

Paris megashow takes on games

FRANCE — Further proof of the games industry's emergence in France has come with the introduction of a dedicated pavillion at one of the largest events on the Paris show calendar.

The Foire de Paris is a giant multi-concept exhibition. Last year, it attracted over one million visitors, and gained 12 hours of TV broadcasts and re-transmissions.

This year's exhibition will take place from April 29th to May 10th. Some 850 journalists from all parts of the media will be kept informed, whilst the overall marketing budget has been set at some 15 million francs (£1.5m).

The Video Games and Computer Pavillion will be located in Hall No.1, which already covers leisure sectors as diverse as tourism and sport. This area alone attracted 650,000 visitors last year.

Pressimage — publisher of games mag *Generation 4* — is handling the organisation of the new area, and exhibitors are currently being sought.

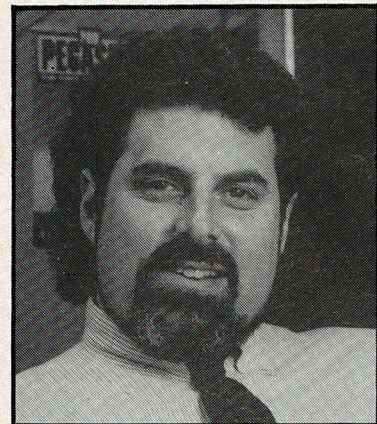
Any firm wanting more details should call Antoine Harmel on Paris (1) 45 22 38 60.

EA Polishes up its export act

POLAND — Electronic Arts is to become the first games label to carry out a fullscale investigation into the fledgling Polish market.

Having successfully exported limited units for the past few months, the firm is now keen to find out just what can be achieved in a territory with an established base of machines and, importantly, a high TV set penetration.

Whilst the C64 has been the dominant home machine for some time, EA wants to hit the estimated 500,000 PC owners and 60,000-100,000 Amiga users.



LEWIS: Taking Pole position

As well as analysing distribution methods and retail potential, EA is to test market Polish language manuals. It already produces dedicated English, French, German, Italian and Spanish manuals for its floppy products.

EA's European boss Mark Lewis expects the first game with dedicated Polish manual to be released in the second quarter of this year.

Currently the average Amiga or PC title sells 3-4,000 units in Poland, but EA hopes that this can rapidly increase. Retail prices of around £12 (Amiga) and £15 (PC) are positioned just above the street price for pirated titles.

Genie emerges in Europe

Full European distribution has been put in place for the **Game Genie** — one of the outstanding successes in the US video game market last year.

The Codemasters-designed game enhancer (or "cheating device") only gained national distribution Stateside in October,



EUROPE DREAMS OF GENIE: A hit here too?

following a legal wrangle with Nintendo. Astonishingly, it then went on to sell over a million units before Christmas — becoming the fifth best-selling toy in retail sale dollars during November, according to Toy Retail Store Tracking Service.

Having handled the product so adeptly in the US, toy firm Lewis Galoob picked up the Western

Europe rights (CTW January 20th), and has now appointed its agents for the various territories.

Hornby has picked up distribution in the UK, and it is here that the product will probably arrive first. Availability will then spread via deals with Gi-Gi (Italy), Lansay (France), Famosa (Spain), the delightfully named Lollipop (Scandinavia), KE Mathiasen (Denmark) and Otto Simon (Germany and Benelux).

Apparently, all the European distributors have had full access to the history of the Nintendo legal battle that first prohibited Galoob from launching the product into the US, and all are subsequently confident that they can avoid similar problems in their own countries.

Every territory should have the product by the middle of the year, leading with the NES version — which allows the customisation of some 300 games. This should be followed fairly swiftly by a Sega-approved Megadrive version.

Virgin seeks French connection

FRANCE — Virgin Games will set up a French base later this year, as the firm attempts to shake off its historical UK bias.

The firm has pinpointed France as one of two export territories where sales can be massively increased, and therefore warrant their own operation — the other being Japan.

"I anticipate us going into France within six to nine months," explained Virgin Games' European managing director Tim Chaney to CTW Europe.

