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New show latches onto games boom

A major new consumer show catering for the UK's video games boom is to take place this autumn, CTW can reveal.

It is understood that the new venture is being headed up by Rita Keane, who has made a sudden departure from the Europress Group's Lifestyle Exhibitions division.

The new show was being promoted at the British Toy and Hobby Fair at Earls Court last week, and negotiations are already under way with several potential major exhibitors.

Details are scant at present, with Keane herself being uncontactable, but it is known that the event is likely to be held in Central London some time between September and Christmas. It will be pitched squarely at consumers, with a minimum of 40,000 visitors being targeted.

Keane appears to have come up with the new venture due to the incredible UK growth of the video games sector in the past year. If manufacturer claims are anywhere near believable, then total sales of the NES, Gameboy, Megadrive, Master System, Gamegear,

Lynx and VCS topped 1.5 million units in 1991.

With EMAP Exhibitions' decision not to continue its Computer Entertainment Show — which had acted as the traditional industrywide consumer and trade event until 1991's ill-fated trade-only affair — there is currently no event on the show calendar catering for video games enthusiasts.

The new event will fill this gap, and is likely to seek an association with Channel 4's *Gamesmaster* programme — which has picked up some 2.5 million viewers from launch, and could well return for a second series in

the autumn.

To create an air of excitement for consumers, link-ups are also likely with the national newspaper and magazine press, which is currently falling over itself to report on the appeal of Mario, Sonic *et al.* Celebrities keen to increase their street cred rating will no doubt be hauled in too.

Keane has a strong background in computer exhibitions, having helped launch both the *Computer Shopper Show* and European Computer Trade Show whilst they were in the hands of Database Exhibitions.



KEANE: New venture

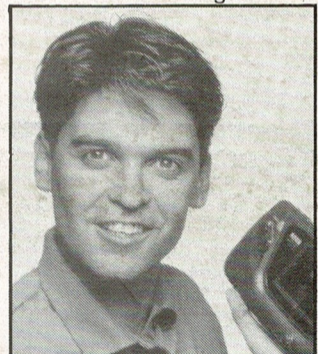
ECTS goes Live

The build up to the European Computer Trade Show awards has begun, this year boasting a prestigious link up with leading BBC kids' TV show *Going Live*.

In total, there are eighteen awards up for grabs. They are being supported by nearly 50 consumer magazines from Europe, Japan and the USA and will be presented on Sunday April 12th at London's Limelight club.

A *Going Live* viewers' award will follow a similar pattern to the programme's contribution to the music industry's BPI awards. On Saturday March 7th, viewers will be shown 10 games nominated by ELSPA.

They will then be asked to vote for their favourites by phone and decide the ultimate winner. As an incentive to cast a vote, *Going Live* will pick out one caller at random to win an Amiga.



SCHOFIELD: Already a fan

The winner will be featured on the show on Saturday April 18th.

An ECTS spokesman offered to CTW: "The computer and console market's permeation of the mass media is now undeniable and *Going Live* were very keen to get involved."

Toy world toasts Gameboy

The Gameboy's impact in the UK was duly recognised last week, as it was proclaimed Toy of the Year by the British Association of Toy Retailers.

The award follows a very successful autumn and winter period for the mono-handheld — with most followers of trade and consumer trends agreeing that it was the best selling toy over Christmas. Indeed, the Gameboy's exclusive UK distributor Bandai claims that over 400,000 units were sold during 1991 as a whole.

Following longtime resistance from certain sectors of the toy trade, Bandai is now confident that Nintendo has been accepted as a long term force in the UK toy market.

"This is a very important award, previous winners in-



HAYES: Nintendo accepted by toy industry at last

clude important products like Lego and Trivial Pursuit. The toy industry now understands that Nintendo will be around for a long time — they don't like giving this award to anything that might be a one hit wonder," Bandai's Nintendo boss Mike

Hayes told CTW.

Bandai picked up the award at a toy industry Gala Dinner last Sunday — its second success in successive years. Last year the firm's Teenage Mutant Hero Turtle action figures came out on top.

Ocean switches to ISM

Ocean has dropped longtime merchandising partner Impact and signed up with ISM.

