see sales fly up."

Two questions arise. First, is Alexander right? — and the suspicion is that he might well be. And second, if he is then will he be able to get the machines? — and the suspicion is that he is keeping his fingers very tightly crossed.

Taking those numbers (and remembering that the Megadrive figure could go up) that puts this year's sales split at 50/30/20 per cent for Master System/Megadrive/Gamegear.

This will change, is changing, rapidly as the 16-bit and handheld demand grows and grows. But unlike the situation in the US, in Europe Sega will remain very much behind the Master System.

"The Master System has definitely got at least two or three years of great, mass market sales left in it. At the moment in Europe around 4 per cent of homes have 8-bit consoles, we believe that we can grow that to about 15 per cent."

Double top

And when he says we he actually means Sega and Nintendo — Sega claiming eight per cent and Nintendo claiming seven. Nintendo may see things

slightly differently, but perhaps only by a few points and the implication is that in Europe there is room for two winners.

"Nintendo sometimes feels a little bit brave and expansive and predicts that they'll get 80 per cent of a market but that's just not going to happen, the splits will be very close."

"What there is not room for is someone to come in and claim a respectable third spot." And thanks must go to Commodore and Amstrad for giving us a (im)practical demonstration of that point last year.

Alexander also believes that 16-bit consoles and indeed handhelds can also permeate 15 per cent of European households — many of them being the same houses.

He does not see the products as being mutually exclusive purchases. "Someone may have bought a Master System a year or two ago and is now looking to upgrade to a Megadrive and is also eyeing a Gamegear as something extra."

Such a person would almost certainly bring a lump to the throat and, just possibly the trousers, of Sega Europe's hard working staff and Alexander believes that there could well be armies of such souls with this

"Richard Branson doesn't come round saying 'take that tie off and do something silly'."

Nick Alexander

ideal for living.

One change that many people predicted would come with the deal were price drops. The distributor has been cut out of the chain, the margin is there, the battle is hard, the cut must come. Right?

Wrong. "Unfortunately there will be no price drops. As all your readers will undoubtedly remember, we have recently had a VAT increase which on hardware we totally absorbed."

"Also in the last three months the Yen has strengthened slightly more than 10 per cent against the pound so all our prices have gone up 10 per cent, so we've actually lost 12.5 per cent of our gross margin."

Add to all this the fact that Virgin had a wafer thin margin anyway, and the arguments do stack up. For now at least.

For Alexander though, the most important difference may not be apparent until well into the future. Because, for him, the biggest difference is being able to even think about well into the future.

"Before there was always the question 'what happens after videogames?'. I'm sure that we've all learned from the early '80s and the Atari experience and it won't happen again like that."

"But I think we also all realise that the boom isn't

Continued on page 8

GoldStar Technology



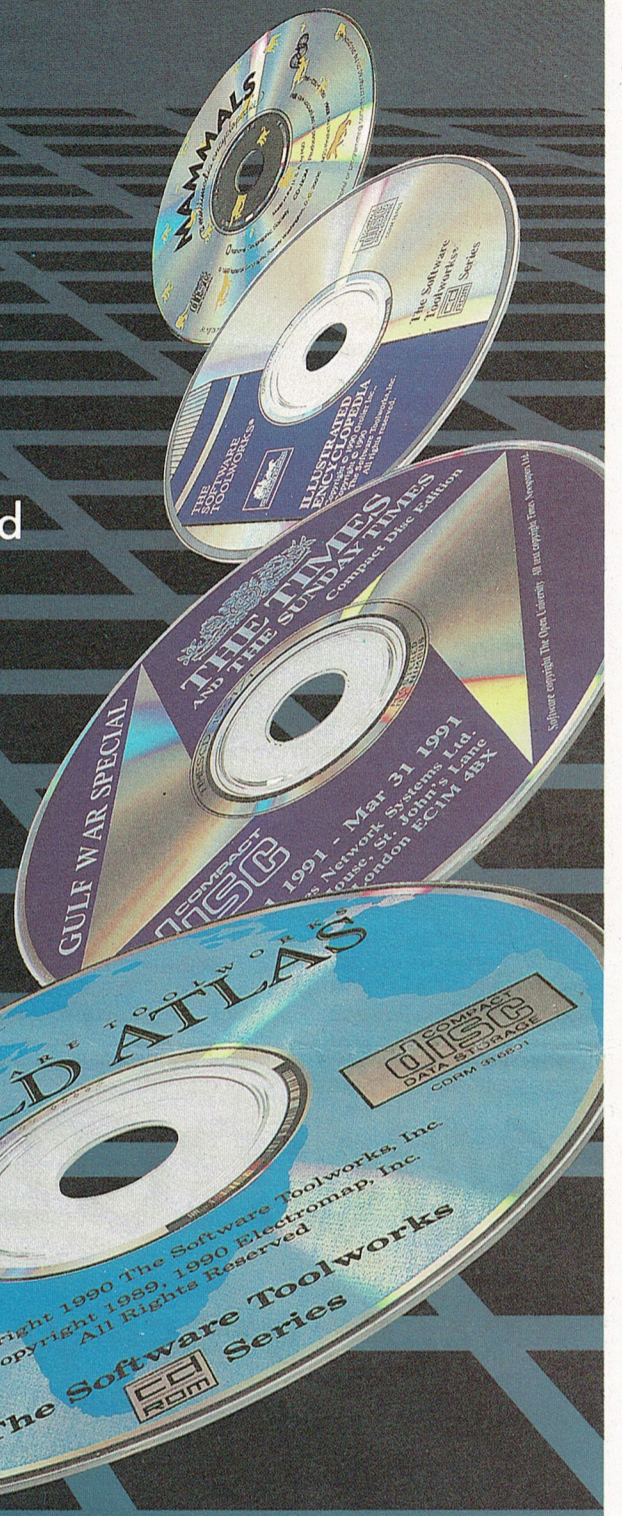
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NEWS ANALYSIS

YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

Continued from page 6

going to go on year after year and that there will come a day when sales decline.

"So our long term question mark was what would we, Virgin Mastertronic, do with the structure that we would have built up by that stage for a £1 billion company?"

"Now, being part of Sega with their hefty R&D department we have secured a long term supply of consumer electronic products and that may ultimately be the biggest benefit of all."

Well maybe, but in the short term, the major difference will be money, cash, lolly, moolah. Alexander is in Tokyo this week deciding just how big the marketing budget for the rest of '91 will be — it will certainly be more than the £9 million previously set aside by Virgin.

Alexander says: "Obviously they are prepared to invest far more". What he means that they need to spend far more.

The timing of the shrewd

Sega's grabbing of the European reins has come just as, or perhaps just after, Nintendo, through its various distributors has slipped into top gear and is even eyeing that turbo switch.

Alexander concedes: "Nintendo have been extremely aggressive in Europe for some time. We would still argue that in the European

market overall we are still ahead but it's about 55/45 rather than 80/20 which it was not so long ago.

"They have been pouring a huge amount of money into the marketplace, far more than we have in places like Germany, France and the UK. In some areas they have spent, on marketing and promotion, something like 20-25 per cent of sales.

"Now that cannot make sense, except as a long term investment and it is also very difficult to see how Virgin could have justified spending the sort of money that would have been needed to take them on head-to-head. Now, with Sega, we can slog it out."

"The Master System has definitely got at least two or three years of great, mass market sales left in it."

Nick Alexander

Bandai's recent tie-ups with Smiths, Walkers and now McDonalds have certainly proved that this is a big money game. It also points to the possibility that we could just be looking at a battle between the biggest wallet and the biggest friends, with Viv Nicholson as overall marketing consultant.

Alexander claims not: "Obviously, if they want to spend ludicrous amounts of

money then, while I don't think we need to match them pound for pound, we do need to at least come close — but there are different ways of spending that money.

"I would hope that we can find slightly more creative ways of doing things. Also, quality of product is the prerequisite of everything else. If you've got a crap product, it doesn't matter how much you spend promoting it, ultimately somebody with a better product is going to beat you.

"I mean, here we are, we've spent far less than Nintendo for the past three years and we still have the market lead."

