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CTW

13.2.89 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 223

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Comet buyer departs

Comet has lost its computer buyer Bill Jacks — the man who would have been responsible for taking on Amstrad's Sinclair PC 200.

Last week the firm was closing ranks and offering the usual barrage of no comments. The only information that could be gleaned is that Jacks left at the end of January and his position is being temporarily filled by director of purchasing Kevin Doyle.

A permanent replacement is being sought by the company but an appointment is not expected for some time. At the time of going to press it had still not been made clear whether Jacks had jumped or been pushed from his post.

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INSIDE:

16-BIT ON THE SIDE

With more and more supposedly sexy software coming on to the market CTW avoids the obvious slamming sexism stance and instead reacts to the reaction. No giggling at the back..... 10

HERTS ATTACK

Deep in the heart of Hertfordshire Watford Electronics has made the giant leap from Beeb specialist to PC pedlar in just six months. At that rate of progress it is due to take over the whole industry on March 12th 1993. CTW examines its chances..... 12

SHOPKEEPERS OF THE WORLD UNITE

Since August the National Association of Computer Retailers has been flying the independents' flag to try and even up the sides in the battle against the major chains. So far its net has captured just 26 members, but its ambitions are far wider reaching..... 15

HANDS ACROSS THE WATER

Hand-held games are already enjoying a comeback in the States with Acclaim among the leading revivalists. Now it is attempting to lead the British renaissance of a pastime that was last popular at a time when we were young and innocent enough to believe that Andrew Ridgeley actually did something.... 16
CHARTS 21/LETTERS 22

Harlow beckons Amstrad

Amstrad is planning to move its customer services and computer spares division to Harlow, CTW can reveal.

Currently, customer services - which employs around 40 people - is based within Amstrad's head office in

Brentwood, with spares being controlled from the firm's assembly plant in Shoeburyness.

Amstrad last week confirmed that a move to Harlow is being considered, but stressed that at the moment its completion is subject to the signing of a lease for the new property.

The thinking behind the

proposed move is to bring all areas headed up by group service controller Simon Angel under one roof. The new site has been chosen because there is no more room at Brentwood and Shoeburyness hasn't got the facilities to house customer services.

"We're really looking for a big warehouse with some

offices," offered an Amstrad spokesman.

One Amstrad observer also noted that pulling two similar computer divisions together would show to the ever-watching City that it is a 'serious' computer manufacturer rather than having computer, hi-fi and VCR spares all lumped together on one site.

P&P swoops in £11.5m deal



SOUTHWORTH: P&P MD sealing £11.5m deal

Distributor P&P last week sealed a deal to purchase the £35 million a year City dealership Personal Computers - whilst posting major increases in sales and profits.

Being one of Amstrad's largest distributors, the move could have an important significance regarding the manufacturer's long time wish to move heavily into the corporate market place - currently Personal Computers does not take Amstrad, its major lines being IBM, Compaq, Toshiba and Apple.

Personal Computers was valued at £11.46 million at the time of P&P's acquisition last

week. The move gives P&P a major increase in business in the south of England and massively steps up its direct activities despite previous statements that this side would be held back.

With 286 and 386 machines due soon, Amstrad will obviously feel that it is in its strongest position ever to gain a Personal Computers presence. Amstrad told CTW last week that it sees no reason why such a move should not be possible.

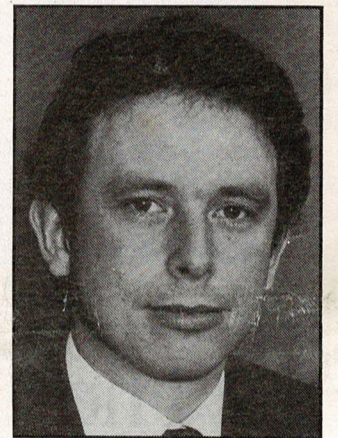
Personal Computers' systems division director Chris Fabesch, however, was guarded on the matter. "Previously we have not perceived Amstrad systems appropriate, neither

Continued on page two

Euro show wins double

The European Computer Trade Show received a double boost last week with the addition of Commodore and Centresoft to its exhibitor list.

The news follows last week's announcement that there will definitely be only one trade show come April (CTW February 6th). The originally planned Computer Trade Forum run by Montbuild has "merged" with Database's show - which has kept its original title, trade-only concept, CTW sponsorship and April 16th date.



STEELE: Backing show

Despite the ECTS already having over 50 exhibitors signed up the addition of Commodore obviously backs organiser's claims that it will become a major annual industry event.

Database Exhibitions sales director Mike Malone admitted that Commodore may not have appeared if two shows had run at the same time.

"They were impressed with the new profile of the show and although there are no particularly big stands available to anyone, they will obviously have a major presence," Malone told CTW.

Centresoft's decision to attend the show also brings along another hardware manufacturer in the shape of Nintendo.

"We'll really be concentrating on the Nintendo," offered Centresoft's managing director Richard Steele. "It gives us a chance to talk to dealers - particularly those from outside the UK."

Trouble mounts for Newsfield

Newsfield managing director Franco Frey last week predicted gloomy ABC figures and indicated imminent major changes within the company.

After impressive figures from rivals EMAP and Dennis last week Frey told CTW he expected figures for *Crash* and *Zzap* to be "disappointing". He added, however, that initial indications gave him cause for optimism regarding all formats title *The Games Machine*.

He claimed that Newsfield had not yet received its June to December ABCs and was expecting them more towards the end of the month. When they do arrive they will almost certainly mark a new low point for a firm that was previously

dominant in computer magazine publishing.

Previously *Crash* has enjoyed a circulation of over 100,000 now it is expected to be down around the 70,000 mark - trailing its two major rivals *Sinclair User* and *Your Sinclair*; *Crash's* last ABC figure was 78,350, which was a drop from 96,000.

It also seems that this time round *Zzap* will be knocked off its perch as the leading Commodore magazine by *Commodore User* - which recently announced a 72,892 circulation. *Zzap's* last figure was 74,214.

A frank Frey commented to CTW: "EMAP have obviously scored quite nicely on the ABCs. I don't know where all their sales come from, but the figures are there and we have to

Continued on page two



FREY: ABCs to be disappointing

Nintendo: US sued as UK spends

Nintendo US last week found itself on the receiving end of a \$250 million dollar lawsuit from Atari Corporation, while Nintendo UK announced a £4-5 million advertising budget for 1989.

The legal action follows swiftly on from the \$100 million lawsuit coin-op firm Atari Games/Tengen slapped on Nintendo at the end of last year for allegedly "illegally monopolising the market".

Atari Corp's action comes as a result of Nintendo's stringent licensing rules on software.

Any title written for the Nintendo is not allowed to be converted for other machines, such as Atari's own games consoles.

"The reason Nintendo is selling its machine so easily is that they have most of the software properties locked up," commented Atari's corporate

counsel Joshua Tropper to CTW.

"Their machine isn't any better than ours, it's just that the software they've got can't be used on our machines. They're just not playing fair."

Nintendo has reacted to Atari's claims with a not unsurprising cry of "sour

grapes". "Atari had a substantial advantage in brand name recognition. The American consumer has simply deserted Atari Corporation," commented Nintendo's senior vice president Howard Lincoln.

"Atari has chosen not to compete effectively for home

Continued on page two

CBM answers to US after changes

The continuing changes within Commodore's European infrastructure look likely to end this week, with Commodore UK reporting directly to the US rather than Germany.

As predicted in CTW two weeks ago, the departure of erstwhile European general manager Harold Speyer has led

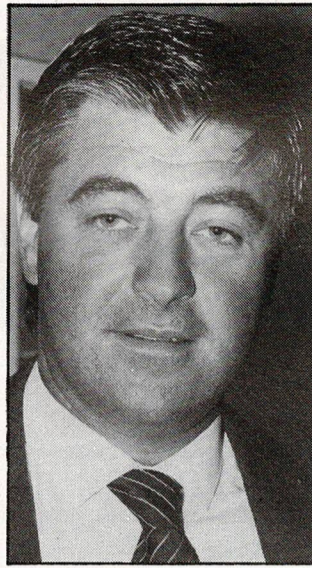
to a major re-organisation within the company.

Each separate territory's director or general manager will now report to CBM's newly appointed president Medhi Ali (CTW February 6th) in the US. Rather than actually control European operations, general manager for support and logistics Kristian Anderson will take on more of a 'troubleshooting' role.

"It's simply more efficient for us to speak directly to headquarters rather than through an intermediary in Germany who then has to talk to headquarters," offered a CBM source.

"The European HQ will simply make sure that products arrive on time, with full details on markets and pricing."

Meanwhile, after a number of complaints (See *Speakeasy* on page 22) Commodore is preparing a number of changes to its C64 returns policy. These will be announced shortly, with no details available at time of press.



FRANKLIN: Reporting to US

Menzies bids to strengthen TBD

John Menzies looks set to purchase Prestwich's leisure distribution firm Wynd-Up, with the possibility of a subsequent merger with the chain's own distribution wing TBD.

Both firms currently handle videos, records and software, with TBD also stocking the Atari range of leisure machines.

"Both firms make a synonymous fit, TBD has very similar

clients to us, and there are great areas of mutual cross fertilisation. At this stage it's only speculation and obviously it may not go through. If it doesn't we don't want to end up with egg on our face," offered Wynd-Up's assistant managing director Alastair Ogilvie to CTW.

Wynd-Up currently boasts a turnover in excess of £30 million, with the firm stocking only budget software and primarily selling to CTN outlets.



P&P swoops

Continued from front page

have we had any demand - but obviously it is something we shall discuss with P&P shortly," he told CTW.

Personal Computers made a £1 million profit last year but was forecasting losses this year. For the year ending November 30th 1988, P&P's sales rose 47.4 per cent up to £107 million. Profits before tax rose 82.6 per cent to £7.5 million.

Troublemounts

Continued from front page

believe them. We've had and have still got various problems here, particularly on the *Crash* side. We've made some changes to it but we're still not happy and we've got a long way to go.

"Basically it has been targeted wrongly and become far too serious for its readers. Also the quality of editorial when it comes down to it just isn't there and a lot of the reasons are down to personnel. Even when you know what to do, if you haven't got the people to do it then you've still got a problem."

He then revealed that major changes in editorial personnel were due as well as a continuing change towards a younger, less serious style of presentation. Announcements can be expected by the end of the month.

UK spends

Continued from front page

video game software and its charge that Nintendo has monopolised the market is absurd."

Meanwhile Nintendo UK has revealed that the bulk of its claimed £4-5 million advertising budget will be spent on TV ads from September onwards.

The firm claims it spent around £2 million last year but is well aware that its profile is not as high as it should be if Nintendo's US success is to be mirrored here.

Buyer departs

Continued from front page

What is known is that each individual buyer at Comet is directly profit responsible and is judged on the performance of his department.

Comet decided to take the Sinclair PC 200 after the machine had been turned down by Dixons - Amstrad's traditional high street partner. When it arrived it went on sale without manuals, operating systems, monitors and games.

Since then the machine has hardly been heralded by a blaze of publicity and may be viewed by the chain as something of a white elephant.

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Smith claims games top slot amidst hardware hesitation

WH Smiths last week staked its claim as the number one software retailer, but significantly reserved judgement on the hardware side.

The chain claimed that its performance in computer games market over Christmas had been "better than expected". It highlighted 16-bit sales as being particularly encouraging.

It added, however, that on the hardware side Atari's ST and VCS/XE consoles had "not exactly set the world on fire". The situation will come under review in the spring and one likely option is that hard-

ware will be dropped in the summer and then taken up again towards Christmas.

Smith's computer buyer Sean Willis commented to CTW: "Things were a lot better this year because we got all our availability problems sorted out. Smiths are 100 per cent behind software and after last year I reckon we're the number one software retailer and if you talk to the software houses you'll find that they agree."

Currently 265 Smiths stores deal with software, of which ST games are stocked in 120 and Amiga titles in 38. Willis revealed that during 1989 16-bit stocks would be significantly

stepped up within those stores at the expense of less successful 8-bit formats such as the C16 which are "dying a death".

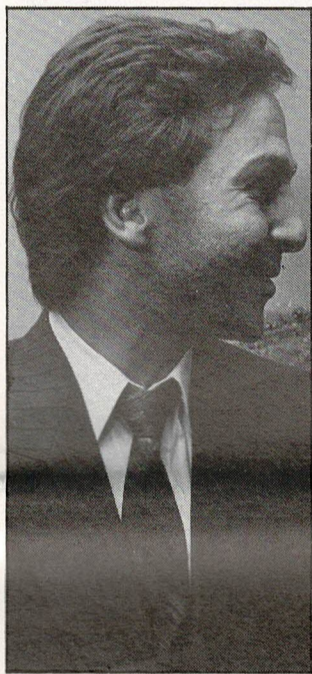
"The way things are going I think that next year the ST will be the second most important format in the market next to the Spectrum. I would also like to think that we are well ahead of the rest of the chains with the whole 16-bit scene", he offered.

