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# CTW

**13.3.89 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 227**

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## Price hikes shake up games trade

The wind of change blew through the leisure software industry last week with several major publishers planning to cut trade discounts in early April, *CTW* can reveal.

Currently the standard discount given to distributors is 55 per cent. From next month the majority of big league publishers will cut that discount to 50 per cent on distributors' orders for independent retailers while maintaining the 55 per cent level for orders destined for multiples. Quite how this distinction will be made in practice is unclear, but it is bound to be a matter for contention.

Six firms are believed to be leading the charge. They are

Ocean, Mirrorsoft, Telecomsoft, Virgin Mastertronic, Domark and Elite. So far Domark and Elite have confirmed the news, reliable sources have reported that Ocean and Virgin are also set for cuts - neither firm denied the suggestion - and Mirrorsoft and Telecomsoft, though both unavailable for comment, seem highly likely to be equally involved.

It is understood that the current developments were initiated within Ocean, which then looked for support amongst fellow publishers. A secret summit apparently then took place involving representatives from the six houses involved during which the plan now emerging was finalised.

The latest burst of activity follows last year's cut in mar-

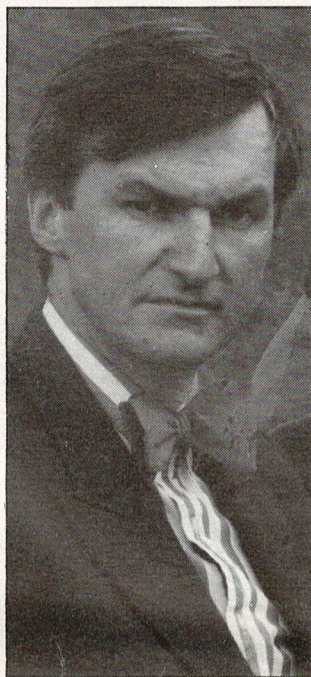
gins by US Gold which at the time caused a storm of protest but now seems to have been accepted by the trade.

Certainly as a 25 per cent shareholder of US Gold, Ocean chairman David Ward would have been perfectly placed to monitor reaction to that controversial move before deciding on his own strategy.

The majority of the changes in margins are set to come into effect in the first week in April and will almost certainly be passed on by the distributors to the retailers. Last week the issue was an extremely sensitive one and any discussions were charged with sometimes fearful expectation of trade reaction. Despite the secretive atmosphere, however, *CTW* did glean the publisher's major reasons behind the move (see separate box).

At the time of going to press the state of play within each of the publishers involved was as follows:

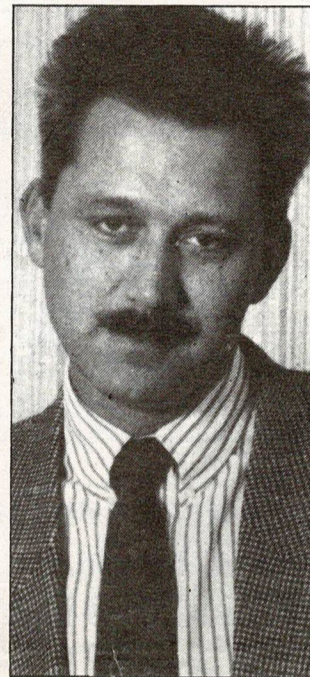
**Ocean:** Although the firm itself was declining to comment at the time of going to press, reliable sources have confirmed to *CTW* that Ocean



**STACHAN:** Prices too low will be cutting its discount. Indeed, it appears to have been a ringleader in the whole affair and it is understood that the latest moves started within the firm which then went trawling for support amongst its fellow publishers.



**ALEXANDER:** Issue too delicate. **Elite:** One of the two firms to officially confirm the margin changes. Director Brian Wilcox offered to *CTW*: "Quite simply our costs have been rising and our income hasn't. Independents are discounting and it is pretty clear that mar-



**DONNELLY:** Indies too weak, gins are too high." **Domark:** The other official confirmation comes from the other leading independent publisher. Joint boss Mark Strachan echoed Wilcox's reasoning and also claimed that

Continued on back page

### THE PUBLISHERS' ARGUMENT

- Rising costs of development, licences and marketing
- Distributor margins too high - set years ago
- Too many retailers discounting current titles
- Cost of using merchandising firms
- Fewer publishers can demand higher prices

## EA: UK labels totter

Electronic Arts' deals with UK affiliate labels Martech and Ubi Soft were in the balance last week.

The uncertainty follows the US firm's decision to start selling through established distributors as well as direct in the UK (*CTW* March 3rd).

Whilst EA preferred to make no comment on the matter it is understood that the general feeling is that a split is likely - with the firm now having a very different strategy in the UK to when the deals were signed.

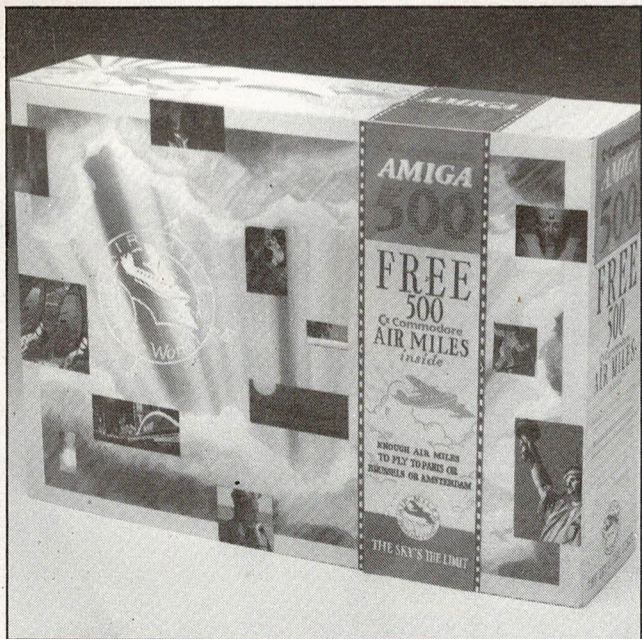
Indeed, president Trip Hawkins indicated to *CTW* last December that the new "profit orientated" EA was looking to tone down its commitment to affiliates.

Ubi Soft president Yves Guillemot told *CTW* that a decision over his firm's deal will be made in the next couple of weeks. Ubi Soft is also the exclusive French distributor for EA product in France.

"I don't see any reason why EA can't sell to all the distributors in the UK and then sell exclusively through us in France - most UK firms operate

Continued on back page

## Amiga pack hits runway



**AMIGA 500:** Come fly with me. Commodore has at last unveiled its long awaited official Amiga bundle - claiming to have put together the most original computer promotion ever.

As of April 1st a new Amiga 500 pack will be sold alongside the current £399 standalone. Retailing at £499, it will consist of a 500, TV modulator, three games, a paint package and

500 Air Miles.

The Air Miles give any purchaser the chance to book a return flight to European cities such as Paris, Amsterdam or Brussels free of charge.

The official CBM bundle comes after two months of distributors' own £399 bundles, comprising the machine and nine free titles. The different packs on offer, however, had

Continued on back page

## Euro Atari unveils, previews and delays

Cebit Hanover Messe March 8th Atari went on parade in Hanover last week, resulting in the now expected batch of unveilings, announcements and previews.

Details emerged of planned additions to the Folio pocket PC range, expected availability for the Stacey ST portable and a slight delay on the ST Powerpack leisure bundle.

In something of a novel move even for Atari, the firm started talking last week about a new improved version of its pocket PC - two months before the original is expected to become available.

The Folio II should arrive at the end of this year, sporting an

enhanced display and slimmer design - there is no word as yet on price. A further Folio is also being planned, incorporating a 286 chip.

The Atari ST Powerpack, which will include over 20 games and a music package, is now set for early May. The delay is due to the need to design a new sleeve and software presentation box, as well as plans for a non-leisure ST bundle.

The Stacey ST portable went on show in Europe for the first time and as predicted by *CTW* (November 28th) it will start at just under £700 rising through to around £1,200. First shipments are expected to arrive in the UK in June/July time.



FOLIO: Better version planned already

## INSIDE:

### A SLICE OF THE AMERICAN PIE

Whilst the Americans get more and more involved in simulations and epic adventures a market seems to be opening for good old British inventiveness..... 10

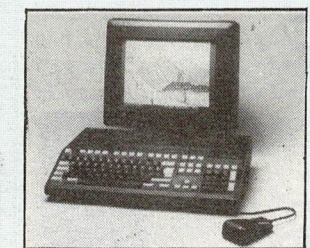
### PICKING POCKETS

After the *Which?* launch of Atari's Folio, *CTW* conducts a dealer focus on the viability of the much publicised little wonder in an area previously filled by anything from the Z88 to the Psion Organiser..... 12

### COMM AGAIN

Perhaps not one to break the needle on the old interestometer but an important issue nonetheless as the latest dealer stockwatch tackles the pros and cons of fax cards..... 17

### PC OF THE ACTION



The much touted PC leisure explosion has still to come so while we wait *CTW* examines just what the hold up is and what affect Amstrad's Sinclair PC 200 is likely to have.... 19

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# Why is Denis Moran going to the first European Computer Trade Show?

## That's his business.

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- Visitor ticket requests pour in from overseas, with mass applications from France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands – and Zimbabwe.
- Exhibitors actively viewing show as launching pad for new products. One company alone announces the proposed release of 20 innovations.
- Borland and Word Perfect enter the powerful Big Business line-up.

The European Computer Trade Show is too good a business opportunity to be missed. Just ask Denis Moran. . .

### The Yanks are coming – in force

Ticket applications from the United States clearly indicate that the Americans are taking the European Computer Trade Show very seriously.

One party jetting in from California includes six senior vice presidents of major corporations.

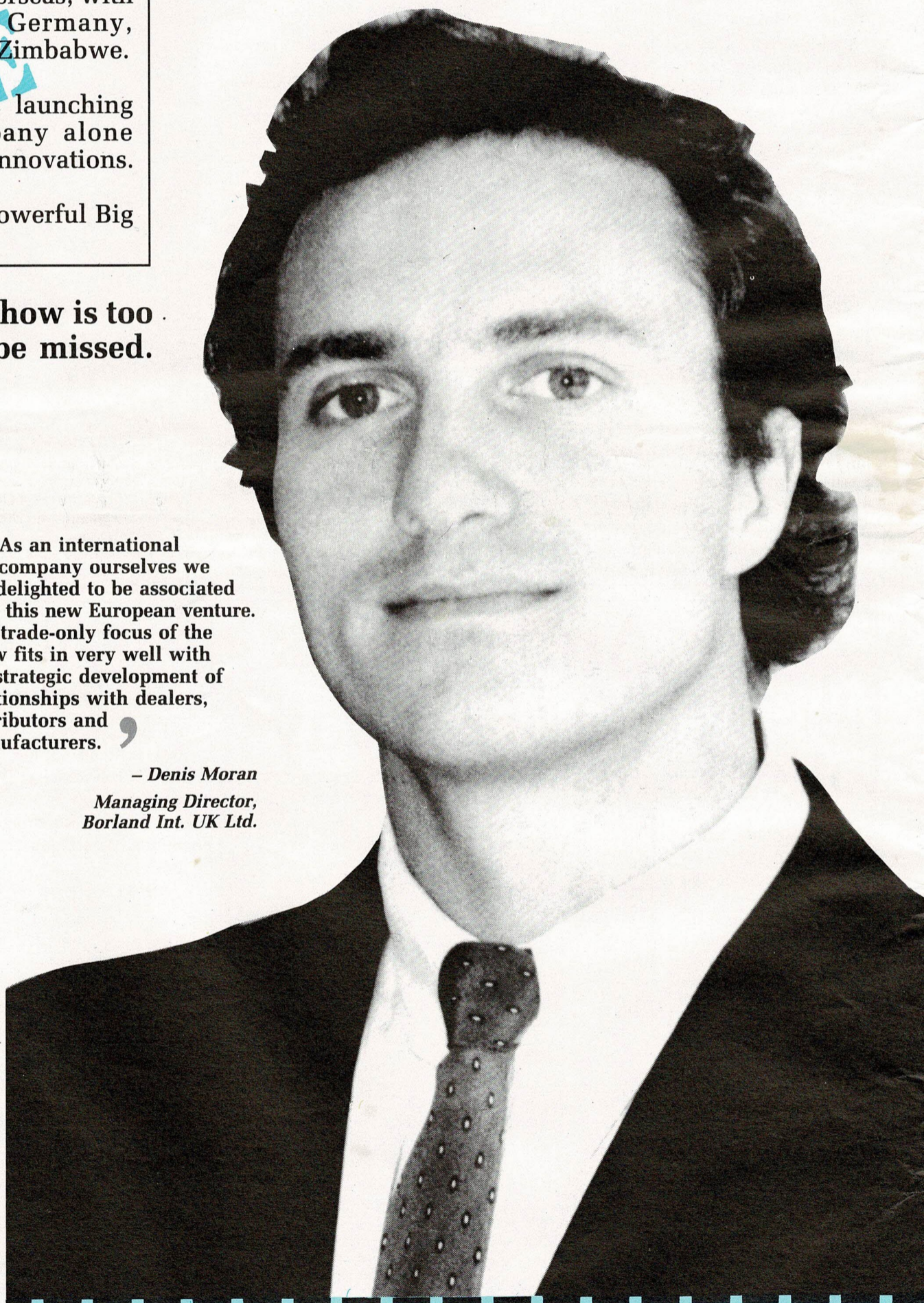
Between them the States-side companies bound for the show boast annual turnovers running into hundreds of millions of dollars.

And their stated reasons for attending?

- To source new software and hardware.
- To establish key contacts in the UK and Europe.
- To find new outlets for products.
- To set up licensing deals.
- To discuss areas of possible co-operation with UK and European companies.

‘As an international company ourselves we are delighted to be associated with this new European venture. The trade-only focus of the show fits in very well with the strategic development of relationships with dealers, distributors and manufacturers.’

– Denis Moran  
Managing Director,  
Borland Int. UK Ltd.



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# Amstrad edges ahead of IBM in race for '88 PC dealer sales

Latest research figures show that Amstrad just pipped IBM to become the largest shipper of PCs through UK dealers in 1988.

According to Wharton Information Systems, some 465,500 PCs were sold through indirect channels in the UK last year.

Amstrad gained 25.6 per cent of that total with sales of 119,400 machines, closely followed by IBM with 23.6 per cent (110,000 machines). These two were some way ahead of the nearest two competitors - Compaq (9.6 per cent) and Apple (8.7 per cent).

Clearly, IBM is likely to come out on top overall in 1988 when indirect sales are taken

Unit sales of PCs shipped through indirect channels in 1988			Comparison of unit sales through indirect channels June-December 1988.		
Amstrad	119,400	(25.6%)	June	13,000	12,700
IBM	110,000	(23.6%)	July	8,000	11,000
Compaq	45,000	(9.6%)	August	7,000	8,700
Apple	40,500	(8.7%)	September	5,500	6,800
Olivetti	36,500	(7.8%)	October	8,000	5,500
Others	34,200	(7.3%)	November	7,000	9,500
Tandon	29,400	(6.3%)	December	3,500	11,000
Apricot	22,300	(4.8%)	Total:	52,000	65,200
Epson	20,400	(4.3%)			
Toshiba	7,800	(1.7%)			

©Wharton Information Systems

into account.

Amstrad sales dropped by over 50 per cent between June and October last year, coinciding with the pre-publicity for the upmarket PC2000 range and the wait for the first PC2086 machines. Sales picked up radically through November and December as

pent up demand for the entry PC2000 model was satisfied.

There is a distinct comparison to be drawn between IBM and Amstrad in the early months of the PC2000 range's existence, for as Amstrad sales picked up at the end of the year IBM saw a major drop.