Nevertheless, Sega will be spending an awful lot in Europe this year, and most of it will go towards building the brand. In America kids don't play videogames, they play Nintendo — it is a word that almost merits a placing in Websters.

In Europe Alexander may want kids to use Sega as the generic term. The best he can probably hope for is videogame rather than Nintendo. Two winners remember.

There will be some product specific ads, but on TV and in national press, the campaigns will mostly drum out the Sega beat and hope we all sing along. It may not take ages but it's definitely going to take millions.

The star of the autumn campaign has already been seen, in the TV ad that has been showing during the summer.

It is set in a child

molester's paradise — a badly lit video arcade watched over by a chap who looks like the two Rons' rather backward younger brother.

Amongst the gloom a young star threatens to do what has never been done — complete every Sega game.

"That character will be developed in the new campaign, he will typify the character of the brand", rather like the Guinness man — only shorter and with worse skin.

Super Sonic

Another key element in the battle is software, and here Alexander believes there has been a significant shift in recent times. To the rhythm of the company song he describes how Sega is keeping a close eye on quality and spending a lot of time and money developing top class titles.

It's a familiar story, but with titles such as *Toe Jam and Earl* and the unstoppable *Sonic The Hedgehog* it does seem to be based on fact.

He also points out that Nintendo's own software policy seems to be slipping. Indeed, at the recent CES the firm and its licensees did seem to be going for the splatter gun approach — there were undoubtedly some good games, but there was also a lot of rubbish.

"I can't really understand why they have altered their policy. Atari lost control of software and the whole industry spiralled downwards.

"Nintendo built the whole thing up again by being really careful on the software released. They showed everybody the way, and now they seem to have forgotten that lesson."

Perhaps the fact that it was unchallenged for the first three years of its US growth gave the firm the time and confidence to do things properly. Perhaps now that it is feeling the hot breath of a real competitor on its neck, it is loosening that tight grip. Perhaps.

It is with a great deal of hope and not a little confidence then that Alexander approaches Christmas 1991 — a period which like all before and almost certainly all to come is being described as "crucial — a make or break year".

1988 he described as a walkover, in 1989 he noticed some slight resistance. Last year, well last year was much tougher: "We did hold around 80 per cent of the UK market but last year they spent about three times as much as us and I would be lying through my teeth if I said that hadn't had some effect.

"We believe that the market is now split around 65/35 again in our favour, of course. But with so much conflicting data that we subscribe to it is difficult to point to accurate numbers."

And the rest of Europe? "Well that's a lot more mixed. They're doing very well in France and it's just about neck and neck there.

"In Germany they had been ahead of us but last year they put all their

marketing money behind the Gameboy and did virtually nothing with the NES so we actually went ahead of them.

"This year they're going to put the push behind the NES again, spending something like 30 million DM, but we'll be spending 20 million DM so we think we'll be able to hold them.

"In Spain we're a long way ahead. They have a distribution company there which is called Spaco who I don't really think have a lot of resources to put into it and we were actually expecting them to make a change.

"They haven't though, so we feel very confident. We'll sell at least 100,000 Master Systems there this year."

Now there are, of course, some people out there, mostly with some sort of Nintendo connection, that would hotly dispute those figures and they may well have an argument.

As Alexander himself points out, there is a fair amount of market research but most of it offers conflicting data and as a whole it doesn't really give any clear conclusion.

The point is that from running a £10 million software house a few years ago, Alexander is now, at the head of what will be a £250 million Sega subsidiary and in a position to at least play the game.

The claims may furrow some brows, but they are not laughable. He can join in the competition of raised sales figures in raised voices.

And now, with Sega behind him, the real shouting match can begin. □

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CTW SURVEY '91: SPECIALIST COMPUTER STORES

CTW SPECIALIST COMPUTER STORES SURVEY

The 1991 CTW survey reaches its third and final leg — with STUART DINSEY offering results and analysis from the sections on Advertising, Consumer Magazines, The Future and CTW itself. For the record, the data was gained via a questionnaire published on May 13th. In all, 145 were returned — accounting for 324 specialist computer stores nationwide. For yet more invaluable, and free, research into UK independent retailer trends, read on...

SECTION F — ADVERTISING

Most Effective Advertising — Leisure Software Publishers

1. Ocean
2. USGold
3. Psygnosis
4. MicroProse
5. Virgin
6. Mirrorsoft
7. Gremlin
8. Domark
9. Mindscape
10. Nintendo
11. Activision
12. Electronic Arts

Honourable Mentions: Sierra, Code Masters, Digital Magic, Accolade, Renegade, 4th Dimension

Most Effective Advertising — Business Software Publishers

1. Sagesoft
2. Microsoft
3. Lotus
4. Locomotive
5. AshtonTate
6. Database
- WordPerfect
8. GST
9. Arnor
10. Norton

Honourable Mentions: Volkswriter, Claris, SPC, Digital Research, Migent, Borland, Digita, Kuma, Timeworks, Symantec, Map, Computer Associates, Corel, HiSoft, Gold Disk, Tasman, Creative Technology.

Sage just nudges Microsoft into second place in the ad stakes, as it did in last week's Business Publishers by Unit Sales listing.

The two firms picked up a hefty slice of all the votes (46 per cent) — this being a testament to both their ranges being very important to CTW's dealers and both their brand names boasting powerful marketing support.

In third, as it was last year, is Lotus — which always improves on its unit sales position in the ads listing. Experiencing the same kind of

brand recognition is Ashton-Tate, which pops up in fifth place here despite only managing an honourable mention in the unit sales table. Thus, it would seem that whilst many of the lower end dealers might only sell the occasional piece of software by 'big name' firms, they do appreciate the efforts such firms go to to create demand and customer loyalty.

Dropping out from last year's ad listing are Amstrad (which has dropped out of business software altogether), WordStar and Borland.

had a relatively quiet time, with the momentum just starting to build up again via a largescale trade campaign and a consumer push to follow.

But Commodore came out on top of this poll because of the effort it had put in previously — effort that pushed the Amiga way ahead of its rivals, to become the single most sought after games machine amongst all those with any gaming knowledge.

Retailers liked this, after all many are gamers themselves, and they loved the fact that their biggest selling piece of kit had the biggest margin too.

But in the real world buying trends are changing —

Nintendo and Sega have made their machines sought after by people who had never dreamt of playing computer games before. The advertising is huge, and so is the demand — and much of the sales go through High Street multiples rather than specialist computer stores.

Commodore's strength has come from its Amiga brand and its dealer loyalty, but this year it will be under greater pressure than ever to match Nintendo, Sega and Atari's advertising budgets.

But — considering the mess it's got into with the indies because it wanted to cut its service bill — one can't help wondering if US management have hidden the chequebook.

Most Effective Advertising (TV and press) — Business Hardware Manufacturers

1. Amstrad
2. Commodore
3. IBM
4. Star
5. Olivetti
6. Atari
7. Citizen
8. Dell
9. Tandon
10. Compaq
- Canon

Honourable Mentions: Acorn, Hewlett Packard, Statesman, Goldstar, Rombo, Brother, Newtek, Epson, Principle, Oki.

Amstrad holds on to top spot comfortably, even though it has been having a rough time of late with its PCs.

The firm has undoubtedly got a lot of work to do if it is going to regain its dominant position in the desktop world, following the PC1512 and PC1640 reaching retirement age and the PC2000 being declared too ill to play on. The Generation 3 machines are now leading the line, and are finding it hard to really stand out in a market which is being snottier than ever about the Amstrad brand name, and where price-cuts are rife.