Willis went on to claim that the computer department had made a "very profitable" contribution to the chain's recent financial results. The figures showed the group's profits up 38.7 per cent to £41.6 million with turnover up 20.3 per cent to £936 million.



SMITHS: Claiming No. 1 spot

Amsoft wait nears end



ROBACK: Trade has been patient

Amstrad has once again promised imminent shipment of its low-cost multi-user software range — several months after original national press advertising.

The firm is attributing the late availability to its decision not to release any new software if there is a chance of subsequent technical problems.

Software development manager Peter Roback is also convinced that the wait for product has not resulted in any slackening of demand or trade unrest.

"The distributors have been very patient and that means the dealers have been patient. I think you will find that the products will be available extremely shortly," he told CTW.

"In line with the company's policy, we've been running a very strict schedule of test flights and not until the software is 100 per cent will it go on sale. It's more sensible that way, and that's how people prefer it."

The Amsoft range of multi-user products consists of *Wordstar*, *SuperCalc 4* and *AccountsMaster*.

Some publishers, such as Paperback, have been attempting to cash in on the Amstrad delay by pushing hard their own similar-styled products.

Paperback has low-cost multi-user versions of *New-Word 2*, *MultiWriter 2*, *VP Planner Plus*, *Cracker 4* and *VP Info*. And recently it has been bundling a free copy of *TopDOS 4* with each package as an incentive to dealers.

Double deal cheers new 'noisy' Gremlin

Gremlin last week tied up two US deals and promised that its fairly quiet 1988 is not about to be repeated.

The long-awaited *Federation of Free Traders* — Gremlin's major step upmarket — has been taken on by Cinemaware in the US. At the same time, Virgin's games label Arcadia has taken on *Artura* for exporting Stateside.

"The Cinemaware deal is absolutely bloody marvellous. The product they put out is very stylish and obviously they think ours fits in well," commented Gremlin boss Ian Stewart to CTW.

"Cinemaware are small enough to concentrate

properly on the product and big enough to put their weight behind it."

Much of Gremlin's product was previously appearing in the States via Epyx. But the firm is now concentrating on signing individual deals for individual products.

Federation of Free Traders should hit the shelves this week, with Stewart hoping that this will signal the end of a sparse period chartwise for the Gremlin label.

"I really don't understand it. How can you be classed as quiet if you turnover £1.4 million in three months? It's only chart action that hasn't been happening and I just can't fathom that out. Sales have been very good."

CTW

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★ BIG ★ NEWS

In this fast moving industry it's not always easy to keep up with the latest events — even with an excellent publication like CTW serving our needs. That's why U.S. GOLD — the fastest movers in computer entertainment — will be bringing you a weekly insight into the most important happenings within the industry, a weekly review called the GOLD REPORT.

In this column, week by week, you'll discover the latest chart toppers to hit the streets, the liveliest promotions and advertising campaigns that are about to break and the hottest deals and retailer incentives to be formulated.

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Signings held back as senior Citizen leaves

Citizen last week lost its North European sales manager and put its hunt for two more distributors on hold as a result.



MARRIOT: Delaying distributor decisions

Roger Flack left the firm to pursue a career outside the computer industry. As yet his position has not been filled with Jack Bennett, Citizen's vice president of sales, taking over his responsibilities.

Some trade rumours suggested that his departure had been forced due to underachievement. Citizen's marketing manager Robin Marriot, however, refuted any such theories and claimed Flack's departure had been expected.

He told CTW: "There's certainly no question of Roger being sacked. He told us he was leaving about a month ago, we just didn't particularly want to tell everyone about it. We haven't started searching out a replacement yet, but when *Which?* is over we will."

He added: "We have four distributors in the UK at the moment and we see six as the ideal number. But we won't be making any appointments until we have a replacement for Roger."

Another one BTs the dust

Continuing the spate of departures from Telecomsoft, Clare Edgeley has left the firm to become Domark's marketing manager.

Over the last six months a total of nine BT employees have left, and all were in positions of either middle or senior management. BT was keen to play down any significance attached to these departures.

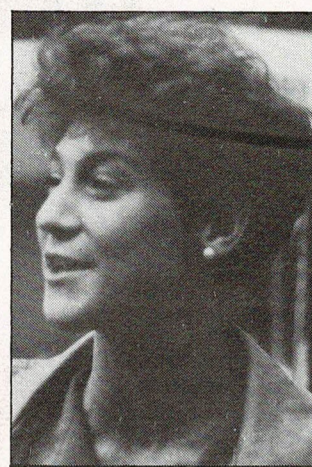
"It is not unusually high. We have fifty people working here, and we lost the equivalent number of people last year. Some have been sacked, because I didn't want them to work here any more, and others I regret losing, but they took promotion that I couldn't

give them, for example Clare. There is nothing sinister going on," explained Telecomsoft boss Paula Byrne to CTW.

Edgeley had been with the company as assistant marketing manager for over two years, and will be taking up her new position in March.

"Domark offered me the job, and I see it as being a great challenge. I've been at BT for a long time and I've learned a lot, but it was time to move on. My parting has been very amicable," stated Edgeley.

Commenting on the new appointment, Domark's Dominic Wheatley offered: "Clare is a young industry veteran, lovely and fragrant. We'd had our eye on her for ages, but it was really a ques-



EDGELEY: Fragrant notion of timing - whether we had enough work to take someone on. With all the bits and pieces now, we needed a marketing manager."

Cuts precede Olivetti move into PS/2 world

Olivetti last week launched two PS/2 compatible additions to its PC range - whilst knocking a fifth off the price of its existing M240 machines.

The new machines will gain their first public showing at *Which?* next week. The P500 runs at 16MHz, and is available with either 1Mb or 2Mb on board, expandable to 4Mb. The more upmarket P800 runs at 25MHz and boasts 4Mb as standard, expandable to 16Mb.

Although prices are not clear yet, availability dates are March for the P500 and June for the P800.

The decision to choose MCA technology, thus giving the machines PS/2 compatibility, has come despite Olivetti being a founder member of EISA - a group of firms attempting to develop non-IBM industry standard.

Olivetti claims that the launch of the new MCA



P500: Olivetti meets MCA

machines "reflects the company's policy of providing the user with what he needs rather than enforcing prescribed solutions".

The new machines were launched last week in Monte

Carlo, just after Olivetti had announced major cuts to its M240 range.

The twin drive version is down 22 per cent to £950 and the 20Mb hard disk model has fallen 20 per cent to £1,349.

The One jumps up

EMAP's all formats title *The One* has increased its distribution by 23 per cent to 65,000 and announced a £40,000 cover mount promotion.

The title has enjoyed increasing circulation since its inception last September and seems currently to be the great white hope at EMAP. Bullish publisher Clive Pembroke predicted: "In 1989 *The One* will become the clear number one in the 16-bit games market."

The cover mount will feature a playable game demo on both Amiga and ST formats.

Zenith appoints

Zenith last week appointed Hanbridge as an Irish distributor designed to concentrate on "smaller, dedicated dealers".

The Shannon based distributor will be handling Zenith's complete range of laptop and portable PCs and will be working both North and South of the border. Zenith pitched the move as further proof of its intent to provide "dedicated representation in the Irish market".

It claimed to be expecting a turnover of around £1 million from Ireland in the coming year. Hanbridge boss Liam Keehan offered: "We were keen to represent ZDS for two reasons. Firstly, ZDS is the world's leader in laptop technology and secondly ZDS represents excellent built in quality in its desktops."

Meanwhile, Software Limited has announced a promotional deal on the Zenith SupersPort 286. For every purchase dealers will be given a carrier case, *Laplink* software, *Protek* software and *Datasave* software which together would retail at £369.

Z88 deal looms after modem row

Dataflex Design claims to have patched over its recent differences with Cambridge Computer and the firm is now expecting to tie up a Z88 bundling deal for its pocket modem.

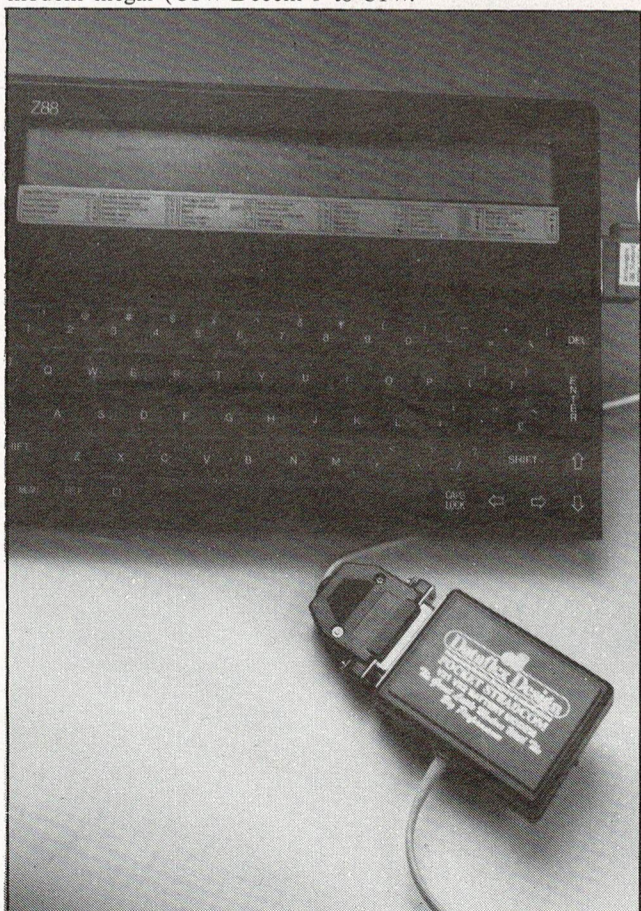
The disagreement was initially over price, with Dataflex producing the Stradcom modem specifically for the Z88, and Cambridge subsequently retracting its support due to the modem's high cost.

The situation reached a head when the Stradcom modem received BAPT approval, whilst Cambridge was still bundling its unapproved Digital Matrix modem with the Z88. This prompted Dataflex to brand the Cambridge modem 'illegal' (CTW/Decem-

ber 19th).

Following threatened legal action, the two firms have now reached an agreement whereby production of the modem has been switched to a different manufacturing source which also assembles the Z88. This has served to reduce its cost from £199 to £150, and Dataflex is expecting to tie up a bundling deal with Cambridge in the next few weeks.

"We had a fight but we've now mended the fences. Cambridge has decided to work with us on the modem, and the pricing level now meets their demands. They got very cross with us saying that their modem was illegal, and they even threatened to sue. Everything is now in the open and a deal is imminent," offered Dataflex director Phillip Bengel to CTW.



The 'legal' Dataflex Z88 modem

Prose nips in after Gold deal collapses

Despite previous claims that US Gold had tied up a deal for *Universal Military Simulator II*, MicroProse was last week boasting worldwide rights to the game.

After a contractual dispute with the game's creator Intergalactic Development, Gold decided to back out of the agreement. The game was planned for release on Gold's SSI label, although the original UMS was marketed in the UK by Firebird.

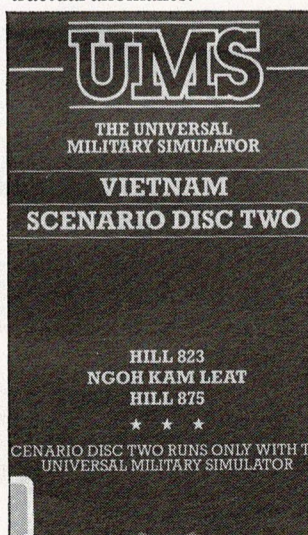
"It got to the point where we had sent them the final contract, and they came back to us saying that they wanted more money. We had gone to our limit. We had reached an agreement but we decided that the game was not worth that much to us," offered Gold's product manager Bob Malin to CTW.

MicroProse will be launching *UMS II Nations at War* around August and the firm is keen to clear up any confusion regarding the Gold deal.

"We want to put the record straight. There have been accounts in various publications claiming that Gold was on the

point of signing or even that they had signed. Intergalactic have decided to run through us and everything is signed, sealed and we're looking forward to an autumn launch," commented MicroProse's marketing manager Peter Jones.