Amstrad would have

expected to move into a stronger position through the first half of this year as first the PC2386 and eventually PC2286 came on-line. However, recent moves by IBM to bolster sales of its non-MCA Model 30s through dealers may thwart this to some degree.

Despite a strong effort from both sides, last year neither Commodore nor Atari managed to show up as major players in the UK PC market during 1988.

Wharton offers some comfort, however, by predicting that both firms are likely to make an impression this year.

## Moneybags PST moves to CeBit — tracks cloners

Having spent "some serious money" at last month's *Which?* Show, export firm PST last week took the rest of its apparently enormous cheque-book to the giant CeBit computer show in Hanover.

The firm that specialises in buying up other firms' excess stock had optimistically planned to spend some £20 million doing just that at *Which?*

"The business we did there exceeded our expectations, but even in our wildest dreams we didn't think we'd be able to spend the full £20 million," commented PST boss Howard Strowman to *CTW*.

Many of the negotiations at *Which?* were due to be continued in Hanover. In the UK, the firm is now confident that



**STROWMAN:** Spent, spent, spent there is a lot of business to be gained from IBM's recent moves into the lower-end with its PS/2 Model 30 promotion.

"IBM is obviously attacking the Amstrad end of the market, and whilst Amstrad has the

strength to continue selling in tremendous volumes there are a lot of other people with cheap products having problems. A lot of them want to get out and move up to higher spec machines," added Strowman.

## IBM low-end moves send MBS on signing spree

MBS Trade Sales has reacted enthusiastically to IBM's aggressive courting of the low-end dealer sector, claiming that many erstwhile clone-only outlets are clamouring to sign up.

IBM announced recently a special pricing promotion for

its PS/2 Model 30 AT range which has effectively made way for a massive influx of new IBM dealers.

In return for fairly large commitments distributors and superdealers can buy Model 30s at such competitive rates as to bring their street price far closer to clone equivalents.

Manufacturers such as Amstrad are being specifically

attacked — with the four Model 30 configurations in some cases coming within £100 of PC2000 prices.

IBM has clearly decided to do something about the erosion of its low-end market share by making it easier for dealers to sell its products — and then gradually move up to more specialised system sales. Some 400-500 new IBM dealers are expected to be signed up through a diluted qualification procedure.

"This brings IBM pretty close to Amstrad and all the other clone manufacturers. IBM created the market originally but by focusing on the high end they let the bottom end go," commented MBS commercial director Steve Sowry to *CTW*.

"The early signs are that there are enough people wanting to become authorised dealers without us having to go out looking for them."



SOWRY: Dealers eager to sign up

## New broom fires into Comet orbit

Comet last week appointed a new computer buyer to replace Bill Jacks, who left the firm last month.

At the time Comet refused to comment on the departure, despite speculation that it was directly related to the computer department's performance. The new buyer is Ged Dempsey who joins the chain from Rumbelows.

Dempsey has already indicated that there will be major changes within the department and told *CTW* that he had certainly not been brought in to keep things running as they were.

"Obviously there is a lot of background work to do but we

will be looking at the range and seeing where the trade is going. I think that the business can move forward and will move forward", he commented to *CTW*.

One area that will certainly come under close scrutiny from Dempsey is Amstrad's Sinclair PC200. Its brief history at the chain has been chequered to say the least and Jack's original decision to stock the machine may have been a factor in his departure.

Amstrad chairman Alan Sugar admitted to *CTW* recently that the PC200 had not been successful last year, blaming a lack of marketing clout on DRAM shortages. A relaunch, however, has been promised for this autumn.



COMET: New computer broom

## CBM shifts again

The internal restructuring going on at Commodore continued last week with the appointment of Dr Henri Rubin to the company's board of directors.

Rubin has been CBM's executive vice president and chief operating officer for the past two years and has played a major part in the firm's product development and technology operations.

The move caps a month of top level shuffling which has seen the departure of European general manager Harold Speyer, the repositioning of Kristian Anderson to general manager for European support and logistics and the appointment of Medhi Ali as world-wide president.

In that time it has also been decided that Commodore UK should report directly to the US rather than through a European HQ in Germany.

# CTW

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# Logotron logs on to Mirror 16-bit muscle

**Logotron last week tied up a sales and distribution deal with Mirrorsoft for the firm's games division.**

Products will now be sold by the Mirrorsoft team and distributed exclusively through Microdealer. As part of the agreement Logotron will also receive marketing co-ordina-

tion and merchandising benefits.

The deal is designed to assist Logotron's development in the 16-bit market, and the first title to be released under the new agreement will be *Archipelagos* on the ST, Amiga and PC.

"We know the people at Mirrorsoft well. We were obviously

impressed by their performance and it transpired that they were impressed by the quality of our product. By aligning ourselves with such a large and successful publisher it will make a substantial difference to our business," offered Logotron's publisher Herbert Wright to *CTW*.

Commenting on the deal Mirrorsoft boss Peter Bilotta offered: "The last twelve months have seen us rise to a position of unrivalled strength and consistency in the market and Logotron complement the brands we already publish. We are looking forward to working with them and we believe we have the people and the expertise to help them grow."

Previously Logotron worked with Active Sales and Marketing, and the firm was keen to stress that the parting was amicable. "We are sad to be leaving Active. Robert Stallibrass took us on before we had any product at all and he has done a brilliant job in launching Logotron games into the world. We owe him our existence in this market."



WRIGHT: Looking into Mirror

# Stephenson rushes over to Germany

**Leading German distributor and Mirror Media subsidiary Rushware last week appointed erstwhile Mirrorsoft sales manager Michael Stephenson to the position of operations director.**

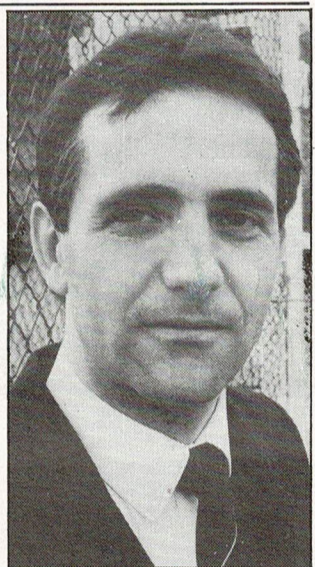
He will be responsible for all the firm's sales and marketing and effectively takes up the role of Rushware's number three behind directors Hans Rabe and Jurgen Goeldner. He is also going to be playing a "key role in developing new product opportunities in key world-wide territories".

Commenting on the appointment Goeldner told

*CTW*: "We wanted to get someone over who has expertise developed in the British market which is much more aggressive than here in Germany. We are looking forward very much to working with Michael."

Stephenson himself offered: "With Rushware I will be looking after sales and marketing and will be keenly pursuing the company's pan-European strategy. This will involve more communication with Microdealer International." One strong advantage Stephenson brings with him to the job is that he is fluent in German.

Meanwhile, the German distributor is also bullishly predicting a rise in profits of



STEPHENSON: Rushing in around 40 per cent for its imminent year end financial figures whilst promising an expansion into the telephone industry when the government deregulates the telephone system later in the year.

# Slam joins £2.99 corps

**Grandslam has become the latest firm to follow the universal trend towards a £2.99 budget pricepoint.**

The firm's £1.99 Bug Byte budget label has been joined by Bug Byte Premier, which will be the outlet for around six £2.99 releases a year.

Premier titles will comprise of re-released major product, such as arcade licences, endorsed games and the more successful original output. The first Premier release is *Terramex*.

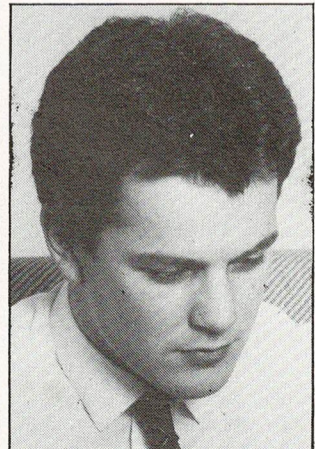
Meantime, Grandslam is planning further cross-marketing deals with the outside world following the news that Paramount Pictures will be releasing a movie version of *The Hunt For Red October* at the end of the year.

The firm has already worked closely with video firm *Brave World* on the release of film tie-in *Running Man*.

# Bulletin plays down naked video concern

**Video firm Bulletin 1000 was last week defending its corner after receiving complaints over the inclusion of digitised naked women in its latest software promoting video.**

The offending images appear in a preview of *Astaroth* from Hewson. Several retailers



STALLIBRASS: Playing down

complained to *CTW* that with the graphics being 16-bit standard the pictures leave nothing to the imagination.

At Bulletin the general view was that there is nothing in the video to cause concern. It conceded that it had received complaints but claimed that the number of callers was minimal.

Sales director Julie Inskip commented to *CTW*: "I could go back a few years and point out examples that are a lot worse with everything hanging out. If it is offensive to people then I can only assume that they will not be stocking the product."

"Anyway if we are going to worry about influencing kids then a better place to start would be with all the death and destruction in the games."

The promotion of the game is handled by sales and marketing firm Active. Boss Robert Stallibrass was also playing down the incident.

# Broderbund snaps up the Emerald Phantom

**In its first ever US deal, Waterford based programming team Emerald software has announced that the US rights to its *Phantom Fighter* game have been snapped up by Broderbund.**

For now the deal is restricted to just the one title but neither side has ruled out the possibility of extending the arrangement to include future product. In the UK the product was handled by Emerald's sister firm Martech.

Negotiations for the deal began at the Las Vegas CES in January where Emerald boss Mike Dixon claims "the Emerald brand name was being held in high esteem". He added that the PC version of *Phantom Fighter* caused "a great deal of excitement at the show".

Broderbund's director of business development Dianne Drosness offered: "We chose to acquire *Phantom Fighter*



DIXON: Fighting in the US

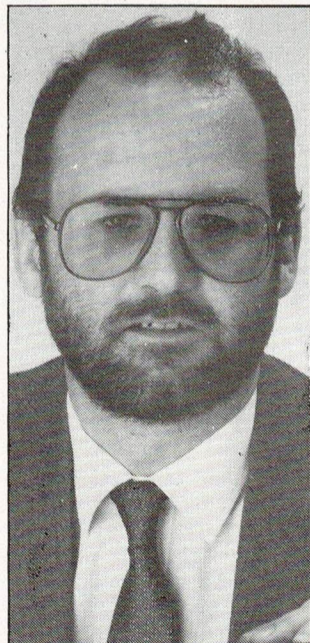
because of its quality and unusual features. We haven't seen this type of game on the PC before. It's fast-moving with beautiful graphics."

The deal only covers PC and Amiga versions of the game. It is due for release in the summer although US pricing has not yet been settled.

# TopTen up for grabs

**Budget software firm TopTen is set to sell off its games division, with the company now looking to concentrate on audio publishing.**

The TopTen label is hoped to be sold for a five figure sum, which will include the rights to all the firm's current software and existing stock. The firm boasts a turnover of £750,000 with less than ten per cent coming from the budget games side.



MAYNARD: Budget nor more

"The returns you get from the budget business are so small for the amount of effort you put in. I have devoted myself for 11 years to computer software, but it's now back to the rock and roll market," offered TopTen boss Martin Maynard to *CTW*.

The firm claims to be negotiating with several companies already involved in the budget field. "We are looking for someone to take it off our hands rather than a large amount of money. There are a lot of rights there. Anyone who can bundle the games or just continue to sell them as normal would earn a nice little living."

# Leisuresoft aims to make Impact

**Leisuresoft's sales and marketing offshoot has been christened Impact and has begun its search for clients in earnest.**

The project is being headed up by erstwhile Bullet general manager John Parker who took up his post last Monday. He claimed that Impact had been chosen as a name "because that's what we feel our retailers need".

He continued: "We will be looking to sign up a comfortable handful of clients. We want to be very selective. There are some good discussions underway and some very hot irons in the fire."

He added that impact's intent was to "offer a totally new concept in software sales and promotion" and provide "the vital link between publishers and key retailers".

# FAST bashes racist pirates

**FAST co-ordinator Bob Hay last week warned of a particularly nasty pirate copy of Mastertronic's *Sidewinder* currently being circulated in Scotland.**

The game has been altered and given the new name of *Paki Basher*. The game itself was originally an ordinary enough shoot-em-up but after the hackers' mutilations the

game is now said to be "extremely racist in its make-up."

Hay commented to *CTW*: "This is obviously something that no-one in the business would have any truck with, and it provides a terrible reflection on the industry as a whole."

Hay went on to point out that under the Public Order Act of 1936 anyone publishing or distributing material of such a racist nature can be imprisoned for up to two years.



HAY: Hacker bashing



**After testing 2,500 disks,  
they had to admit that TDK make the best in the world.**



The new TDK MF 2DD has been proved to be the world's best 3½" floppy disk.

How do we know? Because Memcon, a US company noted for their exhaustive quality testing, recently put 2,500 disks from the top twenty-five brands through their paces.



(We couldn't have asked for a more critical referee. Memcon actually make disk testing equipment and publish highly respected guides on disk quality.)

The disks were judged in no fewer than eleven different categories and subjected to hours of thorough inspection and evaluation.

The eventual result was that TDK came top overall, beating stiff competition from other top brands.

In fact the MF 2DD is just one of a whole new range: so whether you're using 3½" or 5¼" disks, you can be sure you're getting the ultimate in quality and reliability.

And to mark the launch of the new line-up, TDK are giving consumers one box of disks for every five purchased: dealers will receive two boxes free with every ten. (This offer ends May 31st.)

For details of this and an additional offer open only to dealers call Bytech Peripherals 0344 427676, Kelator 01-546 0827, MBS Dealer Supplies 0925 830404, SJB Disks 0509 610333, Software 01-357 6424.

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# Ex-Mattel man leads Nintendo into toyland

Nintendo has stepped up its push into the toy sector with the appointment of ex-Mattel sales manager Alistair Tonnison as distribution agent.

The firm currently feels that its position in the computer market – with Centresoft currently being its only distributor – is far stronger than in the toy world.

Ironically, Tonnison worked for Mattel when the toy firm handled the Nintendo's much criticised UK launch in 1987. His new company Toy Corporation will pitch large chains and toy independents with the console.

"Because he's been sales manager at Mattel he knows all the major people in toyland. We'd rather use him than have to spend time hiring someone and then training them to sell

the Nintendo," commented Nintendo's UK managing director George Lucardie to CTW.

The Nintendo is currently stocked in chains such as Boots, Harrods, Debenhams and Selfridges. With the toy fair season coming to an end the firm hopes to increase the console's retail presence over the next couple of months.

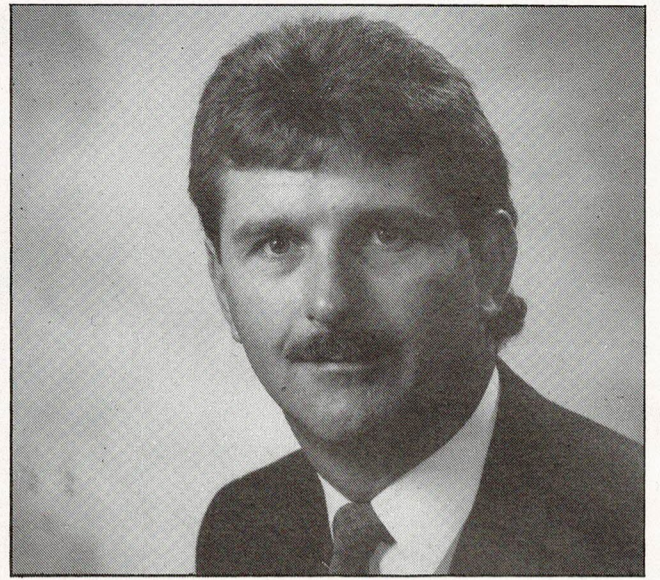
Meanwhile, Nintendo has published the full results of its

£2.6 million (ratecard) TV advertising campaign run through Geers Gross last Christmas.