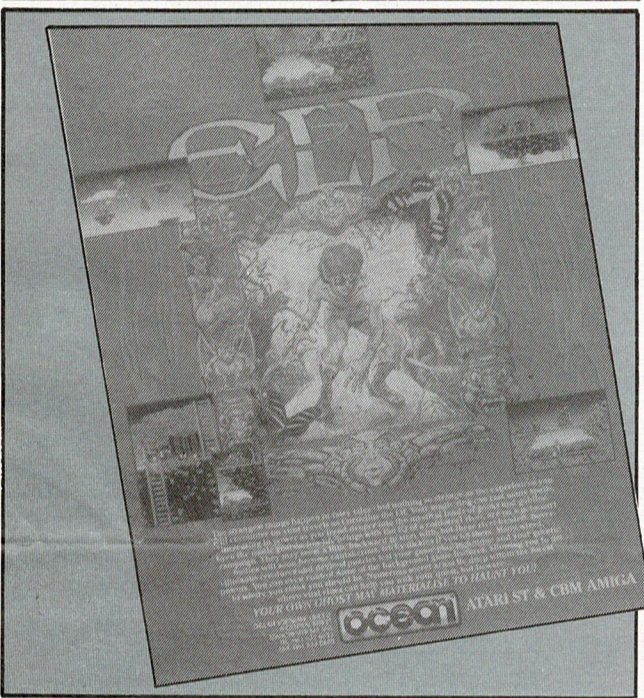
Dealers know, however, just how much marketing effort Amstrad puts into its machines and, as long as it continues, they will keep appreciating it. Sure, the amount spent on supporting the PCs may well be drastically lower so far this year than in previous years, but no other firm has really

been able to launch a mass media offensive either. Indeed, the only current TV push that comes to mind is for the Apple Mac — but that campaign started after the questionnaire was published in mid-May.

Commodore gains second place, probably due to a push on some new PCs launched in early spring plus the occasional supportive gesture for the higher end Amigas.

IBM, meanwhile, is well regarded for its advertising support — which perhaps shows that whilst only 14 per cent of CTW retailers actually stock the firm's machines, rather more would like to.

Lastly, without a section of their own in the survey, printer firms manage to muscle in here. Star (fourth) and Citizen (seventh) boast press advertising that is impressive both in its intensity and in its creativity, and dealers have duly taken note.



OCEAN: Advertising brings long Elf life

Little has changed on the advertising front compared to last year — five firms holding onto their place in the top six.

As it did last year, and the year before, Ocean comes out on top — with US Gold ready to pounce if there's any let up in the Manchester's firm's successful formula of high quality ad artwork and high density campaigns.

Gold has done exceptionally well in the Specialist Computer Stores Survey, as was highlighted last week, but it was always going to be hard pushed to get the number one spot here.

Ocean has been so thorough in its advertising over the years that it has built up an almost impregnable brand identity for the firm. Retailers appreciate such things, because they can then associate their shop with that sexy brand name by plastering it all over their store.

Of course, it might just be the case that Ocean's advertising in recent months actually hasn't been as powerful or frequent as previous times — after all, ads must surely mirror what is going on productwise, and previous survey categories have shown up the odd glitch here and there so far in '91. But the point is that retailers now associate good software advertising with the word 'Ocean'. Indeed, one

can't help wondering whether Ocean would have still won this category even if it hadn't actually run any ads since Christmas.

Psygnosis (third) and MicroProse (fourth) both nudged up a place on last year — following an Activision tumble that is really rather understandable considering its inactive period between last September and this summer.

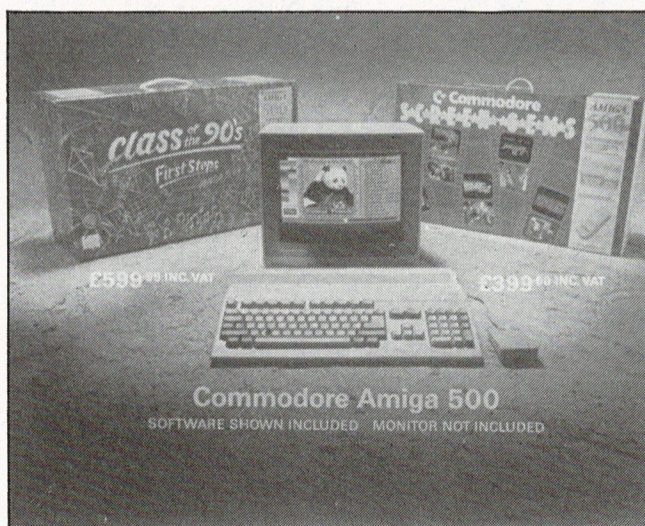
Mirrorsoft stays in sixth, whilst Virgin Games' bid to gain a stronger brand identity seems to have paid off — jumping up from eighth to fifth place.

Too many ads? For the first time, the survey asked retailers just what they thought about leisure publishers' overall marketing philosophies. For many years there have been dissenting voices claiming that publishers are lazy in their efforts to boost sales — simply chucking fancy airbrush artwork at the monthlies for every new release.

So, a rather weighted question was asked in order to find out whether retailers thought publishers put too much emphasis in consumer press advertising when pushing their products. In all, 56 per cent of retailers think that publishers do spend too much on consumer ads. But that means that 44 per cent are happy with the way things are — rather more than might have been expected.

Most Effective Advertising (TV and press) — Leisure Hardware Manufacturers

1. Commodore
2. Atari
3. Sega
4. Nintendo
5. Amstrad
6. Acorn



CBM: Quieter, but still on top

Commodore must surely have only come out on top here because of the tremendous loyalty that it picks up from the nation's independent dealer base.

Just how Atari, Sega and Nintendo weren't vying for the top spot rather than the minor placings is frankly, beyond belief. Since last September these three firms have spent enough money on TV advertising to have kept the Bank of Credit and Commerce International afloat.

The claimed spends aren't particularly important and, frankly, change rather too

often to keep up with. But what is important is the visibility that leisure machines have had on the TV.

During the Christmas run-in, barely an ad slot went by without one or other of the feuding machines getting a plug — and it was usually a non-Commodore machine. Indeed, Amstrad's disastrous games-playing Breville even had more exposure than CBM's odd Aborigine efforts.

If it were able to be honest, even Commodore itself would have to agree that advertising-wise the firm has

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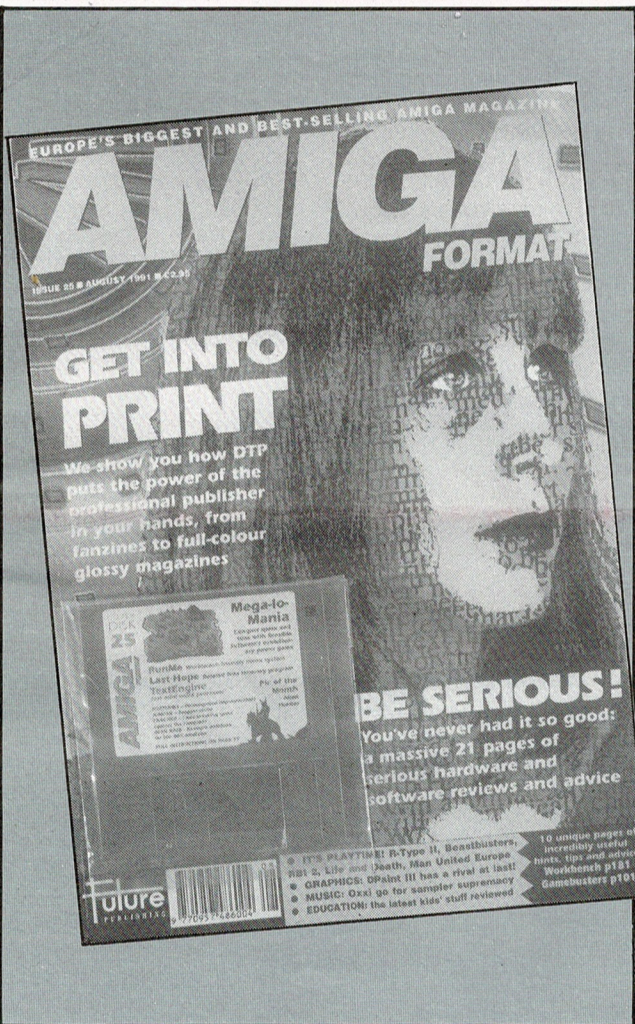
CTW SURVEY '91: SPECIALIST COMPUTER STORES

SECTION G — CONSUMER MAGAZINES

Consumer Magazines Read By Retail Trade

1. Amiga Format
2. ACE
3. Computer Shopper
4. C&VG
5. ST Format
6. The One/Amiga
7. CU Amiga
8. Zero
9. Amiga Action
10. Mean Machines
11. Raze
12. ST Action
13. PC Leisure
14. Amiga Computing
15. Amiga Shopper
16. Games-X
17. Amiga Power
18. The One/ST
19. Zzap
20. New Computer Express

Honourable Mentions: Crash, Amstrad Action, Your Commodore, Sinclair User, Your Sinclair, PC Plus, Personal Computer World, ST User/World.