Back in December, Gold also pulled out of an agreement with SubLogic (CTW/December 5th) for the US firm's arcade-style games. Gold claims that the deal expired due to similar contractual anomalies.



UMS: Battles galore.

Frontline gets its fax right

As further proof of the burgeoning fax card market, Frontline Distribution has added the Softech pc-FAX board to its range of products.

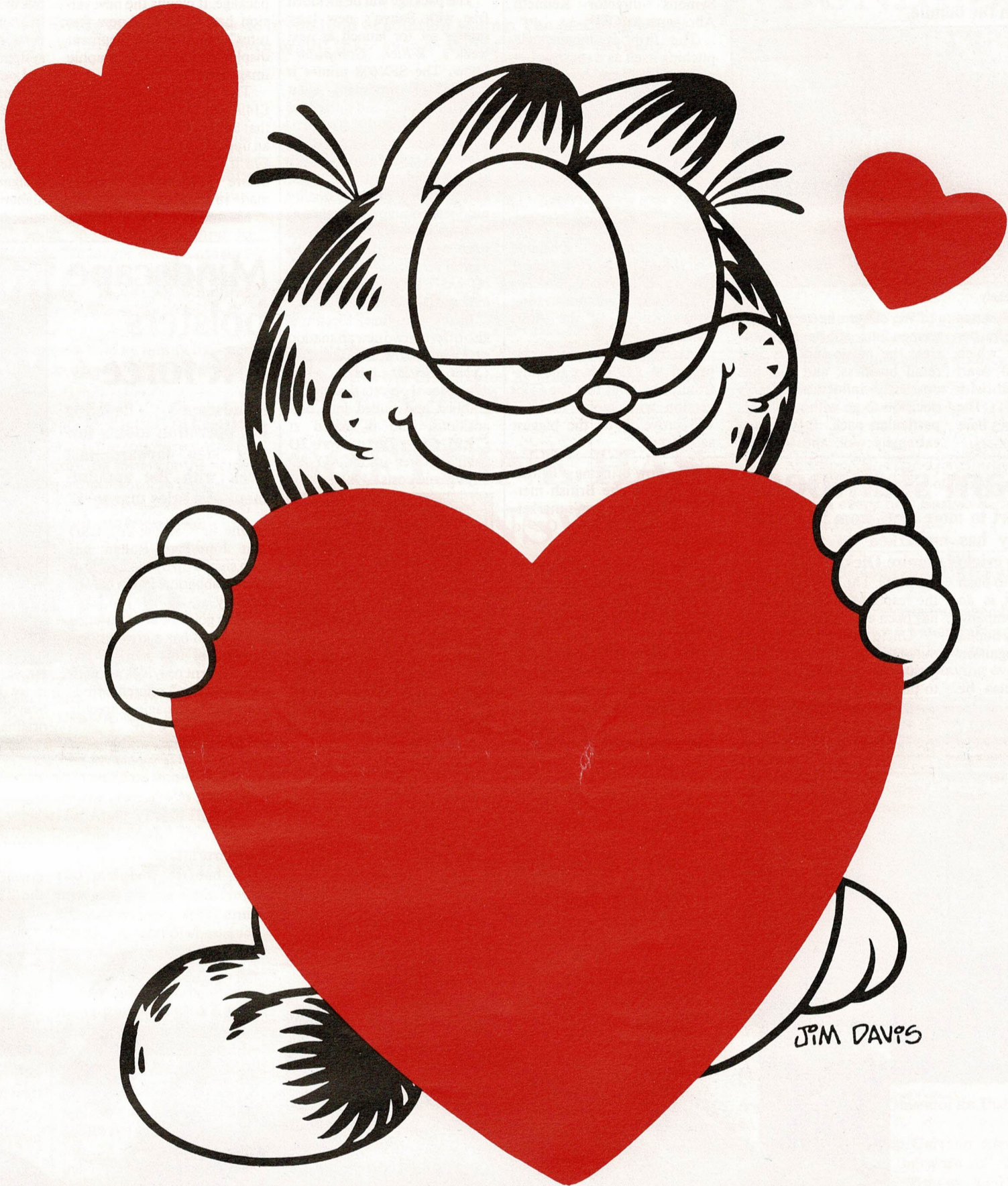
Frontline is claiming that this latest addition will prove to be a key extension to its product line, and signifies the growth of its communications and networking division.

"A fax board is a logical extension to our line. Softech's pc-FAX is a leadership product that fits well with our plans to grow our networking business. What's more, unlike a number of similar boards we've evaluated, it works well and it's BAPT-approved," offered Frontline's communications and networking general manager Pat Harvey.

The Softech card offers polling, image capture and transmission, automatic dialing/re-dialing and transmission to multiple destinations. It also provides high speed binary file transfer over the telephone.

The fax card market is estimated to be growing at around 20 per cent a month, and several firms have recently introduced the product line including Softsel last year.

Who Loves Ya?



THE EDGE DOES! A heartfelt thanks to all our customers for all your support during the last year in helping to make 'Big Fat Hairy Deal' one of the best selling computer games ever!

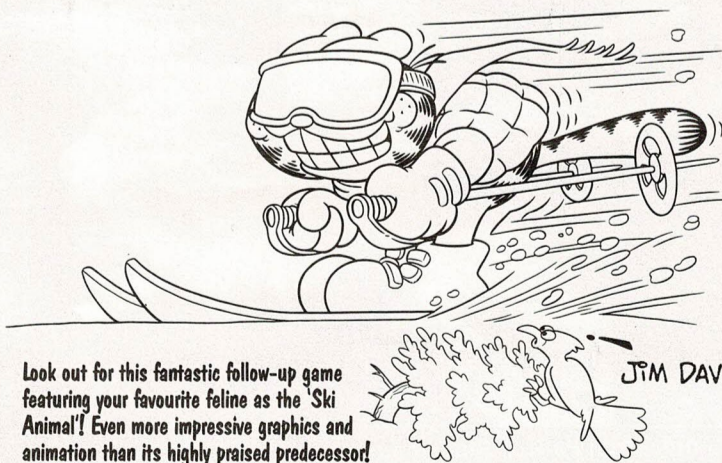
"BIG, FAT, HAIRY DEAL"



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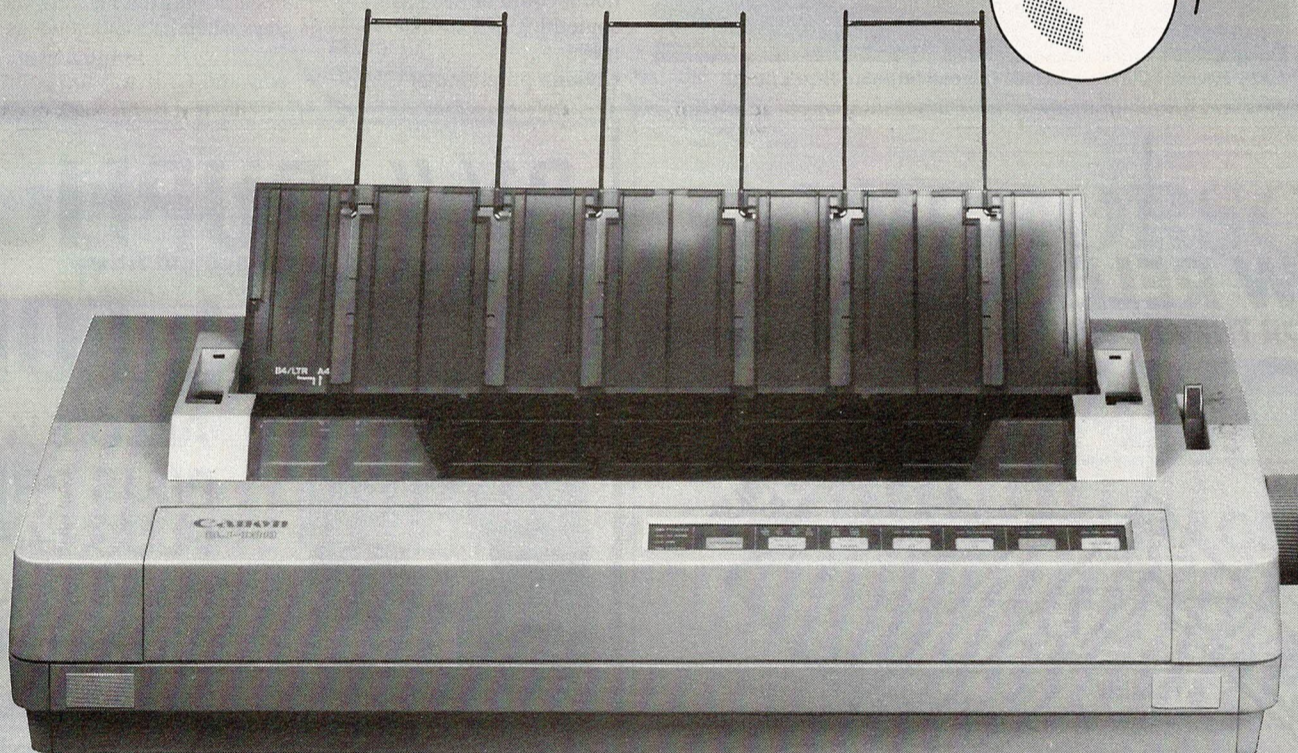
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SNIPPETS

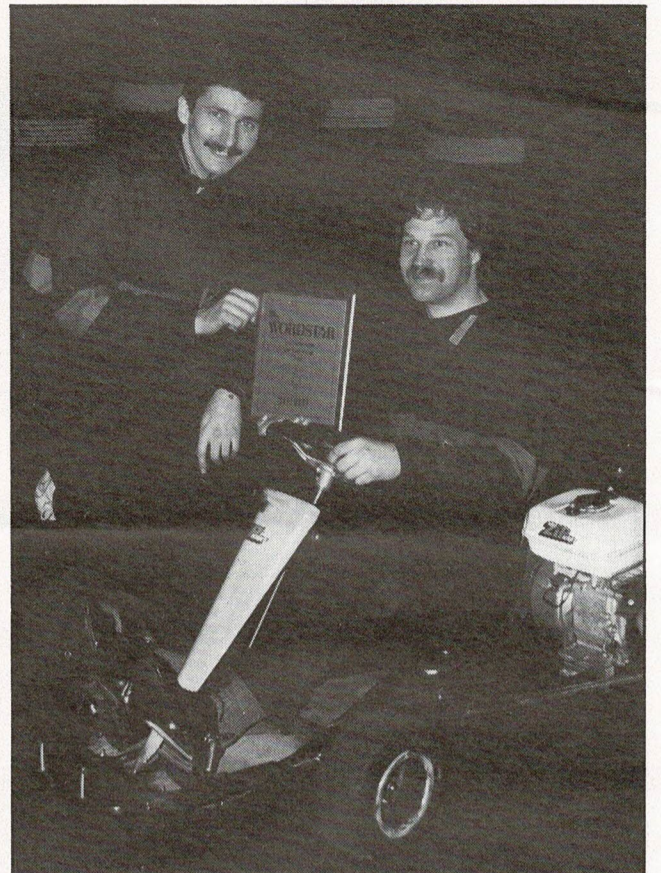
For the second year in succession **Amstrad** has topped the *Sunday Times*/P-E Inbucon Business Index. The table is based on three main areas – profit margin on sales, return on total assets and added value per pound of employee pay, so although Mr Sugar is no doubt delighted Amstrad's workers may not be quite as chuffed . . . An invisible computer is now a possibility for the 21st century thanks to a molecular breakthrough at **Bell Labs** New York. It's all massively complicated and desperately technical but it comes from the same place that gave us the transistor 41 years ago so have faith. Quite what the benefits of an invisible computer would be is not yet clear, I mean where would you plug the keyboard in? . . . **Elite's** marketing department may like to have something of a rethink after the firm's recent launch at CES in Las Vegas. It went for the rather obvious quaint olde England angle that we always think the gullible Yanks will go for and decked its stand out to resemble a traditional English drawing room complete with sofa, chairs, drinks cabinets, etc. Unfortunately, as one particularly influential American buyer passed by he was heard to mumble: "Hey Elite Systems, they do furniture don't they?" Oops . . . Key-note speaker at April's European Computer Trade Show will be Larry Foster – senior vice president of the

largest software retailer in the world, **Egghead Software**, and the man who controls a budget that accounts for around 10 per cent of all software sales in the US. He reputedly last had to pay for his own lunch in 1979 . . . **Kodak** disk marketer **Verbatim** is offering a "colour of spring promotion" in which 10 boring old black mini diskettes will be packaged with one wonderfully colourful diskette available in either red, yellow, orange, blue and green. How pretty . . . **Mannesmann Tally** last week reported turnover up 25 per cent to a record £36 million.