A series of 30 second ads were run from October 10th to December 18th, with a claimed 78 per cent of all children – 17.1 million – seeing the ad on an average of 5.1 times.

According to Nintendo, some 82 per cent of 8-14 year old boys saw the ad an average of 3.1 times.

The TV spend is claimed to have been 12 per cent higher than its nearest rival – Atari. The firm has already indicated that it would spend up to £4 million on TV ads this year, although no Easter burst is planned.



TONNISON: Leading the charge to toy town

## Investors take DisCopy slice

Duplication house DisCopy Labs has sold off a substantial share in the firm to venture capital company 3i PLC.

The acquisition was for £1.15 million, and the money raised from the sale will enable DisCopy to continue its plans for expansion. The move was also prompted by the fact that the firm's managing director Ian Smith was selling off a large proportion of his shares in a bid to take a more backseat role in the company.

"Over the coming months you will see controlled expansion. We're not going to go mad, but we are looking to make greater inroads in Europe and we have just started a company in the states. It will also enable us to buy new equipment and increase our production capacity," offered DisCopy director David Hartley to CTW.

The firm has appointed three new members to its board of directors, they are Graham Burke ex MD of Plessey, Pieter Reddington ex MD of Wabash Datatech and Paul Caton software expert of Trace duplication systems.

"They are all our appointees rather than the investors, and they will be bringing a lot of experience to the company," commented Hartley.

## CDS tunes in for TV quiz

CDS has tied up a licensing deal with Central Television for the TV quiz game *Sporting Triangles*.

The firm is hailing this latest deal as possibly the first of several similar tie ups. *Sporting Triangles*, the computer game, is due for release in April, with the game receiving its first showing at the European Computer Trade Show.

"We've missed a few opportunities in the past, but we were determined to gain this licence. Our negotiations paid off and we are really thrilled to be the software house producing this title," offered the firm's sales director Martyn Wilson.



WILSON: Thrilled

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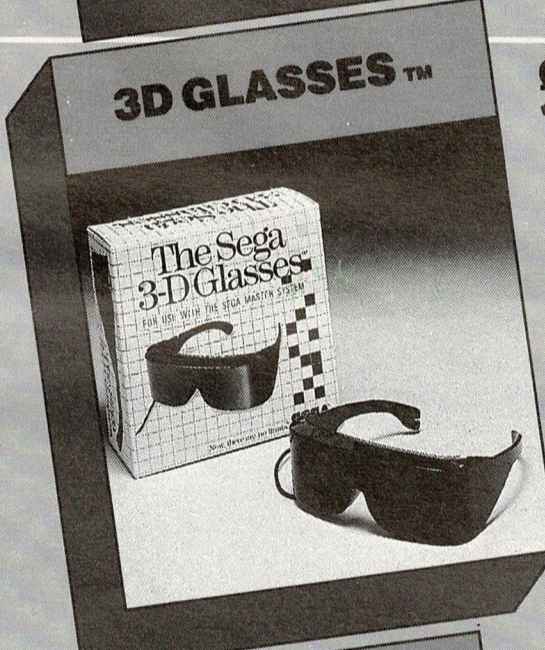
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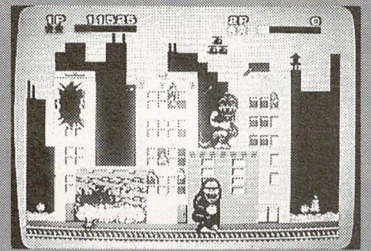
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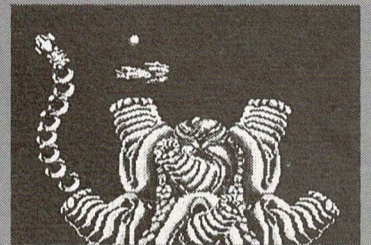
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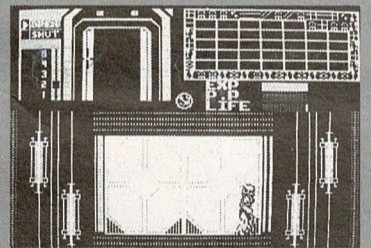
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Horizontally scrolling arcade adventure, action packed! C+VG, March 1989



### Y's

You are Aron Christian, a swordsman washed ashore by the might and fury of a hurricane. You were found half dead by a kind and humble fisherman and he restored you to health. The fishing village sat at the edge of the great plain. Rising in the distance was a small mountain range with an ominous tower at its peak. 'That is the Tower of the Doomed,' the fisherman told you as they made the sign of the evil eye. 'It is the place where the troubles of our land began.' As you watched the tower, you knew that your destiny waited there.

The whole thing looks incredible - the best I've seen on the Sega. Y's offers depth and playability and will keep you engrossed for weeks. It's a must! C+VG, March 1989



# Logi abandons 8-bit for bigger bite of PC Apple

In what is being pitched as confirmation of a successful move upmarket, AMS/Logitech last week sold off all its non-PC and Apple product.

The peripherals company sold its BBC range - which includes *Stop Press*, *Super Art* and the AMX Mouse - to Watford Electronics. Its Amstrad PCW, CPC, C64 and ST pro-

ducts, meanwhile, have been sold to Database Software.

The firm claims the moves are a reflection of its success in the PC and Apple markets. Boss Nick Pearson explained that 8-bit and ST products are now not considered a worthwhile use of the company's resources.

"It makes sense for us to make our range. You really have got to concentrate on the PC and Apple markets which

are more lucrative. I don't know how much longer the other formats have got," Pearson commented to CTW.

The selling off of the product ranges has capped something of a burst of activity from the firm. Last month it launched two new products, announced that it would be appointing Frontline as a distributor of its Apple range.



Database's Chris Payne with new AMS spoils

# PA gains all clear

Mirrorsoft has finally resolved the same name wrangle over its latest release *Personal Assistant*.

The firm had received complaints from Fydlar Macro Programming, a Torquay based firm which has a similar information package also called *Personal Assistant*.

Having sought legal advice, Mirrorsoft was assured that Fydlar has no rights over the name due to its descriptive nature, and the firm has subsequently backed down.

In the meantime, Mirrorsoft was keen to stress that these recent problems had in no way diminished the firm's commitment to the product, with the Mirrorsoft's UK sales manager Charles Francis claiming "sales are looking wonderful".

# Spectrum acquires

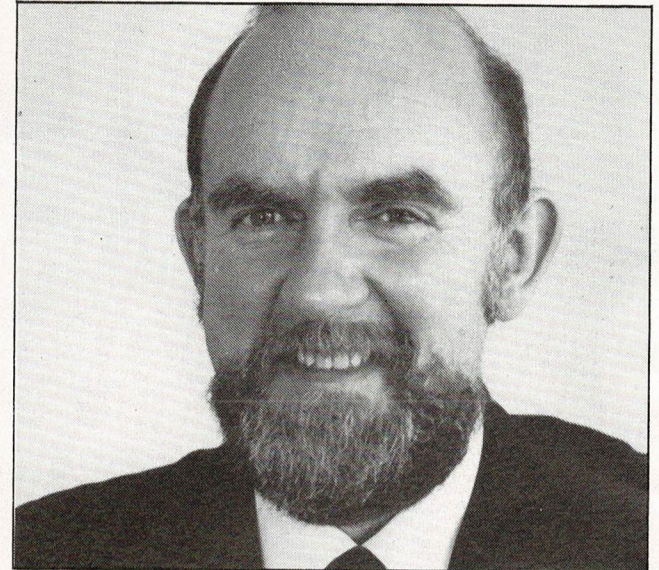
Spectrum Group last week purchased ribbon manufacturer Coralyn for £130,000 cash.

The acquisition was made through Spectrum's newly formed wholly-owned subsidiary Reflex Ribbon Manufacturing.

Reflex will continue to manufacture the Coralyn range of printer ribbons for use in Epson, Star, Brother, Centronics and IBM printers.

In addition to sale to the trade it will also supply to companies within the Spectrum Group.

# Cowley moves base in new PR venture



COWLEY: New firm, same team Database has lost its high profile head of publicity Mike Cowley.

His newly formed firm Cape Cowley Associates will now be handling much of Database's PR - despite the fact that its own PR division is to be retained. It is also pitching to take on Mandarin Software and Microlink, as well as looking to get involved in Database's publishing ventures.

"It's a great opportunity and after seven years I know the industry pretty well. We already have plenty of business and are willing to look after anyone. It's a very exciting time, and obviously it's nice that we've kept in association with Database and the parting has been completely amicable," offered Cowley to CTW.

Database was keen to stress that it has not closed down its in-house PR operation, with the firm currently looking to fill Cowley's shoes, although the role will be much diminished.

"Mike won't be able to do it all himself, he's got off his feet with what he's got already. We're very happy with the set up, we have an ideal relationship. We are looking internally for someone to front the PR side, but a lot of the work will be handled by Mike or the journalists we've got in our different departments," commented Europress chairman Derek Meakin.

Cowley has also poached several of his Database team, with Michelle Haynes acting as account executive, and Andrew Godsall taking on the mantle of account handler.

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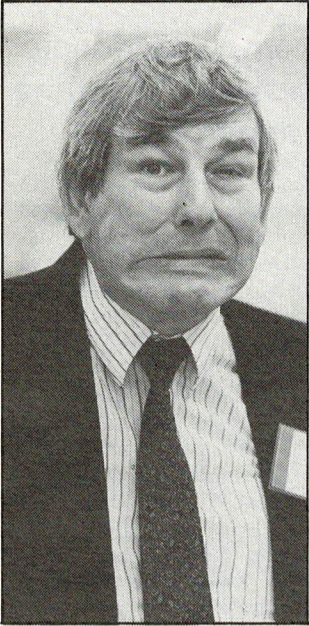
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# SNIPPETS



**MORDECAI:** Court in the act Ex-Amstrad software man Mike Mordecai has at last seen justice done regarding the infamous 'spirit level incident' which took place at Brentwood last year. Mordecai had been attacked by a builder after making it known verbally that he was unhappy about losing crucial data. "What dickhead shut off my computer?" was the actual cry and five stitches in Mordecai's head was the result. Now boss of business software primary distributor AV Marketing, Mordecai was "elated" last week after the offender had been successfully prosecuted at Chelmsford Crown Court. In fact, one Mr. Fred Samuel had to pay a £500 fine — including £250 compensation to Mordecai . . . Even with the last of the Christmas cake finally gone, budget sales have still not recaptured their high levels of before the festive season. **Gallup's** figures for the week ending 18th February show budget leading full price by just a 57/43 per cent ratio . . . **WordPerfect UK** is launching a "buy three get one free" offer for all Apple dealers. The offer opens this week and runs until the end of April . . . Following its acquisition of **Personal Computers**, P&P has now announced the corporate retail outlet's new board of directors. David Southworth (chief executive) and John Atkin (finance director) join from P&P itself, while Mike Sterland (integration director), Stuart Lakey (sales director) and Chris Fabesch (operations director) remain from the days of home rule . . . **Toshiba** has announced that it is to spend \$553.4 million over several years to build a four-megabit DRAM chip plant in Southern Japan. The plant is scheduled to open in April 1991 . . . **Zenith** has introduced its Skyfax Modem into the office automation market. It is a datacom and facsimile modem that resides inside any of the SupersPORT range of laptop computers, and is able to connect into any telephone system in the world . . . **Acorn** is offering a powerful UNIX-based solution for local management of schools that allows close linking of curriculum activities, admin, pupil assessment and training. The system combines Acorn's RISC-based R140 UNIX workstation with management packages SIMS and SCRIPT. Up to 10 UNIX systems will be supplied to LEAs, for £2,695 each . . .

**Compsoft** has expanded its Delta range of products with the launch of a business and presentation package called Delta Five Graphics. It will be available from April 1st and is priced at £295 for the single user and £395 for the Network version . . .

**Research Machines** has launched its Nimbus DeskTop Publisher system. It is a combination of workstation, software, laser printer, that is designed to help businesses produce promotional material and reports. In addition to the

usual machine and software manuals, RM is including a copy of John Miles' *Design for DTP* in the package, to help those who are not trained as graphic artists . . .

Office automation solution **Q-Office-one** has been released for Acorn's new range of UNIX workstations. By porting its software onto Acorn's R140, **Q-Office** hopes to increase its penetration into the UNIX market, particularly in commerce, education and research . . .

**Softklone UK** has appointed Lee Wood as its managing director. He joins from Sony, where he was sales and marketing manager for Videotex products . . .

Following **Logitek Distribution Division's** recent move from Ealing to Slough, the company has now reinforced its service to dealers with the addition of a telesales team. The team will be regularly up-dating dealers with news of the latest products and offers from Logitek, and will be accepting orders directly . . .

**Torus Systems** has announced the availability of a new version of *Tapestry II Lan Manager*, called *Tapestry II Version 1.09*. The starter pack, consisting of an eight station network (six users plus two dedicated servers for the Domain Manager and Lan Manager) retails at £1,995. For users wishing to upgrade, the price is £95 per network . . . Militant UK women's rights group the **National Assembly of Women** has had to concede defeat and turn to a *man* for help. The trouble began when

the company subscribed to electronic mail service MicroLink, but found that it couldn't find a woman able to operate it . . . The results of Context's issue 5 1988 poll of database software sales by volume show that **Sapphire's DataEase** had a 26.2 per cent market share in September, 27.5 per cent in October and 28.9 per cent in November 1988. For the corresponding periods **Ashton-Tate's dBASE III Plus** had a 26.2 per cent, 25 per cent and 19.3 per cent . . .

# REVENGE



# REVENGE





# THE BEST OF BRITISH

With all the US software houses concentrating so heavily on either Nintendo product or enormously complicated 'epic' adventures and simulations has a gap opened up for no messing UK arcade efforts? And if so, what's the best way of getting that product out there? GRAEME KIDD reflects on British publishers' chances these days in the land of opportunity...

Quite clearly, the American market is different to the one we have grown up with over here. Apart from the virtual absence of Sinclair and Amstrad CPC machines and the dominance of Nintendo. American game players are a different breed.

So far as computer games go, complexity of gameplay seems more important than pretty graphics, and up until now, the American computer game player has been much older than his British counterpart. Cinemaware, for instance, found that the British gamer had the quick reactions of youth on his side, and now produces special versions of its titles for the UK market where the player can cope with more of an arcade challenge.

Most of the American consumers that a UK software house will be pitching at are over 20, are prepared to pay a high price for a high value product with a long life, and expect a level of customer support rarely even contemplated in this part of the world.

When American software houses such as MicroProse invest ten man years in developing a complex product and can afford to spend a year play-testing it to make sure all the bugs are removed, much of the British software industry's output looks a bit rushed - slap-

dash even. This has led to a certain smugness on the part of some Americans, who don't believe that European software comes up to their standard.

According to Telecomsoft's Paula Byrne, the CES Show indicated that American software magnates could have been caught napping - a market for cutesy, simple games could well open up in the next couple of years as younger people start demanding fun rather than depth in gameplay. Cheering news for the prospects of UK software houses. Simulation specialist MicroProse, for instance is looking to the UK as a source for quality arcade games.

## Breaking in is hard to do

Breaking into any new market isn't that straightforward, but there are two basic routes across the Atlantic - either you set up shop in America and do everything yourself, or you get into bed with one of the locals and set up licensing deals. Telecomsoft is going for the long-term approach, having set up a Stateside operation - but it seems you can't just ship out a couple of staff members and open for business.

Obviously, the key to being successful lies in understanding the marketplace and get-

ting to know the consumer. Things are different in America, Paula Byrne explains: "Just because we use the same words doesn't mean we speak the same language."

Telecom set up a subsidiary on the East Coast a while ago, staffing it with UK personnel. Last year, the strategy was changed radically - the office was moved to the West Coast, where most American software houses are located, and a quartet of Americans now run Telecomsoft's American operation.