"Traditionally, our European sales have not been that hot, we've sold well in the UK but in other territories we've never really got it together. The easy, and honest, explanation is that for three years we were buried by the Sega business.

"All the investment went there, and everyone knows the results. There's never been anyone on our

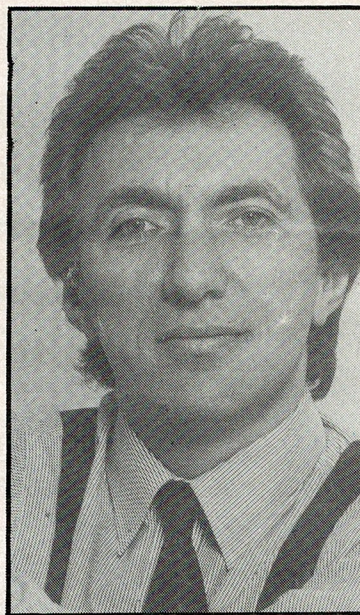
staff with enough European experience to put things rights."

Virgin intends to close the chasm between its European business and successful US arm — which makes up some 75 per cent of overall turnover at present.

This will be aided by the imminent launch of its first console product in Europe, across all Sega formats. Chaney hopes that once France is fully up and running, the territory will contribute some 35 per cent of all Virgin's European console business and around 20 per cent of floppy sales. Currently, it only provides 10 per cent of total Euro revenue.

The firm will look to set up a French office in order to "drive the business". This could well be within one of the Paris premises already under the control of Virgin's retail and record divisions.

Virgin Games has tried numerous different routes into the French marketplace — with a UBI



CHANEY: French office looms

Soft marketing and distribution deal running at present.

SNES — Germany in September?

GERMANY — Nintendo's 16-bit Super NES machine may not arrive in Germany until September.

So far no official word has come from Nintendo regarding German availability, but it has been stated that any launch will come after UK distribution begins in May (CTW Europe January).

German sources now expect the machine to arrive at the very tail end of the summer. This view has been backed up by the manufacturer's decision not to show the Super NES at the Nuremberg Toy Fair (February 7th-12th). A September launch would then mirror the successful introduction of the Gameboy handheld in 1990.

Nintendo is apparently unconcerned by any grey imports problem emanating from the UK. It expects that English games will not run on German systems, as is the case with the NES.

TV salutes Kid's success

FRANCE — After a successful trial, French computer and video games show *Micro Kid's* has been given a six month extended run — and is now targeting a viewing audience of up to 1.5 million.

The programme was given its chance back in September, on the Government-run national TV station FR3. A 13 minute weekly spot was initially authorised only until Christmas, but the viewing response has apparently beaten all expectations.

A 20 minute show is currently set to run until June, with the running time expected to increase to 26

minutes shortly. It goes out at 5pm on Wednesdays, and has also won a repeat showing on Sunday mornings.

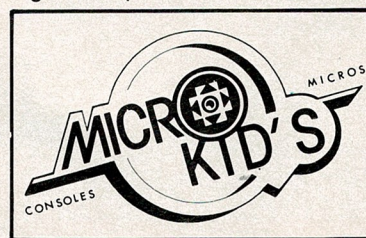
Micro Kid's was largely the brainchild of Jean-Michel Blottiere, editor-in-chief of Groupe Editions Mondiales' leisure titles — such as *Tilt* and *Consoles Plus*.

The show is currently hitting over 750,000 viewers aged eight to sixteen, but Blottiere believes this could double by June.

Catering for both the consoles and home computer markets, *Micro Kid's* features gaming play-offs, reviews and interviews with 'professionals' such as games designers, musicians, journalists and company representatives.

"I am not really surprised by the success, but the channel is," Blottiere told CTW Europe. "It was difficult to explain to them that video games exist in such a big way."

"There are three million consoles in France, and TV is a very, very good complement to the magazines already covering the market."



Gamers gears up with TV launch

GERMANY — The first independent Sega-only consumer magazine has just been launched in Germany, backed by largescale TV advertising.

Little known Hamburg outfit MVL published the first issue of the bi-monthly on January 25th. Called *Gamers*, it is full colour, retails at Dm5 (£1.80), covers Master System, Megadrive and Game Gear and boasts a 125,000 print run.