Unit sales were up 63 per cent . . . **Softsel**, in conjunction with Softeach, is to hold dealer training seminars for its recently launched fax card. They will take place at the Heathrow Penta Hotel on 16–17 February . . . Portable giant **Compaq** has achieved its goal of \$2 billion in sales during 1988. This puts the six year old firm among the fastest growing companies in the States and third in the PC stakes behind IBM and Apple. The American dream came true . . . **Compact Software** has been bought up by accounting software specialist **Tetra**. The

move follows Tetra's decision last year to market Compact's professional software under its own name . . . **Nintendo** came a step closer to its obvious goal of taking over the whole of America last month with its game characters being licensed by a breakfast cereal manufacturer. It's not quite Nintendo Flakes or Super Mario Shreddies yet but just you wait . . . Any company involved in exporting personal computers or related products is being urged to sign up for the London Chamber trade mission to Turkey from 21-26 May. Apparently information technology has been designated a priority area for investment by the Turkish government . . .

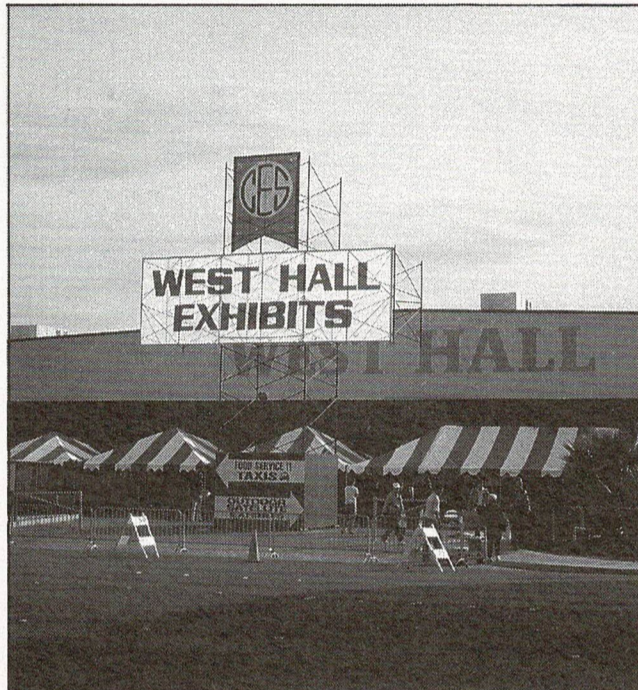
Software Limited has been named as **MicroPro's** European distributor of the year for 1988. Software Limited boss Alistair Handyside received the award only after being forced into doing a couple of laps at the two firms' jointly organised 'Go Kart Day' . . . Usually they trade insults now it's staff. Erstwhile **Alternative** man David Allington has been poached by **Code Masters** to bolster its undoubtedly overworked sales team. Considering that the Coders usual line on **Alternative** is that everything about it is from the bowels of hell it could be seen as something of a strange move . . . **Gremlin** programmer Colin



Software Ltd's Handyside wonders how he got in this particular *WordStar* promotion

Dooley has gripped the nation by changing his name to Fungus the Bogeyman. The story was covered by Yorkshire Television, Radio 1 and all the tabloids that cover that sort of thing. The amusing little chap was apparently bored with being dull old Colin and gained inspiration from his hacking days when he was known as Fungus – it is not too clear why and *CTW* was too polite

to ask. Those whacky Gremlin chaps commented: "We think he's mad" . . . Finally, following last week's story about **Domark's** involvement in the *Spitting Image* charity InventAid there is now an address to send copies of your gratefully received PC productivity packages and games. It is: InventAid, 16A Poplar Business Park, Prestons Road, London E14 . . .



CES: Recent exhibitors include famous furniture firm Elite

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BULLET

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NATIONWIDE DISPLAY MERCHANDISING SALES AND PROMOTION
 CLIENTS INCLUDE: OCEAN — TELECOMSOFT — ELITE — ELECTRONIC ARTS
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NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BORED



How very erotic

There is surely no leisure computer magazine in existence that hasn't at some stage published the 'sexism in software' article. You know, the one that all publishers of supposedly sleazy games pray to achieve — thus gaining invaluable (and free) column inches. But with ever more 'adult' software being imported into the UK what exactly is the reaction we should be taking? DAVE ROBERTS reports on the ultimate scam that is becoming somewhat tiresome already ...

A.O.S. — Adult Orientated Software, what a perfect misnomer.

It is being used to describe the latest batch of sex-related games that have arrived in the UK these last few months. Among them are featured such imaginative titles as *Emanuelle*, *Teenage Queen* and *Sex Vixens From Outer Space* — probably the closest the new genre has got to the classic *BMX Ninja Simulator* type catch-all title.

Of course, such games are not new and supposedly erotic titles have trickled (if that's the appropriate word) into the market for a number of years now, each one giving rise to wonderfully over the top knee-jerk reaction articles slamming sexism in software — oh and don't forget to use the pics big.

But whenever two or three are gathered together at the same time a movement is born and it is so hard to concentrate on any movement if it hasn't got a name. Welcome A.O.S.

The curious thing about this movement is that it claims to be going somewhere. To be leading the industry into the new and lucrative market of adulthood.

On the evidence so far, however, that view would appear to be as generous, optimistic and ultimately inaccurate as the graphics themselves on some of the games.

For a start it has chosen as two of its main torch bearers so far Samantha Fox and Maria Whittaker, those most playground of pin-ups who most certainly do not fit into the *9 Weeks* type fantasy environment of the mystical (and quite probably mythical) new improved sophisticated adult user that the whole industry is desperately trying to convince itself exists.

Indeed so far the whole concept, product and marketing seems to have come from and be aimed at a ridiculously adolescent perspective.

Certainly to start stamping feet and damning it as sexist is far too worthy an action for such insignificant product. OK so the basic premise of many of these games is a sexist one, but ahead of that accusation there comes a long list — starting with laughable building up to pathetic and usually ending with unsuccessful.

Basque to the future

The story goes that the market is taking time to adapt, that this is where the future lies and that with the onslaught of 16-bit, improved graphics and the increasing age of computer users the era of the shoot 'em up is dead.

Some of the more enthusias-

Continued on page 23

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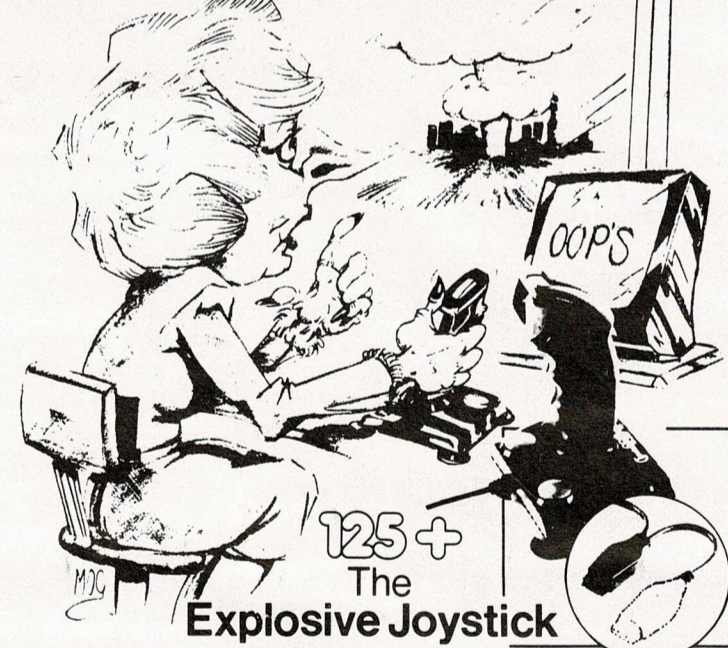
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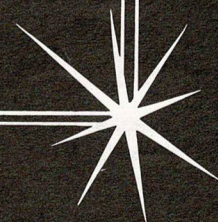
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BRIDGING THE WATFORD GAP

From Beeb specialist to PC pedlar in less than six months, Watford Electronics is already hailing its debut as an unqualified success. With the company set to take on four new machines, KELLY BESWICK finds out whether such optimism is slightly premature and what the firm has in store for the future . . .

Nazir Jessa represents the typical rags to riches story, well perhaps not rags, but from a struggling optician it would have been difficult to foresee the multi-millionaire sitting in his plush office directing an incredibly successful business.

Watford Electronics was founded in Jessa's bedroom over 16 years ago. At the time Jessa and his brother had one aim - to become rich, as Jessa had soon realised that managing a small opticians on Watford High Street was not going to make his fortune. So a small electronics mail ordering firm was set up, and although neither man had any real affinity with the product, the operation soon took off.

As queues formed onto the landing and down the stairs the company was forced to expand into the disused off licence next door, using the old wine cellars for a warehouse. As the money kept rolling in, the firm bought the building in which it now resides, and as a mark of their success the building was re-christened Jessa House.

No one could ever say that Jessa is slow to seize an opportunity and the firm moved into the computer market in 1978 - soon establishing for itself a cosy and lucrative niche in the BBC market. Over the last ten years Watford Electronics has become one of the

foremost Beeb specialists. Last year it raked in a turnover of £9 million and the firm is well on the way to achieving its £10 million target for this year.

Why then did the company suddenly decide to enter the already overcrowded PC market, despite previous claims from Jessa that he was quite happy sticking to a winning formula?

Nowadays Jessa claims that PC's represent "a natural progression". Acorn, he believes is failing to move with the times. But being a man of great tact he refuses to be pushed any further on the subject.

The firm began shipping its current range of Aries PCs three months ago. The 286 based Far Eastern AT and XT are both pretty much standard but are certainly competitively priced with the basic systems costing £789 and £689 respectively. Jessa claims that the firm has already sold out of its first consignment of 800 units.

The initial success of its two debut models has prompted the firm to increase its range and it is set to introduce two tower type models of the above as well as a high powered state-of-the-art Aries NEXT 286 and a 386 machine.

Pioneering prices

Jessa claims that "we are desperately trying not to

increase the prices of the new tower XT and AT as we want to keep them in line with our existing models. This should stir up a few hornets' nests as I don't believe that there are any tower machines priced below £1,000".

The firm also intends to create something of a stir with the higher spec 286, which Jessa claims is a pseudo 386. "In the past when you've wanted a network system you've had to turn to a 386 for its speed and storage, yet for £2,000 less the NEAT machine has all the capabilities of the 386 - you're just paying less and getting more".

Indeed, such is Jessa's enthusiasm for the new machine that he claims that it will "revolutionise the market as there is nothing comparable for the price".

The Aries NEAT will be available early in the new year and for £1,995 offers 2Mb of RAM expandable to 8Mb, a speed of 16-20 MHz, a 5.25 inch and 3.5 inch floppy disk drive, and a hard disk drive of 40Mb.

It comes with an EGA monitor, eight expansion slots and *PC-Organiser* software. The NEAT model will also incorporate a patented password system known as an Intelligent Data Protector (IDP), which Jessa believes to be another big selling point.

The Aries PC 386 also has IDP and as Jessa points out it has many features that have been incorporated into the NEAT PC, although the memory is expandable to 16Mb, and it is priced at £2,495.

Having got a taste for the potential of the badged hardware market Watford Electronics will also be introducing a fax card, which is currently undergoing tests. Once again the machine is being hailed as a pioneer product being priced at approximately £225. "I can't think of one fax that sells for less than £300 and it's very similar to the Panasonic which costs £895," offered Jessa.

There is also talk of adding a portable to Watford's expanding range, although Jessa is still unsure of the potential of the market. "We'll wait and see how things develop, but I'm not ruling out the possibility."

So, as yet another company makes its bid for a sizable chunk of the Amstrad market, just how does Jessa intend to establish the Watford range as a household name?

"Everybody in the electronics and computer industry has heard of Watford Electronics and these are the people that are going to buy. We have a loyal customer base and many of these people will be turning to us for a good quality, aggressively priced PC."

Being the eternal optimist



JESSA: Moving out of a niche

Jessa adds: "At the time when Amstrad entered the computer market their turnover was no more than £14 million," - which seems a rather futile comparison considering that Amstrad was a pioneer in the low-cost market and at the time there was little competition.

