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CTW

3.10.88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 206

STOS
The Game Creator

Number One in Gallup
ST Chart 10 Sept 88

'STOS is amazing.
Value: 5 out of 5'
- ST/Amiga Format Oct 88

MANDARIN
SOFTWARE

No let up in chip shortage

The current memory chip shortage could continue for as long as three years according to latest predictions.

The prediction was made by Toshiba's vice president Tsuyoshi Kawanishi at a recent US technology conference and follows worries recently aired by Alan Sugar about the chip problem affecting availability of Amstrad's new PC2000 range.

The Toshiba view does clash rather dramatically with most industry predictions which see the shortage ending in the first quarter of '89. Kawanishi also predicted that this year's 25 per cent growth in computer sales will continue to grow next year, keeping the demand for D-ram chips very high.

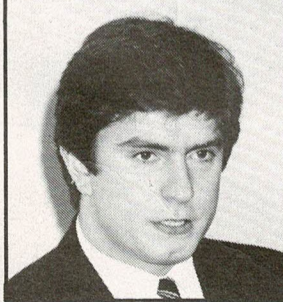
Demand will also be increased by the emergence of products such as high definition television and low cost fax machines which also require D-rams.

INSIDE:

EUROPE OPEN FOR LEISURE

With the challenge of 1992 coming ever closer Virgin boss Nick Alexander looks at the advantages of dismantling the economic barriers and discusses the cultural barriers that seem slightly more deep rooted

BOXING CLEVER



Commodore's marketing man Dean Barrett tells CTW about the new C64 bundles for Christmas. CTW asks Barrett how long the ageing machine can keep on keepin' on

FORUM OR AGAINST 'EM

The leading software houses give their views on Amstrad's new Sinclair PC range in an extensive CTW forum. Will they be the machines to spark a US style PC explosion or will they constitute a rare mistake from the Brentwood beastie boys?

CHARTS 17/LETTERS 18

Franklin cools Amiga optimism

Commodore last week found itself in the strange position of playing down dealers' apparent expectations of Amiga sales levels this autumn.

UK boss Steve Franklin revealed to CTW last week that he expects to sell 55-60,000 Amigas between now and Christmas.

But, he added that if major customers' own optimism for the product is a barometer for the whole retail network and proved correct, that figure would be nearer 100,000 units. Personally, however, Franklin thinks up to 70,000 is the maximum possible.

If the higher estimate is correct Commodore will

simply not have enough machines. Franklin is, however, trying to steer clear of the inevitable "here we go again" reaction from a market that has coped with hardware shortages since the early days of Spectrums and C64s.

"It will definitely be tight, but I'm not going to do an Atari and say that we'll be 15 per cent short," said Franklin.

The biggest upsurge in demand is expected to be around when CBM's £1.7 million (ratecard spend) of Amiga TV ads break. This will be from the second week in November.

"I advise my distributors to take product early. When we actually made the decision on how many Amigas we needed for the autumn we hadn't

decided on TV ads."

Those cynical of hardware firms' incessant talk of Christmas shortages will view Franklin's comments as a way of kicking up demand earlier than usual - thus giving a chance to possibly increase CBM UK's allocation of Amigas from Germany.

The "buy while we've still got them" cry has not been coming from Commodore alone - with Atari already claiming that it is air-freighting in quantities of STs from the Far East.

"I can't talk for others and obviously a lot do create hype, but our plans for October/November were put to bed in April and the demand since then has been fantastic," insisted Franklin.



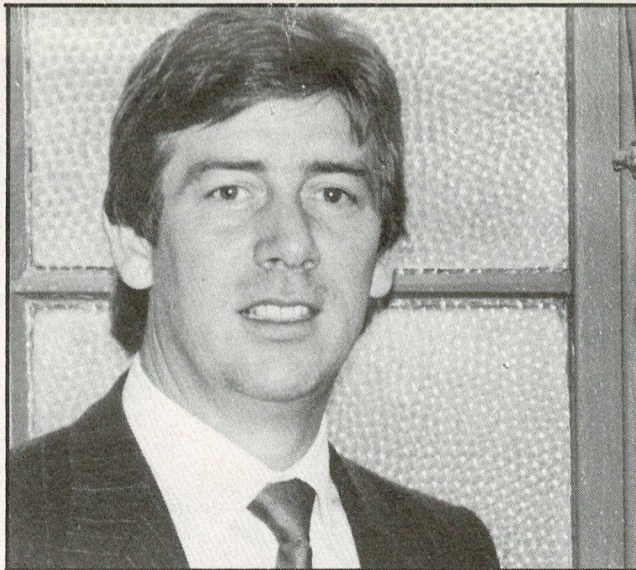
FRANKLIN: Predicting 60K Amiga sales

Konix consoles itself

Joystick manufacturer Konix is planning to unveil its own games console in January with a subsequent launch late next summer, CTW can reveal.

After some trade speculation that a launch could be as early as this autumn, it is now understood that the console will be previewed at the British Toy Fair at Earls Court on January 28th.

Konix - which has had worldwide success with its Speedking joystick - has designed the new console itself and is currently carrying out extensive research of what is still an unproved market in the UK.



HOLLOWAY: "What console?"

Boss Wyn Holloway, however, refused to be drawn on his firm's latest venture. "Console? What console? We're a joystick manufacturer," he offered to CTW abruptly.

The new machine will retail at around £129 - the same price as one of rival manufacturer Nintendo's configurations. The firm is known to be pitching it as worthy of a much higher price tag and not directly in competition with Nintendo, Sega or Atari.

Konix is also likely to push the product's innovation aspect in terms of design and performance. The Speedking revolutionised accepted thinking for joystick design and new

Continued on back page

USD ties up Sega

Merchandising outfit USD has made its first move into hardware by tying up a deal to handle the Sega console.

Virgin/Mastertronic - which handles all UK marketing for the machine - has added USD to strengthen its pitch to independents.

USD will also be handling all of Mastertronic's software releases, from budget to Melbourne House 16-bit. It apparently beat off a challenge from rivals Bullet and new CDS offshoot Network to win the Sega account.



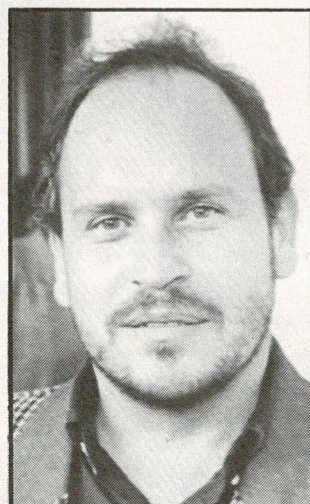
WOOD: Ironics and Sega tied

No more immediate moves into the hardware market are being predicted by USD boss Andy Wood. "We've handled the Virgin account since day one of our existence so they obviously know how good we are," he told CTW.

"USD is geared up to sell anything from eggs to bricks and lightbulbs but we've got such a firm hold on the soft-

Continued on back page

Leisure trade braced for Xmas flood - again



GINTY: Too much too late

Full-price leisure publishers are being asked to reconsider their autumn release schedules - for fear of there being simply too much product around yet again this Christmas.

The call is coming from sectors of the trade that believe it would be in the whole market's interest if firms could spread their major releases more evenly throughout the year.

"I can't be expected to buy everything that comes out,"

commented Lee Ginty, boss of distributor Microdealer International. "With the best will in the world, just because everything goes into the shops it doesn't mean that the consumers can afford to buy it.

"We will tend to take fairly low orders in an attempt to gain as much of a no risk situation as possible."

Market research firm Gallup which compiles the UK software sales charts - is also bracing itself for a flood of new titles all competing together.

"I think the industry's got it into its head that its only possible to sell software during

a couple of parts of the year," offered chart researcher Matt Browne.

"A lot of titles will be buried in the nest when at other times of year they could have been top ten. If you look at *Football Manager II*, that was released at a slow time of year and did very well."

Strangely, despite major players obviously gearing up considerably for Christmas (Ocean has 53 releases across all formats planned between now and January 1st), it is the middle-ranking publishers who seem more guilty of hold-

Continued on back page

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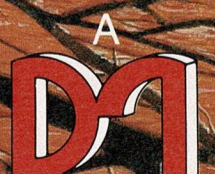


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Spectrum, Amstrad,



CBM64, Amiga, Atari ST.

US "dealer's PC" taken by Midwich for UK PC assault

Printer distributor Midwich Thame has won an exclusive licensing deal with US firm Blue Chip to market its range of IBM compatible PCs in the UK.

The company has in the past concentrated on the distribution of printers, but has been looking to enter the PC market for several months. With its present ratio of 60 per cent printers to 40 per cent hardware, Midwich is now hoping to shift the balance considerably.

The Blue Chip range of computers will be positioned above Amstrad with the entry level Popular 1A model costing £599 without a monitor and the top of the range Popular 286 40E priced at £1,879.

Midwich is justifying the

pricing by emphasising full IBM compatibility, offering a full refund guarantee to the end user if any software proves incompatible. It is also drawing on the fact that the machines are manufactured in the US and are not Taiwanese imports.

Midwich is planning a trade-only scheme in order to avoid sales channel conflict, and is making it clear to dealers that it has no intention of going direct. The computers are being pitched as "the dealer's PC", with initial advertising concentrating on developing dealer awareness.

Midwich is offering various deals to the distributor to encourage take up of the PC, with a 25 per cent margin for one-off trade, rising to 30 per cent on orders over 50 and "35 per cent for the right deal".

The Norfolk based company has a current distributor network of 750 and is looking to expand this over the coming months. It is intending to spend around £60,000 between now and Christmas, with the bulk of advertising being in the dealer press.

In the first year of trading in the UK, Midwich is forecasting selling a minimum of 10,000 computers, forecasting a leap to 20,000 by next Christmas.

President of Blue Chip, John Rossi, is keen to build a product brand name in Europe. In the US the PCs have been targeted at the home business user.

Commenting on Blue Chip's appointment of Midwich as sole distributor, Rossi offered: "It's just like a marriage, we both bring something to the table."



PC POPULAR: US newcomer

Genic lines up two more labels for UK

Mediagenic/Activision is due to announce two new affiliated labels in the next few weeks.

The firm already has a sales and marketing deal with System 3 and a sales and distribu-

tion tie-up with Cascade. The two new firms involved will both be UK-based operations that have previously existed solely as contract houses.

"We're always continuing to look at new affiliates. We believe that we're able to support

them effectively. I'm not necessarily talking about publishers that create 35 titles a year, but the more prestigious units who publish maybe 4-10 games a year," commented Mediagenic's UK boss Rod Cousens to CTW.

"There are a lot of very, very talented development groups in this company. They're not as regimented, disciplined or stale as programmers in certain other territories."