AMIGA FORMAT: The ace in Future's pack

Consumer Magazines Aiding Stocking Decisions

1. Amiga Format
2. ACE
3. The One/Amiga
4. ST Format
5. C&VG
6. Mean Machines
7. Zero
8. Computer Shopper
9. CU Amiga
10. PC Leisure
11. Amiga Computing
12. Games X
- Zzap

Honourable Mentions: Amiga Action, New Computer Express, PC Plus, Amstrad Action, Raze, Micromart, PC Plus, PC Today, Amiga International, Oracle, Amstrad PC, Strategy Plus, Crash, 8000 Plus, Personal Computer World.

If retailers are going to cough up all that money for Amiga Format (what is it these days — £300 with a free cover-mounted CD-ROM drive?) then they're obviously reading it for more than the regular spotlights on video/sampling/graphics etc.

And that extra reason is quite easy to work out. If it's the biggest and most successful Amiga mag on the market then it will have strong editorial with valuable views on Amiga products and it will have one hell of a lot of Amiga products shoved into the numerous ad

Future's flagship mag takes the honours again — beating off a challenge from 27 other mags that picked up votes and probably another 10 or so that struck out completely.

By next year, there'll probably be another dozen mags to compete with — Nintendo Power, Import Gamer, Lynx User and Amiga Home Repairs being just a few currently on offer from the CTW patents office.

And, of course, even if come next May there are fifty mags to do battle with, Amiga Format will still be the one to beat. This threat to the Rainforests currently shows no sign of weakening, despite being the bug-bear of every computer magazine publisher outside Bath.

Its mature, and rather teccy, editorial platform appeals to many an Amiga owner, and — with said machine being their fave by far — it's only natural that the mature, and rather teccy, specialist retailers like it too.

Such was the diversity of competition, Amiga Format came out on top with just 12 per cent of the overall vote — but that was still five per cent ahead of the re-emergent ACE, which has jumped up from third spot last year.

Another retailer read is Computer Shopper, with its mix of leisure/low-end editorial and bargain basement ads making it perfect for their coffee table at home.

Amiga mags dominate as ever — The One/Amiga (sixth), CU Amiga (seventh), Amiga Action (ninth), Amiga Computing, Amiga Shopper (both 14th) and Amiga Power (20th) all chasing Format.

New weekly Games-X (16th) nips ahead of rival New Computer Express despite only having been around a few weeks when the questionnaire was published.

Lastly, it's worth noting that many retailers still couldn't bring themselves to vote for anyone other than their beloved CTW — even though it was made clear that this is strictly a section for consumer magazines only.

pages. Okay, so it's too heavy to actually pick up and read properly — but that's never hurt encyclopedias.

The Amiga One jumps from sixth in the 'read regularly' list to third here, showing that when retailers do read it they take heed of its contents.

Magazines generally found it harder to pick up a useful number of votes here — which is why the frontrunners listing only consists of 13 titles instead of 20 in the previous category.

One reason for this could be that many consumer mags are simply flick read by the trade, without any real benefit coming from them.

Another is that in the original questionnaire retailers could simply tick the magazines listed in the previous category, whereas for this question they had to actually think of their most useful magazines and write it in the space.

THE FUTURE

Who says retailers are a pessimistic bunch?

Last year, despite crippling high interest rates, the Tories' announcement of a new shopkeeper's tax and early signs of a dreaded hot summer, the UK specialist stores were totally convinced that the manufacturers' promises of a boom would come true.

Remember being told that every machine, from the Amiga to the Lynx and the NES to the C64GS, was going to ship at least 100,000 units, and probably more? Well, that kind of hype — plus the optimism that comes from improved product portfolios and marketing support — led 97 per cent of retailers to believe that things would be on the up during the 1990 calendar year.

That twelve months actually turned into a nightmare for many of the smaller stores who have since disappeared, and some of those machines put in performances so pathetic that it could make a Scotsman feel proud of his side's World Cup exploits.

But thankfully, whilst the Tories grated away at the economy's already weeping sores, the console market did boom. Thousands of Sega, Nintendo — and even Lynx — machines were shipped, whilst the Amiga, ST and C64 kept motoring along too.

The games market has been lucky enough to keep growing through the recession, and whilst it might have grown faster without it, the owners of specialist stores should still spare a thought for their brethren in different retail sectors.

This year, whilst a little more reticent than a year ago, optimism still abounds. In all, 82 per cent of retailers believe that their computer/console business will increase in this calendar year.

The word 'boom' isn't exactly being uttered, but many stores are confident of a healthy increase. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of retailers believe that their business will grow by up to 10 per cent, whilst 44 per cent expect a rise of 10-30 per cent.

One in five (20 per cent) expect a 30-50 per cent rise, whilst 10 per cent are actually looking at figures 50-100% up on last year.

Two per cent expect their business to increase by over 100 per cent.

Let's hope they're the ones who are spot on.



Just how CTW is performing is really for each individual reader to decide, and we have a policy of welcoming constructive criticism from any quarter.

We did, however, publish a few questions in the survey to get a grip on just what the specialist stores think about us — these retailers obviously being one of the key reasons for CTW's existence.

What is good to know is

that our efforts to keep up award-winning standards are being recognised. Some 34 per cent of retailers believe that the newspaper has improved in the past 12 months, with 59 per cent noticing no change.

Whilst we believe that these are statistics to be proud of, we are continually striving to improve our product. The past year has seen efforts behind the scenes which should come to fruition shortly. CTW is set on taking a more active sponsorship role with both the European Computer Trade Show and the Computer Entertainment Show. It has also vastly improved its US presence and global news gathering via a partnership with US publisher Sendai Publications and its new Electronic Gaming Retail News publication — culminating in CTW taking floorspace at June's Chicago CES. Its research activities have also been increased — with the UK Games Market Retail Survey

due to be published at £59.99 in September.

CTW is also in protracted negotiations for a new retail support venture which should be announced shortly. And plans exist for increased emphasis on European, as opposed to solely UK, issues.

Some of these developments will directly affect the specialist computer store reader, and others won't. But all are part of CTW's evolution into a mature trade newspaper that can cover all sectors of its market and be read avidly by all who work within it — from shopkeeper to chainstore buyer, from freelance designer to hardware manufacturer.

CTW has long since been regarded as the "champion of the independents" and its support of specialist stores' causes will go on undiminished. But if CTW can ultimately be regarded as the champion of the European games trade by those outside it, then it will be helping everyone.

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INSIDE STORY

SECRETS OF THE BLACK MAGIC BOX

Back in June, Atari US shocked the games world by announcing that its planned 'super console', the Panther, had been canned — in favour of a new feline mega-machine due to arrive next year. It shocked Atari UK too, which had been busy looking after developers, and had only just admitted that the first machine even existed. But just how good was the Panther going to be? CIARAN BRENNAN reveals all...

Atari's recent announcement that it was shelving plans to market its long-rumoured 16-bit console, the Panther, was one of the few real shocks we've had in this business for quite some time.

Why? Well not only was the hardware firm putting a machine out to grass that it hadn't even officially announced, but it was making what seemed like wild

claims that the machine was actually finished — and that its reasons for shelving it were actually strategic!

It seems to me that companies with genuine long term plans are pretty thin on the ground, so imagine my scepticism when the invite came through from Slough HQ to pay a visit and see the abortive machine in action. The idea, as far as Atari was concerned, was that CTW should see what the Panther

was capable of in order to get some idea of what its successor would then deliver.

Upon arrival I was greeted by a small black box, roughly the size of a video recorder (I wonder if there'll ever come a time when I say 'a small black box, roughly the size of a CDTV', but that's another story entirely). This, apparently, was an identical machine to the one sent out to a number of publishers so that software development could begin (the actual number of developers involved varies between 13 and six, depending on who's telling the story).