Two people work on the PR and packaging design, one is dedicated to customer service - in America there's ten times the commitment to customer

service according to Byrne - and the fourth member of the team works as a technical marketing support manager, involved in the evaluation and development of titles for the American market.

Rainbird was relaunched by Americans in America last July, and now Telecom is repackaging all its products for the States under the Rainbird label rather than shipping UK stock. The way the American market works means that the on-shelf packaging has to shout its message to the shopper, partly because specialist magazines as we know them in Britain don't have the clout in the USA.

Paula Byrne has two sets of

example packaging on display in her office - American and European. Europeans and Americans are very partisan, according to Byrne: "Whenever I have American visitors, they pick up the American packs and say they're great, then look at the European boxes and rubbish them. Europeans do the same, admiring the UK packs and criticising the American versions".

It's still early days yet, but things are going well for Telecomsoft. "We've had a brilliant response," comments a bullish Byrne, "and we reckon we're the foremost British software house in the States." A number one slot for *Elite*, achieved a few years ago hasn't yet been topped, but the Magnetic Scrolls range of adventures is going down well, along with products such as *Starglider (I and II)*, *Carrier Command*, *UMS*, *Virus*, *Enlightenment*, *Black Lamp* and *Whirligig* - renamed *Space Cutter*. "We're getting Americans to give us a feel for what is needed. In the short term you can make a quick buck by licensing, but if you really want to get in on in the long term, then you have to have American people," Byrne asserts.

## Visiting with royalty

System 3 had the second SUK-produced Number One

hit in America in 1986 with *International Karate* - renamed *World Karate Championship*, and published by Epyx. "We've not had much of a problem selling into America since then - people now bid for System 3 product," System 3 supremo Mark Cale says. He is less convinced of the potential offered by the American market.

According to Cale, a big investment is needed to set up properly in the States and the returns are not necessarily there: "It's best to let the people who know the market handle it. We don't want to set up our own operation; it's a very different market, set in its own ways and you have to go through existing channels - you're better off getting an advance on royalties and a good royalty deal." Nowadays, System 3 goes out on its own label but Activision does the distribution, manufacturing and advertising.

UK software houses have largely missed the American boat, according to Cale, with one exception - Rare Ltd. "Only 17% of the US market is for computer games," Cale explains, "the rest is held by Nintendo. Other than Rare, UK companies don't get a look in to the the Nintendo market. It's now too late to get into 8-bit Nintendo software, and that's the only way to get a serious



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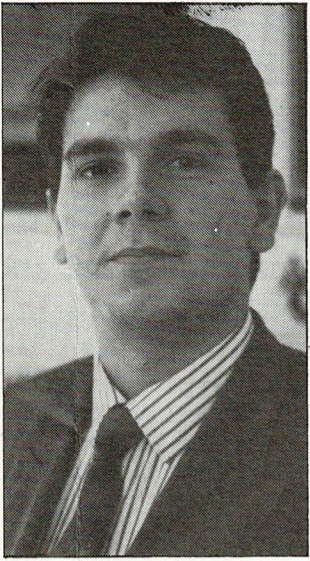
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WILCOX: Not difficult

chunk of the American market. Arguably Rare have made the most money of all UK software houses — not surprisingly, when a Nintendo flop does 250,000 units."

**Flying in with an ally**

On March 15th, the first Hewson arcade title will appear in American shops on the Hewson label, but arriving under the wing of Bill Stealey and MicroProse. Bill Stealey is excited: "I'm into win/win business proposals, and I think it's going to be good for Andrew Hewson and good for us," he enthuses. According to Stealey, few UK products have done well Stateside — "in general, UK products have had modest success, and the few products that have done well tended to be complex, games like *The Pawn* or *Elite*." He reckons the American market for games splits into four quarters. "MicroProse is currently directed at 25% of the market with our complex games, but there's 25% interested in adventures, 25% interested in arcade games and another 25% that buys hot titles."

According to Stealey, the American arcade market is only for top notch games, and Hewson has a reputation for producing some of the best. "Currently we don't address the arcade market, and apart from Hewson we're looking for one or two partners who have arcade games that have a bit more of that initial wrist-busting action," he explains. If Paula Byrne's predictions about the American market are right, Hewson could soon be enjoying considerable success ...

**Softly, softly catchee money**

Elite has already had some very successful titles sold in the States, but so far hasn't been able to reap the benefits. Apparently, contracts Elite signed for the rights to arcade games allowed the licensors to sell Elite's versions in America without paying for the privilege. Ruefully, Steve Wilcox says that some of them have done very well. Elite no longer signs that sort of contract.

With its 'English Living Room' stand at CES, Elite began its softly softly approach to the American market. Epyx published *Battleships* for Elite very recently, and first day shipouts were respectable, but Elite is now looking to fly over America solo.

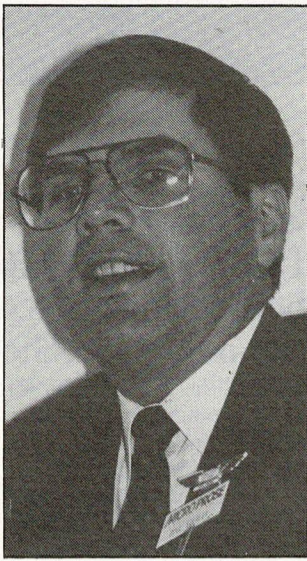
Steve Wilcox explains the strategy: "We have identified 17 or 18 units of product we propose to publish in the US, on the C64, ST and Amiga principally. We're making them compatible with the American NTSC television standard, boxing them, and then with a sales and distribution agent

making presentations to wholesalers and key multiple buyers. It's the same approach we use in Europe."

Elite has been getting PC experience by undertaking contract work for other publishers, and may well start producing PC versions of its titles for the States if take-off is achieved.

Elite is approaching the Americans with caution: "Our sales estimates are conservative — we're assuming our product is not particularly suited, and we're not going to spend an arm and a leg setting things up," Wilcox says.

He's also looking to the Nintendo: "You get the impression if you go over there

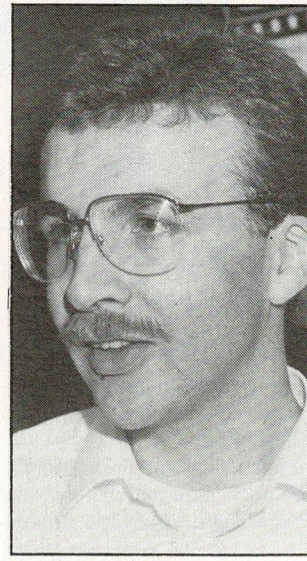


STEALEY: New markets

that if you are not dealing with the 8-bit Nintendo, then you are not addressing the marketplace." Consequently, Elite are placing two products in the States for the Nintendo — a truck racing game is nearly finished, and an original game is under development, but it is too early to tell what will happen.

**Base invaders**

It doesn't look as if the British presence in America is ever likely to mirror the American presence in Britain, where companies such as Activision and Electronic Arts have set up bases and source product from the host country as well as selling software made back

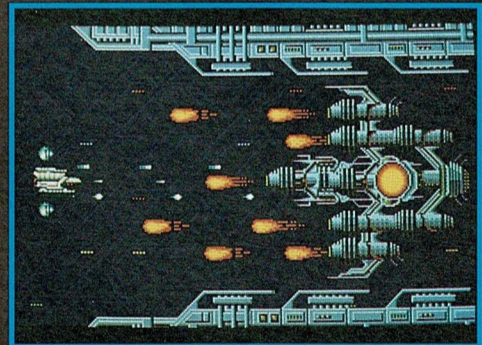
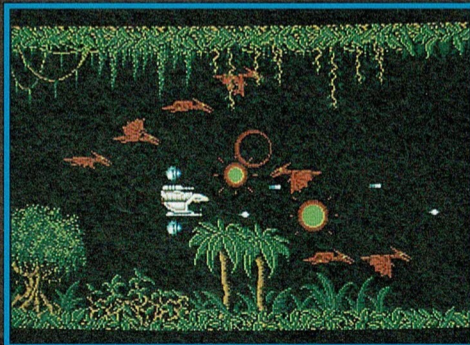
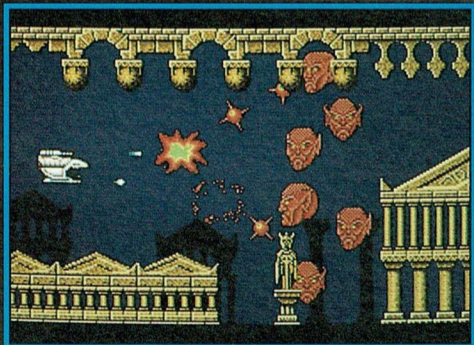


WILCOX: No risks

home.

British programmers, who became expert in writing code for the Spectrum and Amstrad can only earn dollars by producing Commodore 64, Amiga, ST or MSDOS games unless they can get a third party deal with Nintendo, and much of Britain's game design experience is currently irrelevant in the States.

Nevertheless, export earnings are waiting to be made and British software houses are establishing beachheads in the American market. If, as Paula Byrne predicts, the Americans start looking for simpler games that are fun, dollar earnings could rocket over the next couple of years.



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# A POCKETFUL OF POSING?

The DIP Pocket PC has developed from a small firm's 'good idea' into the part property of a brash manufacturing and marketing giant. Re-named the Folio, Atari is already talking about selling half a million units worldwide in the first year. In a rather more sober mood potential dealers offer their own views on the handheld to KELLY BESWICK...

Potentially, the Atari Folio — the much touted pocket PC — could be the perfect peripheral. With over 25 million PCs currently in use the possible market for such a product is colossal.

By this stage most people have heard of it and a few thousand have seen it, with the *Which?* Show heralding its UK launch. Generally reaction has been favourable. There has been slight reservation about the extent of the Folio's IBM compatibility, and whether a

QWERTY keyboard can be easily used on such a small device, but the overall look of the Folio has tended to assuage many sceptics.

It is incredibly compact, or perhaps a less jargonistic description would be tiny.

Indeed, the Folio weighs less than a pound and measures just eight inches by four inches. Yet unlike the Psion Organiser it actually looks like a computer, be it a Lilliputian one.

At £199 it is not exactly an impulse purchase, but cer-

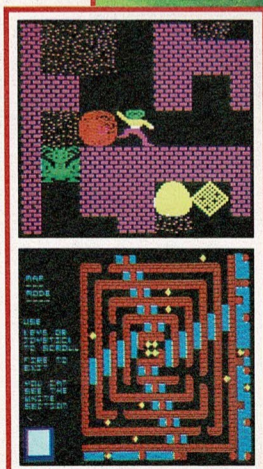
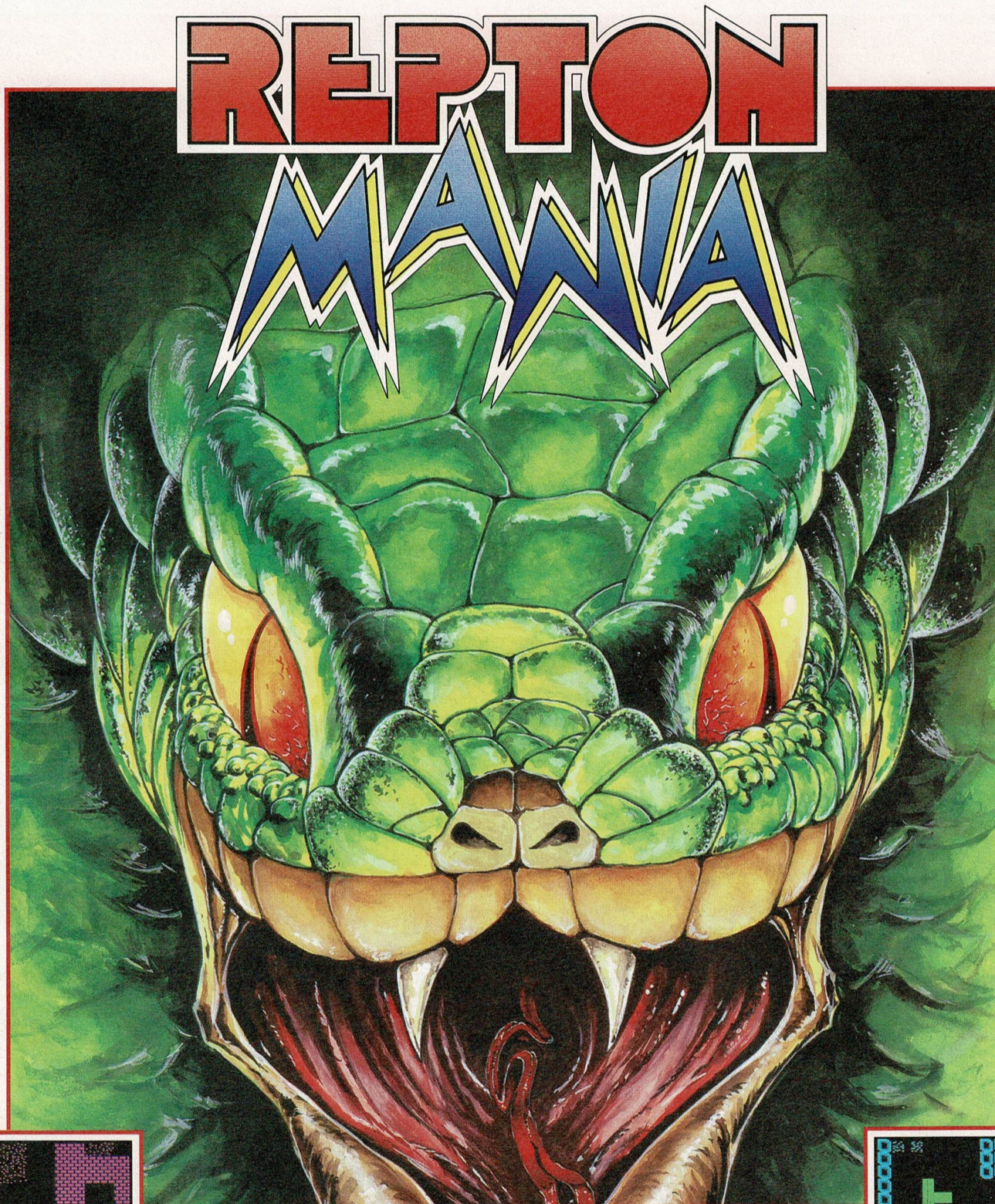
tainly within easy grasp of the businessman, rep, and even the gadget fetishist who discarded his Filofax aeons ago, with the old Psion just not carrying the same kudos as it used to.

It is no fluke that the Folio could be set to take a consider-

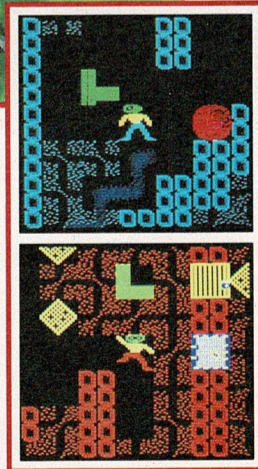
able chunk of the Psion Organiser market. The machine was in fact designed by development house DIP, and guess where two of the firm's founders hailed from? Well it doesn't take the brain of Britain to put two and two together.

## Size of relief

Yet the pocket PC is something of a hybrid concept and with the Folio's IBM compatibility other portables, most notably the Z88, could also come in for a bashing.