It is currently being pushed on TV via 200 new ad spots placed by Sega Germany, which mention the title's arrival. They are running on RTL Plus, Sat 1, Pro 7 and Tele 5, with Sega also planning promotion in its upcoming catalogues and at the Nuremberg Toy Fair, which kicks off on Friday (February 7th).

Further marketing activities include a direct mailshot to 100,000 console games buyers.

Gamers is being run by Rudiger Limbach, who founded MVP two years ago after stints with Gruner & Jahr and Jahreszeiten-Verlag.

Despite Sega's marketing support, he is keen to stress the title's independence: "An experienced team is writing the reviews, and they are very strict," he told CTW Europe.

Master System drops to DM149

GERMANY — Sega has cut 25 per cent off the price of the Master System.

Just after Christmas, the base package fell by DM50 (£18) to just DM149 (£52) — retaining its bundled copy of *Alex Kidd*.

A new DM199 (£70) package has been introduced, however, which has the added attraction of, you guessed it, *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

The moves are being supported by a new series of Master System TV ads, which have been running since late January.

Attic reveals its Dark RPG secret

GERMANY — Growing publisher Attic is hoping to improve its international profile, after signing up Germany's leading RPG board game.

The Albstadt, near Stuttgart, firm is planning to release a series of products based around *Das Schwarze Auge (The Dark World)*, in a similar vein to SSI's successful AD&D activities.

The first game will be called *Blade of Destiny* and is being designed in co-operation with the inventors of the original board game. It will appear in its home territory on Amiga, ST and PC around Easter time.

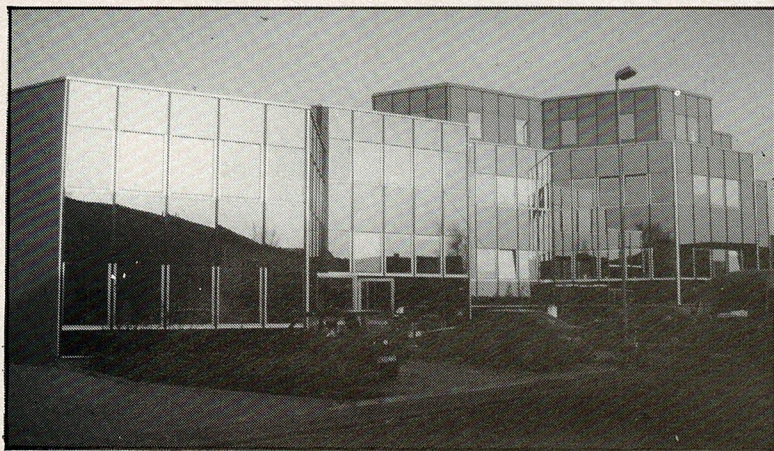
Attic's boss, Guido Henkel, claims that the game system will actually be more detailed than most existing RPG titles, with wide ranging appeal. He is confident of success outside Germany, with the international rights currently up for grabs.

Besides *Dark World*, Attic is also developing a science fiction RPG based on the novels of Perry Rhodan — whose works are apparently selling around 300,000 copies a week in Germany.

CTW EUROPE: RAINBOW ARTS, DUSSELDORF

STATE OF THE ARTS

Rainbow Arts is a typical European games firm that holds a strong position in its own country, if not abroad. DONALD MAPLE visited the firm for some inside information, and the current state of traditional home computer formats in Germany.



SPACE QUEST: Rainbow Arts' brand new offices just outside Dusseldorf

In spite of being a major economic power Germany is not often seen as a big player in the entertainment industry. However, as several Tuetic software houses have already proven, this is a mistaken notion.

You'll find many a German product if you only scratch the surface of some of those Anglicized names — used partially to facilitate access to a worldwide market (dominated by English) and partially because they sound chic. One such software house is Rainbow Arts.

Situated in brand new offices near the city of Dusseldorf, the company was founded in 1986 as one of the first to start developing entertainment software in Germany. The company has been doubling turnover every year since its inception and currently employs 27 full time people.