So what exactly was this black box on the table?

All things sprite and beautiful

A brief inspection of the PCB and Atari's supplied technical specifications revealed that this Panther's sleek black coat has what's basically a three-chip set-up, consisting of a Motorola 68000 running at 16Mhz (that's roughly twice as fast as the ST or Amiga), an object processor (nicknamed the Panther) and

an Ensoniq sound processor (called Otis).

The cleverest of these three — and the one that gives the machine most of its special abilities — is the Panther chip itself. This small slab of silicon is responsible for handling all of the graphics operations, leaving the main processor free to do other jobs.

At its simplest level, the Panther chip works like a sprite generator, taking sprite data from memory and writing it to the screen — but it's also capable of performing quite a bit extra. For instance, it can perform fast memory-to-memory transfers (like a blitter chip in an Amiga or an Atari STE), allowing it to copy entire screens almost instantaneously. Sprites and background graphics can then be scaled up or down, flipped, rotated, or even skewed.

Ultimately, from a games designer's point of view at least, this is what gives the console its greatest Unique Selling Point: we're all familiar with seeing a small on-screen object increase in size as it moves towards its screen (an art pioneered by Sega coin-ops such as *Space Harrier* and *OutRun*) — and while this isn't the only console capable of pulling off this little trick, it's the only machine I've seen which can do the same trick in reverse: a sprite can be defined to any size (filling the screen if necessary) and then be

reduced, by hardware, until it disappears into a dot on the horizon...very clever indeed!

And then there's the colour. Although the display memory can only accommodate a palette of 32 colours, the Panther can switch between different palettes while the screen is being updated (each time a single line is scanned in fact), so a screen could contain anything up to 8,384 colours from a staggering range of 262,144!

And on top of that, the hardware can simultaneously handle up to 83,840 sprites of any size...all of this without any slowing down!

Soundwise, Atari's Panther also drowns out everything on the shelves thanks to Otis, the sound processor. This little chap is the sort of beast you can expect to find in very flash and very expensive sampling keyboards. It boasts 32 voices (in stereo of course), each of which can be filtered and shifted with frequency interpolation. In plain English, that means you can get some wierd and wonderful stuff out of this thing. Each voice also has a looping capability, allowing samples to be played repeatedly, or even backwards, and each voice has its volume and stereo panning controlled through software.

The Panther has an internal memory of 32 Kilobytes, which is more than ample for use as a temporary

workspace and would have allowed games developers to achieve more sophisticated effects than is possible with most other consoles because of their restricted variable space. Finally, the maximum cartridge size Atari was pitching for was 16Mb.

All in all, I trust you'll agree, a very impressive package...

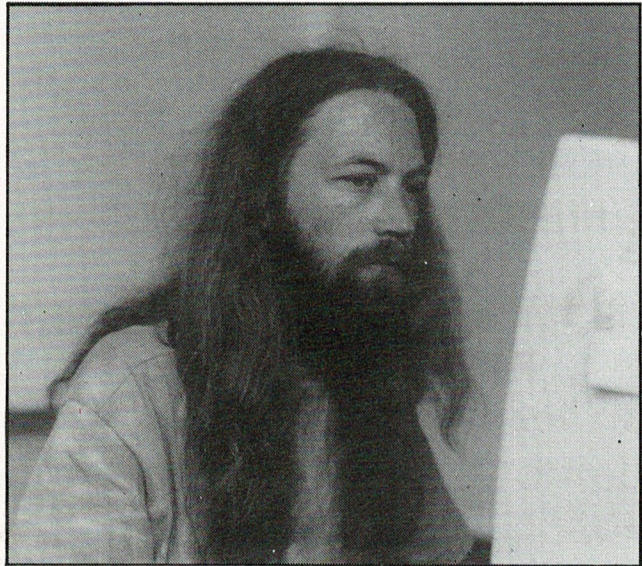
Efficient Chips

But these electronic widgets are only tools of the trade for a good games designer — and as just about everybody knows, it's software that sells hardware. So what we needed was a little proof of this silicon pudding — something on screen to show that these chips were capable of doing all of the things which Atari promised.

To this end, Atari called upon its old friend, champion programmer and games guru Jeff Minter, to put together a series of short demos to illustrate each of the machine's particular good points.

This, some may think, is something of a strange decision...to ask someone who many regard as 'yesterday's man' in programming terms to fiddle about with the insides of tomorrow's technology. On reflection, however, it doesn't really seem to have been that far from the mark — Minter is well known as an all-rounder

Continued on page 14



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INSIDE STORY

SECRETS OF THE BLACK MAGIC BOX

Continued from page 12

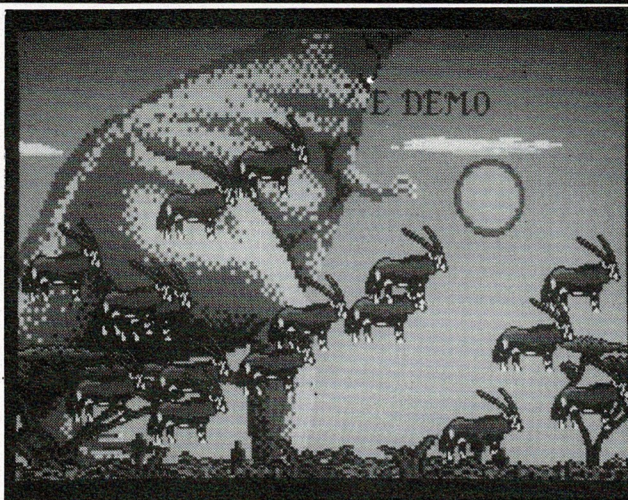
(taking care of all of his own coding, graphics and sound) and also a man who's genuinely excited by technology. This last point it seems was the most relevant, as the hairy one rolled up his tie-dyed sleeves and had plenty moving about his ST's monitor in time for the big show.

Minter himself was fit to burst when asked about this toy which had dropped into his lap, saying: "That machine is as good as about 95 per cent of arcade games,

it has the capabilities of displaying a great deal of objects in a huge amount of colour".

He too, was impressed by more than just the pretty colours though: "The main thing that gets games looking really slick is to get them running at 50 frames per second. Everything you do on that machine runs at precisely that speed."

Having made his apologies for the roughness of the demos (Minter had only had possession of the machine for less than two



Extinct creatures on the extinct Panther

months), we got down to business.

The most immediately noticeable aspect of all these demos was the amount happening on screen at any one time: whether there were herds of Wildebeest sweeping majestically along the plains in front of enormous static dinosaurs (I kid you not!) or swirls of psychedelic colours moving lazily to and fro, there was never anything that could be remotely described as a dull moment.

Once again, Minter was quick with an explanation as to why this machine can do

what its 16-bit half-brother can only dream of. "The poor little processor on an ST, for any given game, is probably spending about 80 per cent of its time drawing objects and making sound effects, which only leaves about 20 per cent free for running the game logic. With this machine's co-processors, both the graphics and the sound are taken care of by the extra hardware so the CPU has a lot more time to increase the depth and complexity of the gameplay."

Two much pressure

I have to admit, at this stage, I was becoming less and less cynical about the whole thing as it was becoming more and more obvious that, in the right hands, the Panther would have been able to produce games of a stunning calibre.

So all I needed was one last run-through from (the then) marketing manager Peter Staddon to explain the company's rationale. Staddon went through the story like a man delivering a daily performance: "Originally Atari had planned to bring out two products for its medium to long-term developments in the console market — one of which was based around the standards set by 16-bit machines epitomised by the likes of the Sega Megadrive and Super Famicom, and one which was a quantum leap forward both in terms of the hardware that was being used and the gameplay you could create with that hardware."

The first of these machines was obviously the Panther, the second its 'newly' announced Jaguar. Apparently the Panther was initially intended for a 1991 release (although Staddon curiously said that they couldn't guarantee that it would have been ready for Christmas) and the Jaguar for the end of 1993.

However, as development on the former slowed down and the latter gained pace, the company quickly realised that it was about to have two machines on its hands at roughly the same time — a marketing nightmare.