Cousens would not disclose who the new affiliates will actually be. He would presumably be hoping, however, that both will be more successful than the similarly-styled venture with Francis Lee's Destiny label. This was recently off-loaded to Big Apple after a number of poorly received releases.

Unlike fellow direct-seller Electronic Arts, Mediagenic is not pitching the signing of more affiliates as a means to increasing volume of releases.

"We don't have to have more product. If anything we have to condense output to selected titles that have a clear commercial demand and are of a very high standard," responded Cousens.



COUSENS: New labels due

All quiet on the Psygnosis buy-out

As the result of a management buy-out Psygnosis is no longer owned by Liverpool conglomerate the Robert Smith Group.

The Liverpool based 16-bit specialists new owners are Ian Hetherington and Jonathon Ellis. They were part of a management trio that ran the

firm for the Robert Smith Group.

The third member of the management team was David Lawson who apparently decided not to take an ownership stake in the firm. It seems that he will, however, continue to work for Psygnosis in some capacity.

Both firms involved in the deal were most sensitive to the

issue and were resolutely uncommunicative. At Robert Smith there was a minimal confirmation that the buy-out had gone through but the main message was "It's nothing to do with us, talk to them."

At Psygnosis however Ellis was so determined not to comment that he refused to confirm that the deal had even taken place.

MicroProse fills Bastable space

After a gap of eight months MicroProse has finally replaced erstwhile marketing manager Colin Bastable.

The new man is Peter Jones, who was previously with courier firm Federal Express. Commenting on the new appointment the firm's UK boss Stewart Bell claimed Jones has "the right mentality and the right outlook".

Bell admitted that the new marketing manager has "zero" market knowledge but claimed that is because "MicroProse do things differently". He added that the reason for the deal was the firm's determination to "find the right man".

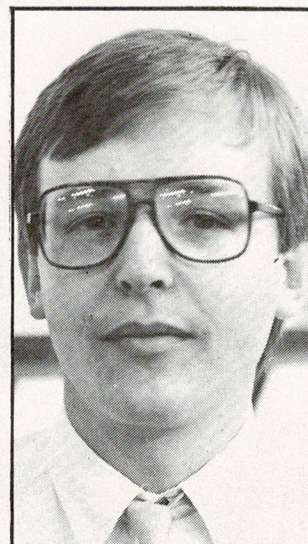
"We had to find someone with the right attitude to fit in with the MicroProse way of doing things so we interviewed over 80 people before we came up with Peter."

Meanwhile, there is still no



BELL: Bastable replaced word on the promised tie-up with yet another US label. Budget outfit Hi-Tech Expression signed up to MicroProse last month (CTW September 5th).

Future hits 50K target



ANDERSON: Ace ABC

Future's all formats monthly ACE has achieved its target of a 50,000 plus circulation — just.

Its initial ABC figure is 50,362 Group publisher Chris Anderson enthused: "We are delighted with the figure, it's very, very tough to get that high at launch."

He also claimed that the figure was the first step towards "making ACE the best selling computer magazine within two years".

"We're also confident that we're well ahead of the Games Machine, even though they haven't had their figures yet."

CTW

Computer Trade Weekly

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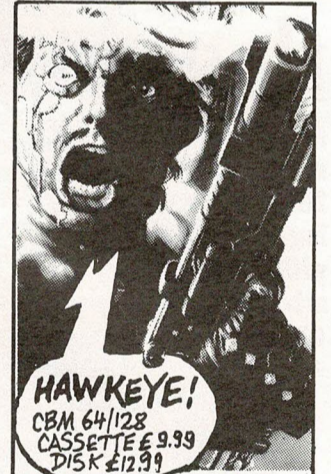
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Wilcox blasts show "disgrace"

Elite director Brian Wilcox last week made a splenetic attack against the venue of the recent PC Show in London.

The success of the show notwithstanding, Wilcox claims that compared to facilities offered at alternative exhibition halls in the UK and Europe, Earls Court was

"simply a disgrace".

"The idea of bringing overseas visitors to that appalls me. Have the organisers ever seen Dusseldorf or Hanover? They should pull the place down," he raged to CTW.

"I'm not an over-sensitive person but when I went in I could smell the drains, and as for the car-parking facilities and the litter - it was just bloody awful."

Wilcox claims that the perfect answer would be to move the show to somewhere such as the NEC in Birmingham, which currently houses the annual Which Computer? Show.

Elite itself had a higher profile presence at the PC Show than last year, but claims it is thinking "very seriously" about re-appearing.

"Earls Court is just not up to standard and it's certainly not 1988."



EARLS COURT: Slammed

CDS takes five in new venture

CDS has followed an increasing trend by setting up a marketing and merchandising company.

Network is due to be launched this week and will be headed by former COS man Mike Clark. The firm has a start-up stable of five publishers.

At the time of going to press Clark was still coy about three of the labels but unsurprisingly CDS and Blue Ribbon are confirmed clients. One more company is wanted by Clark to complete what he sees as Networks "maximum potential".

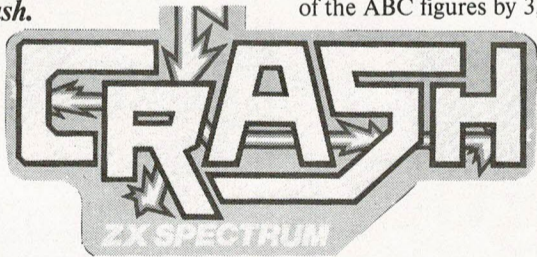
All clients are signed up for at least 12 months. Clark described Network's role as "a

publisher's sales force" and "a link between the retailers and the publishers".

The firm will not be doing any actual selling but will instead pass the retailer on to its usual distributor. Clark commented: "Our main aim is to be reliable for both publishers and retailers and to provide a link between the two."

Crash up after flagging ABC

After disappointing ABC results (CTW September 26th), Newsfield is claiming to be up and fighting with a massive increase in sales for the July issue of *Crash*.



CRASH: Better sales news

Newly appointed promotions co-ordinator, Richard Eddy told CTW that the latest sales figures show an 18,000 increase on the previous month. According to Eddy's calculations this means a bumping up of the ABC figures by 3,000 -

which still leaves the mag nearly 15,000 short of its all time high of 96,000.

The increased sales are being attributed to the revamping and new design of *Crash*, and while Eddy did admit that the cover-mount on the July issue had helped pump up sales, he is confident that an upward trend has been set.

In a jubilant mood Eddy offered "Watch out EMAP, we're hitting back. The editorial team is working flat out to get the right feel and we'll soon be back on top".

EMAP, having originally lain down the gauntlet with the announcement of the highest ever figures for its three major monthlies, is not content to rest on its laurels either. It is already claiming that sales are rising for *Commodore User*, *C&VG* and *Sinclair User*.

Active enters Jungle

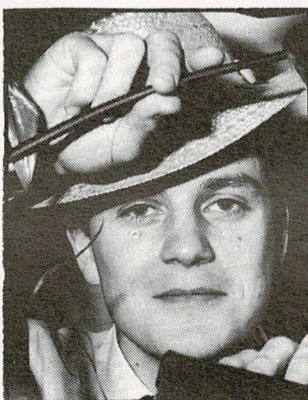
Active has tied up a prestigious deal with its French client Coktel Vision, having just snapped up the coveted licensing rights to Walt Disney's *Jungle Book*.

While Active will be handling the sales, marketing and distribution of the game, Coktel will be venturing outside the French and German market for the first time with the new licensing deal extend-

ing not only to the UK, but also Scandanavia and Holland.

Jungle Book is set for release some time in November on the ST, Amiga and PC, priced at £24.95.

Coktel Vision is apparently one of the top five software publishers in France and is set to release a host of new titles for the UK market. One game due for release is based on the 70's film *Emmanuelle*, and according to Active boss Robert Stallibrass "it's all done in the best possible taste".



STALLIBRASS: Jungle boy

Survey backs Z88's new schools pitch

A Cambridge Computer educational survey has unearthed an apparent desire in schools for portables.

The firm - which just happens to market its own Z88 portable - interviewed some 300 teachers. The need for portables is pitched as a result of the broadening use of personal computers in education.

With PCs being used for more and more subjects a portable can be handed out in the classroom and used on field trips. A series of trials in several LEAs have identified the

Z88 as the "obvious" choice.

Most teachers would pay up to £300 for a portable, with £500 being the upper limit. Cambridge considers this to be an important price ceiling in the market, and with the Z88 costing £249 (exc VAT) it fits easily in the lower price bracket.

Other findings of the survey confirm the shortage of computers in schools, with nearly all teachers saying that the number of personal computers did not match the demand. The majority of respondents felt it was essential to meet his demand within the next two

years.

With a large proportion of the existing computers in schools still being Acorn BBCs it was also felt to be important for any new machine to run BBC Basic.

Commenting on the low take-up of portables by schools to date, sales manager for Cambridge Computer, Paul Streeter, said: "It is remarkable that despite the obvious demand, only 15 per cent of schools have seriously considered the option of a portable. This situation will have to change if the needs of teachers are to be met."

Circus comes to Oxford St



MARKHAM: Chain aim

A proposed chain of 50 software outlets has started life with a shop opening in Oxford Street, London.

The store is called Software Circus and is owned by publisher and distributor Paper Logic. It will stock leisure and business product worth up to £200 at retail.

Boss Steven Markham was remarkably undaunted by the giant task of building the one store into a nationwide chain. He described it as a "very real proposition" and claimed his ultimate goal was to "saturate the whole of Britain".

The masterplan has no fixed time scale but the next step would seem to be the opening of another shop in the London area "within the next four months".

Markham described the layout of the Oxford Street store as "like a bookshop" and claimed it would "revolutionise software retailing".

Superior snaps up defunct Alligata

BBC specialist Superior Software has taken over the Alligata label.

It has taken its pick from the firm's back catalogue and has come away with 30-40 titles. Most of which are due to appear at some time on the firm's BBC compilations.

Joint boss Steve Hanson claimed that one of the main reasons behind the take over

was Alligata's "distinctive logo". Indeed Superior's future releases for the Commodore, Spectrum and Amstrad will appear on a Superior/Alligata label with the Alligata logo prominent.

The BBC versions of all games however will continue to be on the Superior/Acornsoft label. The first release due on this two label scheme is a boxing simulation called *By Fair Means or Foul* which is due

in mid October.

The prices of the non-BBC versions to appear on the Superior/Alligata label range from £7.95-£14.95. On the Superior/Alligata label prices are £9.95-£14.95.

Hanson commented: "We are obviously very pleased with the deal. It was a question of really getting in at the right time when it was clear that Alligata was no longer going to produce their own games."

Nintendo promises regular releases

Nintendo is hoping to kill off trade criticism over software supply by promising a regulated release schedule through the autumn.