The number of freelance programmers varies, but there are about 50 of them engaged at any one time. We sat down with Marc Ullrich (founder) and Kristin Dodt (marketing manager) to have a few words about life, the universe and everything.

Let's start with "everything". Rainbow Arts is actually a part of a group. Its parent company, Softgold (founded in 1985) is a sales and marketing umbrella for Rain-

bow Arts (of which it owns 100 per cent) and its sister developer Reline (with a 50 per cent share). The latter was acquired in 1988 because of its impressive successes in the local German Market. Softgold also publishes Lucasfilm, SSI, and New World Computing products.

Softgold and Rainbow Arts were founded independently of each other but, due to a major expansion and co-operation, they first "moved in together" sharing office accommodation, and then decided to "get married".

The distribution, however, is done by Rushware. Confused? I was, but the bottom line is that in Germany the group is a heavyweight and if you do business here you come across them sooner or later. The parent company Softgold has 16 per cent of the total German market or, as Ullrich puts it, "every seventh game sold in Germany is ours!" This makes them the largest in Germany.

It's important to differentiate between the distribution in the UK and Germany.

"In the UK a distributor is a warehouse with products going in today and out tomorrow, while a specialised agency does sales and marketing. In Germany, on the other hand, a distributor is a com-

bination of both. This is why a German distributor is given the exclusive distribution rights since nobody wants to do the sales and marketing if there are other distributors handling the same product," explained Ullrich.

"This is changing slowly, and there are already distributors dealing with the independents but this isn't really a conflict of interest," added Dodt.

Rainbow Arts currently has an exclusive contract with Rushware and, according to Ullrich, for the time being it is very happy with it.

Asked about East Germany, Ullrich was very optimistic. "A very interesting market! There are many more machines than we expected. Even before the wall came down many kids and students got a computer as a present from their relatives in the West. After the unification, many department stores opened branches in East Germany which automatically expanded our business.

"In the beginning, East Germany was a very strong budget market — C64 and Amigas. But now they are buying PCs as well."

Dodt pointed out an interesting aspect of selling to East Germany. "They rely on the magazines a lot! When you know computer games

SOFTGOLD/RAINBOW ARTS GREATEST HITS

Turrican I
Turrican II
Oil Imperium

SOFTGOLD MARKET BREAKDOWN (TURNOVER)

By format:	
Amiga	40%
PC	36%
C64	18%
Others	6%

By price:	
Full price	90%
Budget	10%

it's easy for you to make a decision on what to buy. But these guys don't have that experience, so they read the reviews in *Power Play*, *ASM* or *Amiga Joker* (German magazines) and if you have good reviews its 100 per cent sure you'll sell that product in East Germany."

Ullrich again: "Another interesting point about East German consumers is that they are fascinated by high profile brand names. And for this reason, they moved quite quickly into the full price range of the market. The budget titles are still strong, but full price is catching up fast and in terms of turnover share it's expanding rapidly."

Role of honour

The most popular game category in Germany is clearly role playing followed by adventures, and then simulations. Marc projects that this will remain so for at least one or two years.

"Role playing is a brand new category in Germany and it has only been available in German for about a year. It's just becoming a mass market product now. I can't see any other brand new game category appearing. Everything has already been invented! So I expect the order by category to remain the same."

Both Marc and Kristin agree, however, that there will always be a market for original games that do not fit into any category such as *Lemmings* or *Populous*.

Speaking of *Lemmings*, the PCs march on. Ullrich believes that the PC will overtake Amiga sales in the first quarter of 1992.

"The Germans are very conservative. They buy computers for serious use like filing things and such. But the market is changing. The customers now realise that there are sophisticated games around which don't have to be violent. We are opening a totally new market consisting of older PC owners."

"And younger," added Dodt, "especially because of the consoles. When a kid wants a console, daddy buys a PC instead. This is because you then have something you can use for education later on. And the PCs are so cheap now."

Ullrich expects the Amiga to continue for another year at current levels and then start declining. C64 will turn into a purely budget

machine, but still an important part of the market. "C64 is the only machine for which the dealers are willing to stock the software even after they stop selling the hardware. ST on the other hand... as soon as they stopped selling the hardware they also stopped selling the software. That's the main reason why the ST software sales plummeted. Commodore did it correctly by creating the Amiga 500 as a strictly console type machine."