Staddon was particularly keen to stress that it was this, and this alone, which prompted the decision to drop the Panther: "What happened was that the gap between launching one and launching the other was not the two years that was initially planned. It didn't really make sense to say one month that 'we're launching Panther and it's the best thing since sliced bread', spend a lot of money on marketing it and creating the consumer awareness, and then nine to 12 months later say 'well actually the Panther isn't the best thing since sliced bread, Jaguar is!'"

And so, the Panther became a casualty of the march of progress. If, as expected, the Jaguar is a step beyond the Panther, then we could be in for a giant leap forward in the console technology wars — and probably as early as next year.

Now all Atari has to do is convince its favourite publishers to take a Jaguar development system — after all, it wouldn't drop another machine...would it? □



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NEWS ANALYSIS

LAND OF THE FREE...

...well nearly. Thanks to new mag launches from Future and Europress, public domain and shareware has suddenly stepped into the spotlight. But does anyone really want this non-commercial stuff? And how does it all work? RONNIE DUNGAN investigates...

Software for skinflints? Amateur hour for anoraks? Or is it really the fastest growing market in computing? Whatever, a lot of people have suddenly become mildly excited about public domain software.

Far from being discouraged by a market that is traditionally a blind spot for many, both Future and Europress have decided that the time is right to start the PD mag war by launching the cunningly titled *Public Domain*, and *Shareware Shopper* respectively.

Certainly the image of PD is definitely something that the industry should be moving away from — very often poorly produced, poorly packaged, and with a fair scattering of programs that should only be of interest to 'special prisoners' and members of the vice squad.

On the whole though, it's all good clean family er...fun, and of course anyone involved with PD and shareware will tell you that the quality is just as high as commercial software.

This, of course, depends on how you define quality, if you include the manual and packaging in the equation then realistically it can't be as good, the majority of

packages will be strictly photocopy-only affairs.

It's all very well to be laudative about quality, but does anyone actually know what public domain is? Certainly consumer awareness can't be that high, it seems to be enthusiasts catering for enthusiasts.

It would almost certainly be completely alien to the hippest gamers — the ones who own a console and a computer — the photocopying idea would be a strain, but no freebie? What is this stuff?

Apparently it comes from the same era that gave us power cuts, sideburns, and glam rock — the mid seventies. As Rod Smith boss of PDSL, one of the largest PD libraries in the UK, explains: "Back in the mid seventies the CP/M operating system was launched, which was a bit of a first for computers because it enabled software to be run on different machines, prior to that it was written for each individual computer. The system allowed people to swap software with each other, which was the beginning of PD.

"It grew over the years, and then someone thought of using the PD network and requesting a fee of whatever

amount, that was the beginning of shareware."

Money and share

The idea of shareware is that you pay the author a registration fee, but only if you like his software. When you register with the author you get manuals, technical support, and updated versions of the title if there are any. The library takes a fee for copying the software for the user, which is how it makes money.

"There are probably in the order of 100 (shareware) libraries in the UK. Six are of reasonable size, but the bulk of them are two bit outfits. The top one is probably Advantage which is based in Gloucester."

Rod Smith

On the PC, shareware takes up about 90 per cent of the non-commercial software market over public domain. Most of the titles are

either word-processors, spreadsheets, or of a slightly more specialist nature. Who can forget classics such as *The Filey Medical Computing Office Management System*, *The Greengrocer's Collection*, or *Numerical Recipes in PASCAL*?

Hardly the sort of thing to whet the appetite of anyone not involved in hospitals, cauliflowers, or cooking. So why should Future and Europress get involved?

Adam Waring, editor of the forthcoming Future effort explains: "We noticed that in our mags such as *Amiga Format* and *ST Format*, the amount of ads for non-commercial software had risen and the popularity of the software was increasing. So we felt it was necessary. Our magazine and the new one from Europress are probably not aimed at the same market, but we do cover both PD and shareware.

"PD has been building up in popularity for quite a while now. This mag will give the PD market a much higher profile image than before. Previously people have seen it as very cheap and cheerful, we can hopefully change that."

"Obviously not all of the

software is as good as commercial stuff but there are some that are really very good. I guess there will be some sort of competition between the two mags but I'm not sure where the crossover will be."

The mags will certainly be catering for the real enthusiast, the sort that makes *New Computer Express* readers look hip. With Europress looking for around 65-75,000 readers Future will presumably be looking for near enough the same, and the firm has rarely been wrong in the past.

It may not be as exciting as the glam world of commercial software, but if both firms can find the readers they're looking for there will be no complaints, and they must be out there somewhere.

"There really isn't an average type of user," says Rod Smith. "We sell to individuals, the Ministry of Defence, health authorities and large multinationals. There are also a number of games that do very well.

"There are probably in the order of 100 libraries in the UK. Six are of a reasonable size, but the bulk of them are two bit outfits. The top one is probably Advantage which is based in Gloucester."

It's the individuals that will be buying the mags though, not the MOD. Many of the PD and shareware titles available are in the library because they're too specialist, the sort of thing that Ocean or even Lotus wouldn't touch with a very long large pole.

So those in the commercial market and the PD market know which side their bread is buttered and never the twain shall meet. Even with leisure software, there's no way that something that comes in a plain polythene bag is going to take on Psygnosis' slick looking packaging and win.

But if 16-bit software remains at £25-£30 a throw who knows? Gabriel Jacobs, editor of Europress' *Shareware Shopper*, feels that price plays a big part in shareware's appeal: "If you go back five years and look at hardware and software prices, I can remember them as being very expensive. Nowadays you can get better machines at a lower price. There has been a huge drop in the price of hardware but not in commercial software."

"A lot of good authors throw their work onto the shareware and PD markets, and suddenly everyone realises that they can get good software at ridiculously low prices, the price rarely goes over £50 in shareware. I would say that the PC is probably better served by shareware than commercial software."

It lacks the glamour to turn the heads of leisure publishers, the two mags may go some way to improving the image, but they would have to be massively exciting to give it any appeal outside its own boundaries.

But, for the Norbert Colons of the computer market, at least it's something to read. □

PC Leisure
5 * * * * *

PC Leisure
5 * * * * *

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ELSPA CHARTALK

Compiled by Gallup
on behalf of ELSPA
WEEK ENDING July 20th 1991

ALL FORMATS TOP 20 16-BIT (FULL PRICE)

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	FORMATS	PUB. LABEL
1	2		SONIC THE HEDGEHOG	— — — OT	SEGA
2	1		MAN. UNITED EUROPE	ST AG — —	KRISALIS
3	—		MICKEY MOUSE	— — — OT	SEGA
4	6		PGA TOUR GOLF	— AG PC OT	ELECTRONIC ARTS
5	4		F15 STRIKE EAGLE 2	ST AG PC —	MICROPROSE
6	—		WONDERBOY	— — — OT	SEGA
7	5		MONKEY ISLAND	ST AG PC —	U.S. GOLD
8	15		FLAMES OF FREEDOM	ST — — —	RAINBIRD
9	3		LEMMINGS	ST AG PC —	PSYGNOSIS
10	7		SHINOBI	ST AG PC OT	SEGA
11	13		SUPER MONACO G.P.	ST AG — OT	U.S. GOLD
12	—		ARMOUR-GEDDON	ST AG — —	PSYGNOSIS
13	—		POWERUP	ST AG — —	OCEAN
14	—		SUPERCARS 2	ST AG — —	GREMLIN
15	12		EYE OF THE BEHOLDER	— AG PC —	U.S. GOLD
16	16		SWITCH BLADE 2	— AG — —	GREMLIN
17	17		CHUCK ROCK	ST AG — —	CORE DESIGN
18	—		SEC. OF THE SILVER BLADES	— AG PC —	U.S. GOLD
19	18		LIFE AND DEATH	ST AG PC —	MINDSCAPE
20	11		TOKI	ST AG — —	OCEAN

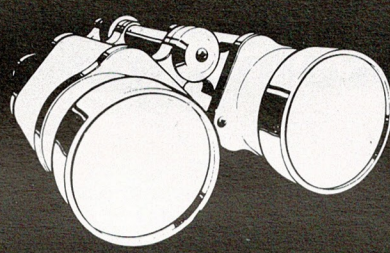
KEY: ST — Atari ST; AG — Commodore Amiga; PC — PC Compatibles; OT — Other