Breaking the chain

Nevertheless Jessa refuses to see the Amstrad stronghold as insurmountable. "As a result of the Amstrad set up going through so many chains before the product reaches the end-user, quality has suffered to keep the price down. We do not suffer from that problem.

We have no middle man and the machines come straight from the factory to the customer - either through mail order or selling direct and we pride ourselves on high quality as well as low cost."

Yet as Watford Electronics continues to expand Jessa can not completely rule out the possibility of establishing a distribution network some time in the future. "Obviously in this business you can never tell, although there are certainly no plans in the pipeline."

The firm is placing a lot of faith in its machines selling word of mouth, yet £200,000-

Continued on page 23



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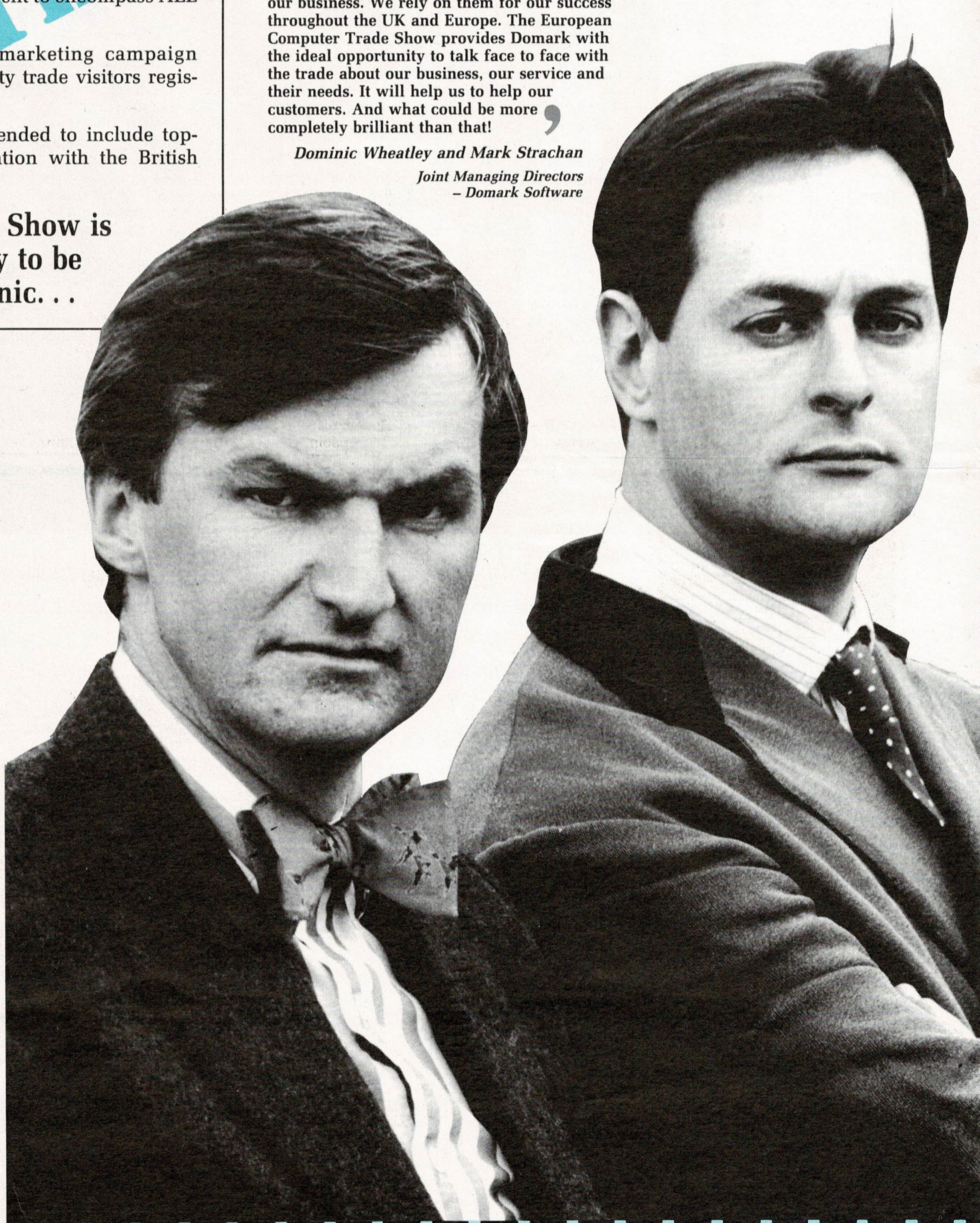
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*Dominic Wheatley and Mark Strachan
Joint Managing Directors
– Domark Software*



Exhibitors booked to date

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| Compact Software | Mindscape |
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| Direct Disk Supplies | Rushware (Rainbow Arts) |
| Domark | Profisoft |
| Dynamic Marketing | SPAIN |
| Electric Distribution | Micro Digital |
| Electronic Arts | SCANDINAVIA |
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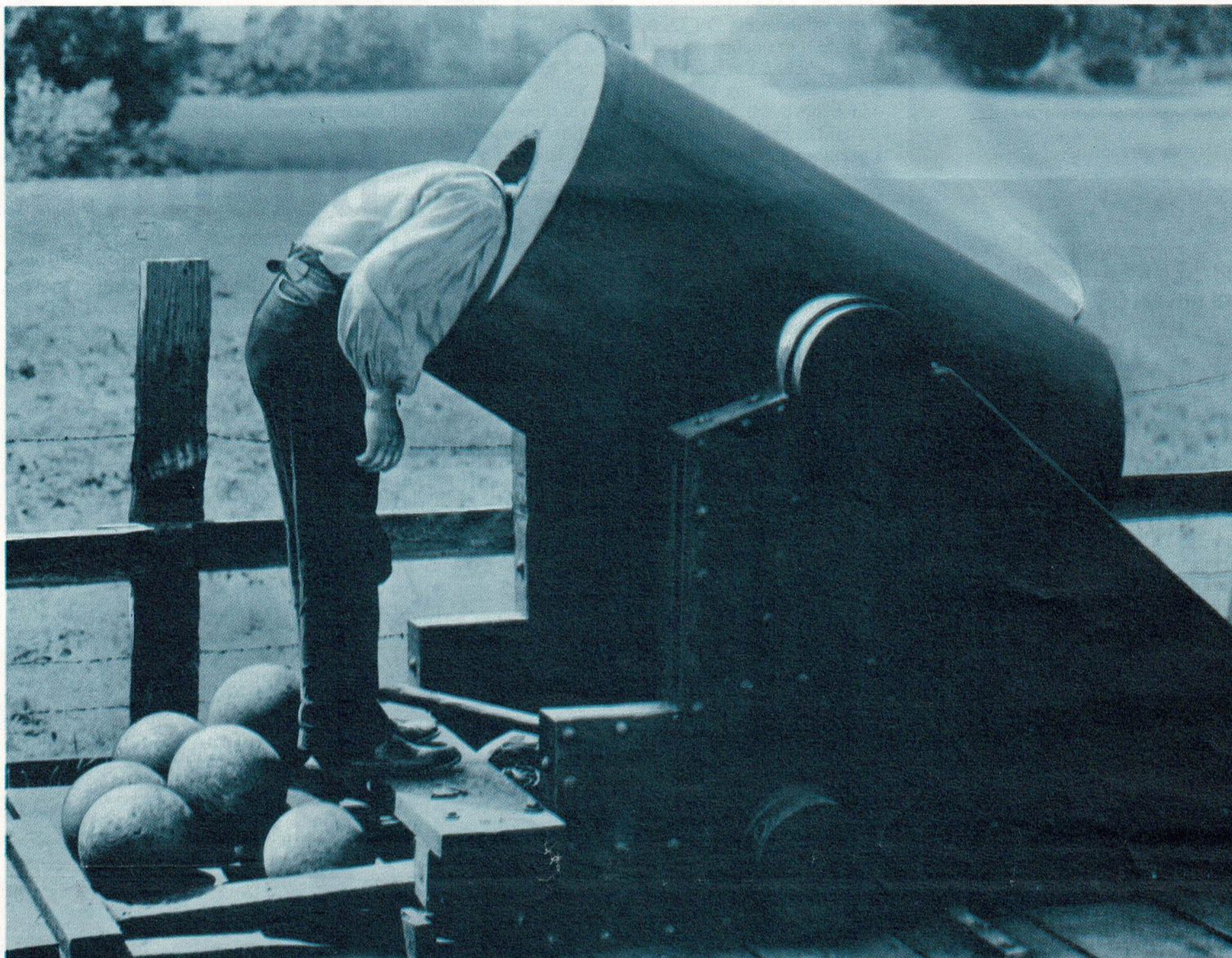
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BUSINESS DILEMMAS NO. 19

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TOGETHER IN ELECTRIC DREAMS

Retailers that feel badly done by often argue that they have no chance of gaining a fair deal simply because muscle rules. In the face of this, one organisation — The National Association of Computer Retailers — is touting for support with a firm belief that strength through unity is possible. KELLY BESWICK reports . . .

David and Goliath: the old biblical tale of the small individual triumphing against the overwhelming presence of a stronger and more powerful force. It's a scenario that has constantly served to fire the imagination, many a book and film having tapped into this well worn theme.

In reality, the world in which we live is one where the individual's interest has to constantly be exerted against the strength of others, and the small does not necessarily triumph over the giant. In order to achieve this end, a common tactic is for the diminutive figure to join forces with similar individuals to form a more powerful voice with which to express their needs.

It is this theory that rests behind the formation of many organisations — from the trade union movement to the small local body campaigning against the latest plans to run a motorway through its village. The collective voice can obviously shout louder, and

stands a greater chance of eventually being heard. And it is this premise that led to the setting up of the National Association of Computer Retailers.

"In the main software houses and manufacturers pander to the needs of the multiples, and we felt that it would be advantageous if the independent block had its fair share of the vote," offered Keith Wadham treasurer and co-founder of the organisation.

"As a single independent you can't function as a voice, nobody can be bothered to listen. But the bigger the group the louder the voice. Other retailers have similar groups, which have proved successful."

The NACR was set up in August last year, being the brainchild of Wadham and the organisation's chairman Vic Purnell. For both men the job of getting the NACR off the ground is part-time, with Wadham owning London based Gallery Software, and Purnell running Computability in Wales.

"We've been getting so many

problems through returns and lack of support, and if enough of us can get together we might be able to get some action done. Through the problems ultimately it's the customer who suffers. At the end of the day the objective of the NACR is to see the customer gets a fair deal. We're at the frontline and when there's problems we get all the hassle," offered Purnell.

Apathy in the UK

Similar ventures have been attempted in the past, but because the independent sector is so fragmented, geographically dispersed and often has conflicting interests, they haven't really got off the starting block. Even if the above problems were all surmountable, then eventual apathy tends to be the final killer.

"Unfortunately to get people off their backside you have to offer some sort of financial incentive. It's a pity, but it's a fact. The success of the organisation depends on how well we can offer members advantageous terms of trading," believes Wadham.

So far the organisation has offered its 26 members bulk buying discounts on power supplies and cassette players, but it has intimated an ambitious plan to set up a deal with an as yet unnamed distributor. According to Wadham "all

distributor action would be transferred to one company. In turn our members would be provided with better sale and return facilities, more demos of games software and a lot of other benefits. It will basically be what other distributors offer but more." A sideline of this agreement will be that one per cent of the firm's sales from members will go to financing the day to day running of the NACR.

If the deal does get off the ground, 26 dealers is hardly likely to create tremors in the distribution business, and gaining the unity and cooperation necessary for such a venture will be a hard task.

Moving away from the potential buying benefits of the NACR, and looking at its main intention of making firms sit up and listen to the grievances of dealers, the organisation has just entered its first campaign directed at Commodore.

Several dealers have been complaining about a high fault rate on the C64 and misunderstandings appear to have occurred regarding return procedures. In its recent newsletter the NACR tried to clarify the situation to its members and Purnell is set to meet a representative from CBM shortly.

But can this small organisation really expect a huge international concern to sit up and

take note? Purnell can only offer that he hopes it can "carry some weight," but he is obviously conscious that when it comes down to it everything rests on the number of voices backing the NACR.

Thesis of eight

Purnell and Wadham are going full out to attract new recruits and have linked up with Scotland via its own dealer group MICROS. Out of NACR's existing members Purnell admits that only eight regularly attend meetings as a result of being based all over the country.

"As the membership builds up we would like to see areas having their own meetings, so there will be small pockets throughout the country. We do keep in touch with our monthly news-sheet, and I think considering how long we've been going and the fact that there was a postal strike and then the build up to Christmas, we're pretty pleased," offered Purnell.