The console manufacturer has just finally made available five titles which have all been massively successful in the US. From now on it is promising at

least two new titles a month.

The criticism - which Nintendo itself doesn't believe is justified - has come from the fact that very few titles have reached the UK since the console was first introduced here last year. The titles that have been available have also tended to be rather old.

"The thing is, 25 per cent of our software sales have always

come from older product - and that's true not only in the UK but other countries," commented Nintendo director Mike Wensman to CTW.

He also refutes the suggestion that two titles a month is still a fairly sparse offering. "We're talking about games that can have up to 260 hours playing time. It's being produced by the best programmers in the world."

The new titles are *Legend of Zelda*, *Mike Tyson's Punch Out*, *Metroids*, *Pro-Wrestling* and *R.C. Pro-Am*. They retail between £19.95 and £34.95.

TO HONG KONG . . . CHINA, AND BACK?

If you're free in May and can purchase £35,000 of Commodore product by 31 March 1989 give us a call. The 1989 ZCL/CBM dealer incentive will take you in 5 star luxury to Hong Kong and then on to China over a 9 day period that defies description.

— What the Papers say... —

GLOBE-TROTTING, JUGGLING AND FANCY CIRCUS TRICKS

It's a hard life. Dixon's boss sees his salary drop below £300K and ZCL's Carter has to pack his Bermuda shorts yet again.



Carter: Supergrass jet-setter

• ZCL's managing director and Supergrass supreme (he knows what we mean), **Don Carter**, has been having a tough year of it. First, it's Commodore freebies to Mexico and Thailand, and then we're informed that the ZCL dealer incentive to Tangier has been cancelled after the assiduous Don checked out the accommodation and found "the standards . . . were not to our requirements".

Never mind, the 97 lucky winners will be setting off today to Athens for five days to stay somewhere that meets Don's high standards. Once that's over he'll be resuming his arduous task — checking out Hong Kong and mainland China, which are the subject of the 1988/89 Commodore/ZCL incentive scheme. Safe travelling, Don.

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TOUR DETAILS

HONG KONG AND CHINA 12-20 MAY 1989

- 12 May Depart Heathrow
- 13 May Arrive Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport
- 14 May City tour of Hong Kong, tram ride to Victoria Park, San Pan ride to Repulse Bay, then on to Tiger Balm Gardens
- 15 May Free day and evening
- 16 May Depart by hovercraft up the Pearl River to Guangzhou in mainland China. City tour, evening gala dinner and traditional entertainment.
- 17 May Full day tour of Fushan and on to Peoples Commune. Evening dinner in one of Guangzhou's excellent restaurants
- 18 May Depart for Hong Kong, afternoon free, evening special gala dinner with a sensational floor show
- 19 May Free day, last minute shopping for Hong Kong's amazing bargains, evening depart for London.
- 20 May Arrive Heathrow

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SNIPPETS

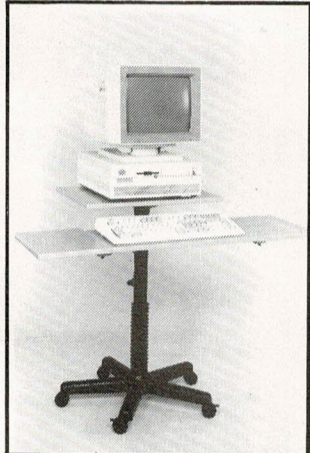
Following Chelsea FC's impressively appalling form since tying up with Commodore over a year ago, CBM must have been hoping for a good performance from its other sporting affiliate Tessa Sanderson at the Seoul Olympics. Unfortunately the sponsorship-loving firm's curse struck again. Sanderson couldn't even qualify for the second day of javelin throwing, let alone win a medal. . . .

Wendy Berry has been appointed dealer marketing executive for **Sentinel Software**. Previously employed by Comsoft dealing with marketing communications, Berry will now be responsible for creating a range of dealer support services. Obviously pleased with her new role, Berry commented with great originality "I'm delighted to be joining Sentinel". More news from the Sentinel stable, in a bid to promote *WordPerfect 5.0*, two new software add-ons have been released. A *Bitstream Fontware Installation Kit* is being offered free to all purchasers of 5.0, while a supposedly 'intelligent' hyphenation program is available for just £10. . . .

Lucky old **Ocean** is in cohorts with that brilliant game show, *Wheel of Fortune*. With Ocean building a superdooper version of *Typhoon* to be offered as a prize, one

particularly fortunate young chappie popped along from the Manchester based software house to teach the show's hostess Angela Ekaette how to operate a joystick. A good time was had by all. . . .

Clearly an absolute must in the office is the latest offering from **Bulldog Computer Services**, wait for it . . . a height adjustable computer trolley. Available with such goodies as heavy duty castors and optional matching side extensions it makes you wonder how you ever lived without one. . . .



Another essential from Bulldog

First prize this week for the naffest piece of hype must go to **Database Exhibitions**. First *Coronation Street*, now it's *Amstrad Street*. But don't despair Big Al is not set to become the next Jack Duckworth, the so-called street is just another unique feature at the Amstrad

Computer Show which returns to Manchester in October, can't wait. . . .

Gordon Towell following his redundancy from DDL, has surfaced after several months. The erstwhile deputy managing director of the MBS owned subsidiary has been appointed managing director of the computer peripherals distribution business, **Sintrom Electronics** . . . **Again Again**, the new software label with a wacky name, is set to release a great gothic game based on *The Munsters*. Herman, Lilly and all the other delightful characters will be making an appearance around mid-November. **Again Again** is the sister company to **Alternative Software**. . . .

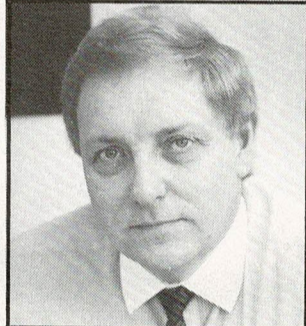
IBM is set to plunge into a major advertising campaign in a bid to promote IBM '88, its own exhibition to be held at the Business Design Centre in London on October 26. The new ads will be incorporating the ad man's dream strap of "I think, therefore IBM", and will run on Thames and LWT for two weeks starting October 12. . . .

Tulip has announced price cuts on its 386 range of machines. The 40 Mb AT-386 has been reduced by £400 to £3,395, while the 75 and 155 Mb versions have also been cut by £400 to £4,045 and £4,995 respectively. . . .

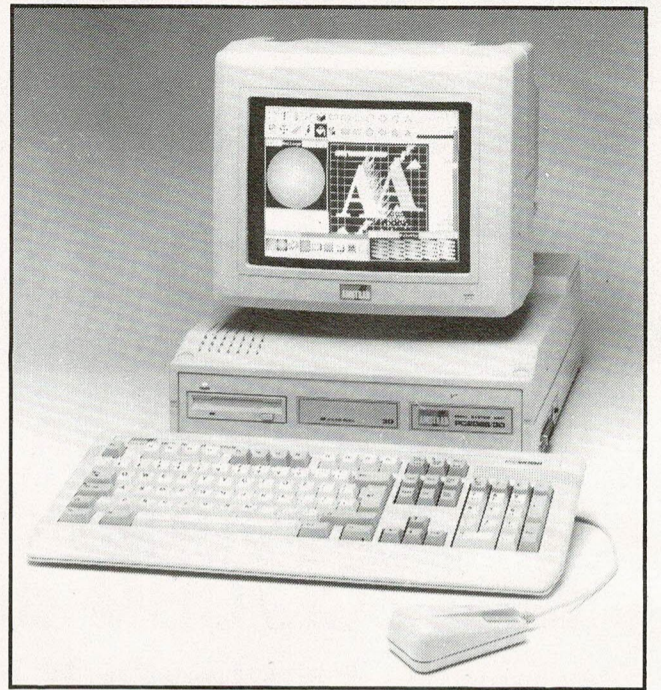
Tony Hetherington makes a brief but welcome return to *Pop Weekly* taking over as editor while Paul Marks is having high jinks in some sunny clime. A stalwart in the computer press, Hetherington has in the past proven a great friend in need to the frequently under-staffed weekly. . . .

Logotron recently launched a ubiquitous personal organiser and project management tool called *Big Plan*. Using a diary, reminder system, work planner and project managements notebooks, the big boss should now be able to manage his minions more productively, and all for £99.

Erstwhile **Exocet** boss and former TBD software buyer Terry Jeffries has been appointed by **Mastertronic** to handle software evaluation and key accounts. Unfortunately, the break with Exocet does not seem to have been that clean with his former firm not entirely convinced that he has indeed left. . . .



JEFFRIES: New Tronic



PC2086: Sapphire signed

Amstrad has confirmed Sapphire's appointment as the official services and support company for its new PC2000 series. Sapphire will also be running a range of training courses. For dealers the training will be part of the agreement aimed at familiarising engineers and staff with the new machines, while customers will be offered a £50 course to help them get to grips with the new window environments. . . .

Rexel is offering its stockists a consumables catalogue with the added bonus of having the dealer's name,

logo and telephone number on the ordering instructions. For £200 Rexel will give you a choice of front cover design, while for a weeny bit extra a sales message can be printed inside via a special 8 page supplement. . . .

Interestingly described as a 'scurrilous' low budget magazine a copy of *Underworld Computer News* has winged its way to *CTW*. Published every two months by a couple of chaps who run a bulletin board system, *UCN* has a massive circulation of 65 and rising. Advertisers must be falling over themselves for space. . . .

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1992 AND ALL THAT

One can't switch on the television set without someone blabbering about Europe being open for business. The *Financial Times* has been happily filling up column inches for months and even Alan Sugar has had his say. But what difference will it make? Virgin Game's boss NICK ALEXANDER ponders the question...

As any fule knows 1992 is the year of the Great Euro-Revolution. It is virtually impossible to tune in to our favourite TV-valium without being exhorted to "Euro-Think" by the entrepreneurial successes of the decade - especially Alan Sugar and our very own Richard Branson.

Galvanised into executive

action I asked my voluptuous PA Catherine to phone the DTI Hotline to get my Euro Info Pack.

Anxiously I awaited its arrival, eager to learn how I could back Britain and seize the opportunity of 1992. Eventually when the weighty Euro Pack arrived in one of those other runs between

postal strikes in London I immediately put it in my In tray - so that I could give it the full attention it deserved.

And what a data packed Euro Pack it was - more than 20 leaflets each dealing with a particular industry area detailing just a few of the legislative amendments that will eventually bring commercial har-

mony to the EEC. The only problem was that I hadn't a clue what any of it meant or how it was going to make a difference to our company.

Disillusioned now I flung the pack into my Out tray.

Fortunately it was only the briefest of time before a real opportunity to think European arose with our recently an-

nounced distribution agreement with Sega for the UK, France and Germany.