ALL FORMATS TOP 20 8-BIT (FULL PRICE)

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	FORMATS	PUB. LABEL
1	3		SUPER MARIO LAND	— — — OT	NINTENDO
2	—		MAN UNITED EUROPE	SP CO AM —	KRISALIS
3	2		HERO QUEST	SP CO AM —	GREMLIN
4	7		TEEN MUT HERO TURTLES	SP CO AM —	MIRRORSOFT
5	1		DIZZY COLLECTION	SP CO AM OT	CODE MASTERS
6	—		GHOULS AND GHOSTS	— — — OT	SEGA
7	—		DR. MARIO	— — — OT	NINTENDO
8	18		TENNIS	— — — OT	NINTENDO
9	—		WORLD CUP SOC. '90	— — — OT	SEGA
10	4		BIG BOX	SP CO AM —	BEAU JOLLY
11	5		VIZ	SP CO AM —	VIRGIN
12	11		POWERUP	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
13	—		TEDDY BOY	— — — OT	SEGA
14	12		THE NINJA	— — — OT	SEGA
15	—		S.C.I.	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
16	19		SUPER TENNIS	— — — OT	SEGA
17	—		BURAI FIGHTER DELUXE	— — — OT	NINTENDO
18	—		ROBOCOP 2	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
19	—		GOLF	SP CO AM —	NINTENDO
20	—		SHADOW DANCER	SP CO AM OT	U.S. GOLD

KEY: SP — Spectrum; CO — Commodore 64; AM — Amstrad; OT — Other

All Gallup software charts are the copyright of ELSPA from April 1st 1990. The charts published weekly in CTW are extracts from 'CHARTALK' which is compiled in report form both weekly and monthly by Gallup on behalf of ELSPA. There are 22 charts in 'CHARTALK' covering all formats, pricepoints and with market share statistics. 'CHARTALK' is available from the general secretary at ELSPA on 0836 830642/831223 — or write to him at Arden Mill, North Littleton, near Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 5QP.



CTW STOCKWATCH

BART vs THE SPACE MUTANTS

Ocean
Amiga
The Simpsons have already established themselves via Sky TV, hit records and thousands of T-shirts, and now it looks like the game will take the UK by storm too.

The game itself is cute in presentation. It all starts with some truly amazing animated graphics and digitized sound — which fill a whole disk. Shop owners could attract customers just by running the sequence over and over again.

The game has had one double-page spread in *Games X*, in which it received four Xs, and a three-page spread in *Raze*, gaining 94 per cent.

Point Of Sale will undoubtedly include many posters of Bart in all his glory, but at the time of going to press no details were available. Mind you, with an opening screen as good as this game has, who needs POS? Just a big TV will do.

CONTACT: Ocean's Tracy Wickland on (061) 832 6633.

MIGHT & MAGIC

Electronic Arts
via New World Computing

Megadrive
Might and Magic is one of the first role-playing titles to really put the Megadrive to the test. The game is actually the 16-bit version of *Might and Magic II*.

It also boasts battery back-up. This allows novices to explore the game to the full, and if and when they want to save the game at their chosen stage they can.

Electronic Arts is planning to release more titles with this facility. In fact the firm's Simon Jeffrey feels that it "adds a great deal of value for customers" — but at £49.99 customers will have to dig deep for it.

The game features over 60 maps with 3-D graphics.

Players can also choose between different characters like ninjas and barbarians.

The game, when it was released on the 16-bit formats, did extremely well. It has sold over 100,000 copies worldwide. But will it do well on the arcade-based console? Yes, it probably will — but perhaps not to the extent that it has on higher end home computers.

CONTACT: Electronics Arts' Simon Jeffrey on (0753) 549442.

THE RAINBOW COLLECTION

Ocean
Amiga, ST, PC, C64 Spectrum and CPC

This compilation consists of three big hits, namely *Bubble Bobble*, *New Zealand Story* and the classic *Rainbow Islands*. *Bubble Bobble* has already hit number one in the budget charts on the 8-bit formats and it should do well consistently well until right through to Christmas.

The bundle costs £9.99 and £15.99 for 8-bit cassette and disk versions, and £19.99 on 16-bit. Ocean hasn't so far planned any Point Of Sale for the package. The firm feels that everybody should know about the titles and that it should sell well without it.

This compilation will be released under the new Ad-

dicted to Fun banner. Ocean is planning on a whole range of Addicted compilations, but as yet no others have been announced.

This title should have a long shelf life — especially on 16-bit formats and C64.

CONTACT: Ocean's Tracy Wickland on (061) 832 6633.

ELF

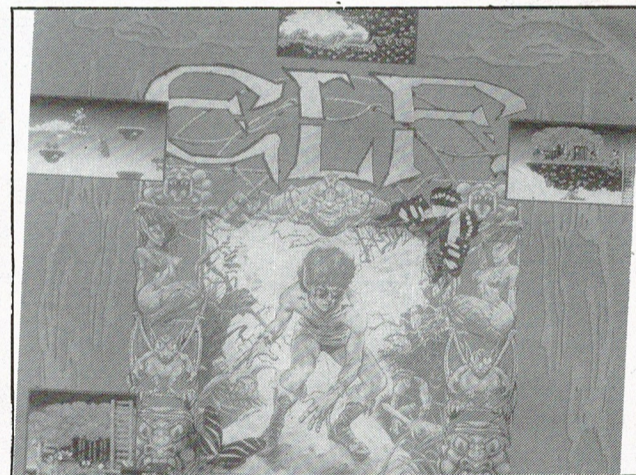
Ocean
Atari ST, Amiga

Magazine coverage has so far been limited for this original platform game but *Elf* has had a full review in *Amiga Action* (where it received 87 per cent) and *ST Action* recently ran a double-page preview. More reviews should start to fly in the September issues of the multi-format magazines and *The One*.

Point Of Sale will centre on cardboard displays, but Ocean is undecided on how many will be pushed in to the shops and exactly what they will look like — most probably displaying the colourful cover artwork which looks very, well, elfy, indeed.

The graphics and good reviews (if they follow as expected) should attract a fair amount of punters, particularly those who like to think a bit as well as blast the baddies.

CONTACT: Ocean's Tracy Wickland on (061) 832 6633.



CTW COMPETITION

WIN A MILLION POUNDS!*

CTW and Virgin Games have teamed up to offer retailers the most incredible competition prize ever — a cool one million pounds in cash — just for answering a few simple questions about snooker.

FIRST PRIZE: £1 million in cash
SECOND PRIZE: A snooker cue signed by Jimmy White + 10 free copies of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* + a signed Jimmy White photo.

THIRD PRIZE: Free tickets to a major snooker event + 5 free copies of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* + a signed Jimmy White photo.

FOURTH PRIZE: 5 free copies of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* + a signed Jimmy White photo.

For your chance to win £1 million, just answer these three questions correctly.

1. What is Jimmy White?

- A rather good professional snooker player
- A Malaysian cooking utensil
- A low-calorie beverage

2. In snooker, what is potting the black worth?

- 10 months in Pentonville
- Seven points
- A chest of drawers

3. Which is Jimmy White's nickname?

- Torrential rain
- Overcast
- Whirlwind

Mark all entries COMPETITION, and send to CTW, The BTC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2DX. The winners will be notified by phone, and have their details published in CTW Issue 349 (August 12th).

* Any UK-based retailer can try to win the runner-up prizes. But the £1 million cash offer is restricted to retailers under the age of 21 who have run a bamboo shop in eastern Guava for the past 10 years (legal documentation required).

SPEAKEASY

Struggling for promotion

I read the latest edition of Atari's own report (issued to retailers who stock their products) with a fair amount of disbelief. Then I realised, as it was written by Atari's own marketing department, it was obviously totally biased.

After reading the "A day in the life" type report I

wondered if this was the same Atari that we all know and love.