Key to the decision was an agreement that Ocean would gain semi-exclusive status within the ISM operation. This means that its new partner has agreed to limit itself to deals with just two games publishers — Ocean and US Gold.

Ocean is particularly keen on the idea because of the expansion of its Nintendo publishing activities this year, which it wants pushed hard into all retail areas, and because it knows that the coming year will be particularly competitive for firms seeking to keep sales strong in the threatened home computer sector.

On the floppy side, Ocean and US Gold will only have each other to compete with

when being presented to retail whilst there will be no competition on consoles, as Gold is firmly in the Sega camp. ISM's other clients include the non-competing Miracle piano tutor plus sundry other peripheral products.

"The important thing with merchandise teams is the quality time that you gain with the dealerships. Products are being put in front of retailers, and obviously the fewer clients the team has the more time they have for us," commented Ocean's Dean Barrett to CTW.

ISM will specifically target specialist computer dealers, with some possible inroads being made into toy independents. Ocean will continue to run its own Toys R Us merchandising operation, and let Bandai push the Nintendo titles into multiples.

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IN THIS ISSUE — CTW EUROPE

Now Prime Time fast forwards into games

Prime Time has become the latest chain of video stores to climb on the console and computer game bandwagon.

It boasts 41 stores, most of which are situated in the north west of England. Just before Christmas it placed Sega hardware and a selection of cartridge and disk games in six of its outlets.

Last week, Prime Time's managing director Martin Hulme told CTW that he has been "very, very pleased" with the trial and that hardware and software will now be rolled out.

"We would hope to have games in over half our shops by the middle of the year, but the line-up of hardware and

the amount of software would vary from shop to shop depending on size or location", Hulme offered.

He also revealed to CTW that Prime Time is in the midst of negotiations with Nintendo to add the NES and Gameboy to the line-up. The aim is to have three stores stocking Nintendo product within the next month or so.

New figures from the video market suggest that there will be a 10.5-12 per cent downturn in the sell-through and rental market this year. Subsequently, many switched on video dealers are turning to consoles and computers.

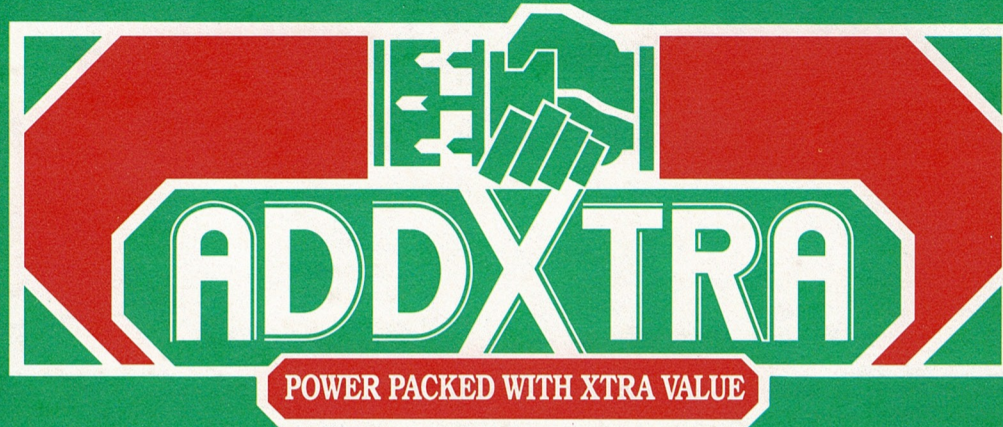
Prime Time joins the likes of Ritz, Blockbuster and Images on the list of video chains recently recruited into the games arena.



STREET OF DREAMS: Video chains chase a recession-bucking saviour

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Amstrad gloom mounts at half time

Amstrad is preparing to announce a disappointing set of interim financial results this month — as the recession continues to hit PC manufacturers hard.

Its six month performance to December 31st 1991 is likely to fall far short of the £40.1 million pre-tax profits clocked up in the comparable period of 1990 — with the most optimistic view being break even, but a more realistic guess being a double figure loss.