On the perennial subject of piracy Ullrich noted: "It's very simple. Take *Winter Games* for example — the all time Number 1. It sold less than 100,000 copies at a time when there were some 1.1 million C64s, and I would say 900,000 of those had a copy of *Winter Games*."

"But the piracy problem is less important in the PC market. The target group is older and does not have access to the piracy channels and swapping parties. Piracy is a typical Amiga and C64 problem." Dodt added that she thinks piracy is here to stay. "There's no way to prevent an Amiga kid from using a pirate copy. How? Especially in Germany. There are so many good hackers here and it only takes them one day to crack a game."

"The only way to fight piracy is with service," added Ullrich. "We have detailed manuals, free hotline number staffed with well trained people, a quick faulty disk exchange service..."

And what does the future hold for Rainbow Arts? "Peripherals. It's a very nice synergy for us. We can easily bundle any accessory necessary for playing games — such as a mouse, a joystick or a sound card. We have access to inexpensive hardware and we can create very competitive packs such as joysticks with games, or a sound card with speakers, and so on."

PC-Soundman, the firm's latest product is exactly that. In addition to an AdLib compatible PC sound card, the customer also gets the headphones, a couple of active speakers, software, and a couple of games to boot.

"Germany is one of the strongest PC markets in Europe but it's still not strong enough to set standards or be the market leader. Even Europe as a whole is not strong enough for that. I see Europe following the market for at least the next two years, while the standards are being set in the US. □

CTW EUROPE: ARTGAME, HUNGARY

APPETITE FOR CONSTRUCTION

As Hungary finds its footing in the 'new' Europe, so a Budapest firm called Artgame is attempting to join the ranks of European games developers. Its first game, *Abandoned Places*, has won the approval of Electronic Zoo. ASHLEY COTTER-CAIRNS reports...

As the cloak of Communism slips from the shoulders of Eastern Europe, its countries are emerging into a harsh world of competition, armed only with their raw skills and plain old fashioned naivety.

Prime targets for exploitation then. Indeed, when Artgame — a group of Dungeons and Dragons enthusiasts-turned-programmers — approached Electronic Zoo, it had no idea what the market wanted, nor how much it could offer them in return.

Stewart Bell, boss of Electronic Zoo, remembers the initial contact with amusement: "Artgame sent us a load of puzzle games which were like *Tetris*, only without the addiction factor. We, as kindly as we could, told them that they weren't quite what we were after."

"Then we loaded up *Abandoned Places*. Instantly, I knew that this was where their hearts really were. It was superb. We signed them up

on the spot — I didn't want them to show this stuff to anyone else."

Zoo's Diarmid Clarke then spent a week in Hungary, doing the groundwork to make the outfit more professional. As the firm's technical advisor, Tony Bickley, explains: "It's Diarmid's project really. He'd kill me if I stole the limelight. He came here and asked them what they wanted in the way of equipment. In fact, that was about as much payment as they wanted, because equipment here is hard to get and very expensive."

"I advised Stewart to get a

modern for them and another for us. Now we communicate by phone, sending the new versions of the game through the modem. It's a faster and more reliable way of keeping up with how the developments are going."

Comms things for those who wait

The East-West marriage has had its rocky moments, though, particularly in the early days.

"We had trouble with com-

munication," Bell explains. "They were telling us one thing and we assumed they meant another. I suppose we went around in circles for a while. Then Diarmid and Tony sorted out the equipment and comms situation and, while both sides still weren't quite sure what was going on, at least we could find out that much quicker."

Payment was also a sticky issue. If Zoo had gone for the Hungarians' throats and paid them Hungarian wages (poverty is rife in a country where the population pays 70 per cent tax and inflation runs at 30 per cent) it would have been accused of cashing in on their inexperience.

As it happens, Zoo provided the equipment requested and is paying a "compromise" between UK and Hungarian rates — plus royalties. Both sides seem happy enough, for now at least.

Of course, a lot hinges on whether the product makes it in our market. This is not the first time that a foreign 'discovery' has made it to the UK and, if this one fails, well, that won't be a first either.