Trying to make us believe that their 'merchandisers' get up and go at 6.30am is a joke. The reps that come to us (not just from Atari) don't look as though they have been to bed the night before — that's probably the

answer.

I would love it if somebody else were to come and do a big display of Atari STs. It's not as if I haven't got the stocks.

The amount of enthusiasm that 'oozes' from the promoters has diminished somewhat drastically over the years. Having a fairly large showroom with loads of wallspace, we need plenty of posters, stand-ups and point of sale everywhere.

In these "times of recession" we need all the help we can get. Eye-catching displays certainly help, but I find that I am having to do 99% of them myself.

The companies who pay vast amounts of money every year to get their products promoted certainly aren't getting their money's worth. I advise them to look into this very carefully indeed.

After all, it is *us* who pays for most of it anyway.

Isn't it?

Richard Taylor
Home sales manager
Long Eaton Software Centre
Long Eaton

Honoured to be honourable

My heartiest of thanks to the retailers who voted for us (CTW July 22nd/Business Software) and anyone needing information, here's who to phone.

Debbie King
Software Toolworks
Scaynes Hill
West Sussex

The unsoundness of silence

I notice that Commodore have stayed silent since their unilateral decision on DOAs, but the matter cannot be allowed to rest.

As it is generally assumed that any breach of the 30 day period is more likely to have been done by the multiples, can Kelly Sumner categorically state that all outlets, including multiples are being treated in the same manner? I would have thought that any variation in returns policy would be a *prima facie* breach of the Sale of Goods Act.

What processes are to be used to determine the age of returns? Presumably distributors will no longer mark the serial numbers on their invoices, if this is so it removes an independent confirmation of when the goods were delivered. I assume Commodore will make an arbitrary decision on age and it will be intended that we all lump it.

It is very disappointing that Commodore should choose to act in such a confrontational manner. If there is a valid reason for the decision it would have been nice if more attempt could have been made to explain before acting. However, what is equally worrying is the fact that insufficient thought has been given to the way in which this scheme will work.

We have already seen that the figures on which Kelly based his decision are incorrect and that his estimate of delivery costs were too low, but his ignoring of the problems of Christmas will lead to disaster.

Last Christmas our company stocked just under 200 Amigas, the bulk of which were bought in October or November, and we had 8 in stock in the first week of January. We normally test each machine, but at that time of year this is not possible. If we sell the same amount this year and if we assume a 5% failure rate, we will have to replace 10 computers in the week between Christmas and New Year. I dread to think what the figure for 64s would be.

Will FMG be open during this period?

Does Commodore seriously expect us to believe that if everyone were to send back similar quantities that FMG could cope with this? Are they really going to open each and every one, check it and then send a new replacement? In Christmas 1984, The Spectrum Group had to instruct Securicor for two weeks not to deliver any more parcels to its repair company, Micromend, as they could not physically store the product. Will Jerry Pank please give us his practical proposals for dealing with this problem?

So, we have to stock more computers to satisfy our customers under the Sale of Goods Act, and when, and if, our replacement arrive three actual weeks later (Kelly's quoted figures) we will have lots of stock for when the market goes dead. What a great way for Commodore to boost their Christmas sales by five per cent or more.

OK — What's to be done? Dropping Commodore is

not a viable option. There is not enough consensus or muscle to make Commodore hurt the way they did in 1985 when their friends the multiples destocked. We can, of course, and are, pushing alternative machines, and we will not stock any Commodore machine for which there is an alternative.

Rather than cancel your registration for the holiday promotion, I would suggest that you wait until you are notified that you have qualified and then inform Commodore two days before that your terms have changed and you will not be going. Remember not to fix a stamp on the letter. This will have the added benefit for Commodore that they can reward all their honest European dealers, who, unlike us, would never do anything wrong.

I have written to all our distributors explaining that if, when paying our account, we have computers which we are unable to sell because they are DOA, we will deduct their value from our payment, and have suggested that the distributors pass this shortfall on to Commodore when they in turn are paying. I am sure Kelly will have no objection to publicly sanctioning such a policy, as he is adamant that there will be no problems and so no one will ever have recourse to this procedure.

Yours sincerely
Will Copeland
Managing director
One Step Beyond
Norwich

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Leisuresoft eyes German expansionism

Leisuresoft has made a number of changes to its German operation, which it claims is now at least challenging the traditional dominance of Rushware and United.

Leisuresoft GmbH was a separate company owned privately by Ash Taylor and German boss Ronald Schafer. It has now been acquired by Leisuresoft Limited and is a wholly-owned subsidiary.

At the same time, it has been re-capitalised to the tune of 1 million DM. The turnover of the subsidiary has more than doubled from just under 10 million DM for the twelve months ending July 1990 to 22 million DM for the year ending July 1991.

Managing director Ash Taylor told CTW: "It's growing at a phenomenal rate. A lot of people think that in Germany there is only Rushware and United but now there is very little difference between the three of us in terms of size."

He added that despite his satisfaction with the German venture, he has no plans to expand into any other European territories. "We're not getting carried away, we don't want to dilute our effort."



TAYLOR: Attacking Germany

All rise...

Continued from front page the UK market.

Weekly title *New Computer Express* didn't let the side down, although its growth was not in the same spectacular fashion as some of its sister mags. Its ABC rose just 0.05 per cent (10 readers) to 20,214 — arresting its recent decline.

Chart deal

Continued from front page

definitive in terms of data content. In fact, all of the multiples will soon be connected to the EPOS system.

"The context that it will be important in is the way the chart is perceived, and we will use the money to expand the objectives that we have yet to achieve within the definition of our existence. The firm would be putting their own PR clout behind it as well as ours, I'm sure they will be very supportive."

In addition, the trade body held its AGM last week, welcoming new committee members onboard and appointing a new chairman.

Electronic Arts' Mark Lewis takes over the role vacated by Andrew Hewson back in March, whilst acting chairman Dominic Wheatley becomes vice chairman.

Four new members were added to the committee, namely Jonathan Ellis of Psygnosis, Michael Meakin of Europress, Michael Hayward from Millenium and Andrew Chorzelski of US Gold.

Favourite five take a bow

Ocean, Sagesoft, Commodore, Amstrad and Future Publishing have emerged as the best performers in the final categories of CTW's marathon 1991 Specialist Computer Store Survey.

The last remaining sections of the survey, published on pages 10 & 11 of this week's issue, cover advertising, consumer magazines, CTW itself and what retailers think about the market's future.

Ocean again picked up the honours as the leisure publisher with the most ef-

fective advertising, with Sagesoft just beating off Microsoft in the business market. Meanwhile, Commodore was picked out as the leisure hardware firm with the most effective advertising and Amstrad as the best business hardware firm.

On the magazines side, Future's strident *Amiga Format* achieved a clean sweep — being the most read consumer mag and also the most useful in terms of stocking decisions.

Lastly, some 82 per cent of specialist retailers believe that their computer/console business will increase in this calendar year — 44 per cent

of them expecting a 10-30 per cent increase in business.

The Specialist Computer Stores Survey is compiled from the results of an extensive questionnaire published on May 13th, covering all sectors of the leisure and low-end business market in the UK. It is not qualitative market research, but is derived from the answers of 145 non-selected dealers — accounting for 324 outlets around the country.

CTW will publish a separate UK Games Market Retail Survey for £59.99 at the beginning of September — comprising data from 2,021 stores and backed by nine multiples.

Sugar spells it out for corporate customers

Amstrad boss Alan Sugar was in typically bullish mood when he addressed a group of Bonsai's corporate customers last week.

He told them: "You need your heads examined if you continue to pay over the odds for premium brand PC products when Amstrad can provide the same specifications merchandise, built to a high standard of reliability at a fraction of the cost."

Sugar was speaking at a meeting organised by Bonsai and held in its London headquarters.

Bonsai's managing director Michael Kraftman offered: "There was a tremendous response to the event from our customers. Many of them told me how stimulating they had found it to hear Alan's view on the PC industry."

"We at Bonsai certainly believe that Amstrad has now got the right balance of price and performance for the corporate marketplace."

Meanwhile Amstrad's top of the range 80386SX PC range has just been awarded certification as file servers and workstations from networking experts, Novell.

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