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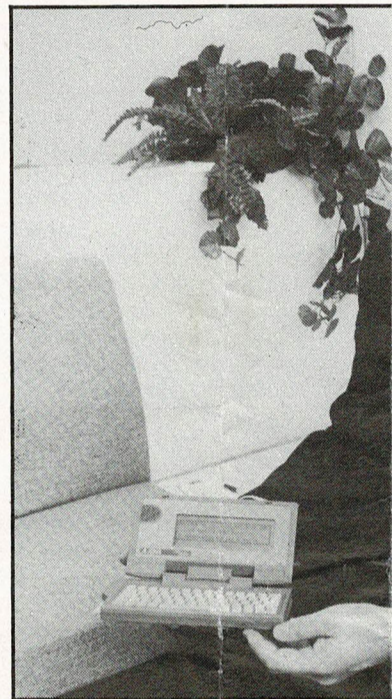
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Atari boss Bob Gleadow shows off his ne...

For Atari the Folio hardly represents a flagship product, and it certainly doesn't fit in with the firm's mainstream range. But if it takes off then it will be a clever little strategy for Atari to get itself better known as an IBM compatible company, and assist in the firm's move into the more coveted business market.

Despite the potential of the Folio, some dealers are concerned that due to its association with Atari, ultimately the business sector will not take it seriously.

"Even now there are prejudices against Atari, and many people still see the name as being synonymous with games machines. This could be damaging for the product, but if it is good then people should overcome those prejudices," offered Gwent based Soft Centre's Dale Bradford.

This view is reiterated by Rob Ross, manager of Computer Plus in Norfolk. "Really they need to prove up front that it is a serious machine. I know that with a lot of my business customers, as soon as you say the word Atari they immediately think you're talking about something gamesy."

This view is really quite ironic, considering that way back in the darker recesses of Psion's history, the firm was churning out games for the Spectrum. Nowadays Psion is keen to keep that skeleton hidden in the cupboard, much preferring the chic yuppie image embodied in the Organiser.



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According to Bill Smith at Falkirk based **Microplus**, it's only really the average person in the street that harbours this outdated view of Atari. "If people are into computers at all then they will know about Atari's range of business machines, and see the pocket PC as a serious product."

Despite some reservations the Folio has caused something of a stir with pundits already predicting the emergence of at least a dozen clones in less time than it takes to say whatever it is you say in these particular circumstances. Atari is already boasting that in its first year shipments of the Folio will exceed 500,000 worldwide, with between 70-80,000 being snapped up in the UK.

The deal between Atari and DIP is such that whilst Atari has exclusive worldwide

Folio, and although I will stock it, it will be with reservations," is the caged view of Ian Agland owner of **Microcare Computing** in Gwent.

So, whilst the majority of dealers are showing interest in the new machine it would appear that for the small independent retailer such products simply do not sell in volume and it is the high street giants who have made a killing on the Organiser.

Colin Hughes of **Transform** in Kent claims that out of the firm's £30,000 turnover a month, the majority comes

from Psion products. But as far as the machine itself is concerned the majority of his customers go to Dixons. "They come to us to buy additional products to add to the machine, because they know that we know what we're talking about."

Hughes did not seem over enamoured with the Folio. "Personally I think it's too small. The QWERTY keyboard is much better suited to an A4 size, and I'm not at all sure about the size of the screen. Also they say it runs MS DOS but for most applica-

tions it would be too small. They're obviously pitching it at the Organiser market, but it doesn't have the add-on pen, bar code reader and a lot of the other extras. It will have to have those things if it's going to compete. If Psion launched a new product I would rather take theirs.

Similar doubts have been voiced by a number of other dealers ranging from: "It looks a bit flimsy" and "I'm not to sure about the memory" to "as long as its a bog standard program there's no problems, but it you run other things there

could be difficulties."

Caution seems to be the key word here. No one is willing to write the Folio off as completely out of hand, but few appear willing to jump in head first, stacking up the pocket PCs for the influx of buyers.

Just who those buyers will be appears to be very diverse. DIP believes rather optimistically that the Folio will appeal to everyone. It certainly has considerable novelty value. According to Mike Smith at **Tomorrow World** in Hull "I think the gadget type people will be interested. As long as it

bleeps and has got fancy buttons they'll buy it for its curiosity value".

Clearly Atari is placing more emphasis right now on its PC3, 4 and 5 business machines - after all, that's where the real money is.

But considering the pages of publicity Atari has gained (including a *Financial Times* front page no less) it probably feels that it has scored on the whole thing already.

All it's got to do now is actually bring the product out - which for Atari always seems the trickiest part of all.



w baby

manufacturing, distribution and marketing rights, in the UK DIP can also market the Folio. Yet whilst this could sound a potential recipe for disaster, the two firms have reached an agreement whereby DIP will be pushing the machine into more specialised niche markets. Indeed, the Folio will be available in special £299 packs containing specific software for use in such areas as engineering and finance. DIP is confident that it will be able to ship 25,000 units by the end of the year.

Yet despite the figures being bandied about, several dealers do not seem at all convinced that there is this vast market out there just waiting to slip the Folio into its suit pocket.

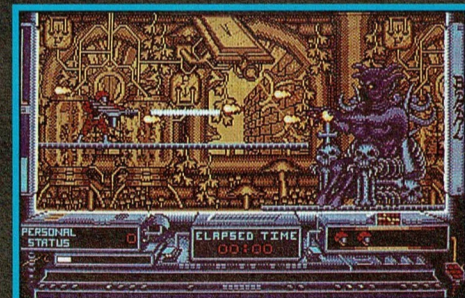
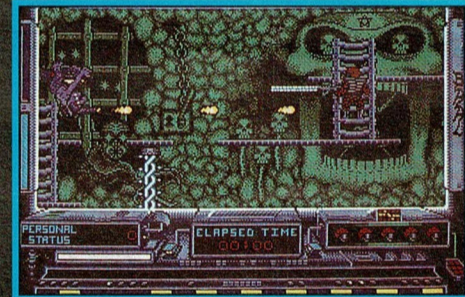
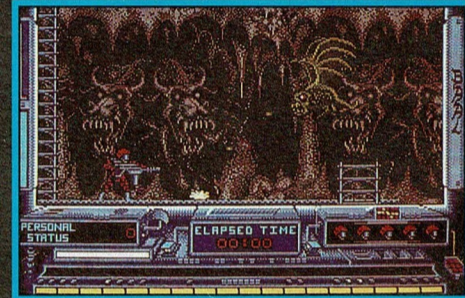
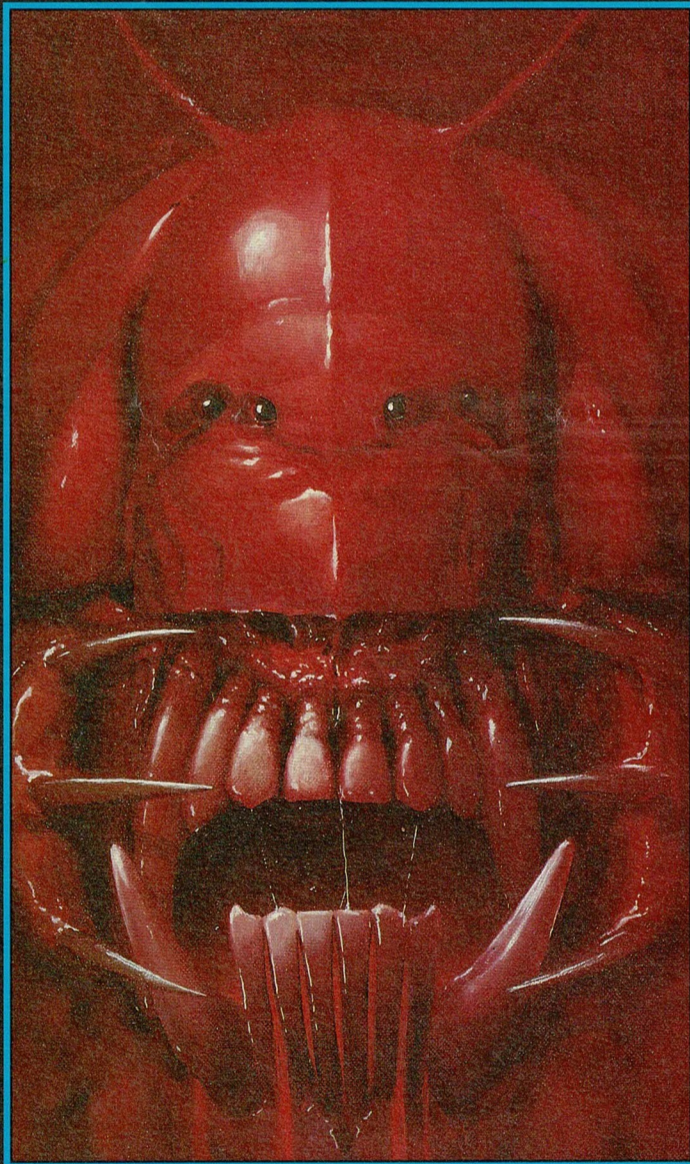
"I really don't think the market is that big for his type of product. If it takes off at all then I would only expect it to be a steady seller. I certainly wouldn't commit myself at the beginning, I'd just take one or two and see if anyone was interested," offered Ross.

**Psion of the times**

Most of the dealers spoken to currently carry the Psion Organiser and very few reported large sales on the product, despite its evident popularity. This appears to have jaded several retailers perceptions of the potential market for the Folio.

"There isn't that big a market for the Psion Organiser, and I think the Z88 market is quite small as well. I don't think it will be made any bigger by the

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# THE FINE ART OF SERVICING

After all its torch bearing US leisure giant Electronic Arts has brought an end to its direct-only supply policy for independents. But the firm insists that this decision does not comprise a U-turn in its overall UK strategy. STUART DINSEY examines the reasons behind the decision and the claim . . .

Nobody likes eating their words — especially multi-million dollar corporations bursting with strategies, research, philosophies, and investment projects.

To the uneducated onlooker it would appear that after the events of the last week or so a certain Trip Hawkins, president of Electronic Arts, has a rather large meal to get through.

“Let’s take a look at the retailers’ perspective. They’re buying a lot of product from wholesalers. They don’t know what the products are, the wholesalers don’t know what the products are and they don’t really care very much . . . it’s hard to get information, it’s hard to get marketing support and it’s hard to get technical questions answered . . . a lot of the packaging isn’t very professional and a lot of the products aren’t good enough quality.”

Hawkins said these words to CTW back in July ’87 — just as EA had decided to set up in the UK, bringing with it a bold new approach of selling direct. It was an approach that had been successful in the US and meant literally millions of pounds of investment in the UK market.

## Pride comes before a . . .

At first there was an air of “we know what we’re doing so you can all go to hell” about the firm’s UK intentions. After all, the firm even refused to supply Boots through Centresoft for a while. But the need for market share wilted this resolution and as the months went by EA gradually found itself supplying Centresoft, TBD and Mastertronic in order to get into the major multiples.

Even last autumn when the candle was being blown out on the cake that marked EA’s first year in Langley, diehards such as Mark Lewis intimated to CTW that his firm felt it could ultimately supply the multiples a better service itself.

But here we are facing the Easter ’89 sales blip and EA has gulped good and hard and swallowed its pride. Centresoft, Microdealer and Leisuresoft have all been offered pro-

duct in what appears to be a three month trial with the natural way of selling in the UK. Gem is just about to sign the dotted line too, and Frontline has been taking product into the business arena for a while already.

Cue then, one unified V-sign from those who felt wronged by Hawkins’ mutterings two

summers ago. But, alas for the EA-bashers, there is no such thing forthcoming (not in public at least).

Leisuresoft boss Ash Taylor and Centresoft managing director Richard Steele had no intention of offering a torrent of ‘told you so’ comments when asked about the EA move.

Instead, views generally coincided with the official EA line of ‘we’ve established ourselves here and now we’ve come to a new stage in our development’. Of course, it would not be in any of the distributors’ interests to start abusing a firm that has just allowed them to sell its products — and herein lies part of

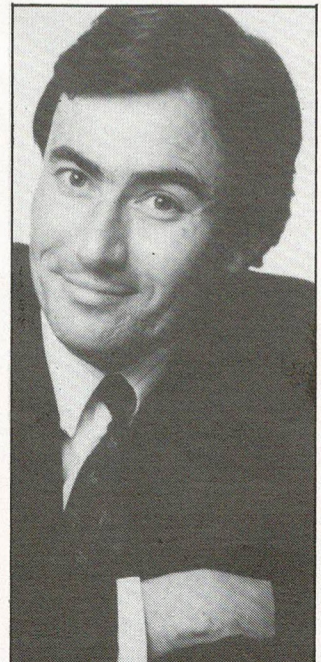
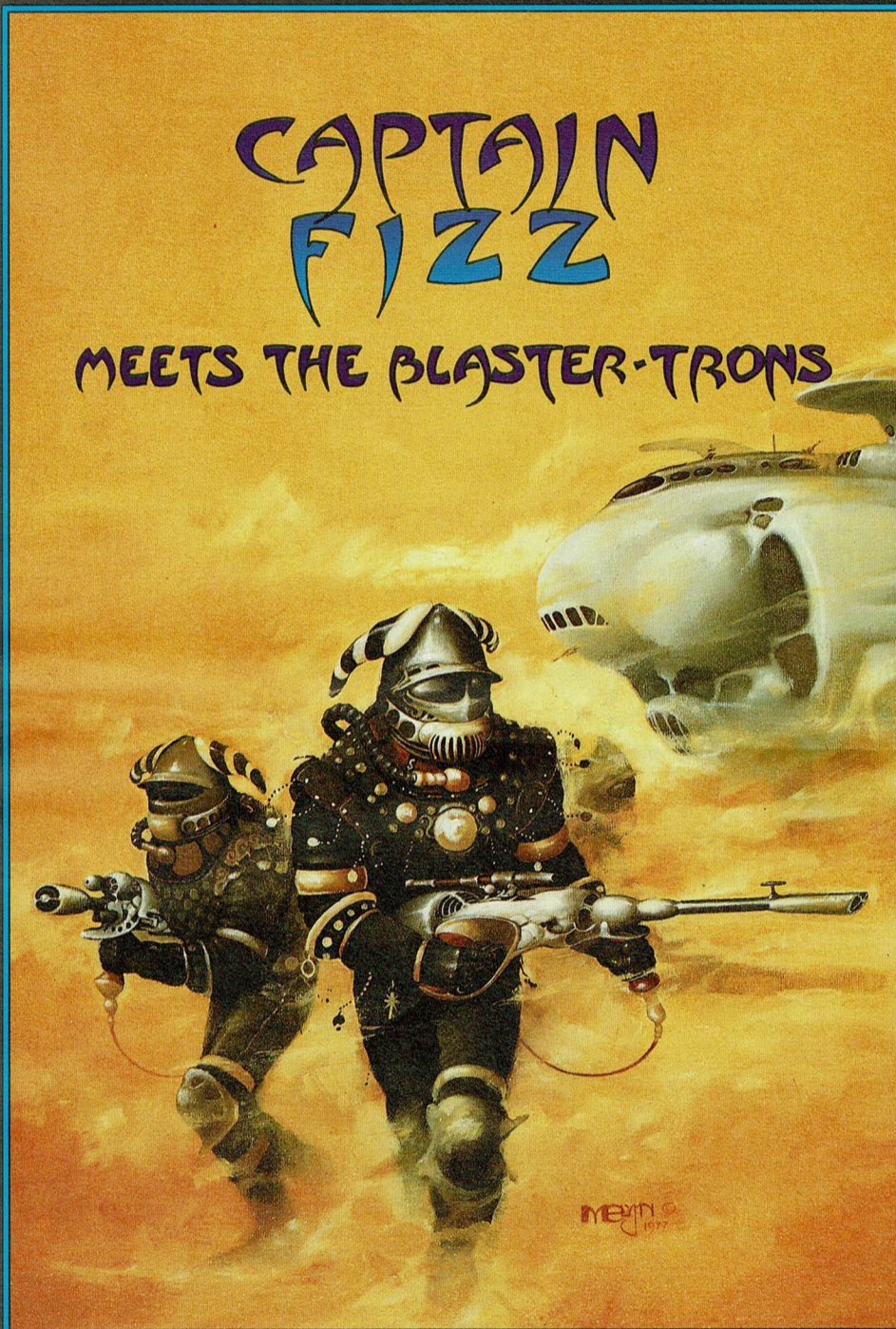
the explanation why ‘U-turn’ has been prohibited from utterance.