But *Abandoned Places* is a cut above many of its ilk, combining *Ultima*-style wilderness wandering with the 3D *Dungeon Master*-type underground scenes. It's also got high quality graphics and all the

bells and whistles that the British punter on the street demands.

It deserves to be at least a minor success, and Zoo is certainly confident — thus, it is putting some extra promotional effort in.

Indeed, the firm has already decided that it would prefer its relationship with Artgame to be long-term rather than casual.

"We get on alright with the guys," says Bell fondly. "They like us and we like them. The booze is cheap — what more could you want?"

Publishing will remain outside Hungary, however, with little chance of a market developing there for some time.

"It's just not worth it. There's only a few thousand Amigas here, and no copyright laws. We'll stick to launching what they write for us into traditional territories."

Real mass volumes for *Abandoned Places* may be unlikely, especially considering that this is a product in a vertical market, handled by a UK outfit currently lacking the muscle of, say, a Mindscape or EA.

But any degree of success, plus a healthy smattering of acclaim, could send the software house scouts sniffing around Eastern Europe with rather more verve than ever before. □

CTW FACTSHEET: ABANDONED PLACES

Style: RPG
Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Developer: Artgame
Release Date: Available now on Amiga (1Mb), PC in March
Price: Amiga £29.99, PC £34.99
Features: Three sub-plots, 70 minute music soundtrack, all control options on one screen, 35 different dungeons

CTW EUROPE: SEGA

DO THE CONTINENTAL

The last issue of *CTW Europe* sketched the Nintendo map of Europe, detailing household penetration of the company's two systems, the NES and Game Boy. The conclusion? Despite undoubted success thus far, Europe is still wide open to further exploitation. In this issue JON SALISBURY completes the second part of the video game equation with a closer look at Sega's Europe...

No wonder Europe's video game distributors are smiling. Just listen to the recent experience of Sega Europe's boss, Nick Alexander:

"In just one day before Christmas we generated sales of £2.5 million in Europe. Four years ago our worldwide sales were only £4.5 million!" By anyone's reckoning, that is spectacular progress.

Sega's platform in Europe was first built on the 8-bit Master System. It was a steady rather than spectacular start to life but, while Nintendo began to boom in the likes of France, Sega was never far behind, establishing a solid franchise in most territories and even managing to become market leader in the UK.

The launch of the 16-bit Megadrive helped to propel Sega

into the big time, and an image gelled in consumers' minds that Sega was the discerning video game player's first choice. If you wanted the ultimate in video game play, Sega claimed, then there really was no competition. "Taking the technological high ground," is how Nick Alexander describes it.

That success gave Sega the confidence to purchase Virgin Mastertronic, its distributor in key territories, thus creating a Sega Europe identity, and it has been upward and onward ever since.

Sega Europe now controls directly its interests in Spain, the UK, France, Austria and Germany. Distributors are used in other areas like Greece, Portugal, Italy, Scandinavia and Benelux. A greater proportion of Sega's European sales are run by the company itself

than is the case with Nintendo.

"1991 was an extraordinary year for the Megadrive — it took us and the fans by surprise," continues Alexander.

Over 200,000 units were sold in the UK, 150,000 in France and a further 255,000 throughout the rest of Europe to create a formidable installed base. Availability has been the problem but, so critical was it to ensure that players got their machines, Sega Europe had the confidence to lay on 747s laden with Megadrives at an air freight cost of £8.50 per machine!

Around the houses

Sega Europe believes it has a household penetration level in Europe of around 8 per cent at present. The figures shown (see box) indicate a lower level, but our research has been conducted by taking gross households rather than target households.

France leads the way, closely followed by the UK. "At the end of 1991, France was still our biggest single European market," says Alexander, "but we feel that it could be overtaken by the UK in 1992."

Alexander and his team have always had a total European household penetration target of 15

per cent in mind. Last year's experiences have seen this figure revised and then revised again: 20-25 per cent could now be more realistic, he feels.

Let's just pause for breath: 20 per cent penetration could mean 4 million units in France, 4.5 million in the UK and a staggering 5.5 million in Germany. But why stop at that? The addition of Game Gear means that households can be multi-users, owning more than one piece of Sega hardware.