The NACR is currently sending out mailshots to independent dealers, and claims

that the real push for recruitment has only just begun. Wadham is confident that the numbers can be pumped up to three or four hundred given time, and obviously with this sort of backing the NACR would carry considerable weight.

But at the end of the day whether any body formed for the purposes of representing the small man can succeed through the might of a collective voice, must be debatable? Such a thing is fragile and insecure and however cohesive it appears, ultimately it is made up of many parts to fragment under the slightest stress.

Meanwhile, Wadham and Purnell are hopeful that the potential of lucrative trading benefits offered by the NACR will actually make the organisation glue together. And it is appealing to the financial interests of its members that the organisation hopes to eventually achieve its primary objective — to make the industry sit up and listen to the demands of the independent retailers.

A mighty struggle lies ahead.

"We've been getting so many problems through returns and lack of support, and if enough of us can get together we might be able to get some action done."

Computer dealers can join the National Association of Computer Retailers on payment of a £10 annual subscription fee. Application forms are obtainable from Vic Purnell, Computability, 5-6 Market Square, Ebbw Vale, Gwent, NP3 6HR.

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HAND-HELDS IN BLACK AND WHITE

Whatever Konix may say, it is very often the US and Japanese leisure markets that set the agenda for the UK. Just as the clamour for consoles is finally hitting these shores, could the next wave bring a resurgence in demand for hand-held games? It's happened across the water, so why not here? KELLY BESWICK reports . . .

How many times have you heard it said that whatever's happening in America today is sure to start in the UK tomorrow?

This particular adage is incredibly old and can be traced back to the demise of the corner store and the advent of supermarkets and even fast food. Most often, it's used somewhat scathingly as if our lovely little island is being invaded by alien values, upsetting the status-quo and those antiquated customs that we so pride ourselves on.

With MacDonalds invading practically every high street in the country, the older generation tend to shake their heads in bewilderment, whilst being dragged in unwillingly by their children to indulge in the culinary delights of a Big Mac, french fries (whatever happened to good old fashioned chips) and shakes.

Here lies the key to this phenomena. More often than not the latest craze to sweep America is directed at the young, and more often than not the tastes of the British youth tend to be pretty similar, hence the fad for skateboarding, rollerskating, BMX bikes, transformers and even those ridiculous headbands with antenna sprouting out of the top. For

those quick enough to pick up on the US trends and drag them across the Atlantic, a fast buck or several million can be made.

The beauty of this little strategy is that nine times out of ten it's pretty foolproof. Just occasionally, however, the stateside entrepreneur can fall flat on his face, but such incidences are rare. Okay, so the Nintendo hasn't made the UK killing that was initially anticipated, but it can't be written off yet - as the firm keeps

telling us, these things take time.

The craze twin

Well, guess what's the latest craze to hit America and, according to the pundits, looks set to take the UK by storm? It's something that's certainly not new, in fact they were sort of big in the early 80s, but then again so was the console and the skateboard and both of those have undergone a revival. Yes folks it's those ingenious little devices snappily

known as hand-held games.

So if those pundits are correct hand-helds are set to undergo a massive resurgence in the UK. Indeed, the latest figures from the States show that this little niche of the leisure market increased by a massive 600 per cent last year, and is still growing.

Now when it comes to explaining this turn around in the hand-held's fortunes one can possibly see a slight hiccup in their UK assault. According to those in the know these trans-

portable little devices have risen from the proverbial ashes on the back of the Nintendo. Indeed, most of the games available in the US are cross-licensed from big Nintendo hits, so little Chuck or Billy can now take his *Rambo* or *Donkey Kong* into the back yard, station wagon, and even on vacations.

Yet as we all know, little Johnny from Basingstoke hasn't quite picked up on that there Nintendo, and is still sticking steadfastly to his trusty old Spectrum, C64, etc.

So whether we can expect a similar revival of interest as that experienced in the US must surely be debatable.

According to Greg Fishbach - founder and president of US leisure publisher Acclaim - not so. Acclaim, based in Oyster Bay, New York, sprang into existence less than two years ago. It was initially a Nintendo publisher and distributor, but since last November the firm has been cross-licensing its Nintendo hits onto the hand-held format.

"I think there is very good potential for hand-helds in the UK market. Basically home computer software is essentially video games, and we didn't really have that format in the US until Nintendo. In the UK there has been very consistent support of the software market and hand-held games have been very well received."

Yet because hand-helds are nothing new to Britain there are several UK firms that do already offer the product. Systema has been importing and badging hand-helds from the Far East for the last three years, selling via mail order in such publications as *The Sunday Times*.

"I'm not sure if they will take off in the UK to the same extent as America, but the market



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level is good and we are happy with the way things are developing. I think the Japanese and US have a different attitude to hand-helds, as can be seen with video games. The UK has a large computer market, and is therefore buying games for those computers," offered Systema's Bob Martin. Such an opinion from a British firm, would certainly seem to put Fishbach's theory to rest.

Throwaway lines

Fishbach, however, remains resolutely undeterred and is currently scouting around for UK distributors to take on his hand-held range, which consists of three titles - *Rambo*, *Airwolf* and *Wrestlemania*. The firm is also planning to introduce a Super Series of hand-helds around July or August, and would like to see them simultaneously released both sides of the

Atlantic. The Super Series will consist of five hand-helds, but with four times as much memory and a larger playing screen. In the States the games retail for around \$25, which hardly makes them a pocket money purchase. And surely the life-span of such a toy is very limited, regardless of the variety of surroundings you can play it in? And are the British public as heavily into disposable products as the Americans?

Fishbach strenuously denies that hand-helds are a throwaway item, arguing that the gameplay and electronics of the device make them a good quality buy, and one with relative longevity.

Acclaim's success in the US has certainly been meteoric, which must have a lot to do with Fishbach's business acumen and market knowledge, gained whilst being president of Activision Interna-

tional, and later RCA Records. In its last fiscal year the company had a massive turnover of \$39 million - with the latest quarter's figures already up 100 per cent at \$17.5 million. Whilst most of this has been made on the back of its Nintendo licences hand-held games are beginning to make a substantial contribution to the company, and it could be even bigger if things in the UK go according to plan.

Leisuresoft looks like being a likely distributor for the Acclaim range of hand-helds. "Obviously as a distributor of electronic products, we're looking at the possibility of this market. Hand-helds were a fad several years ago, then they sort of disappeared, but now they seem to be coming back. I mean you look at the Atari 2600, that was huge, then it died a death, and now it seems to be doing well again," comments Leisuresoft's operations manager Tony Adams. Such appears to be the fickleness of the leisure market - here today gone tomorrow and then maybe an encore just to satisfy the next generation of gamers.

I wanna hold your hand-held

On a more business level, the possibility of a hand-held revival in the UK could provide some interesting opportunities for software houses, with the potential to transfer games onto the pocket size format.

Mirrorsoft's Peter Bilotta reiterates Fishbach's belief that

the potential for hand-helds in the UK is very large. Indeed, the firm has already been approached by several companies - with Tengen expressing interest converting *Tetris*.

Yet Bilotta believes that not all games are appropriate for conversion. "It takes a special type of game where it's possible to plagiarise a simple concept. Basically you put a nice screen shot around a piece of plastic and it makes a very exploitable product. Whilst it's not quite a stocking filler or a pocket money toy it's not far from it."

Despite Mirrorsoft's involvement, major UK publisher Ocean is not in the queue to transfer games just yet. "In a sense it's more a division of the toy industry, but I suppose there are cross overs with people like Nintendo and Epyx getting involved," offered Ocean boss David Ward uncertainly. Ocean in the past attempted branching out of the solely software world with interactive video board games. This idea has since been put on ice and no sudden move into Ocean-built hand-held games looks likely.

In the States the majority of hand-held games are indeed sold in toy shops, and for Acclaim Toys 'R' Us is a major buyer. Fishbach believes that any mass merchandiser or large retailer could take on the product, and cites Boots as being a good prospect in the UK.

Yet the Virgin Games Centre isn't totally convinced. "At the moment we only sell



RAMBO: Leading the attack on the UK market.

them as an extra, they form a very small part of our business and are usually only bought by European tourists at Christmas and the holiday season. I think they're very expensive for what they are and I'd be surprised if there was any sort of revival," offers the store's Dave Perrett.

As intimidated by Perrett, the market appears to have already taken off in Europe, and according to Nintendo's UK boss George Lucardie "generally in Europe there has been a market recovery for this type of

game, they started selling again at the end of 1987. Things went from practically zero to around 30,000 units". This hardly seems earth shattering, but clearly shows the beginning of a trend.

So, is the British game buying public ready for another onslaught of hand-held games? Will we once again follow in the US faddish footsteps? We've done it twice with the skateboard.

And ultimately, like good food, good ideas seem to have a way of repeating themselves.



ACCLAIM: You need hands.

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DARK FUSION	T 9.99	FEBRUARY 22	GREMLIN
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OLYMPIC SKI	T 1.99	OUT NOW	ALTERNATIVE
PROJECT FIRESTART	D 14.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
PURPLE SATURN DAY	D 14.95	MARCH	EXXOS
PURPLE SATURN DAY	T 9.95	MARCH	EXXOS
RIK THE ROADIE	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
ROCKET RANGER	D 14.99	END FEB	CINEMAWARE
STREET GANG	T 1.99	OUT NOW	PLAYERS
SUPER SNAKE SIMULATOR	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
T.K.O.	T 9.95	OUT NOW	ACCOLADE/EA
TOMCAT	T 1.99	OUT NOW	PLAYERS
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	D 19.99	MARCH 9	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	T 9.99	MARCH 9	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WARLOCK'S QUEST	D 14.95	OUT NOW	ERE/INFOGRAMES
WARLOCK'S QUEST	T 9.95	OUT NOW	ERE/INFOGRAMES
WEC LE MANS	D 14.95	OUT NOW	IMAGINE
WEC LE MANS	T 9.95	OUT NOW	IMAGINE

ELECTRON

GRAHAM GOOCH	T 1.99	OUT NOW	ALTERNATIVE
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IBM & COMPATIBLES

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BILLIARDS	5.25 19.95	FEBRUARY	ERE/INFOGRAMES
CRAZY CARS II	5.25 24.99	END FEB	TITUS
DRAGON NINJA	5.25 19.95	MARCH	IMAGINE
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F-16 COMBAT PILOT (EGA)	5.25 24.95	END FEB	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
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MODEM WARS	3.5+5.25 24.95	MARCH	ELECTRONIC ARTS
OPERATION NEPTUNE	5.25 24.95	MARCH	INFOGRAMES
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MACINTOSH

FISH!	34.99	FEBRUARY	RAINBIRD
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MSX

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SPECTRUM

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DRAGON NINJA	T 8.95	OUT NOW	IMAGINE
EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER	9.95	OUT NOW	AUDIOGENIC
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INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	T 9.99	OUT NOW	ELECTRIC DREAMS
KENNY DALGLISH'S SOCCER MANAGER	T 9.99	EARLY MARCH	ZEPPELIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	T 9.95	MARCH	EXXOS
SKATE OR DIE	T 8.95	EARLY MARCH	ELECTRONIC ARTS
STREET GANG	T 1.99	OUT NOW	PLAYERS
SUPER SNAKE SIMULATOR	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	T 9.99	MARCH 9	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WEC LE MANS	T 8.95	IMMINENT	IMAGINE

SPECTRUM+3

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DARK FUSION	D 12.99	FEBRUARY 22	GREMLIN
DRAGON NINJA	D 14.95	OUT NOW	IMAGINE
EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER	14.95	OUT NOW	AUDIOGENIC
FISH!	D 15.99	OUT NOW	RAINBIRD
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	D 12.99	FEBRUARY 27	GREMLIN
KENNY DALGLISH'S SOCCER MANAGER	D 14.95	EARLY MARCH	ZEPPELIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	D 14.95	MARCH	EXXOS
SKATE OR DIE	D 14.95	EARLY MARCH	ELECTRONIC ARTS
SPITTING IMAGE	D 14.95	OUT NOW	DOMARK
TRIVIAL PURSUIT	D 19.95	OUT NOW	DOMARK
WEC LE MANS	D 14.95	IMMINENT	IMAGINE

Out Now = Released within the last month. Imminent = Expected at time of publication.

Dates given are expected release dates. Please allow for slippage. Software Information Services is a department of Inter-Mediate Ltd.