On the record

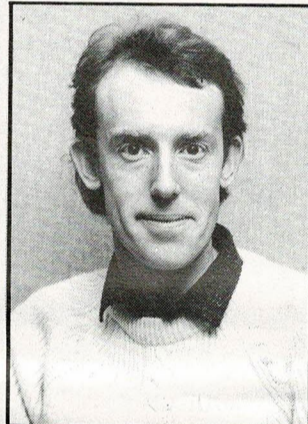
Virgin is a company that has owed much of its success in the 1980s to opening and developing its operations in all the major European territories. Starting with France, Virgin Records now has offices

in every significant market in the Western World, and in some of the less significant ones as well.

Not only has this meant that we have gained better margins from each territory by doing it ourselves rather than licencing to someone else, but we have also had people who live in and know each market place dedicated to Virgin's success in their country.

When one adds to this the fact that having a presence in various territories has given us the ability to sign local artists for international exploitation then the secret of some of our success is revealed.

The missing ingredient in the equation is that you need either a sufficiently large business in any territory to cover your overheads or the ability to find the operation until you can build the business up.



ALEXANDER: No virgin to Euro ways

We were particularly fortunate with the Sega deal in that the video game business in each of the three territories is not only very substantial already but is also growing at an impressive rate.

The list of problems of trading overseas has been well rehearsed elsewhere. Language, culture, laws, and customs all differ from country to country and will continue to do so long after 1992. It is therefore critical that we enlist the help of local professionals as quickly as possible and do not make assumptions that anything will be the same as in the UK.

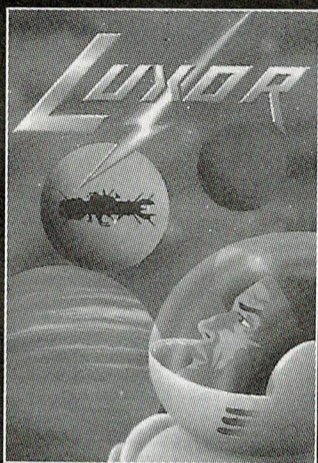
EC rider

Any textbook on International Marketing will give you long check lists of things to watch out for laced with a few amusing anecdotes about product names that did not translate too well. A recent example from our own industry is "Vixen" which in Germany apparently refers to a form of abuse normally practised by one's self. Actually, on reflection, and bearing the inlay in mind this might qualify as an appropriate translation.

Nonetheless, despite the various pitfalls Europe represents an enormous market with potential for any product you can sell in the UK. Whether anything will actually change in 1992, who knows - the DTI pack left me little wiser - but why wait. Continental Europe is as near now as it's going to be then - so why not get on with it?

And the food's great too.

YOU'VE SEEN THE REST NOW BUY THE BEST!

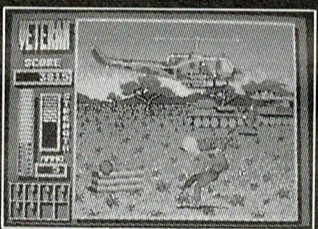
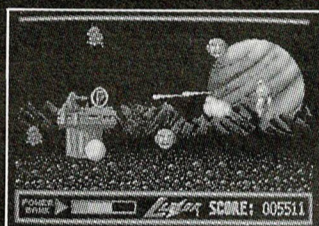


The evil Okira clan of space pirates have kidnapped your beloved princess Diora, and are now holding the Empire to ransom...

You must search three planets to find your princess, and each one will be heavily guarded with highly trained Okira warriors. Find the planet that Diora is being held on, destroy the pirates, and a fairy will grant you a single wish.

Love and magic will help you win the day - you must not fail in this mission. Collect power points to recharge your guns and life-support systems as you battle through the planets.

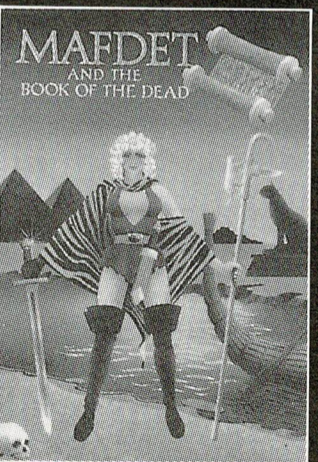
LUXOR



VETERAN

The war is nearly over. Your side seems to have lost everything. But there is just one last chance to save the day...

You must battle your way through 3 deadly missions, knocking out the enemy positions, until you reach the enemy's Headquarters. Blow up tanks, gun emplacements, and shoot down the hordes of enemy soldiers. Your supplies are limited, so you must pick up spare rocket launchers and ammunition for your gun, left behind by fleeing soldiers.



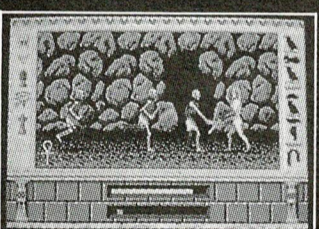
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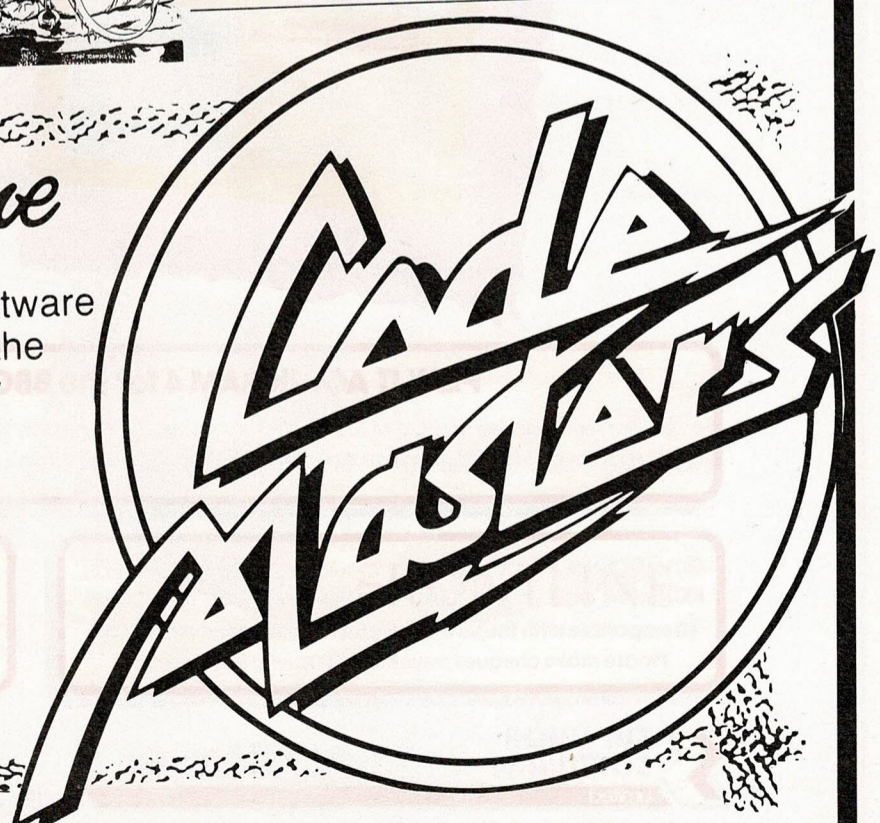
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KEEPING ALIVE A LEGEND

If this is autumn it must be time for a new C64 bundle. In fact this year Commodore has done itself proud with two new packages to breathe life into the old machine. DAVE ROBERTS wonders how long it can keep it up . . .

The computer industry is watching the C64. Like so many salivating vultures circling injured prey it delights at its every stumble and waits for what it sees as inevitable death. Yet the beast refuses to die. It continually embarrasses industry pundits by struggling

through just one more season while the vultures grow increasingly impatient for a carcass. Commodore's reaction to all this cruel speculation is private annoyance tempered by public bemusement. Marketing manager Dean Barrett echoes the corporate line: "It

really surprises me that people keep asking when we are going to be winding it up. Why should we when it's still selling?" Why indeed. And according to Commodore's own figures the machine is most certainly still selling. It claims that in the year ending this June 90,000

64s were sold in the UK. And its optimistic target for the corresponding period this year is 120,000. It's certainly ironic that sales of a supposedly dying machine are predicted to rise. Figures such as these for what many see as an outdated machine may come as some-

thing of a surprise. Not to Barrett: "Quite simply it is a really good computer, a bad machine certainly wouldn't have lasted so long." There is undoubtedly some truth in this, but it is certainly not the whole truth and nothing but. There is another vital factor in the continuing suc-

cess of the C64. Something that Barrett himself is a bit of an expert on - marketing. The 64 has consistently been packaged in increasingly attractive bundles. The most common form these bundles take is to put ten games with a vague theme in the pack and focus on these in the promotion rather than the machine itself.

The games are the usual mixture of the good, the bad and the just plain appalling but there are usually just enough winners in there to make an ancient machine an attractive proposition. They are the crutches that support an otherwise fatally injured beast from season to season.

The lifesaver this summer was the Olympic pack. Current sales stand at 16,000 and Commodore expects the full sell through figure to be around 20,000.

Hooray for Hollywood

But with that pack losing its topicality by the minute, new blood is needed if the C64 is to be healthy this Christmas. Enter two new crutches - The Hollywood pack and the Family Entertainment pack.

Ironically, it was these two bundles that were the only really new products on the Commodore stand at this year's PC show. So once again a machine that has been written off so many times found itself the focus of attention.

The Hollywood pack is priced at £149 and contains ten Ocean and Domark games concerning either the big or little screen. Five are from programs kids really watch like *Miami Vice* and five are from shows their parents like to think they watch such as *Blockbusters*.

Barrett offers: "Kids are going to enjoy these games because they're all big names but mum and dad will be happy as well because of the educational aspect."

He describes the music pack as "a more considered purchase" which roughly translated means that at £199 it is £50 more expensive. For his money that purchaser gets a Bush personal stereo, a Yamaha keyboard, a *Commo-*

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM 4



FRAK!
Aardvark Software
SUPERIOR SOFTWARE ACORNSOFT

FRAK!
The Unique No. 1 Hit from Aardvark
One of the most original computer games ever devised. Propel our cavern-dwelling hero Frogo about the weird world of Frak!
"Go out and see it as quickly as possible. . . . A & B Computing.
"A superb game that will take you hours to master." . . . Micro User.



SPELLBINDER
Superior's Bewitching Adventure
A captivating 3D arcade-adventure full of problems to be solved by magical means.
"What is more impressive than the detailed graphics, is the sheer number of rooms comprising the two floors, three catacombs, catacomb and dungeons." . . . Electron User.