"Handhelds help with household penetration initially," according to Alexander, "but long-term we see them very much as an additional rather than a substitute purchase," and he cites Germany as an excellent example of a market that has developed differently.

"Handhelds — both our Game Gear and Nintendo's Game Boy — are holding down the console market in Germany. I don't believe players are going to want to miss out on the excitement of console gameplay, so the two systems should eventually complement

each other."

Looking at the almost exponential explosive sales growth of video games in Europe, it is difficult to resist the temptation to say that the bubble will burst.

Alexander argues differently: "There is still a lot of potential for all of us, even in the most developed markets such as France and the UK. Germany is now coming on strongly and Southern Europe looks promising.

"There is too much resource and momentum invested in this market from both Nintendo and Sega," he says.

And you only have to look around the corner to see what product news is going to hit the headlines in the future to realise that consumers are going to be kept on their toes.

SNES, Mega CD, and goodness knows what else will all help to ensure that Europe is as fertile a stamping ground for the video game giants — if not more so, there are more consumers! — than Japan and the US have already proved to be. □

SEGA'S EUROPEAN HOUSEHOLD PENETRATION
January 1st 1992

Country	% total households owning Sega products
France	6.41
Germany	2.51
UK	4.51
Spain	1.68

Source: Sega Europe

SEGA'S EUROPEAN INSTALLED BASE
January 1st 1992

	Master System	Mega-drive	Game Gear	Total
UK	700,000	260,000	125,000	1,085,000
Germany	440,000	120,000	140,000	700,000
France	1,080,000	200,000	65,000	1,345,000
Spain	150,000	38,000	50,000	238,000
Others	785,000	180,000	30,000	995,000
TOTAL	3,155,000	798,000	410,000	4,358,000

Source: Sega Europe

CTW EUROPE: ITALIAN GAMES PUBLISHERS

PASTA, PRESENT AND FUTURE

There may not be many of them, and they may have had very limited success outside their native territory so far, but Italian labels Simulmondo, Genias and Idea are all growing fast — cur-tailing commitment to the historically dominant C64 format as they evolve. RICARDO ALBINI takes a closer look...

Being a software house in Italy is no easy job. Besides having to fight against rampant piracy, Italy's three software houses also have to fight fierce competition from abroad — in a country which loves anything foreign.

Maybe this is the reason why they all want to be called *European* software houses instead of Italian software houses. As a matter of fact, being an Italian software house, says Simulmondo's Francesco Carlà, "has no advantages, nor drawbacks: there's just a lot to do!"

First of all, finding programmers. In fact, there are very few professional programmers, and no freelance development teams as such in Italy. What the nation does have, however, is a lot of computer enthusiasts that pretend to be programmers.

This not withstanding, Italian product has managed to get some good ratings from UK magazines,

notably *I Play: 3D Soccer* from Simulmondo (97% *The One*, 85% *Zero*) and *Bomber Bob* from Idea (88% *CU Amiga*).

The Bitmap Brothers can still get a good night's sleep, but Italy's software industry is still young: give it some time and you could be in for a surprise.

Singing with Dylan

Bologna-based Simulmondo was the first software house in Italy. It was founded in 1988 by Carlà, and normally specialises in sport simulations.

It gained the game of a lifetime at Christmas, however, with *Dylan Dog, the Murderers* — a licensed game based on the hero of a 250,000 copies a month Italian comic.

According to Carlà, advance orders from retailers shot through the roof, totalling about 40,000 units (for C64, Amiga and PC) and establishing a new record for the

company — and Italy — beating hands down the previous best seller, *F1 Manager*.

1991 was the year of the licence for Simulmondo. Apart from *Dylan Dog* it also scored another major licence, this time with some appeal north of the Alps. *Mille Miglia* is based on the famous car race of the '30s, which is currently stirring up some interest in the US.

Simulmondo had a turnover of almost £1 million last year. This is a 100% increase over 1990 and, according to Carlà, 1992 will be another banner year — with another 100% jump projected.