Considering that this period is traditionally the one in which Amstrad makes the largest proportion of its money, predictions for full-year performance are not exactly providing comfort either. Indeed, some firms are forecasting a loss in the region of £35 million.

"They will probably make a loss for the first half, and then double that in the second half," commented UBS Philips and Drew analyst Adam Quinton.

"The full-year figure for 1992 will be significantly

down on 1991, but you must remember that those figures went right back to sales during the last six months of 1990.

"Since then there has been an intense period of economic depression in the UK and throughout Europe. Amstrad has been a victim of the recession and, very specifically, the difficulties in the PC market.

"Just about everyone has experienced problems, with perhaps the exception of telesales Dell-type operations. For traditional PC sup-

pliers selling through retail outlets and distributors — whether that is Amstrad or IBM — the going has been very tough."

Amstrad's second half (January 1st-July 31st 1992) is expected to show a dramatic dip due to recent aggressive moves made in the PC market. The firm has cut the prices of its PCs sharply. This will undoubtedly hit profitability, but will keep Amstrad's products on the shelves — thus helping it to grow once the market starts to pick up again.

Acclaim prepares Terminator 2 blitz

Acclaim is about to go into promotional turbo mode for this spring's biggest Nintendo release, Terminator II.

The title, which will appear on the LJN label this spring is being released to coincide with the much-anticipated video release of the Arnie blockbuster.

Acclaim has already clinched a deal with Guild Home Video to promote the NES and Gameboy title before the movie.

Marketing director Larry Sparks commented to CTW: "T2 will be the biggest video ship-out in history. They are initially distributing 75,000 copies and they believe that 15 million people will see the film in the first three months of release."

Just in case anybody misses the release, Acclaim has also signed with Capital Radio in a day long T2 promo which will concentrate on the Gameboy version and should hit around four million people.

Atari steadfast on Lynx claims



STILL: 150,000 sales for the Lynx

Atari was last week remaining adamant about its unexpectedly high sales claims for the Lynx — which has apparently reached a 150,000 units installed base in the UK.

This figure will have surprised many, who expected the Lynx to trail in third place after the Gameboy and Game Gear. Current sales figures from the three firms have the Gameboy leading with 453,000, the Lynx second with 150,000 and Game Gear last with 125,000.

Atari claims to have sold some 80,000 hand-held machines between October and December of last year, and predicts that the Lynx will have a base of 400,000 in the UK by the end of the year.

Marketing manager Daryl Still told CTW: "We know that Dixons had a good

Christmas with the Lynx, as they did with a lot of other things, and in the independent sector what happened was that retailers got stiffed with supplies of Game Gears, and we gave lots of support to the Lynx with POS and counter displays.

"People were going into the independents and asking what the best machine to buy was and they told them it was the Lynx, so the machine is on a high. If you believe the Nintendo figures for 1991 then 150,000 isn't a problem at all really, and I don't see why people should be surprised.

"The Lynx has established itself as the best machine, it has the software support now and is only £15 more than the Gameboy and £15 less than the Game Gear. The public are very discerning — they can only take so much Gameboy, Gameboy, Gameboy."

Sega shapes Genesis successor

Sega's US president, Tom Kalinske, last week talked for the first time about the consoles that will come after the Megadrive and its various CD connotations.

Talking exclusively to CTW, he commented: "This

new machine, this Gigadrive or whatever you want to call it is being worked on and is in quite an advanced stage of development."

Despite the advancement, the product will probably not be launched until late 1993 so, not surprisingly, details were rather thin on the ground.

Asked if it was 32-bit, Kalinske replied: "Could be, could be more by the time they've finished."

He also revealed that the machine will be optical based "but we will have no problems with backward compatibility". This means that CDs and even Megadrive cartridges being produced now

will run on the next generation.

"There's still a lot we can do on carts and we're going to do it," explained Kalinske.

He went on: "1992 and 1993 will be the peak years for cartridge based machines, but in 1994, we believe that CD systems will takeover."

Copyright worries grow for CD-ROM developers

Firms investing heavily into multimedia products have singled out copyright wrangles as a new obstacle in the race for mass market acceptance.