COSMIC CAMOUFLAGE
A New Release from Superior Software
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GRAND PRIX CONSTRUCTION SET
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ACORN ELECTRON VERSION

Unfortunately it is not technically possible to produce an Acorn Electron version of GRAND PRIX CONSTRUCTION SET. The four games on the Acorn Electron version of PLAY IT AGAIN SAM 4 are: FRAK!, SPELLBINDER, COSMIC CAMOUFLAGE and GUARDIAN.
GUARDIAN - An Alligata Software Hit - received rave reviews when first released.
"It's a classic Defender game . . . and it's very good." . . . A & B Computing.
"A fast-moving space game, with striking graphics and excellent sound effects." . . . Electron User.



(Acornsoft is a registered trademark of Acorn Computers Ltd. Superior Software Ltd is a registered user.)
Dept 4PS6, Regent House, Skinner Lane, Leeds LS7 1AX. Telephone: (0532) 459453.

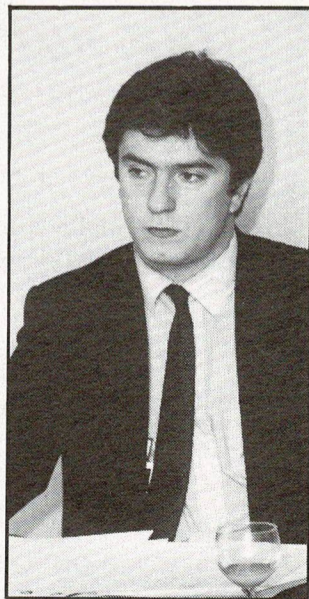
The screen pictures show the BBC Micro versions of the games.



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BARRETT: "The 64 will see the 1990s"

dore's Top Ten Hits audio cassette, a joystick, five games, oh yes and a C64.

Barrett is confident that both bundles are strong enough to put the machine back on top of another generation of kids' Christmas lists.

Last Christmas, though, things did not run smoothly. Commodore uncharacteristically opted not to produce its own bundle but left the retailers to come up with their own packages. Barrett sums up the scheme with a rather flat "satisfactory" and admits that "it was all rather confusing for the end user".

So where does this dinosaur of a computer fit into Commodore's increasingly upmarket and business-minded image? Does it nestle comfortably beside the sleeker, sexier Amiga or is it something of a kink in an otherwise smooth corporate line?

Many industry watchers believe the firm should be somehow embarrassed by an out-dated machine that it so obviously markets as a toy. Barrett vehemently disagrees: "We have no reason to be ashamed of a machine that has sold 9.5 million worldwide and is still selling. Just because Rover produce the Fastback doesn't mean they have to forget about the Metro.

"We are a computer company and we produce a wide range of computers. Maybe if our image is going increasingly upwards then the C64 helps us keep our feet on the floor."

Perhaps so. Yet it is undeniable that the main thrust of the Commodore 1988 promotional push is behind the Amiga. Barrett, however, claims this has nothing to do with priorities.

"With the public awareness of the product being so very high there is not that need for an educational element in the advertising."

So instead of the Amiga blitz, which includes TV advertising, the C64 approach will be more a series of gentle reminders. The odd nudge in the trade press, the occasional prod in the monthlies. Not exactly cross-media saturation but, according to Barrett, "just enough".

Some of the machine's competitors, meanwhile, are either not as confident or not as content to sit on their laurels. Atari is to push its XE console on TV and despite not actually delivering too much as yet, fellow console manufacturers Nintendo and Sega continue to talk of their imminent invasion.

Regarding the C64's traditional competitors Barrett tactfully finds himself "not in a position to comment". He does, however, have a few words on the coming console challenge.

"There is a lot of hype surrounding the consoles but last year very little actually happened. Our one strong advantage over these people is that we already have a very strong software base and of course people are very familiar with the C64 and they trust it."

But surely the so far ludicrously high level of inactivity from firms such as Nintendo will prove impossible to maintain and Barrett admits that "one day they will become serious competition".

The latest addition to what could loosely be defined as competition for the 64 is Amstrad's Sinclair PC 200

range. Barrett describes the machines as "surprising and a little odd" adding that "everybody seems to be looking for a reason why they've done it." This is the closest a diplomatic Barrett will ever come to slamming the opposition.

So what of that foreign land the future. To Barrett it is a remarkably familiar place. "I have no doubt whatsoever that we will be selling the C64 for years to come, the product will definitely see the 1990s.

After such a rosy forecast it seems almost sacrilege to say it, but will this beast ever roll over and die? "I'm sure there will come a time when the C64 is not an obvious success and then we would simply stop run-

ning with it. We certainly wouldn't let it slowly bleed away."

So, as befits the computer version of an elder statesman, the C64's demise will be a painlessly short private execution rather than a messy drawn out public death.

For now though, rather than face its final curtain this Christmas the 64 will continue to play to packed houses and be popular with the public despite something of a savaging from the critics.

Indeed Commodore would like it to become the *Mousetrap* of the computer world. Maybe that is just a tad ambitious, but for now at least this one will run and run.



THE 64: Glittering prize or dusty has-been?

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AGENDA	
10.00	Registration
10.30	Introduction - John Weatherhead, Frontline.
10.40	Alan Solomon, IBM PC User Group - Opportunities in Communications.
11.30	Mike Hafferty - CCITT Standards and their significance.
12.00	Bob Jones - Micro to Mainframe Linking.
12.20	Costa Carofyllakis & Andy Sceats - High Speed Communications.
12.40	Mark Pearlstone - Single User Applications for Today.
1.00	Lunch, and viewing of manufacturers' stands.
2.00	Celebrity Guest.
2.30-4.00	Further opportunity to view manufacturers' stands.

laid on buffet.

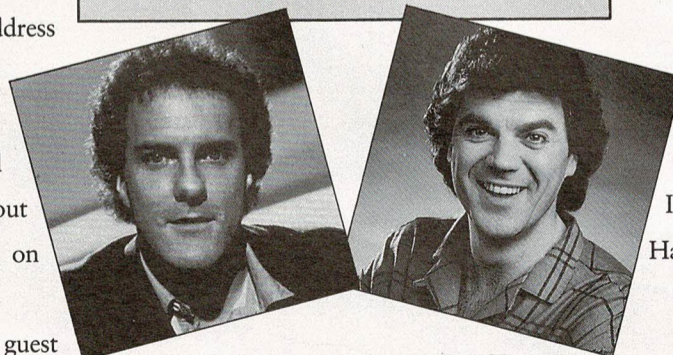
The first of these seminars is on Tuesday 11th October at the Empire Napoleon Room, Café Royal, 68 Regent Street, London, with the second on Thursday 13th October at The Royal Suite, Chateau Impney Hotel, Droitwich Spa, Worcs.

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WHITHER THE SINCLAIR PC?

A quantum leap backwards or the dawn of a new era? Amstrad recently unveiled its Sinclair Professional PC200 to a deafening roar of indifference. CIARAN BRENNAN asked Ocean, Telecomsoft, US Gold, MicroProse, Mirrorsoft, Martech and Domark what they think about the new games-pitched PC. And what does it all mean for the 8-bit market? ...



PC200: The publishers proselytise



Looking at the penetration of the PC in homes in the US, and the fact that there are now millions of two-PC homes, Amstrad's attempt to introduce the PC into the home as a games machine is a natural development for this industry in the way that it follows the States. The fact that it plugs directly into the TV gives a greater access to the home user.

"The games available are going to have a few limitations, but the fact that the machine can be used for so many different things makes it a good all rounder.

"Following the launch of US Gold in America last January, we are now committed to considerable PC development in Europe. This time last year we weren't producing PC software, but now we are - principally because of external markets - but now this product can also be useful at home."

How will it fare against the ST and Amiga?
"It's down to marketing and distribution. You're selling a workhorse as against something a lot more artistic with a different appeal - it's horses

for courses. Our research shows that the ST and the Amiga are sold to second generation purchasers, whereas the PC 200 will appeal to a different market."

Tim Chaney
Operations director
US Gold



come out on the 8-bit format, but what will come out will be good and what's not so good will come out on budget. It's a really solid base and it's being added to every year.

"Atari gets very excited about selling 50,000 STs, but Commodore sells over 100,000 C64s in this market at Christmas - and that's a lot of first time users."

Dominic Wheatley
Director
Domark

Continued on page 14

It's obviously not as good a games machine as either the ST or Amiga, and we're not sure exactly where Mr Sugar has positioned it, but it seems that he's going for the loyal Sinclair customer who wants to trade up. However, if a customer really wants to play games then he or she will go for an Amiga or an ST. If they're interested in doing a bit more on the home computing side and they're still brand loyal then they'll probably buy a PC 200.

"We're very pleased to witness any support for the IBM games market, because up until now machines in that market have been too highly priced for the home user. A machine which allows us to develop IBM software for markets other than the States is absolutely perfect for us."

What future is there for the 8-bit machines?

"Less titles will probably



WHEATLEY: Expect loyalty

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the business and education markets. On the 1st September, we launched our massive £6 million advertising campaign. And we've set up a new pricing system to ensure our computers stay really competitive in the run up to Christmas. But that's only half the story.



Commodore

WHITHER THE SINCLAIR PC?

Continued from page 12

Ciaran Brennan is currently deputy editor on consumer monthly *Your Sinclair*

Telecom Soft

"We've been publishing product suitable for the PC 200 in the States for the past two years, so we've already got a complete range that we can carry over. This machine also fits into our plans as we generally don't like to consider products unless we can get them on a minimum of six formats."

Will the machine's limitations cause you problems?

"What we're most proud of is publishing good quality product and that's why we originally enjoyed publishing on the ST and the Amiga, but sometimes with the IBM compatibles it's difficult to find product that you're really proud of publishing. There's no reason for people in Europe to buy average IBM product, they've got the ST and the Amiga. The American market hasn't had the huge success of the 16-bit market that we've had here in Europe that's why they're re-

liant on the IBM.

"I'm sure that Amstrad will sell it, they'll do a good marketing job and we'll publish product for it, but if this was purely a European publishing decision I'd be feeling much more wary. However, as it is we've got the product and the experience so we'll go ahead and do it."

Paula Byrne
Managing director
Telecomsoft



BYRNE: PC fits plans



"Personally, I think that this is the wrong machine at this point in time. CGA is going to be overshadowed by EGA and VGA, for entertainment software, I would have thought it was a bad move. CGA graphics just don't look good. If you want it for spreadsheets or as a database it's probably great, but for entertainment purposes I wouldn't touch it with a barge pole."

So where does the games market go from here?

"There'll be a gradual shift away from 8-bit. Already we're experiencing a greater revenue sales on 16-bit. And soon unit sales will be greater too. Come next year, new products will

probably be developed with 16-bit in mind and then we'll see what we can do with 8-bit."