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New for 1989 - Electric Distribution have introduced two new add-on graphics packs - **DrawArt** and **ScanArt** by Migraph - providing a wide range of high-quality graphics which will give documents impact and professionalism. Ideal application software for your fast moving DTP product lines, both packages are available in 5 1/4" version for IBM PC and 3 1/2" version for Atari ST and IBM PC.



The unique **DrawArt** collection consists of around 150 pictures, divided up into categories including office, transport, sport and music. A comprehensive manual is supplied providing detailed information about scaling and joining items together, plus a full

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Images are saved in industry standard .GEM metafile format so DrawArt is ideal for use with packages such as Timeworks Publisher, GEM Desktop Publisher, Ventura Publisher, GEM Artline, Easy Draw 2, Supercharged Easy Draw 2 and GEM Draw. DrawArt costs £49.95 inc. VAT.



ScanArt is a collection of over 100 professionally drawn pictures of exceptional quality saved in .IMG format. A wide range of subjects - including sport, humour, animals and holidays - are provided in the package. The high resolution of the images

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Softline also allows the user to register free of charge any additional Softline supported products when they are purchased. The regularly augmented support literature

TOP OF THE CLASS

Timeworks Publisher, already available in PC, ST and Lite versions, is soon to be available in Acorn Archimedes and RM Nimbus versions - giving complete coverage across the educational computer market.

Timeworks Publisher must now be viewed as the natural DTP offering for educational establishments. Electric Distribution will work with its dealers to secure the best discount with special schemes and promotions aimed directly at the education market - and of course **never** selling direct. So it stands to reason that Timeworks Publisher must come top of the class.

Phone 0480 496666 NOW

GOING A BUNDLE ON PRINTERS

Electric Distribution have recently tied up two impressive bundling deals with major printer manufacturers.

Seikosha UK Ltd are offering a voucher entitling the purchaser to a free copy of Timeworks Publisher Lite, with every SL80 or SL130 24 pin dot matrix printer.

It's not just the publishers and Seikosha who know that Timeworks Publisher Lite offers great value for money and a superb introduction to DTP - look at what *Computer Shopper* say about the product:

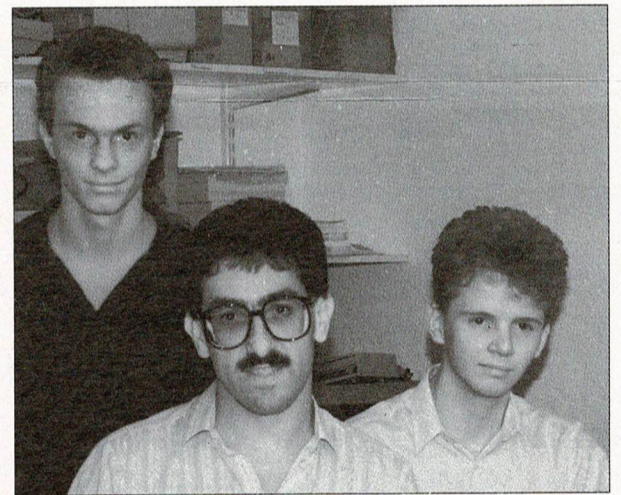
● There's plenty to get to grips with in Timeworks Publisher Lite, and more than enough facilities on offer to start producing high quality DTP work.

Timeworks and Timeworks Lite look set to steal the day so far as the PC 'budget' DTP software market goes.

In addition, Electric Distribution together with Sanyo are offering a copy of **Timeworks Publisher PC** free with every new **Sanyo SPX608 8 page per minute laser printer** sold.

can then be efficiently stored in the easy reference ring binder supplied.

The Softline service is managed by Paul Kaufman, ably assisted by David Yenerski and Robin Doggett. The team are pictured here in a rare moment of inactivity, they're usually slaving over a hot phone!



STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS

Award Coup For Timeworks Publisher PC In Germany

News just in... in top German computer publication **Chip Magazine's** Software of the Year Award, impressive result for Timeworks Publisher PC. The revolutionary DTP product was voted into second place in the **Commercial Software** category - second only to Microsoft's Excel.

Best-selling UK package Timeworks Publisher is also distributed throughout Europe in different language variants, making it not only a truly international product but also a must for the education market.

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A HEART FELT FONT WANT

As leaders in the field of desktop publishing software distribution, Electric Distribution always listen closely to the views expressed by DTP users at all levels.

A noticeable gap in the marketplace, regularly pointed out by end users is the complete lack of high-quality,

affordable fonts. With the growing sophistication of low-cost DTP software, users are finding the small range of fonts available very restricting. So, if you want to keep up to date with what's happening on the font front, it is recommended that you watch this space...



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ALL FORMATS TOP 40

TW	LW	WK	Title	Publisher	Formats
1	1	50	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AT MS
2	3	7	ROBOCOP	OCEAN	SP CD AM
3	2	5	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	SP CD AM ST AG
4	5	50	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AG
5	7	8	KNIGHTMARE	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM MS ST
6	11	22	GAUNTLET	KIXX	SP CD AM AT MS ST
7	41	1	WHO DARES WINS 2	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM BB C1 AT MS
8	14	15	ADVANCED PINBALL SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
9	4	9	AFTER BURNER	ACTIVISION	SP CD AM ST
10	16	35	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
11	36	2	INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
12	10	17	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	SP CD AM BB EL ST
13	26	10	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
14	27	53	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
15	12	6	JET SET WILLY	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM BB EL C1 AT MS
16	6	36	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
17	13	13	FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR	KIXX	SP CD AM C1 ST AG
18	8	10	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	SP CD ST AG
19	6	8	THUNDER BLADE	US GOLD	SP CD AM ST AG
20	5	21	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	SP CD AM BB
21	17	18	COMMANDO	ENCORE	SP CD AM
22	15	8	MOTORBIKE MADNESS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM ST AG
23	18	3	GRAHAM GOOCH TEST CRICKET	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM BB EL C1
24	20	1	TURBO BOAT SIM	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
25	35	24	STUNT BIKE SIM	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
26	24	15	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
27	45	1	TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
28	22	5	THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
29	26	10	PRO SKATEBOARD SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
30	23	3	BIG FOOT	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
31	28	44	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
32	15	8	ACE 2	CASCADE	SP CD AM C1
33	38	7	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAMS	SP CD AM
34	18	1	BMX FREESTYLE	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
35	30	7	LEADERBOARD	KIXX	SP CD AM AT ST AG
36	RE	5	FALCON	MIRRORSOFT	ST AG
37	31	52	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
38	RE	2	INTO THE EAGLES NEST	PLAYERS	SP CD AM
39	29	5	BATMAN	OCEAN	SP CD AM
40	RE	8	BMX NINJA	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM

SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

Publisher	Units sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
CODE MASTERS	9.9	10.8	7.4	7.3
ALTERNATIVE	9.5	8.2	10.3	8.5
OCEAN	9.0	9.5	12.4	5.6
FIREBIRD	6.2	6.8	5.5	8.2
MASTERTRONIC	5.5	6.5	5.5	4.8
US GOLD	5.5	5.8	5.5	4.6
KIXX	4.9	3.9	3.3	5.1
ENCORE	4.0	4.3	3.5	8.3
PLAYERS	3.9	3.7	3.0	4.6
ACTIVISION	2.5	2.8	2.6	—
MIRRORSOFT	2.2	2.1	2.3	1.1
CASCADE	2.2	1.7	1.2	1.3
SEGA	2.3	1.5	1.1	1.0
ZEPPELIN	2.0	1.5	0.3	0.7
MELBOURNE HOUSE	1.7	1.8	2.3	—
MICROPROSE	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.1
BLUE RIBBON	1.2	0.9	0.6	1.2
ELECTRIC DREAMS	1.2	1.1	1.5	—
ATLANTIS	1.1	1.2	0.8	1.0
SYSTEM 3	1.0	1.0	0.7	5.1

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	40.9	40.9	44.4	44.0	26.4	26.4	28.9	29.3
COMMODORE 64	19.8	19.7	20.4	22.9	21.8	21.8	22.7	24.4
AMSTRAD	19.7	19.2	16.9	18.5	18.5	18.9	17.3	13.4
ATARI ST	6.0	5.4	4.6	4.1	6.4	8.4	6.7	7.0
ATARI	4.9	4.4	2.3	1.3	6.6	6.9	4.7	2.2
AMIGA	4.1	3.9	3.6	2.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	4.0
BBC	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.4	3.2	3.2	2.8	2.5
ELECTRON	0.3	2.0	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.7	2.5	2.1
COMMODORE 16	0.2	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	2.8	2.5

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

Units Sold			
This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
101	81	201	106

Soft options

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



Δ ARTRONIC: *Disc 15* (ST — £19.95) A compilation from the latest firm to suffer from the traditional publisher's identity crisis. In true Actiagenic/Medivision style this lot can't seem to make up their minds if they're Cascade or Artronic. Well whoever they are they're offering 15 games such as *Noughts and Crosses*, *Solitaire* and *Othello* for £20. It works out at just over a quid a game and some of them may even be worth it.

Δ CODEMASTERS: *Twin Turbo II* (Am — £2.99) *Jet Ski* (PC — £19.99) The two ends of the Coders spectrum appear side by side this week. *Turbo* may well have appeared last week but in the Darlings we trust, so here it is again and still pretty good value. *Jet Ski* is the latest example of Code Master's Gold. It is based on a budget game called *Jet Bike* and hopefully more than the title has been changed for its move upmarket.

Δ ACCOLADE: *Card Sharks* (PC — £24.95), *T.K.O.* (PC — £24.95) Despite the split with EA, Accolade product keeps on coming. These two are the usual simulator type thingies to keep us amused while we wait to see just what the firm will do when EA finally empties its Accolade left-overs cupboard.

Δ ACTIVISION: *Roger Rabbit* (C64 — £14.99) These Mediavision people must have been well pleased with getting such a great licence but slightly less pleased that the game has been available on import for quite some time. This, however, is the first 8-bit version to hit these shores and at £14.99 it will have to be nearly as special as the film to be worth the money.

Δ ACTIVISION: *Super Hang On* (Am — £24.99) The hit Sega conversion of last year makes it onto the Amiga. No doubt it'll be big again but only in a 16-bit sort of way.

Δ UBI SOFT: *Puffy's Saga* (Sp, PC — £8.99-£19.99) The magic dragon wanders onto a couple of new formats still battling the same baddies in the same rooms. This sort of thing is apparently popular in France.

Δ MARTECH: *Armageddon Man* (PC — £24.99) Martech certainly has been a bit quiet of late and although this is breaking the silence it's not exactly a new rip-roaring release. The earlier versions of this superpowers strategy game came out months and months ago.

Δ ELECTRONIC ARTS: *Mini Putt* (Am — £8.95-£14.95) The crazy golf sim makes it onto one of the more unusual EA formats — perhaps

proving the US firm's confidence that it may have found a more universally appealing game for us Brits at last.

Δ ELECTRONIC ARTS: *Fusion* (ST — £24.95) Another pretty strong title which might have been better off coming out in the September to December period if EA is worried about its 'hit' profile. But then again, it probably isn't and there is an equally strong argument that says the best time to release okay product is when there's little competition.

Δ SYSTEM 3: *IK+* (AG — £24.99) Long awaited on the Amiga and bound to do well. Martial arts games may have lost their chart-topping appeal of a few years ago, but when they are as good as this the memories come flooding back. This has a degree of slickness and style that other less successful labels could learn from.

Δ RAINBIRD: *UMS American Civil War Scenario* (AG — £12.99), *UMS Vietnam Scenario* (AG — £12.99) As you might just have guessed, these are add-ons for the successful UMS strategy wargame. They recreate bloody encounters at Shiloh, Antietam, Chattanooga, Hill 823, Ngho Kam Leat and Hill 875. And at £12.99 they are a profitable way of extending the shelf-life of the original article.

Δ KIXX: *Colloseum* (SPAMMSX — £2.99) This is not-another-like-Ben-Hur-honest chariot racing game is the second original release ever from Kixx. It's written by Topsoft and possibly signals the beginning of a new trend amongst games labels who are just discovering the varied themes that can be lifted from ancient history.

Δ CRL: *I Ludicrus* (ST — £19.95) As if to prove a point (we don't just throw this column together you know) along comes another game set during the days of the Romans. This time, rather than revolving around chariot racing, the main character is a kind of comedy-gadiator. The 'cartoon-style' graphics actually look cartoon-style for once and this looks set to be CRL's biggest hit for ages.

Δ ANCO: *Face Off* (ST — £14.95) There hasn't really been a good ice hockey sim released yet, but this one looks promising. And with the sport gaining momentum in the UK it should do well — if not spectacularly.