The new CD based electronic technologies — such as PC CD-ROM, CD-I and CDTV — will all be able to blend soundtracks, text, graphics, film and illustrations. Developers believe that, if software prices can

be kept down, it is this mix of features that will create a new standard of home entertainment. But mixing everything together without a subsequent lawsuit may prove increasingly difficult, or costly.

Because a single multimedia production often incorporates thousands of moving and still images, as well as text and sound from multiple copyrighted works, a producer may be obliged to work out arrangements with

many artists or copyright owners. So far, however, no standard rates have been set in what is still a highly speculative market.

Copyright owners — such as photographers, illustrators, writers and publishers — are increasingly worrying that they will be underpaid for the use of their works, or worse, not be paid at all.

The American Society of Magazine Photographers — a 5,600 member organisation

— is already considering pre-emptive action. It will vote in May on whether to set up a clearing house to sell its members' rights to multimedia producers, collect royalties and guard against infringement. If this goes through, then similar moves by other bodies will almost certainly follow.

Some copyright holders are so concerned about multimedia that they are currently refusing to licence any material.

A Time Warner production called *Loud Guitars* — a history of the electric guitar — will end with Jimmy Hendrix because present day rocker Eddie Van Halen refused to play ball.



TWO FOR T2: GHV and Capital Radio join the promo push

Neo Geo back yet again

De Gale Marketing has embarked on the third attempt to launch the Neo Geo games console in the UK, promising that it will be absolutely the last, final, and ultimate launch of the machine.

The SNK machine was due to be launched at last September's CES but supply problems led to this being cancelled. Previous to that some modified Japanese versions of the machine were allowed in to combat grey importers.

The shipments now arriving are the first PAL machines to be available in the UK. The price point still remains at the rather high £299 for the machine and £99-£149 for software.

Due to the high price of games, the firm is looking for avenues to hire out the car-

tridges such as video stores and console specialists.

DGM boss Luther De Gale told CTW: "The saga goes that we were geared up for the show, but because the PAL machines weren't ready we had to postpone it, but now they are ready.

"We're concentrating our efforts on rental and so far the reception has been very good. We will be dealing with independents but we're also talking to record shops and video dealers. We've been in touch with virtually everyone in the video market and so far no one has turned us away."

Rental of the machine is expected to cost around £6 a night, with games between £3-£5 depending on the dealer. A weekend package may cost around £15. The firm is also looking to set up an end user club, help line and newsletter to support the machine in the long term.

Blockbuster busts block US video giant

Blockbuster seems to have defeated attempts to block its acquisition of the UK Cityvision chain, which controls the Gamevision computer outlets.

Blockbuster claims to have control of 50.21 per cent of all the shares in Cityvision, and is prepared to complete the acquisition even if a large minority of shares remain in the hands of other

shareholders.

Blockbuster originally made a cash and shares bid of some £75 million last November. As part of that deal Philips had agreed to pay £37.3 million for a 50 per cent stake in the new firm.

If Blockbuster fails to buy up 100 per cent of the shares in Cityvision, Philips has the option to use its £37.3 million to buy 6 million shares in Blockbuster Entertainment — the parent company — rather than the UK subsidiary.

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Acer clubs rivals with High Street PC attack

Taiwanese giant Acer went gunning for Amstrad last week, as it unveiled a new brand of PCs aimed squarely at the High Street.

Boasting a turnover of £1 billion, the firm has long been one of the largest OEM manufacturers in the world. Its own range has traditionally had marginal success in the mid to top-end sector of the business market.

Now, however, it has introduced a new brand called Acros, with the specific in-

attention of shaking some action in the low-end PC dealer sector — including superstores and consumer electronics multiples.

Announcements are due in the next couple of weeks, but it is understood that Dixons and Comet have both been in protracted negotiations with Acer for some time.

With chip prices down, the firm feels it can establish its name by making 386 machines the standard for small business use.

The entry level Acros 100

is a full 386SX package retailing at just £799. It comes with a 40Mb hard drive, colour VGA and a Microsoft Windows-style GUI, DOS, personal organiser and an integrated suite of business software.