"We were hoping that the Amiga and the ST were going to dominate the entertainment world but they haven't, particularly in America, so we have to go where people are developing hardware. The Sinclair name has still got a high profile, people will always buy the name - it sticks. Therefore the PC 200 will probably sell, but as a software developer it doesn't excite me at all."

David Martin
Managing director
Martech



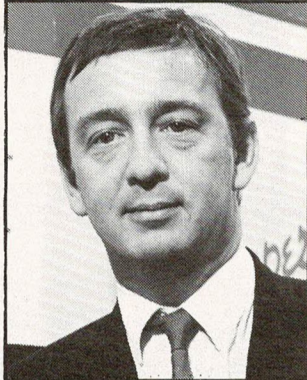
"MicroProse will be supporting the PC 200 specifically with new product. We want it to succeed because we believe that the PC is a good machine for the home, and to this end we will produce a range of original product at

£9.99 including, among others, Walt Disney and Sesame Street licences."

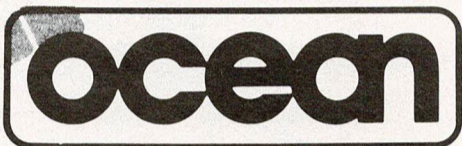
Who is the PC 200 aimed at? "We think that the person who buys this machine will be slightly above a yuppie - people with young kids. This may be the opportunity for educational or home-based learning software to take off."

"Obviously you're not going to get the best quality in the world with CGA. It's not going to succeed if he tries to sell it just as a games machine. It's interesting to see whether it will work - personally I think it's in the balance."

Stewart Bell
UK Managing director
MicroProse



BELL: Not just games



"There's no question that the fastest growing home computer in the world, whether it's technically better or not, is the PC compatible system. And although PCs are not dominant in any single market outside of the US, they are the only machine that exists everywhere."

Will the 3.5 inch format cause problems?

"If you're marketing for Tandy or Olivetti then you have to

manufacture a 3.5 inch disk anyway, and this is only a media thing there's no difference in the code."

Is this the right machine for the market?

"History has shown that it's very rare that the technical architecture of a machine makes it succeed. What makes success is good, efficient and innovative distribution. The Spectrum itself is a good example of this. Was that the

best 8-bit machine for playing games on? Probably not, but it succeeded nonetheless. Alan Sugar has the best distribution, so whether it's what everybody wants to see or what some individuals might think is the best way that history can progress isn't really the question."

"The only thing that gave me a slight pause for concern was when I saw the way this was being promoted, an old two letter phrase came to mind. It said to me... QL."

David Ward
Director
Ocean



"This machine will be suitable for both the home business user and the games player, so a lot of people who are thinking of upgrading are going to consider the potential advantages of PC compatibility. Due to Mirrorsoft's policy of producing software for worldwide markets we consistently attempt to produce PC versions of our software wherever possible. The fact that our American affiliates produce

large numbers of PC programs means that we're very well placed for the arrival of such a machine in the European market."

Has the Amstrad got the specifications and price right?

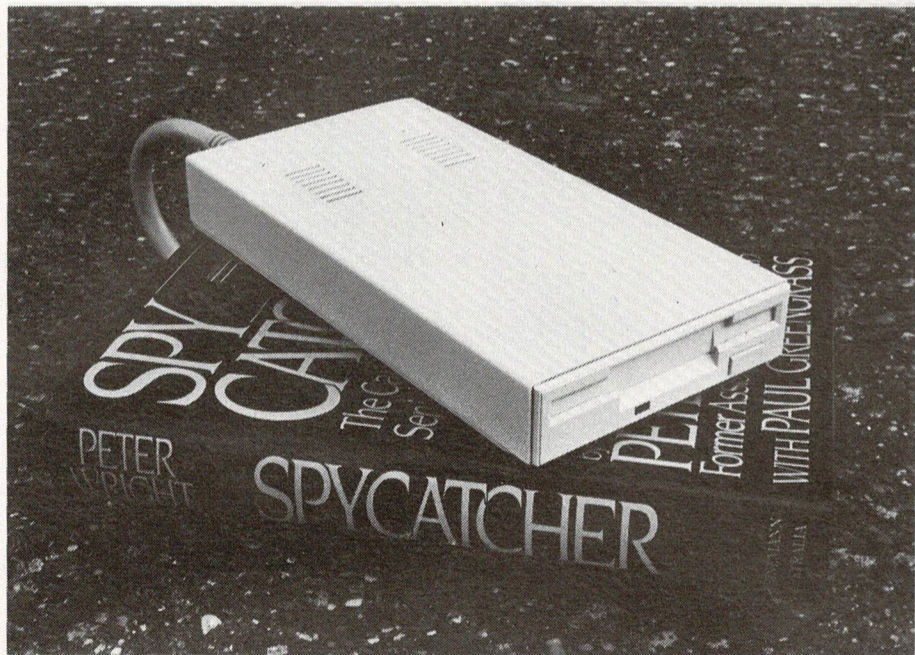
"Pricing policies for the new pieces of hardware are difficult to establish, so it's up to the market to say whether this machine is correctly priced or not. Certainly one of the most interesting things about the £299

machine is that it has a built-in modulator and plugs straight into the TV which is an area that hasn't really been explored before and is potentially quite an interesting development."

"The restriction to CGA isn't such a bad thing, as EGA packages are still the exception rather than the rule - also, the inclusion of two expansion slots means that Amstrad hasn't written off the possibility of people including their own EGA card at a later stage."

Peter Bilotta
Managing director
Mirrorsoft

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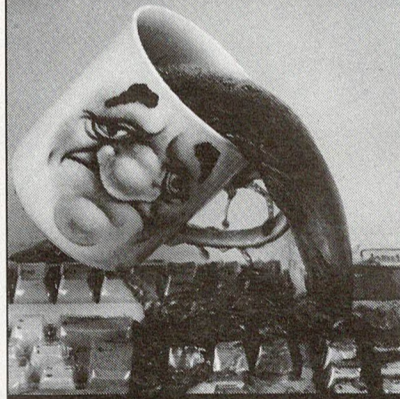
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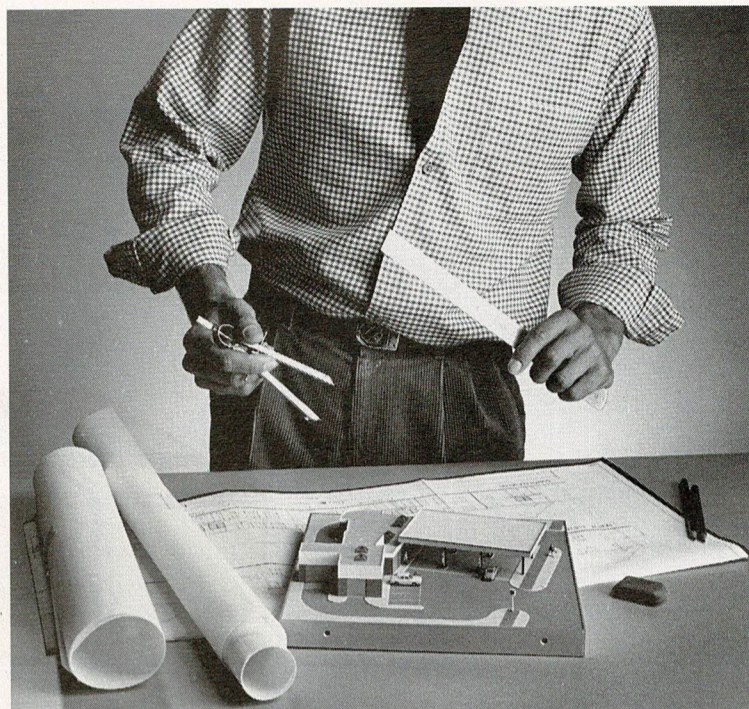
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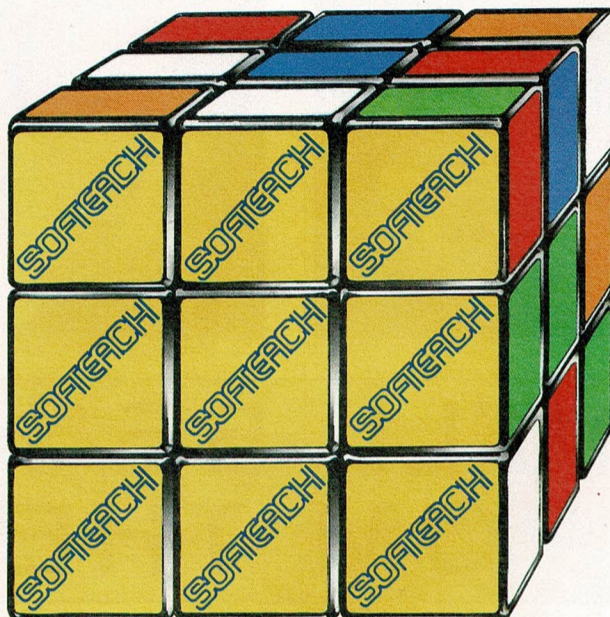


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SPECTRUM TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	3	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
2	7	DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPIC	OCEAN	9.95
3	27	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	7.95
4	12	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
5	17	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	25	ROAD BLASTERS	US GOLD	8.99
7	1	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
8	4	SKOOLDAZE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	NE	OVERLANDER	ELITE	7.99
10	33	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
11	8	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	1.99
12	10	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
13	6	TRACK SUIT MANAGER	GOLIATH	9.95
14	9	ACE	CASCADE	2.99
15	16	PETER BEARDSLEY'S FOOTBALL	GRAND SLAM	8.95
16	24	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
17	26	ON THE BENCH	CULT	1.99
18	14	FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
19	15	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
20	5	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99

C64 TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	9	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
2	6	TRACK SUIT MANAGER	GOLIATH	9.95
3	12	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
4	1	DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPIC	OCEAN	9.95
5	4	HAWKEYE	THALAMUS	9.95
6	3	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
7	32	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.95
8	RE	NINETEEN PART 1	CASCADE	9.95
9	8	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	21	SALAMANDER	IMAGINE	8.95
11	NE	GOLD SILVER AND BRONZE	US GOLD	14.99
12	NE	VINDICATES	OCEAN	6.95
13	11	PETER BEARDSLEY'S FOOTBALL	GRAND SLAM	9.95
14	2	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	2.99
15	10	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	1.99
16	10	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
17	RE	ALIEN SYNDROME	ACE	9.99
18	7	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
19	17	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99
20	13	ACE	CASCADE	2.95

AMSTRAD TOP 10

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	2	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.95
2	1	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.95
3	5	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
4	9	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
5		NEDALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPIC	OCEAN	9.95
6	4	ATV SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.95
7	3	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	1.95
8	10	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	14	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
10	6	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	3	SUPER HANG ON	ELECTRIC DREAMS	19.95
2	1	STOS GAME CREATOR	MANDARIN	29.95
3	2	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95
4	RE	ALIEN SYNDROME	ACE	19.99
5	4	LEADERBOARD BIRDIE	ACCESS-US GOLD	19.95

AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	5	MENACE	PSYCLAPSE	19.95
2	RE	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95
3	2	INTERCEPTOR	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
4	1	CARRIER COMMAND	RAINBIRD	24.95
5	RE	BARDS TALE	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

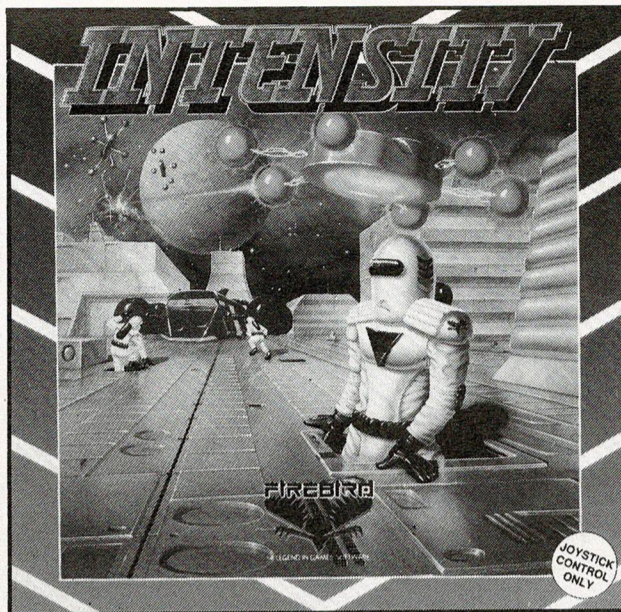
Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	43.2	45.4	45.0	45.5	24.3	31.6	29.5	31.1
COMMODORE 64	22.9	23.3	23.3	21.3	24.2	23.0	24.2	22.3
AMSTRAD	18.5	17.9	18.0	17.3	17.1	13.2	18.1	17.1
ATARI ST	4.0	3.4	3.2	4.7	1.1	3.5	7.1	8.2
AMIGA	3.6	2.4	1.5	2.1	1.1	4.7	4.2	3.2
COMMODORE 16	1.2	1.8	2.0	2.5	2.1	1.9	2.6	3.2
ATARI	1.2	1.3	0.9	0.5	1.1	2.2	2.9	1.3
BBC	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.3	2.1	2.2	3.6	3.3
ELECTRON	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.1	2.4	2.9	2.5

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
60	76	106	70

Soft options

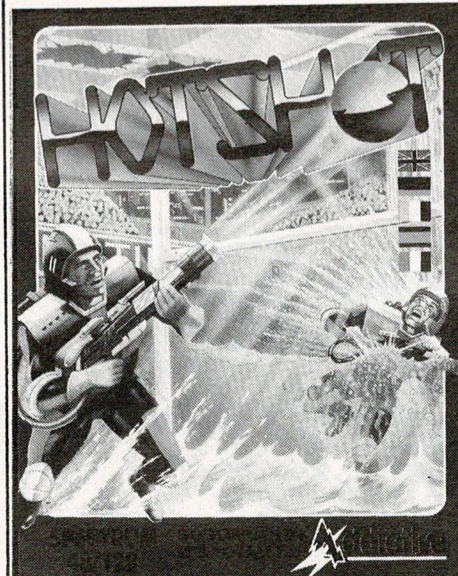
Soft Options carries salient details of leisure software just released or which are due to appear in the next few days. Software house wishing to be included should fax (0438 741247) or phone (0438 310185) through details prior to our publication date.



GREMLIN: *Artura* (Sp64AmST £9.99-£19.99) In Gremlin's latest arcade adventure offering the brummie bunch will whisk the unsuspecting player back to the fifth century, all for under twenty quid. The objective of this awe inspiring game is to carry out a rescue mission, saving an innocent soul from the clutches of an evil half sister. And by using the mystical wheel of Cerridwen (Birmingham, Wales, it's all north of Watford) the Universe can be saved. There's nothing like a bit of good old originality. **FIREBIRD:** *Intensity* (Sp64 — £7.95-£12.95) *Starglider 2* (STAg — £24.95) Hailed as another arcade classic from Andy Braybrook, Intensity is an apparently long awaited space shoot-em-up. It features little tinkers attacking a mining station causing untold grief and distress and once again the universe must be saved. After a fair deal of hype *Starglider 2* finally hits the streets with a deadly new mission to destroy the Egron army once and for all, which must surely mean no more sequels. It's got all the old excitement of interplanetary hops with the added bonus of blast slithering pac worms and animated 3D solid

graphics. **SILVERBIRD:** *Biggles* (Sp64Am-£1.99) *Dynamite Dan* (SpAm — £1.99) Two more licenses from Mirrorsoft for the Telecomsoft budget label, but can the inspiring *Biggles* and *Dynamite Dan* really set the market alight and further increase *Silverbird's* market share? **MASTERTRONIC:** *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* (SpAm — £1.99). A bit of dithering from *Mastertronic* here, will it be released this week, next week or some time never? These are the adolescent agonies of Adrian which should be experienced at a knock down price on the *Ricochet* label, eventually. **GRANDSLAM:** *Espionage* (SpAm64 — £8.95-£14.95) Following Gremlin in what looks set to be a new trend, Grandslam go for multi-marketing tactics with the board and computer game version of *Espionage*. You've read *Spy Catcher* (in America of course), so why not dabble in a bit of the cloak and dagger business. It must be marginally more exciting than constantly blasting peoples brains out, but then don't they do that too? **ELITE:** *Overlander* (64 — £9.99-£11.99) As the big boys battle it

out and the solicitors smack their lips with delight, *Overlander* spreads its undulating road on to the 64 format. **ADDICTIVE:** *Hotshot* (Sp64AmST — £7.99-£19.99) Addictive's first full price release since the mega successful *Football Manager 2*, and *Hotshot* will find it a hard act to follow. A futuristic sports simulation, no more, no less. Perfect for those who are just dying to attract a deadly plasma ball and become the neat pinball wizard, which must be a good few. **PALACE:** *Barbarian II* (64 — £9.99) Muscle-bound Barbarian and the well endowed Princess Mariana are back in this jazzed-up version with a few more monsters thrown in for good measure. Head hacking, blood spurting fun that will obviously be a biggy with a public that should never be over-estimated. **KIXX:** *10th Frame* (Sp64AmMSX — £2.99) The old US Gold game *10th Frame* rears its head, dated but dead cheap, should prove a hit with the under threes. **US GOLD:** *OutRun* (Ag — £19.99) *Pepsi Challenge Mad Mix Game* (64SpAmST — £7.99-£14.99) A major success for the mob at US Gold, the Amiga version of *OutRun* can only be a surefire winner. Tooth rotting fun with the *Pepsi Challenge Mad Mix Game* set rather surprisingly in the Pepsi village with the hero sporting the somewhat unfortunate name of Mad. Plenty of advertising with Pepsi certainly getting its money's worth and the added excitement of a chance to enter a free draw. **SUPERIOR SOFTWARE:** *Play It Again Sam 3* (BBCL — £9.99-£14.95) This latest compilation features a couple of classics with *Commando* and *Killer Gorilla*, and for the B side there's *Killer Gorilla 2* and *Palace of Magic*.



PLAY IT AGAIN SAM 3

COMMANDO
The Smash No. 1 Hit from EGA

PALACE OF MAGIC
A Superior Software Chart Topper!

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A Classic from Micro Power

KILLER GORILLA 2
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SUPERIOR SOFTWARE
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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.

US Gold/Elite: ad nauseum

As you may know our clients (US Gold) are publishers of two successful computer games known as *Roadblasters* and *OutRun*. Both these games involve a vehicle travelling on a road with the player manoeuvring the vehicle to avoid obstacles of various descriptions. In the *Roadblasters* game the vehicle is also armed with weapons.

Elite Systems Limited have recently brought out a similar game entitled *Overlander* and have run an advertisement in many computer and trade magazines including your own. For ease of reference we enclose a copy of that advertisement.

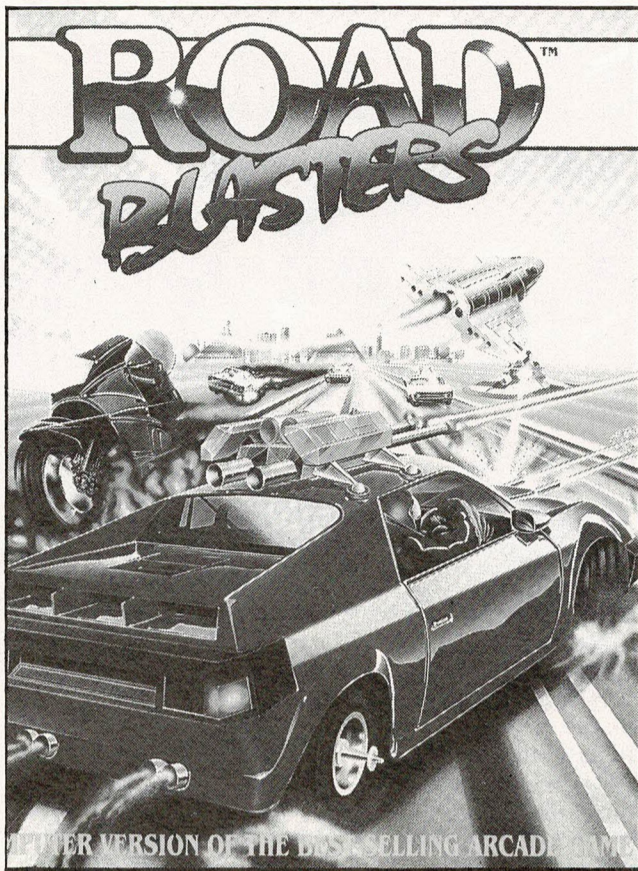
You will see that the advertisement is headed "The road game that blasts the way" which appears to be a deliberate attempt at associating Elite's game with that of our clients game *Roadblasters* in the minds of the public.

Furthermore, the advertisement contains a comparison table with various other games on the market including *Roadblasters* and *OutRun*. In summary it makes the following points:

1. That *OutRun* does not depict "stomach churning hills" or have first class reviews.
2. Opposite the phrase about first class reviews, the appropriate box for the *Roadblasters* game is marked "N/A" implying presumably that reviews are not available.
3. The *Overlander* game is stated to have first class reviews and "stomach churning hilly road".

The questions of the hills feature is perhaps of lesser importance but it should be noted that there is a similar hill feature in the *OutRun* game as in *Overlander*.