All charts shown are copyright of Gallup. The All Formats Top 40 and Share of Sales by Publisher charts refer to the Total Market. Week ending January 28th 1989.

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

Hounded by faulties — the sequel

Activate

The Commodore 64 problem (Speakeasy, CTW January 30th) is general. As a retailer myself I have a fault rate of 15 per cent and find that most of my stock is at Granada for repair.

As the National Association of Computer Retailers' circular states, I did speak to Commodore and they outlined the returns procedure. Unfortunately, to keep customers happy replacements have to be given which leaves the retailer with excess stock when repairs eventually come back.

Incidentally, Granada have returned two machines which were still not working and with the packaging in an unsaleable state.

It appears that Commodore's quality control is non-existent. Also, why do we still get an earth strap on C2N tape players as these can cause short-circuits if it touches the PCB?

To add to the complaints I find the Commodore PC-10 running at a 100 per cent fault rate.

I have had complaints from six dealers over the C64 and I dread to think how many out there haven't got in touch, but still suffer the problems. Amstrad is not in the clear either, as there has been delays on Spectrum Plus 2 parts and I have letters from customers complaining about this.

Incidentally, my fault rates do not include D.O.A. (dead on arrivals) on the C64, which run at a further 4-5 per cent.

In summary, Commodore needs to check its quality control and inform dealers in detail what its return policies are.

The customer is entitled to replacement within 30 days of his purchase. We need this facility as well.

Vic Purnell
Chairman
National Association of
Computer Retailers

Communicate

I read with interest the problems Miles Better Software have had with the Commodore 64 computer (CTW January 30th).

This Christmas I decided to sell Commodore 64 computers, having only sold Atari STs and Commodore Amigas up to this point, and out of the six computers sold five have come back with the following faults: power supply; completely dead; computer would not access tape player and two with tape player faults. This has given us a failure rate of 80 per cent.

In the middle of January, I contacted Vic Purnell of the National Association of Computer Retailers about this problem. Mr Purnell contacted Commodore and the outcome was discussed at the meeting of the NACR in January (a copy of the communication is enclosed).

Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of communication between Commodore and its distributors about the faulty goods procedure (as is outlined in the enclosed sheet) which is not being adopted.

Tim Swift
Tim's Megastore
Macclesfield

Irate

Re: Robert Miles' letter (CTW January 30th).

We had at least 70 per cent returns on C64 packs. Some customers are now on their third machine.

All other dealers that I have spoken to in Northern Ireland have experienced the same. One dealer had 25 back out of 27 C64s sold.

Also, the returns procedure is a disgrace. We will not be stocking C64s next Christmas.

Yours
Brian Beattie
Nebulae
Carrickfergus
Co. Antrim
N. Ireland

Cogitate

Your correspondent's letter about the failure rate of Commodore 64s raises a number of points. Whilst we have not had such a large amount of returns, they are still unacceptably high.

The problem is not so much with the computers as with the PSU's and the cassette decks. I would say that 90% of our customer returns are alignment problems. As probably all will agree, the quality of the C2N is rubbish and entirely unacceptable for a machine which has been in production for so long.

The fastest way for us to go bust would be to follow Commodore's official returns procedure. We try to repair every computer which is returned, if necessary by cannibalising other machines and sending back one very dead one, but we still have a mountain of C2N's waiting to be boxed with the next Hollywood pack we return.

As we are breaking the terms both of the warranty and returns policy of most manufacturers I would prefer if you withheld our name and address, but I am writing as I believe that should the manufacturers face up to their responsibilities, independent retailers could officially provide a far better level of service and the customers would be much happier.

I agree that it is impossible to ask a customer who has a two week old faulty machine to wait whilst it is returned to Granada and do not understand why all producers could not authorise competent dealers to repair on their premises.

Stringent conditions could be imposed and checked by reps. I can imagine two immediate objections. In the first place Commodore could no doubt argue that Granada is providing a fast and efficient turn around, but in our limited

experience this is not so. Every machine we have been forced to return to this company has been subject to delays and problems. We have lost a contract with a school because Granada lost their 128D and the school has chosen to blame us.

In this case all that was at fault was the power supply, but because we do not normally stock this product and so could not swop the PSU with another, and as the machine was outside the returns period we had no recourse other than to send it to Granada. If we had been empowered to replace the PSU we could have done this with the minimum delay and the maximum of customer satisfaction.

The second immediate objection would be that some unscrupulous dealers would abuse an on-site repair system by using guarantee items to repair out of guarantee goods. A number of checks and balances could deter this, the most obvious being that those companies registered to repair would legally undertake not to take in non guarantee work.

I believe that if the manufacturers were to use their imagination they would realise that good independents could be a godsend to them if only by cutting down administration and silly repair costs.

The computer industry is more complicated than selling washing machines, and if the producers could see past the beguiling volume deals with the chain stores to the ancillary costs occasioned by judging all retailers by the most incompetent, they would reap more than just contented customers.

As it is, the present system is at the best unsatisfactory and is an evasion of the manufacturers' responsibility.

Commodore dealer
Name withheld
England

C no evil

With reference to David Miles' letter (CTW January 30th) as well as some of those letters published in this issue, I feel I need to correct some points as well as spell out our returns procedure.

It might be worthwhile to set out in full the various types of 'return' situations and the rules and the timescales involved. I should point out these are not new procedures and that our distributors are fully aware of them.

i) Dead on arrival

The dealer may return the faulty unit to his distributor for direct replacement within 21 days of delivery from the distributor.

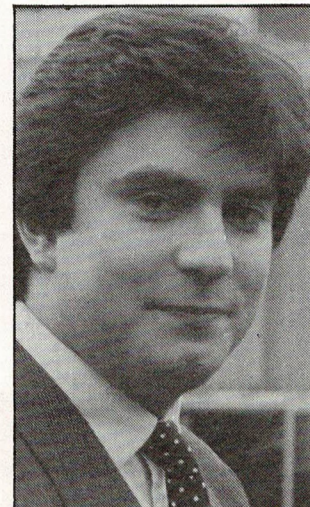
ii) 30 day refurbishment

The dealer may return the unit for complete refurbishment which will include repair/replacement of faulty peripherals and software and new packaging - in essence a completely new machine. This procedure is open to dealers for 30 days after the customer purchase date. Proof of purchase must be supplied when returned to the distributor and clearly marked 'refurbishment'.

iii) Repair

A complete unit may be returned to Granada for repair within 12 months with proof of purchase. Faulty joysticks and software (as well as keyboards and personal stereos from the entertainment pack) can be returned to Granada for replacement.

I would like to point out that whilst I believe this is one of the most effective and efficient returns policies in the industry I will be shortly announcing, within the next month,



BARRETT: Responding improvements that will make the policy even better.

As far as individual cases are concerned I have arranged for engineers to contact and visit the outlets concerned and review the situation with them. Our current returns rate is approximately 2-3%, a figure which is borne out by our distributors.

It is easy to be complacent and argue that to have over 120,000 CPU's going out in a two-three month period will inevitably result in the odd faulty machine. However, one complaint is one too many and I apologise on behalf of Commodore to those dealers who are experiencing difficulties.

If any dealer is having problems with the above procedure then they should write to our service manager Jerry Pank or fax a letter to him on 0628 71456.

Providing effective support to our dealers is an important part of Commodore's sales philosophy, that is why we appointed one of the best service companies in the country and continue to improve this part of our business, which we know is so important to our dealers.

Yours sincerely
Dean Barrett
Marketing Manager
Commodore UK

H.C.L.

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NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BORED

Continued from page ten

tic amongst the marketing men involved may now even be starting to convince themselves, but their success hopefully ends there. The games are crude scams to gain that most valuable of marketing assets notoriety. And in an industry as young as this it is embarrassingly easy to succeed. In other entertainment industries that we so long to be compared to such schemes would simply be ignored. You can fool some of the people some of the time but marketing men seem to take particular pleasure in deluding themselves.

Perhaps in this case even

they know the truth. Why else would they bother to advertise all this adult software in *Crash*, *Zapp*, *Kerpow*, *Wallop* and all the other pubescent publications? Surely they can't be part of this brave new PC world they're telling us about.

So when CRL boss Clement Chambers first claimed that his *adult* horror games would take software "out of the clamouring hands of the kiddies" he was more realistically hoping that there is nothing more than a bit of blood and guts, or now the glimpse of a digitised naked body, to get kiddies hands clamouring like they

have never clamoured before.

As a marketing ploy its main fault is that it simply isn't working. But we don't mind that, we're used to marketing ploys not working. What does grate is the ridiculous pioneer stance that is used as a front. Lately it can be described as nothing more than bare faced cheek (which is often more than can be said for the games themselves).

The tedium is the message

And with failure it also means that the other old recourse of giving the people what they want can still only justifiably be claimed by the *Outruns*, *Operation Wolfs* and

Robocops of this world.

The products themselves do nothing to suggest that this situation will change. They certainly go no way towards changing every sane pundit's original theory that computers just aren't sexy. A roughly shaped blob of pink pixels with a horribly mathematical triangle of black pixels strategically placed is not the stuff that dreams of any kind are made of.

Sex and drugs and 16-bit is not a phrase that is going to grip the nation. Not now, not ever and not surprisingly.

The product as yet has looked like the direct result of a programming wonder-boy discovering that he can produce a

rough approximation of the female form and then not being able to keep it to himself. Some of them hide behind poker games but it is not card buffs who are targeted in the marketing.

For sex to work well in the field of entertainment it must be presented with either wit, style or both. So far with software it has just been presented.

So let's try and resist our right-on reflexes to scream sexist - it really is just too important an insult to waste.

Anyway as any good stylist will tell you, it is ridiculous to categorise things as good or evil, they are simply interesting or tedious. So far A.O.S. has fallen firmly towards the latter.

BRIDGING THE WATFORD GAP

Continued from page 12

£250,000. will be spent on advertising the new range, with the bulk of the budget being spent in the technical press.

Having made considerable contacts in the education sector through being a Beeb specialist, the firm intends to tap into these with its Aries range. "Obviously the education market if our forte and we're going to pitch there first. Then we will be looking towards small businesses and eventually we are confident that the corporates will turn to us as a result of our prices and quality."

The name Watford electronics is proving to be a bit of a handicap for the firm's plans of expansion. Its present premises are overcrowded to say the least with small electronics components vying for space with the ever increasing number of computer peripherals and machines.

Supermarket baskets full of products are precariously piled on top of each other waiting to be sent out to customers and the staff have to constantly jostle past each other with stock looming on either side.

"In retrospect we have limited ourselves with the name, because when the crunch comes we are going to have to move. The price of property is ridiculous in Watford, but then we can hardly go to Luton and still call ourselves Watford Electronics."

Despite the fact that the firm has just bought a new warehouse across the road the problem has only been alleviated temporarily, and a move does seem imminent.

In the meantime, it looks as if the firm will be winding down the electronic components side of the business, which if failing to live up to the Jessa golden rule of maximum profit.

Jessa is certainly enjoying his success and the riches he has reaped from the company, but he is determined that however large Watford Electronics becomes it will remain essentially a family concern. And as such Jessa's son Shiraz has stepped into the role of technical director, whilst his brother continues to handle the sales side of the operation.

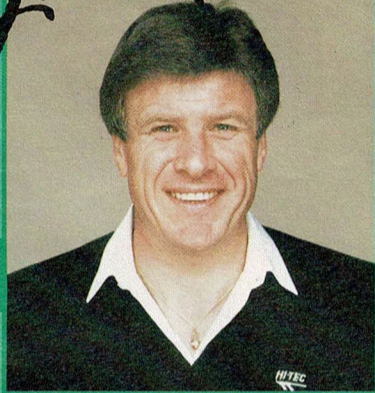
"There is no possibility whatsoever of going public. This is a family concern and I'm so attached to the business that I'd be lost without it. We want to be answerable to ourselves and not shareholders."

Jessa is keen to stress that Watford Electronics is not a box shifting set up and with the new PCs the firm will be offering strong technical support as well as a 12 month on-site maintenance warranty. "We are not a company that's just into making a quick buck. You see so many firms that are here today and gone tomorrow."

Jessa represents something of a patriarchal figure as he leans back in his sumptuous leather chair watching the company at work through the video monitoring system. He has achieved his goal - the erstwhile optician has made his millions.

But has success in a specialist niche made him shortsighted to the pitfalls of taking on the likes of Amstrad? Jessa clearly thinks not. "We are determined to make sure that we're successful in every way. With hard work, business acumen and long term planning I know we can succeed."

Emlyn Hughes



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