Further up the scale comes the Acros 200. This has four models, starting with a similar 386SX package at £999 which has 'real' Microsoft Windows rather than Acer's home grown system. The top-end machine is a 33MHz 486DX with 120Mb hard drive, coming in at £1,699.

Core pounces on Jaguar

Core has made in its first move into the cut and thrust world of licences, securing the rights to Jaguar cars.

The firm now has the ability to publish games with all models of Jaguar cars involved, from racing machines to saloon models.

The first game will feature the Jaguar XJ220, which is

apparently the fastest production car in the world. This will be followed up by a game centred on the Le Mans 24 hour rally.

Core boss Jeremy Smith told CTW: "We'll see what the reaction is first, it's exciting because it's our first licence. Jaguar have been superb in their attitude, the technical information they have given us has been second to none, they're very

keen to promote the game.

"We certainly aren't looking for other licences at the moment, this is one of the few car licences left. I think it just shows that we're capable of writing 3D simulations, platform games, or RPGs."

The first game will be out in April on Amiga and ST with the Le Mans simulation planned for the Christmas market.



JAG IN THE BOX: Core's first project already under way

Leisuresoft tables show Amiga's force before the cart for last time

Leisuresoft has revealed its 1991 sales splits, showing a market in flux and some formats in trouble.

The figures showed formats' shares of total software sales by value. Commodore's Amiga came out on top with a healthy and steady 35 per cent.

Leisuresoft's managing director Ash Taylor commented to CTW, however, that this is "definitely and absolutely" the last year of

the machine's reign.

Its crown will be taken by cartridges. Leisuresoft's cart figure of 18.79 per cent is made up mainly by Sega cartridges, with contributions from Lynx and C64GS games. The distributor does not handle Nintendo at all.

The share of Atari's ST fell steadily, ending with a full year figure of 12.2 per cent, two points less than the emerging PC.

Strangely, after three quarters of impressive

growth, the DOS share dipped in the three months before Christmas. There were probably more PC games sold in the period but other markets are far more seasonal and their sharp rises forced the downturn in share.

In the 8-bit sector, only Commodore's C64, with 8.83, is hanging on to any sort of respectability. Spectrum and Amstrad shares have slipped firmly into the realms of insignificance.

Sega lines up Art cart

Sega will launch its first non-leisure title this spring, a productivity package called Art Alive.

It will be launched in March retailing at £29.99 and initially will only be available for the Megadrive.

Sega describes Art Alive as its first "expressive exercise", claiming it allows users to "tap into their own creativity" using patterns colours and lines.

To add a touch of populist appeal, Sega has incorporated its hit characters Sonic the Hedgehog and Toe Jam and Earl in the program.

Images created can be captured using a video recorder. If Art Alive performs well alongside Sega's traditionally less cerebral offerings, more productivity titles will follow.

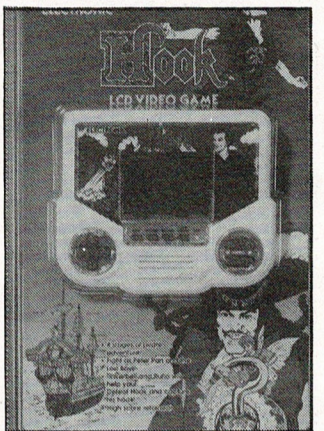
Adam uses Toy Fair for show of hands

Adam Leisure took advantage of the recent Earls Court Toy Fair to launch its 1992 batch of handheld electronic games, including a smattering of hefty licences.

The LCD titles have been split into three distinct groups — video games, puzzles and junior games.

In the video game section, two of the biggest from the selection of 18 are Hook and Batman Returns, retailing at £19.99.

The puzzle range is a new addition, boasting a game based on the BBC series The Crystal Maze plus a themed series under the banner Wicked Blocks containing three individual titles, Block Attack, Block Mania and Block Master. All titles will



Adam gets Hooked be released in the spring for £13.

A Disney tie-in providing titles based on The Little Mermaid and The Rescuers is the cornerstone of the Junior range, which also features a Muppets game.

The Junior games are out now, retailing at £23.