## People in glass houses . . .

EA’s shift has come from a number of reasons: retailers simply prefer doing business with as few people as

possible and not one publisher at a time; EA is in desperate need of bolstering its market share — which sits around the one per cent level despite a lot of good product; despite protestations to the contrary EA’s supply service has never really matched that of the major distributors; and, most important-

Continued on page 23



HAWKINS: Tripping up in UK

### CAPTAIN FIZZ Meets The Blaster-Trons The message is simple: co-operate or die!

It's double fun and double trouble all the way in Captain Fizz, the most exciting simultaneous two-player game you and a friend are ever likely to play. It's a whole new world of split-screen, high-speed action, as both of you take on the nasty Blaster-Trons infesting the planet Icarus.

Yup, it's a tough mission alright, but you might just be able to do it if between you you've got the right blend of co-operation, courage, laser-hot reflexes, tactical sense... and brains. The action is fast and furious in Captain Fizz, but if you can't work out the right tactics you'll both be dead meat.

There are 22 levels of savage and relentless action to battle through before you reach your objective, the central computer that's causing the evil infestation. You'll never get there, though, unless you put your heads together and co-operate; your buddy can't do it on his own, and neither can you. This is one program where even the easy games are hard. So remember — united you stand, but divided you fall...

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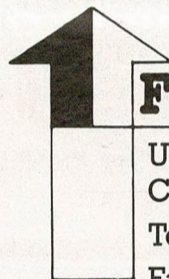
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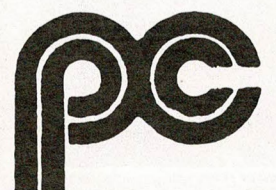
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# SPRINGTIME FOR COMMS SALES: FAX NOT FICTION

The fax card market is already starting to take off and looks set for massive growth over the next couple of years. OLIVER TUCKER runs through the advantages and disadvantages of this form of communication, predicts forthcoming developments and, overall, paints a rather rosy picture . . .

Facsimile has now replaced telex, electronic mail and even the mail service as the preferred business communications medium. Particularly when speed of communication, the ability to broadcast information to many users, or security is of the essence.

It's no surprise therefore that facsimile has been successfully integrated with the PC, the most common tool in today's modern office.

Fax on a card is growing in popularity not only because it provides greater functionality and is considerably cheaper than conventional fax but also because person to person communication is clearly the fastest growing application for PC users.

The whole market for PC fax has mushroomed from a niche market dominated by a few manufacturers, to one with over five million users, a number of BABT approved suppliers and many more non-approved suppliers.

The UK PC fax market is currently worth about £13 million per year and the LAN fax card market could be worth as much as £30 million per year - not to mention the opportunities offered by 1992 and the European single market.

With new products, new features, new technology and price cuts being introduced at a rapid rate end-users and dealers now have a lot more to come to terms with.

In addition the emergence of new standards for communications, particularly electronics data interchange (EDI) is having an accelerating influence on the sales of PC fax cards. In fact, it promises to be possibly the biggest market growth that the computer industry has ever seen, and one for which dealers and end-users will not have to wait too long.

EDI will see the advent of an integrated communications server or workstation actually inside the PC, which will handle telex, fax, asynchronous communications and X.25 communications.

## Message in a bottleneck

The fundamental problem with conventional fax is that it creates a bottleneck for communications. A dedicated fax machine can be likened to 'a hole in the wall' through which all messages have to be passed. If there is only one fax machine on one telephone line then everybody will have to queue to send messages.

Fax on a card however has brought facsimile into the realms of every PC user and the development of cards for local area networks has further reduced the size of the 'hole in the wall' problem.

PC fax has many more advantages over conventional fax, for example there is con-

venience, security and cost. A user can also eliminate the production process of a docu-

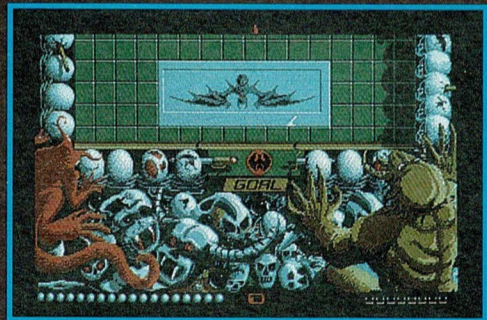
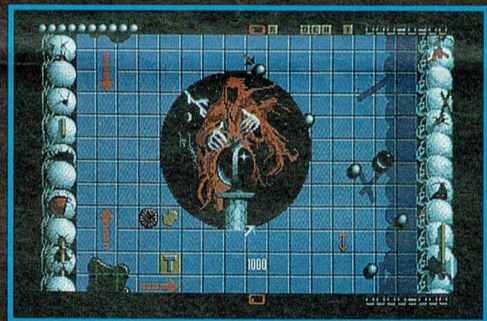
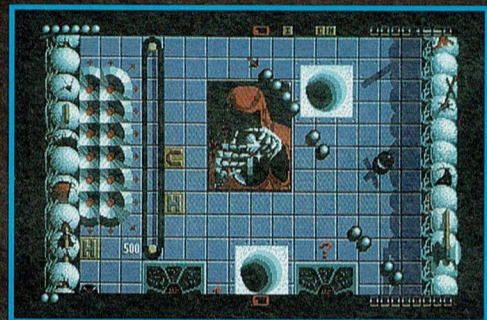
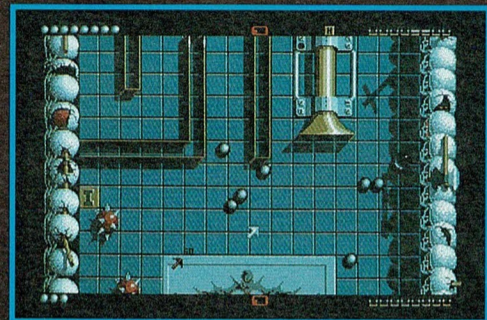
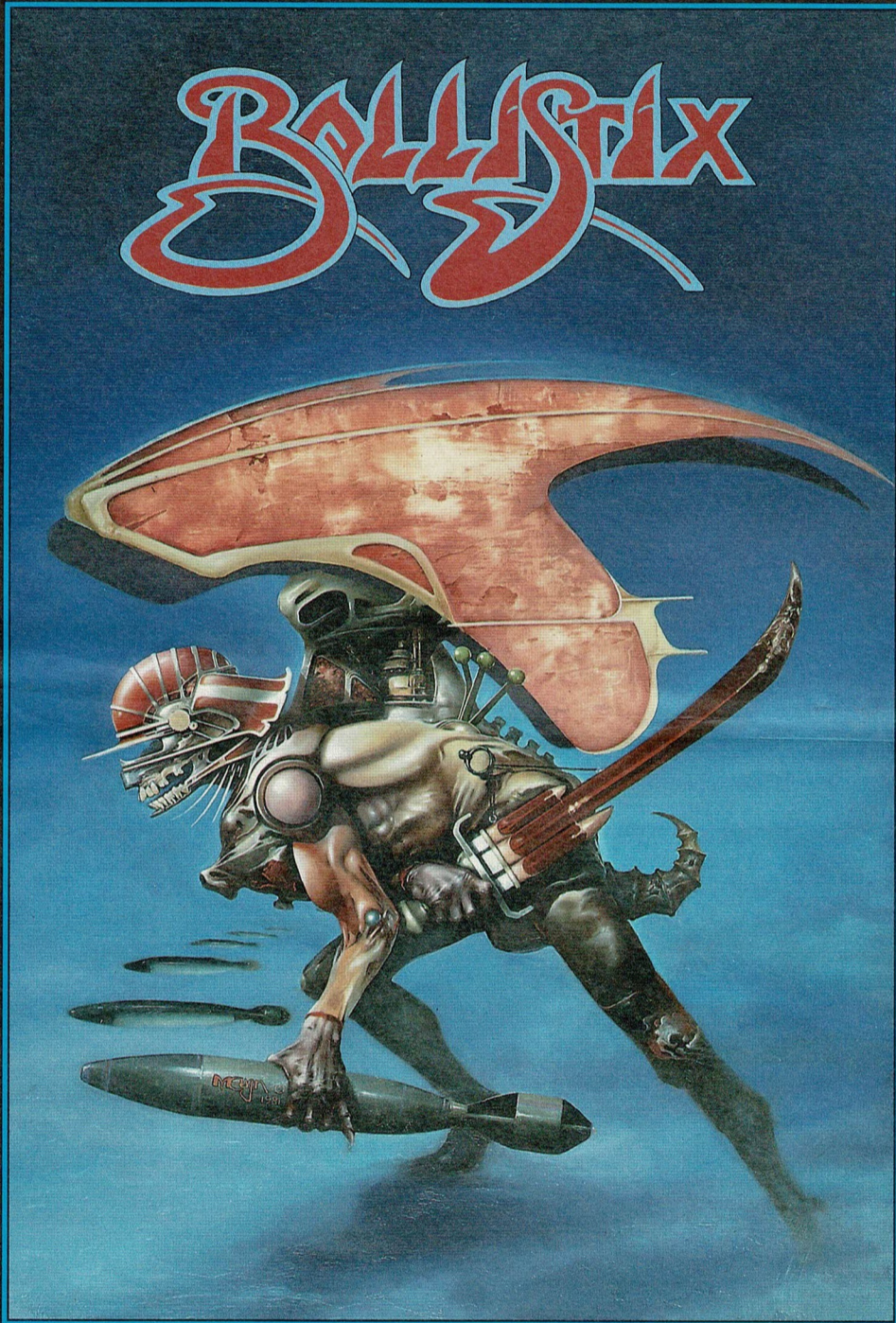
ment by sending information straight from the screen of the PC. This also increases image

quality as there are no scanner deficiencies. In addition, background options allow the user

to get on with something else while the PC is receiving or sending a fax.

Other less obvious advantages include providing infor-

Continued on page 23



### BALLISTIX Its a whole new ball game!

Sick of silly old soccer? Tired of pathetic pinball? Then you need a dose of *Ballistix* - the fastest, wackiest, toughest ball game yet to appear on a computer. *Ballistix* just explodes with excitement, puzzles and an amazing 130 different screens of frenetic action.

The aim of the game is simple; score more goals than your opponent to win the match. Doing it is a different matter as **splitters** fill the screen with dozens of balls, **tunnels** hide them from view, **bumpers** bounce balls all over the show, fiendish **red arrows** speed them up to almost impossible velocity, **magnets** pull them away from your control, and much, much more.

*Ballistix* is incredibly flexible, too. You can play against the computer or another player, set the speed if you can't stand the pace, define where the balls are fired and their velocity, rack up bonuses that will get you extra goals and then, at the end of an exhausting game, set your name in pride of place on the high-score table. And it's all played to the accompaniment of a throbbing sound-track and a crowd that applauds your every goal.

*Ballistix* is definitely not a game for wimps. It's tough, fast, challenging and incredibly competitive - in fact, it's just the kind of game you like.

Two joysticks required for two-player game

ATARI ST/AMIGA - £19.95

Screen shots taken from the Amiga version.

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# The Release Schedule

Software information Services

13/3/89  
WEEK 10

New leisure software

A vital reference to new and forthcoming software, expected release dates and prices. Updated weekly.

## AMIGA

AFTERBURNER	.....24.99	IMMINENT	ACTIVISION
ALIEN LEGION	.....24.99	MID MARCH	GAINSTAR
ARTURA	.....19.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
BALANCE OF POWER 1990	.....24.99	MARCH 16	MINDSCAPE
BARBARIAN II	.....19.99	APRIL	PALACE
BLASTEROIDS	.....24.99	MARCH 21	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL	.....19.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
COSMIC PIRATE	.....19.99	IMMINENT	OUTLAW
CRAZY CARS II	.....24.99	MARCH 21	TITUS
D.N.A. WARRIOR	.....19.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION	.....19.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
DENARIS	.....19.99	IMMINENT	RAINBOW ARTS
DRAGON NINJA	.....24.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
DRAGONScape	.....19.95	MARCH 14	SOFTWARE HORIZONS
DUGGER	.....19.95	OUT NOW	LINEL
FUN SCHOOL 2	.....19.95	MARCH 15	DATABASE
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	.....19.99	APRIL	GREMLIN
LORDS OF THE RISING SUN	.....29.99	APRIL	CINEMAWARE
OPERATION NEPTUNE	.....24.95	IMMINENT	INFOGRAMES
R-TYPE	.....24.99	MARCH 22	ELECTRIC DREAMS
RAIDER	.....19.99	IMMINENT	IMPRESSIONS
ROBOCOP	.....24.95	EASTER	OCEAN
SHOOT-EM-UP			
CONSTRUCTION KIT	.....24.99	MARCH	OUTLAW
STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER	.....19.99	IMMINENT	CDS
TECH	.....19.99	IMMINENT	GAINSTAR
THE CHAMP	.....24.95	EARLY MARCH	LINEL
TRIAD	.....29.99	OUT NOW	MIRRORSOFT
VIRUS INFECTION PROTECTION	.....29.99	OUT NOW	DISCOVERY
WEC LE MANS	.....24.95	EASTER	IMAGINE

## AMSTRAD CPC

BARBARIAN II	.....D 14.99	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BARBARIAN II	.....T 9.99	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BLASTEROIDS	.....D 12.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
BLASTEROIDS	.....T 9.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL	.....D 14.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
BUTCHER HILL	.....T 9.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	.....D 14.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	.....T 9.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	.....D 14.99	IMMINENT	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....D 14.95	APRIL	EXXOS
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....T 9.95	APRIL	EXXOS
THE NATIONAL	.....T 9.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
WEC LE MANS	.....D 14.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
WEC LE MANS	.....T 9.95	EASTER	IMAGINE

## AMSTRAD PCW

MINI OFFICE PROFESSIONAL PLUS	.....49.95	MARCH 21	DATABASE
SPELLING CHECKER & THESAURUS	.....24.95	MARCH 21	DATABASE

## MACINTOSH

BALANCE OF POWER 1990	.....29.99	IMMINENT	MINDSCAPE
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## COMMODORE 64/128

ACTION SERVICE	.....D 14.95	IMMINENT	COBRA/INFOGRAMES
ACTION SERVICE	.....T 9.95	IMMINENT	COBRA/INFOGRAMES
BLASTEROIDS	.....D 12.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
BLASTEROIDS	.....T 9.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL	.....D 14.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
BUTCHER HILL	.....T 9.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
D.N.A. WARRIOR	.....D 14.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
D.N.A. WARRIOR	.....T 9.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION	.....D 14.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	.....T 9.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
DENARIS	.....D 14.99	OUT NOW	RAINBOW ARTS
DENARIS	.....T 9.99	OUT NOW	RAINBOW ARTS
FINAL FRONTIER	.....D 17.99	MARCH 23	PSS
FINAL FRONTIER	.....T 12.99	MARCH 23	PSS
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	.....D 14.99	IMMINENT	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	.....T 9.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....D 14.95	APRIL	EXXOS
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....T 9.95	APRIL	EXXOS
SOCCER Q	.....T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES

## BBC & ELECTRON

GALAFORCE	.....T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
RAVENSKULL	.....T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
REPTON 2	.....T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
THRUST	.....T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON

## ATARI ST

ALIEN LEGION	.....24.99	LATE MARCH	GAINSTAR
BALANCE OF POWER 1990	.....24.99	APRIL 6	MINDSCAPE
BIO CHALLENGE	.....19.99	MARCH/APRIL	DELPHINE/PALACE
BLASTEROIDS	.....24.99	MARCH 21	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL	.....19.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
CHAOS STRIKES BACK	.....14.99	LATE APRIL	MIRRORSOFT/FTL
COSMIC PIRATE	.....19.99	IMMINENT	OUTLAW
DARK FUSION	.....19.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
DRAGON NINJA	.....19.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
DUGGER	.....19.95	OUT NOW	LINEL
F-16 COMBAT PILOT	.....24.95	IMMINENT	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FUN SCHOOL 2	.....19.95	MARCH 15	DATABASE
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	.....19.99	APRIL	GREMLIN
GRIDRUNNER	.....9.95	LATE MARCH	LLAMASOFT
MINI OFFICE PRO.			
COMMUNICATIONS	.....24.95	OUT NOW	DATABASE
MINI OFFICE PRO. SPREADSHEET	.....24.95	OUT NOW	DATABASE
OPERATION NEPTUNE	.....24.95	IMMINENT	INFOGRAMES
ROBOCOP	.....19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
ROY OF THE ROVERS	.....19.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER	.....19.99	IMMINENT	CDS
STOS COMPILER	.....19.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS MAESTRO	.....24.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS MAESTRO PLUS (INC. HARDWARE)	.....69.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS SPRITES 600	.....14.95	MARCH 28	MANDARIN
TECH	.....19.99	EARLY APRIL	GAINSTAR
THUNDERWING	.....19.95	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
WEC LE MANS	.....19.95	EASTER	IMAGINE

## IBM & COMPATIBLES

ABRAMS BATTLE TANK	3.5+5.25	24.99	MID MARCH	ELECTRONIC ARTS
BALANCE OF POWER 1990	...5.25	24.99	IMMINENT	MINDSCAPE
BARBARIAN - ULTIMATE WARRIOR	.....5.25	TBA	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BATMAN - THE CAPED CRUSADER	.....5.25	19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
BILLIARDS	.....5.25	19.95	IMMINENT	ERE/INFOGRAMES
CRAZY CARS II	.....5.25	24.99	EARLY APRIL	TITUS
DRAGON NINJA	.....5.25	19.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
F-16 COMBAT PILOT (EGA)	...5.25	24.95	IMMINENT	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FINAL FRONTIER	.....3.5+5.25	24.99	MARCH 23	PSS
LOMBARD RAC RALLY (CGA+EGA)	.....5.25	24.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
OPERATION NEPTUNE	.....5.25	24.95	LATE MARCH	INFOGRAMES
ROBOCOP	.....5.25	19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
SINBAD	.....5.25	29.99	APRIL	CINEMAWARE
TECHNOCOP	.....5.25	19.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN

## MSX

BLASTEROIDS	.....T 9.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
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## SPECTRUM

BLASTEROIDS	.....T 9.99	MARCH 22	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL	.....T 7.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
CAPTAIN BLOOD	.....T 9.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
CUP FOOTBALL	.....T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
D.N.A. WARRIOR	.....T 9.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION	.....T 7.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	...T 7.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....T 9.95	APRIL	EXXOS
SOCCER Q	.....T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
SOCCER STAR	.....T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
THE NATIONAL	.....T 9.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES

## SPECTRUM+3

BUTCHER HILL	.....D 12.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	.....D 12.99	END MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	...D 12.99	IMMINENT	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY	.....D 14.95	APRIL	EXXOS

*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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# GAMES GROWING AT LEISURE

Even with the existence of the Sinclair PC200 and the steady increase in numbers of PC games, the wait for a PC leisure explosion drags on. In fact, JEFFREY DAVEY reflects that even a slight rumble would be welcome . . .

Asked to name software used on a PC, titles like *Lotus 1-2-3* or *Fleet Street Editor* effortlessly roll off the tongue - titles such as *Double Dragon* or *Airborne Ranger* are often forgotten despite the September '88 launch of the Amstrad PC200, clearly tagged for games use and plummeting PC prices. There is little argument that the market for PC leisure software has failed to grow as fast as some expected - and that seems largely down to the software companies.

Companies such as Electronic Arts and MicroProse are pushing out PC releases before they start to dream of the Spectrum or CPC versions since in America (so it's said), if you don't deal in the PC market, you might as well wave goodbye to thousands of dollars. Even ambitious games such as *Battle Chess* - which relies on graphics for its appeal as much as the tough game of chess it plays - have been released on the PC.

Advocates of the machine point to its large user base of business people and, presumably, their playful offspring. They also point to the fact that there is no argument about graphics quality - once companies take the EGA initiative, the PC's games can excel and at the VGA and MCGA stages, they blow the competition away.

So, what's stopping UK software companies? It seems to boil down to an apparent misconception that PC users don't want games. Virgin disagrees and is "very happy" at having seized the initiative, shipping out over 5,000 copies of PC *Double Dragon*. The ST and Amiga sales are many times that but it shows that there is a definite market with potential.

Mirrorsoft too has got its finger out with PC versions of *Rocket Ranger* and *Speedball*. Its main reason is the huge American market but both are apparently doing well in the UK. In future, says Mirrorsoft, there will be a "strong commitment" to PC versions - even of arcade conversions such as *Blasteroids*.

Mirrorsoft has a particular market in mind at which to aim its sales effort . . .

Imagine the scene, after a hard morning buying low and selling high, the stockbroker yuppies of The City sit down at their PCs and engage in some mindless blasting of aliens or the odd flight simulation. This is the PC games player - the "Spectrum owner of five years ago that grew up". These people want more mature games, strategy games, flight simulations, games that make you think.

Mirrorsoft reckons that it has hit a certain amount of "resistance". In America, companies have got over this and 30 to 40 year olds purportedly slump in front of their PCs and play games as much as their

kids. In the UK, this wall of negative opinion remains - computer games are for kids - PCs are for work.

Personally, I hope that companies can get through this wall - an increase in sales in PC games will surely lead to more

people taking the machine seriously as a leisure format and churning out versions of most games for the format. It will be at this point that great advances can be made - a lost opportunity if not.

The future of the mass PC

games market holds - according to many people - marvels that would make Amiga owners gasp and cause people to liken the C64 to a pocket calculator. Virgin sees the MCGA graphics format as the future. Never dreamed of graphical wizardry will be coming our way.

If this is true, then the PC will finally take its rightful place next to the Amiga and ST as a machine for leisure software.

But don't hold your breath - not for the moment anyway.



PC200: Not setting the leisure world on fire

**WATCH OUT FOR A MAJOR NEW RELEASE  
FROM PSYGNOSIS**

**BLOOD MONEY**

**IT'S THE ULTIMATE ARCADE GAME**





# ALLFORMATSTOP40

TW	LW	WK	Title	Publisher	Formats
1	1	54	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AT MS
2	4	11	ROBOCOP	OCEAN	SP CD AM
3	2	3	WEREWOLF OF LONDON	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM
4	5	12	KNIGHTMARE	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM MS ST
5	3	5	TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
6	7	21	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	SP CD AM BB EL C1 ST AG
7	9	5	BMX FREESTYLE	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
3	6	6	INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
9	11	13	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	SP CD AM ST AG
12	10	2	DRAGON NINJA	OCEAN	SP CD AM
20	15	59	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AG
33	22	16	FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR	KIXX	SP CD AM BB EL C1 AT MS
21	9	12	AFTER BURNER	ACTIVISION	SP CD AM ST
14	RE	1	EMLYN HUGHES		
			INTERNATIONAL SOCCER	AUDIOGENIC	SP CD
15	19	19	ADVANCED PINBALL		
			SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
16	RE	11	THUNDER BLADE	US GOLD	SP CO AM
17	RE	1	FALCON	MIRRORSOFT	ST AG
18	12	5	SAS COMBAT	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
19	34	16	COMMANDO	ENCORE	SP CD AM BB EL C1
20	16	15	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY		
			SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
21	32	2	WEC LE MANS	IMAGINE	SP CD AM ST AG
22	15	62	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
22	20	61	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
23	18	5	BACK TO SCHOOL	ALTERNATIVE	SP
24	25	3	WORLD GAMES	KIXX	SP CD AM MS ST AG
25	14	6	BIG FOOT	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
26	40	14	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	SP CD ST AG
27	27	12	ACE 2	CASCADE	SP CD AM C1
28	30	5	WHO DARES WINS 2	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM BB C1 AT MS
29	17	26	GAUNTLET	KIXX	SP CD AM AT MS ST
30	36	8	THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
31	13	39	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM AT
32	RE	1	FUN SCHOOL 2	DATABASE	SP CD AM FE
33	35	3	STREET GANG	PLAYERS	SP CD AM
34	RE	30	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	SP CD AM ST AG
35	23	25	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	SP CD AM C1 ST AG
36	38	3	THE DOUBLE	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD
37	RE	9	JET SET WILLY	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD
38	39	11	LEADERBOARD	KIXX	SP CD AM AT ST AG
39	29	35	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
40	22	2	DEATH STALKER	CODE MASTERS	SP AM

## SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

Publisher	Units sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
MASTERTRONIC	13.6	17.0	15.0	15.0
CODE MASTERS	13.5	16.6	13.1	15.2
ALTERNATIVE	10.5	11.0	12.0	7.6
OCEAN	7.1	6.3	6.3	7.7
FIREBIRD	6.3	7.8	7.0	5.5
KIXX	5.5	5.1	5.2	3.2
PLAYERS	4.5	4.2	3.5	3.3
US GOLD	4.4	2.7	4.0	3.2
ENCORE	3.1	3.4	3.2	3.5
MIRRORSOFT	1.8	1.0	1.7	1.3
BUGBYTE	1.6	1.0	3.0	1.1
DATABASE	1.6	0.8	1.2	1.1
ACTIVISION	1.4	1.4	2.5	1.8
CASCADE	1.4	1.5	2.2	2.8
MELBOURNE HOUSE	1.4	1.1	1.1	3.0
ATLANTIS	1.3	1.3	1.0	—
AUDIOGENICS	1.1	1.4	1.1	3.0
IMAGINE	1.1	1.0	—	—
ZEPPELIN	1.1	1.0	1.2	—
SEGA	1.0	0.7	1.8	1.5
ADDICTIVE	0.9	0.6	0.7	0.9
BLUE RIBBON	0.8	0.9	—	1.2
MICROPROSE	0.8	0.7	0.9	1.3
ELECTRONIC ARTS	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.9
CULT	0.6	0.7	—	—

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	41.5	40.4	38.9	42.3	28.8	25.8	26.4	27.2
COMMODORE 64	20.7	19.3	19.6	23.3	21.6	21.6	21.5	24.3
AMSTRAD	19.2	21.0	19.7	16.3	17.3	18.8	18.8	17.8
AMIGA	4.8	3.7	4.1	2.9	6.1	5.9	6.4	5.5
ATARI ST	1.1	2.0	6.0	7.7	8.0	8.0	8.4	7.9
ATARI	3.0	5.0	4.9	1.1	6.0	6.3	5.9	3.3
BBC	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	2.3	3.5	3.2	3.7

## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
74	111	101	141

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 February 25th 1989.

# 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.

## BALANCE OF POWER

THE 1990 EDITION



**△ IMAGEWORKS:** *Blasteroids* (AmC64SpMSXAg—£9.99-£24.99) A coin-op conversion from the Mirrorsoft crew which bares more than a passing resemblance to original arcade smash *Asteroids* — a game which was so beautifully simple it just had to succeed. Hopefully this new version won't be so cluttered as to lose that most vital quality.

**△ MICRODEAL:** *Goldrunner II* (Ag—£19.95) With the earth apparently dead, mankind has taken refuge on some God forsaken planet which bears a ghastly resemblance to a new town shopping precinct

and is constantly under threat from something or other. The idea is to prevent the human race's "permanent death" — as opposed to a temporary death one imagines.

**△ MINDSCAPE:** *Balance of Power* (PC—£24.95) With its UK operation now firmly in place Mindscape should be in a good position to capitalise on this updated version of its well respected strategic simulation. The main things that seem to have changed are the names with a few new scenarios thrown in for good measure.

**△ MELBOURNE HOUSE:** *War in Middle Earth* (PCApSTAg—

£19.99-£24.99) Four more versions of a game that contains everything you would expect an adventure based on the Tolkien epic to contain — unfortunately.

**△ MICRODEAL:** *Time Bandit* (PC—£24.95). Alas this has nothing to do with that fine film of very nearly the same name.

The packaging announces that "all of space is your garden and all of time is yours for the harvest", well quite possibly, but the game just seems to be a standard arcade adventure on an unpopular UK format.

**△ CODE MASTERS:** *Rock Star (ate my hamster)* (Sp—£9.99) Full price effort from the busy budgeteers which involves the managing of a rock group. In choosing the rock stars available those Coders have really surpassed themselves. Some people said they had no sense of humour but with names like Dorrisey and Michael Gorge (Morrisey and George Michael — geddit?) there is now no doubting the issue.

Laugh? I nearly forgot.

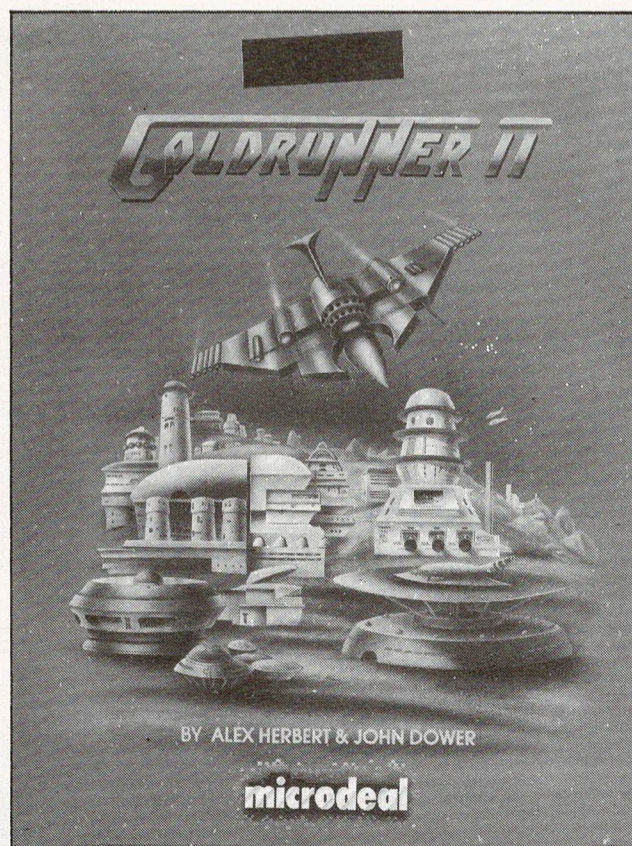
**△ DATABASE EDISOFT:** *Fun School II* (STAg—£19.95) Now this is more like it. Eight games for the under sixes here with such classics as *Find the Mole*, *Teddy Count* and *Colour Train* included.

And who could forget the seminal *Shape Snap* and *Teddy Bears Picnic*. Your *Sinclair* readers may find the humour a tad sophisticated, but otherwise a great little education package.

**△ HEWSON:** *Eliminator* (Sp—£9.99-£14.99) Standard shoot 'em up from Hewson involving some incredibly destructive machine shooting just about everything in sight.

**△ WHITE PANTHER:** *Infinity* (BBC—£9.99-£14.99) New label which is apparently driven by "the arrogance of youth" and "thrusts of genius". Sounds intriguing but the product seems to be just another arcade adventure. Beeb people are apparently getting a bit excited about it but then they would.

**△ KIXX:** *Super Cycle* (SpC64Am—£2.99) Re-release of an old Epyx smash of '86 from the US Gold budgeteers. Undoubtedly it has been superseded by a few bike racing titles since then, but at £2.99 it seems destined to be a hit all over again.