Distribution and/or publishing agreements exist in 14 countries all over the world. Its main platforms are C64 — still selling by the truck load in Italy — and 16-bit computers, but for 1992 the company is planning to drop the ST and target the PC mainly, followed by Amiga and C64. It is also planning products for CD and consoles.

I dream of Genias

Nestled within Multimedia, a Bologna-based company working in the music and TV fields, is Genias.

Turnover in 1990 hit £1 million and the company projects an increase of 30% for 1991 and 50% for 1992 (the latter projection being the result of a recent US distribution agreement with Merit Software).

The firm has a distribution agreement with Rushware in Germany and agents in 22 other European and non-European countries.

The new US deal is very important, since a lot of its new products are targeted for the US market.

Genias has long been publishing games for C64, CDTV, Macintosh and all 16-bit computers. Next year it is going to drop the ST (like Simulmondo) and, strangely enough, also the C64. It is also planning to produce games for consoles and CD-I.

Unit sales are significantly lower than those declared by Simulmondo. For 8-bit (namely C64) its best selling title *World Cup '90* sold around 15,000 units in Italy, while an average title sells around 3,000 units.

The Italian 16-bit market is even tougher, with 5,000 copies selling at the most (*World Cup '90* again) and an average title managing just 1,500.

At the September ECES, Genias signed an agreement with Core Design to produce a C64 version of *Chuck Rock*. It is also in negotiations with Loriciel to produce C64 versions of the French label's 16-bit games.

The C64 lira question

The newest Italian software house, Idea, was founded in 1988. The managing director is

Silvia Rotelli, but the driving force behind the company's products is software manager Antonio Farina.

Turnover for 1991 totalled around £700,000 — showing a 100% increase over 1990. No data on next year is available at the moment.

Idea's recent hit title, *Lupo Alberto*, (another licensed game based on the character of a popular Italian comic) sold around 20,000 units, while an average title sells around 5,000.

The firm has exclusive distribution deals in the UK and Germany, and is thinking about expanding to other European countries.

Its most important platforms at the moment are the ones that really count in the Italian market — that is Amiga and C64. It is also working on PC games which, according to Farina, are destined to become the main platform in the near future, followed very closely by the Amiga.

Idea too is going to drop the C64 — it is just finishing the last projects in the drawer and will then stop altogether.

If two out of three Italian software houses are dropping the C64, this should really mean the kiss of death for the machine that in Italy is synonymous with home computer. □

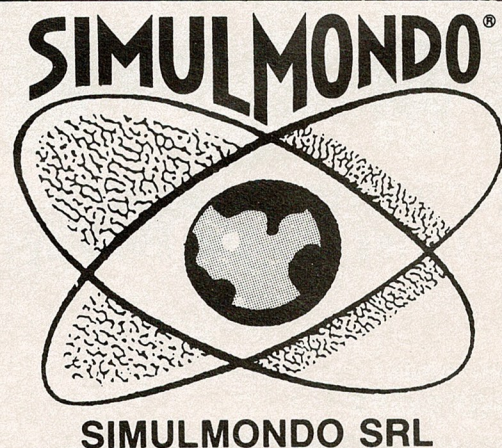
CTW EUROPE NEWSDESK

This is the second issue of *CTW Europe* — a supplement designed to increase *CTW's* coverage of non-UK events in the games market.

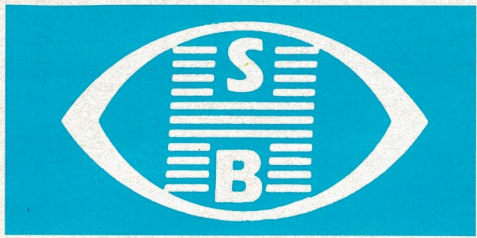
To make it work, and become a permanent fixture, we need the support of the industry — in terms of both editorial material and comment. If you are interested

in contributing editorial material, news releases or ideas on how *CTW Europe* can be improved, please call Stuart Dinsey on 0438 313470 or fax him on 0438 741247.

The next issue of *CTW Europe* will appear on Monday March 2nd (*CTW Issue 376*).



Comic hero Dylan Dog spawned 40K games sales — a Simulmondo record



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