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Dealers swell Calculus ranks as launch looms

With just a few weeks until lift-off, ZCL's Calculus franchise scheme is picking up pace.

It is due to come alive in the second week of February. Originally, the distributor had planned to launch what it is pitching as "an independent multiple" with 50 outlets on board.

Managing director Don Carter told CTW last week, however, that the response has been more enthusiastic than anticipated. He claimed that 80 dealers have already committed.

He was also hopeful that the number would increase before the launch date of February 10th.

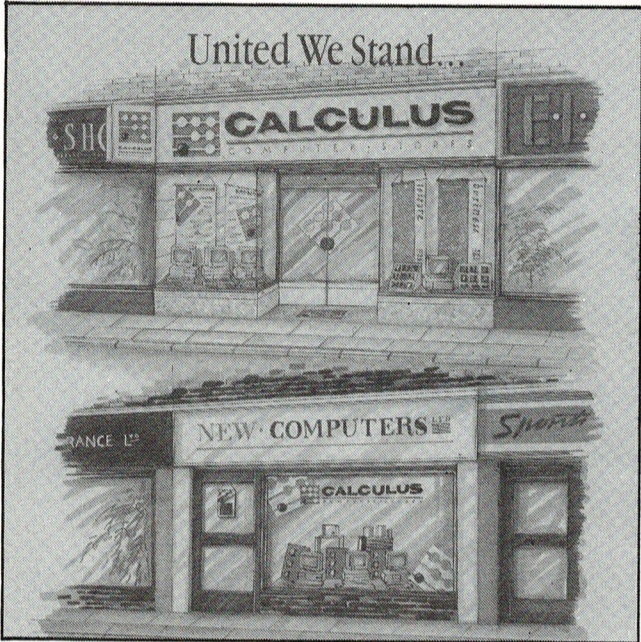
He commented: "Looking

at the spread of stores, we've got the country pretty well covered. Displays are being sent out to dealers this week and ads break in the March issues. Things are looking very healthy."

To join the scheme, dealers must pay £29 for the Calculus display material and £100 plus VAT every month to stay in the scheme. They will also be expected to contribute towards the cost of national advertising; the cost per dealer of the March campaign will be £250.

A ZCL account with a minimum £10,000 credit limit is also required.

A franchise scheme aimed squarely at the business market is also being planned by ZCL, details will be revealed in the next few weeks.



CALCULUS: Dealers counting themselves in

Blenheim plans Cyprus surprise

All those dreading the annual tedium and exhausting schedule of the Computer Arena will be pleased to note that Blenheim PEL has organised a bit of relief from the boredom.

In conjunction with the Computer Shopper Show, the firm will be organising, of all things, a treasure hunt. The firm will be hiring out 20 jeeps for the hunt. The winner receives a cash prize of £200.

Ginty re-starts Former Multimedia Distribution boss Lee Ginty has re-emerged as boss of a new outfit called Computermate.

The small firm has been set up to sell software to the educational market, with Ginty looking unlikely to return to retail distribution.

Formed in 1989, Multimedia was a leisure hardware, software and peripherals distributor. After only 16 months it was dragged down by the recession, owing over £3 million — the largest creditor being Commodore.

"With the current economic climate, I'm not going to try to expand and have a lot of staff," said Ginty recently to upmarket business mag *Microscope*.

"I've no desire to sell to the trade. If I'm selling to schools, it's fair enough, the Government's unlikely to go bankrupt."

Apax corners VR market

The Virtual Reality threat continues to loom with W Industries, the firm at the centre of the curious phenomenon, receiving fresh investment and opening a new arcade.

W Industries' change in management came about after Wembley Plc sold a majority of its shareholding to a venture capital firm called Apax Partners in a deal believed to be worth more than £2.4 million.

Apax director Anne Glover offered: "We are delighted to be backing this highly suc-

cessful company in the forefront of a new technology which we believe has the potential to be the success story of the '90s."

WI is predicting that its 1992 turnover will be in excess of £5 million. If achieved, the figure would represent a growth of 200 per cent since its launch in 1991.

Part of the expansion planned in the next twelve months is through a new VR "Location Based Entertainment System", opened last week in Nottingham.