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



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**SPEAKEASY**

**SPEAKEASY**

# A notion of shopkeepers

And anyway, we've also sold lots of Commodore 64's (see Miles Better Software letter *CTW* Jan. 89). Can I suggest the following policy on receiving stock from your distributor.

1) Always fully tighten the head alignment screw on the C2N. We frequently find this is never completely screwed in, after all what are screws for if they're not for tightening.

2) Lubricate well all rubber surfaces in the tape deck. 3 in 1 is good, it eliminates that awful squeak when a tape has fully rewound and somebody forgets to press the stop key.

3) Switch the power switch on and off very rapidly for about ten seconds. This ensures the contacts are bedded in properly. The transformer must be plugged in to the computer and the mains supply must be on.

4) If the computer then fails to produce the familiar blue screen after this with the power still connected, and computer switched on, transfer the power lead to the 'video' socket (I assure it fits perfectly) and leave for a couple of hours.

5) ALWAYS use dry foam (never water) to extinguish a burning C64.

6) To promote the long life of your C64, always tell your customers to constantly plug and unplug the C2N whilst powered on. This must not be attempted within the guarantee period.

7) Connect the loose earthing tag on the C2N to a really good earthing point, such as a lighting conductor.

8) There is no eight.

9) Er!

10) That's it.

Having read the amusing letter of Dale Bradford (I can't compete with his wit) *CTW* issue 226 and previous C64 critics, we too can endorse the failure rate. We came out remarkably well, due to a good spread between complaints, and the 'we can make one good one out of four bad' syndrome.

When somebody like Commodore have the success they have had, they should know

better. Most faults derive from badly aligned C2Ns or the C2N loose earth wire shorting the computer's internal fuse. (You can't change the fuse because of the warranty seal).

After all why should we attempt basic service (ie remove or strap back the unwanted wire) when Commodore removed serviceability. All said and done, the AMIGA reliability which was 'doubtful' in the early days, shone with pride over Christmas (We did have our problems but QC has undoubtedly improved).

This letter is not intended to be defamatory to Commodore, but simply to reinforce the general consensus of opinion of a very high percentage failure rate.

**Yours faithfully**  
**Alan May**  
**Mays Computer Centre**  
**Leicester**

I was relieved to read in your column that other retailers were also experiencing problems with failure rates on C64s and that we were not, as we had been told, the "only ones".

I have been surprised, however, that all the letters seem only to refer to the C64. The Amiga has been selling through quite strongly, but between the loading problems (drives or compatibility?) and the failure rate of the new lightweight power supply Amiga returns have here been running a (very) close second to C64's.

Has the C64 problem simply overshadowed Amiga failures in people's minds or are we possibly genuinely the "only ones" this time?

**Alan Burroughs**  
**Slough Computers**  
**Slough**  
**Berks**

Re the problem of C64 faults. We are a small retailer and I moved a number of C64 computers at Xmas, my failure rate was approximately 40 per cent. I agree with Vic Purnell and all the letters sent in to *CTW* regarding this problem.

One of my wholesalers in Glasgow has hundreds if not more of C64s and Amigas etc. He has been told apparently this fault only applied to a consignment sent to us in Scotland and there were no faulties anywhere else—obviously not true. I had to break packs and change units to keep my customers happy.

I've never heard of such a failure rate, normal quality control allows for a two per cent failure rate not 50 per cent. I'd say this is a disgrace and something has to be done as smaller outfits like me are left overstocked while we await new deliveries. When they come in we can't sell them as it's then after Christmas, so they're left on our shelves.

I recommended all our customers to go for C64s as there wasn't enough Spectrums to go around and I had more bother than I could handle. I feel in any other trade something would be

done, even honesty, if Commodore would say "OK we know there are faulties out there, get them back to us and we'll sort it out" it would help customer relations.

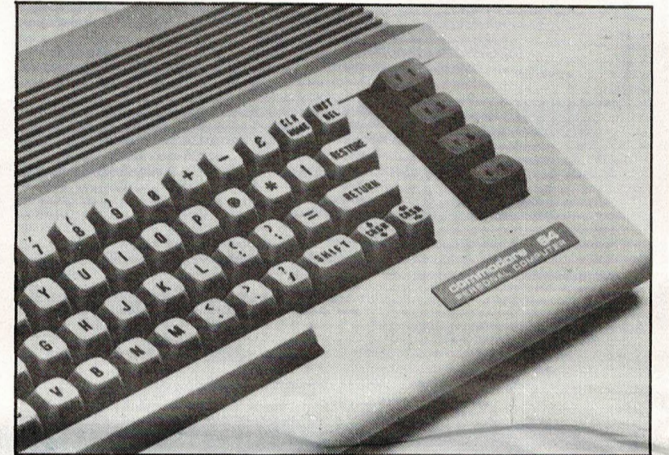
The public can take us to consumer advice, we can't take Commodore, or can we??

**Disgruntled**  
**Tony Stead**  
**Corner Video/Computers**  
**Greenock**  
**Scotland**

— *The dealer discontent goes on, with Christmas fast becoming but another memory of heady machine sales and the dewy morns of spring already upon us.*

*Oh take heed yon makers of the C64 and cast aside this perilous journey to a land where only unhappiness remains.*

*For 'tis a land where there are no C64s.*



C64: Slammed again

## Research: where there's a Williams there's a way

I had to put pen to paper after reading *CTW's* reply to the read 'em and weep' letter (*CTW* Feb 27th).

As you quite rightly point out *C&VG* does pass on detailed readership research to advertisers. However, having spent more than £30,000 on independent research (this year alone!) I was a little put out that this fact hasn't filtered through the industry. (Maybe I should call some clients now and again, and let them know).

This year we are spending even more on independent research. We are commissioning the first survey of the home computer marketplace for four years, (we did the last one!). The research will be undertaken by Marketing Direction — an independent agency — and the result will be available to advertisers in April.

EMAP has undertaken various forms of research as there is very little useful existing research in this industry, mainly because the industry seems to operate largely on ego, guesswork and intuition. In these days of increasing financial commitment to licencing deals, surely any research which helps to ensure a company's investment is useful?

There are a few companies out there who do research the market and their customers, this information is rarely passed on (for obvious reasons), and thus rarely questioned or challenged.

Perhaps *CTW* could do some form of article highlighting just what information is available which may induce some companies to volunteer more information.

Finally, if any advertisers out there wish to see the research EMAP has then please give me a call.

**Garry Williams**  
**Advertisement Manager**  
**C&VG**  
**EMAP Business and**  
**Computer Publications**

— *The reason CTW doesn't publish an article explaining what research is available is because it is virtually impossible to do so.*

*First of all, there simply isn't any reliable information on the views and experiences, is prohibited by its commissioner from publication, or simply out of date twaddle — à la reports by Mintel and similar lumbering giants.*

*If the EMAP research really is independent, then it should be commended for trying to further everybody's interests.*

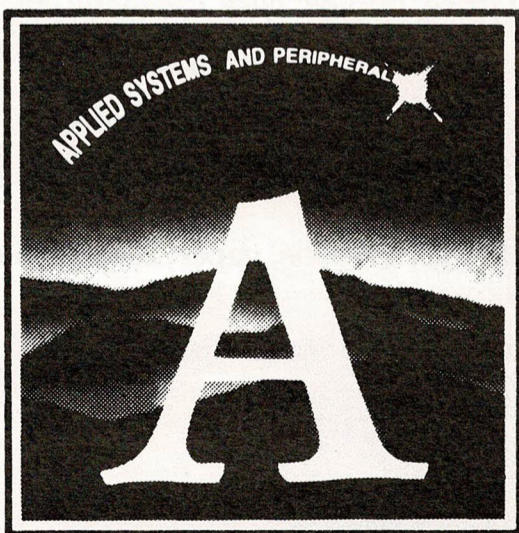
*Non-computer orientated firms looking tentatively at this market are understandably appalled when they learn that there is no generally accepted figure for the size of the UK leisure market. US firms, no doubt, take that as yet another sign of this market's immaturity and messiness.*

*And what of the one company that does struggle on trying to provide weekly and monthly information?*

*Gallup just gets criticised.*

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## SPRINGTIME FOR COMMS

Continued from page 19

mation in the exact format for which it is required as well as unattended operation. The ability to send graphics as well as text based files will grow in importance as working practices change.

It would be unfair, however, not to address current limitations inherent in PC fax as there are a number of problems as yet unresolved. For example, the ability to index fax files so that a user can retrieve a document based on its contents,

and editing the contents of a fax.

On the whole, fax operating software is sophisticated, and the time it takes for a fax file to be displayed on screen is being reduced.

### For fax sake be careful

As with dial-up modems and telephone handsets a fax should be submitted for BAPT approval before being plugged into BT or Mercury lines. Unapproved fax cards

can cause an electrical accident or interfere with other lines being used for data or normal conversations. Users of unapproved products can also be prosecuted.

Approved products must display a green or white sticker carrying their BAPT number. Likewise any advertisement for telecomms products must display a BAPT approved circle or red unapproved warning triangle. But beware of products bearing the green sticker but no number!

Despite the many advantages and potential of PC fax it will not necessarily replace the dedicated fax machine, in fact there will always be a need for

them. Indeed, most manufacturers of PC-based fax cards market their products as complementing existing fax machines.

Users of fax cards range from small companies and solo operators to large scale corporations such as banks and insurance companies with tens of LANs connected to several fax machines and PCs taking information from mainframe systems.

The market for fax on LANs is divided into three distinct camps: corporates, medium to small sized companies and LAN start-ups.

There are about two or three thousand large corporate net-

work users, averaging around 20 PCs each; a much larger number of medium to small companies with an average of about six machines per network; and lastly and increasing number of LAN newcomers with perhaps only one of the network's PCs on the receptionist's desk but with plans for expansion.

### Fax for the memory

While developments in PC fax for networks are already well advanced innovations in cellular communications particularly for lap-top users are at an early stage.

Modems suitable for use internationally will enable lap-

top users to send data by fax over the cellular phone network from a number of locations previously incompatible with the UK cellular network.

Optical disk storage is another exciting area of development. It could allow all traffic passing through a fax to be recorded on disk thus providing indelible audit trails and proof of transactions.

Manipulating faxes is memory hungry. A single page fax for example can require up to 65K of disk storage. CD-ROM disk drives which are capable of storing gigabytes as opposed to megabytes will be of interest to large scale PC fax users particularly in the financial sector where deals are struck over the sending of a fax.

At present only the IBM PC and compatible marketplace is well developed. No product has BAPT approval for the Apple Macintosh and there is only one product with an MCA interface for the IBM PS/2.

However, dealers can offer a fax card to suit most end-users' needs. In addition PCs can be easily upgraded for fax communication and cards can be installed by most users, therefore little or no support is required.

With dedicated fax machines costing in the region of £1,500 the fax card which can cost as little as a quarter of this is the obvious solution for those people looking for a cost effective entry product into the fax market and for those companies looking for products to complement their existing dedicated fax machines.

Oliver Tucker is business development manager for Communicate Distribution (a division of Ideal Hardware).

## THE FINE ART OF SERVICING

Continued from page 15

tly, the market has changed.

The last factor could be the one that saves Mr Hawkins from any embarrassment whatsoever over his original comments. The thing is they were correct — *at the time*.

Since 1987 the market has seen a contraction in the number of serious distribution contenders, for independent outlets there are probably only four or five firms worth bothering with. The badly run box shifters have either disappeared altogether or deteriorated into second division hustlers (it's rather ironic to note that the very week Hawkins' comments appeared in CTW onetime giant distributor CSD came crashing down with debts totalling £1.3 million).

The major distributors these days offer a far improved service, with sophisticated stock control, on the road reps, fewer outright liars doubling as telesales and better all round product support.

Added to that is the fact that merchandisers such as Bullet and USD have sprung up to increase the amount of information available to retailers on product — and even the general standard of packaging appears to have improved.

Yes EA has done a U-turn and a lot of its plans have been a costly experiment — but it might just have been the catalyst required to push distributors into improving their service.

And for that, dealers should be thankful.

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## Price hikes

Continued from front page  
the moves had been inevitable for some time. "The time is right to address the balance. We are spending enormous amounts of money on product and the prices we are offering are just too low," he told CTW.

**Telecomsoft:** Unfortunately the Telecomsoft stable of labels was not available for comment but does seem likely that it will be part of the movement. The possibility must be, however, that any decision regarding the firm's policy while it is still up for sale and its future is undecided.

**Mirrorsoft:** Again unavailable for comment but again likely to be involved, having attended original meetings.

**Virgin Mastertronic:** Whilst clearly being one of the major forces involved in the trade price hikes, Virgin is keen not to be portrayed as a ringleader. Such is the delicate nature of the whole matter the firm's normally voluble managing director Nick Alexander refused point blank to discuss the matter.

The initial reaction to the news, by distributors at least, has been one of shock and it is still too early to say what level of resistance, if any, there will be.

Paul Donnelly, joint boss of Gem distribution, was particularly aggrieved at the plan to exclude multiples from the cuts - a decision the publishers claim was dictated by their purchasing power.

"It's always the independents who stand it when firms say they want more money. I think it's a case of the publishers being scared of the multiples and their possible reactions to a drop in discounts. Why aren't they worried about the reaction of the independents?" he offered to CTW.

## Amiga pack

Continued from front page  
caused an element of confusion in the market.

Commodore itself insisted that despite trade pressure it would hold out until the spring before it introduced its own pack. It had also stressed that any such promotion would bring the price over the £400 mark.

"We researched the whole thing very heavily and discovered that obviously people are very keen on holiday promotions at this time of year," commented CBM's UK marketing manager Dean Barrett to CTW.

"We've been telling you for some time that we'd come up with something different and special - something that isn't just 22 old games and a peripheral that we no longer intend to stock.

"This is something current using a scheme that has already caught the public's imagination and it's being backed by all sorts of different marketing campaigns."

The Air Miles promotion is designed to appeal more to the older Amiga purchaser or parent - leaving the £399 machine as the 'saved up' buy.

CBM is stressing the simplicity of the promotion, with dealers' involvement ending as soon as the box is bought. The Air Miles can be redeemed for an air ticket at any travel agent or via CBM's own hotline.

The three games included in the pack are *Nebulus*, *StarRay* and *Roger Rabbit*. The paint package is *Spritz*.

## Labels totter

Continued from front page  
in a similar sort of way," he told CTW.

"Regarding Ubi Soft in the UK, I don't know yet. We need to talk with them. When things change you think about how it can be done better - but really it's up to them to tell us what they're going to do. If they could continue to sell direct as well as through distributors that would be good, but I don't think they'll be able to do it."

Martech's boss David Martin was unavailable for comment.

The contract signed with EA's third affiliate, Dinamic, does not come up for review until September.

# Now ZCL bolsters line-up with CBM business range

Having recently taken on Commodore's A2000 range, ZCL has also tied up a deal to distribute the firm's full range of PCs.

ZCL is pitching this latest addition to its range as the ideal second product to Amstrad. The deal also forms part of the firm's continuing move upmarket.

"Amstrad covers every important pricepoint, and we

have the whole range with us. The only problem is that we cannot always get enough of the product, and we've known for a long time that we miss out because of this. The Commodore PCs provide us with a second string product," offered the firm's boss Don Carter to CTW.

The firm does, however, admit that Commodore was not always its first choice. "We've been looking at all the

alternatives and at first we were not convinced by Commodore. But they have now replaced their products and are very competitive. They are now in the same ballpark as Amstrad."

ZCL was also impressed with Commodore's recent push to develop brand awareness. "They are spending a lot of money on things like mail-slots to dealers and a tele-

phone system for consumer enquiries. Amstrad proved a long time ago that anybody can produce a good quality clone, but what makes it a success is the marketing behind it."

Meanwhile, ZCL looks set to revamp its business side. "We will be changing the whole emphasis and putting a lot of effort into marketing in order to help the dealers," commented Carter.

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