The question of the reviews is more significant. As far as we are aware from those we have seen, all three games referred to have received mixed re-



ROADBLASTERS: The Elite wrangle goes on, and on...

views. Some undoubtedly have been "first class" if that means very good, while others contained criticisms of certain aspects of the games. To imply that *Overlander* had received first class reviews, but not *OutRun*, is misleading to say the least. Further, good reviews for *Roadblasters* have appeared before the advertisement in question was last published and certainly were available for comment.

We have referred the above points to Elite and their solicitors but they have not accepted the points we have made nor agreed to change the advertisement.

Our next step will be to refer the matter to the Director General of Fair Trading pursuant to the control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations 1988. He has powers under the Regulations to seek an injunction and an order for

costs against "any person appearing to him to be concerned or likely to be concerned with the publication of the advertisement". This would obviously include your company.

The purpose of this letter is therefore to put you on notice of the present situation. In the event that Elite requests you to run the advertisement again we would suggest that you require them to make amendments particularly to delete the inaccurate representations and also the heading "The road game that blasts the way".

In default we reserve the right to refer the matter to the Director General without first contacting your company. This is also without prejudice to any other civil rights that our clients might have.

Yours faithfully
Needham James
US Gold solicitors

— A publisher writes.

It may be of interest to Needham & James, and indeed to the posses of lawyers employed by other companies active in this industry, that advertisements booked into CTW are published on the understanding that the client company comprehends and is party to this company's Advertisement Terms and Conditions.

Clause 4 reads: "The advertiser specifically indemnifies the publisher against, and warrants that, the advertisement does not contravene any Act of Parliament."

Inherent, therefore, in the placing of the ad about which Gold's solicitors are whingeing at length, is Elite's belief that it does not contravene any Act of Parliament, this belief would appear to be upheld by Elite and its (?) solicitors who, according to Needham & James, "have not accepted the points we have made nor agreed to change the advertisement."

Furthermore, clause 5 states that "the advertiser specifically indemnifies the publisher against any claim whatsoever arising from the publication of the advertisement," which basically means that should the argument be proved one way or another CTW itself will not be financially damaged by the outcome.

But at present what does seem to be being damaged is the reputation of two leading, and supposedly mature, software houses seen squabbling in public over, amongst other things, whether a two dimensional computer game has got 'stomach churning hilly roads.'

It's my guess that the grown-up retailers in the market find the whole thing stomach churning.

Tom Stock
Publisher
CTW

More PC Show blues

I'm writing with a few comments on the PC Show: no doubt you're sick of reading others, but what the hell, have some more.

On the first day, things were looking pretty bleak already. One PR person told me that they thought the show was "a bit flat": certainly it was, since there were no multi-storey stands or balcony displays à la Olympia.

Strolling around the leisure hall revealed the fact that there was almost nothing new as all the major companies seemed to be showing pre-production copies or just videos of their forthcoming releases. Once more, the arcade machines were there in their multitudes. Why? Since the computer versions of any games are invariably less impressive than their arcade cousins (just look at *OutRun*) it would seem pretty stupid to make such a fuss over the arcade version.

And, even more so this year, the public days were swarming with armies of freebie-grab-

bers, all donning hats, plastered with stickers and laden with carrier bags by the time they leave. Are these really the type we want at the major computer show of the year? I'd be interested to know just how many of these sweating hordes will actually buy the real computer versions of the arcade games they played on the stands.

This leads me on to the main point of the letter. The "trade" days are a complete farce. Anyone can get a complimentary ticket for the first two days, and the "over 18 only" rule certainly isn't applied with any force. In fact, I'd be surprised if the organisers turned anyone away from the trade days for being under age.

Security isn't nearly tight enough during the rest of the show either. After an exhibitor's reception on the Thursday, we saw only one security guard on our way out of Earls Court at around 9 o'clock, and he was too drunk to keep a close eye on anything. Some of

the arcade machines were either left on, or switched on again as the noise was clearly heard. I hear that a master tape was stolen from one of the stands that night. After the show closed on Sunday, I had a "invaluable camera pinched from my stand, again with no security in sight."

The games industry seems to be moving to later and later Christmas releases: last year, *OutRun* was released on the 10th December, and I hear of a few other early December releases for this Christmas.

So, it seems that the logical step would be to hold the show later in the year: mid-late November, say. I believe a separate show should be held in September/October for dealers and other trade, obviously at a smaller venue. This would allow companies to skip all the crap with huge, expensive stands obviously aimed at the public and try to appeal direct to the trade. The public show could then be limited to "central" and "leisure" and easily

squeezed into Olympia.

Whatever happens, I doubt if the PC Show can continue for long in its present form.

Yours sincerely
Ewan Dalton
Vice President
Federation of Small
Computer Magazines

— This is certainly not one of the most enthusiastic responses to the show we've received. The arguments about lack of security to many non trade visitors on trade days arise every year.

Unfortunately, there will always be something stolen and there will always be a number of implausible spotty freelance journalists and programmers scoring on the quiet trade days.

Generally though, most would agree that there was a visible improvement this time around — that possibly saying more about how bad it was last year than how good it was at Earls Court.

As for the desire for a separate trade show, Montbuild has already partly admitted defeat by lining up its own with the rather inconspicuous BMF.

CTW itself feels there's a need for a dedicated trade show and its own "discussions" are in full swing. Watch this space...

All that glistens

I would be grateful for the opportunity to make some comments with regard to your article "Just as Good as Gold" (CTW September 1988) and the US Gold Star dealerships.

1. The apparent suggestion that US Gold are the only people to be supplying POS material (and that's only because they can afford it now they have cut margins) does not stand up and is an insult to other software houses and distributors. I would agree that a couple of years ago this would have been the case, but these days we sometimes feel we are drowning in posters, display material, stickers, cardboard stands etc, etc. (please don't stop though, we do appreciate it).

Other software houses seem to manage this without slashing our margins and increasingly have reps on the road just to promote their products and distribute POS. Even the distributors are beginning to pull their weight now, ensuring that POS material is packed with orders and running promotional schemes of their own — e.g. Microdealer with their excellent Cover-Up scheme. 2. We would definitely not want to take US Gold's complete range. No one would argue that their good material is very good, but a great deal of it is quite mediocre. To take the lot would push some better products by other companies off our shelves — commercial lunacy in the busy autumn period when it is hard enough to find shelf space for all the good stuff being released.

3. Without doubt we would much rather forego SOR in return for our margins back. Our stock control is entirely computerised on a system developed in-house. We have two excellent prime distributors, one of whom gives us same day delivery. We also have an efficient and well-informed retail manager. Quite frankly, overstocking is just not a problem.

I find it hard to believe that many dealers in the computer industry could have failed to

computerise themselves and therefore surely many of them would be in the same position.

4. We have, as promised, greatly reduced the number of US Gold titles we are stocking. We have not noticed any loss of sales, in fact, our turnover continues to increase.

5. The mail order issue, apparently the excuse for the whole shebang, raises its head again. I wouldn't just like to repeat that we are unable to discern any effect whatsoever of mail order discounting on our leisure software. In any event as long as there are margins there will be discounters. Discounting is only a problem with business software and effects sales of software carrying a unit price of over £200.

Finally, what about those who are not one of the 100 Star dealerships? As far as I can see all they are getting from the deal is reduced margins and advertising for their competitors.

Yours sincerely
Caroline Picking
Soft-ly, Milton Keynes
P.S. Please CTW just for a change do you think you could get our name right.

— The "what about those who are not one of the 100 Star dealerships" question is simply answered. They will have to continue trying to sell US Gold product — is they decide to stock it in the first place — making less money.

But Gold isn't the only one. Mediagenic's new almost direct system means that retailer margins are negotiated with Microdealer with the decisive factor being volume commitment. Those small outlets trying to keep selling software in smaller towns and villages will find they're buying price higher than the big city stores.

This is a trend that's set to continue. The 'elite dealers' idea is already up and running and widely accepted in the business market.

Gold's move may be the first of this kind, but it's unlikely to be the last.

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Olivetti figures squeezed

Olivetti last week reported a 24 per cent drop in first half pre-tax profits — despite a 16 per cent rise in sales.

The poor figures follow a 29 per cent drop in profits during the whole of 1987. Late last week Olivetti chairman Carlo De Benedetti was expected to try and allay worries about the figures by announcing a major corporate re-shuffle at the firm.

Olivetti claims that the decline in pre-tax profits from L224.7bn in first half 1987 to L171.3bn (£73 m) this year "reflects a tightening in operating margins which, in many ways, is characteristic of the information technology industry at large."

Konix consoles

Continued from front page lines, the Navigator, Predator and Megablasters are all similarly idiosyncratic in style.

The Konix console will be rolled out to retailers in around August to give them time to get to know the product before the busy autumn season.

Any link with Flair Technology's Flair 1 console — which has been doing the rounds as a prototype for over a year — has been ruled out. It was thought to be too full of components and more suited to full arcade applications.

Leisure

Continued from front page ing everything back for one big splurge.

Indeed, Gremlin, Mediagenic/Activision and Ocean itself are all planning at least one major launch in January. Compared to this, Novagen — which usually releases a couple of titles a year — is releasing six new games prior to Christmas.

"It would be nice to see a few more releases during the summer and a few less in the winter," commented Stuart Garret of Portsmouth outlet GB Microland. "There was a lot of consumer money swashing around in the summer and we couldn't really cash in."

One merchandising firm also noted to CTW that it is having to turn down promotional projects at the moment, whilst it was "crying out" for product a few months ago.

Ginty pointed out that this year the problem of over-releasing was highlighted by the PC Show — a natural unveiling event — being later in the year.

"I just don't understand the logic of some software houses. Next year it will be worse because the show's even later."

USD

Continued from front page ware market we don't really need to take anything else on."

Console rival Nintendo was known to have been in contact with USD, but it would appear that any possibility of a tie-up has now disappeared as a result of the Sega deal.

"I think it's important for dealers to know what we're doing with the Sega on a regular basis," offered Mastertronic director Geoff Heath to CTW.

Tronics lose out to Alternative Gallup

After dominating the open market charts for most of the summer Alternative now also tops the total market share chart.

The total market chart includes outlets that have exclusive deals with publishers. The main benefactor from this scheme has traditionally been Mastertronic due to

its higher than average quota of exclusive contracts, usually with multiples.

Now, though, Alternative has gained the top spot in pretty conclusive style. Its lead over Mastertronic is six per cent after trailing by a point in the previous week.

Boss Roger Hulley was "terrifically pleased" with the figures but did concede that

the lead in the total market share would be difficult to maintain. He also claimed that this is the first time any firm but Mastertronic has been top of the total share chart.

He continued: "A lot of firms have got a lot of good product coming up but, we've got some great titles due and we're determined to hang in there as long as possible."



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Screen shots from Atari ST version



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