The new location is called Legend Quest, networking four VR systems in a swords and sorcery environment.

Accolade confident of personal best

Accolade is expecting to announce a 50 per cent rise in turnover for 1991.

This will bring the firm's turnover to in excess of \$25 million — and is apparently the best performance in its six year history.

Accolade boss Alan Miller commented: "We attribute this outstanding growth, most significantly, to the hugely successful launch in 1991 of our Ballistic line of 16-bit video games. With such hits for Sega Genesis as *Hardball*, *Star Control* and *Mike Ditka Power Football*. These high-end products, marketed under the Ballistic name, have made a significant mark on the cartridge based industry.

"Supported by such com-

puter game hits including *Test Drive III: The Passion*, *Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf and Course Design* and *Mike Ditka Ultimate Football*, it was certainly the most successful year in the company's six years in business."

In addition, the firm has signed up with Legend Entertainment to distribute the firm's products worldwide. The first title will be *Spellcasting 201: The Sorcerer's Appliance*. A number of titles have been added to the Accolade range as well, including the first Nintendo products — *Missile Command* and *Asteroids* on the Gameboy.

On the Megadrive, *Double Dragon*, *Super Off Road*, and *Test Drive II* are all released later in the year.

Show set for Wembley win

The forthcoming 16-bit Computer Show looks well on course to being the biggest event so far, according to organiser Westminster Exhibitions.

The show takes place at Wembley Hall 1 from February 14th-16th, and Westminster is already claiming that stand sales are up 35 per cent, and pre-purchased ticket sales by 40 per cent.

A total of 160 companies are expected to attend the show, the biggest of which will probably be Atari, which is attending the event for the first time.



Westminster's Timothy Collins commented: "In the current market conditions the confidence that companies have in the show is the result of all the hard work which we have put in to respond to a difficult market.

"Our increased spend on promotion is paying dividends and we look well on target to achieving our estimated 30 per cent improvement on last time, with a total of over 35,000 from all sectors of the ST, Amiga, and PC market. The phones have not stopped ringing since early December with visitor enquiries of who will be visiting."

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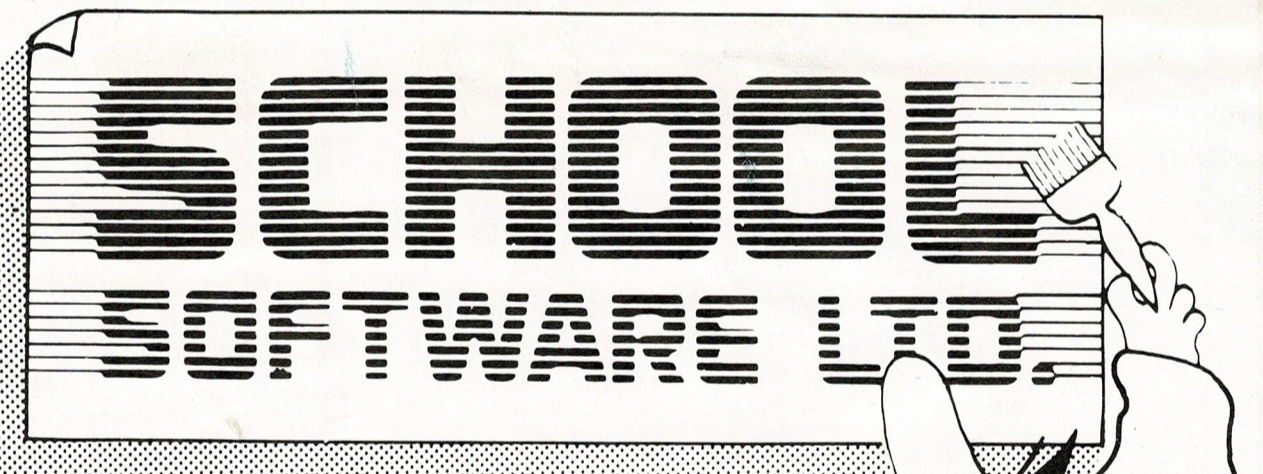
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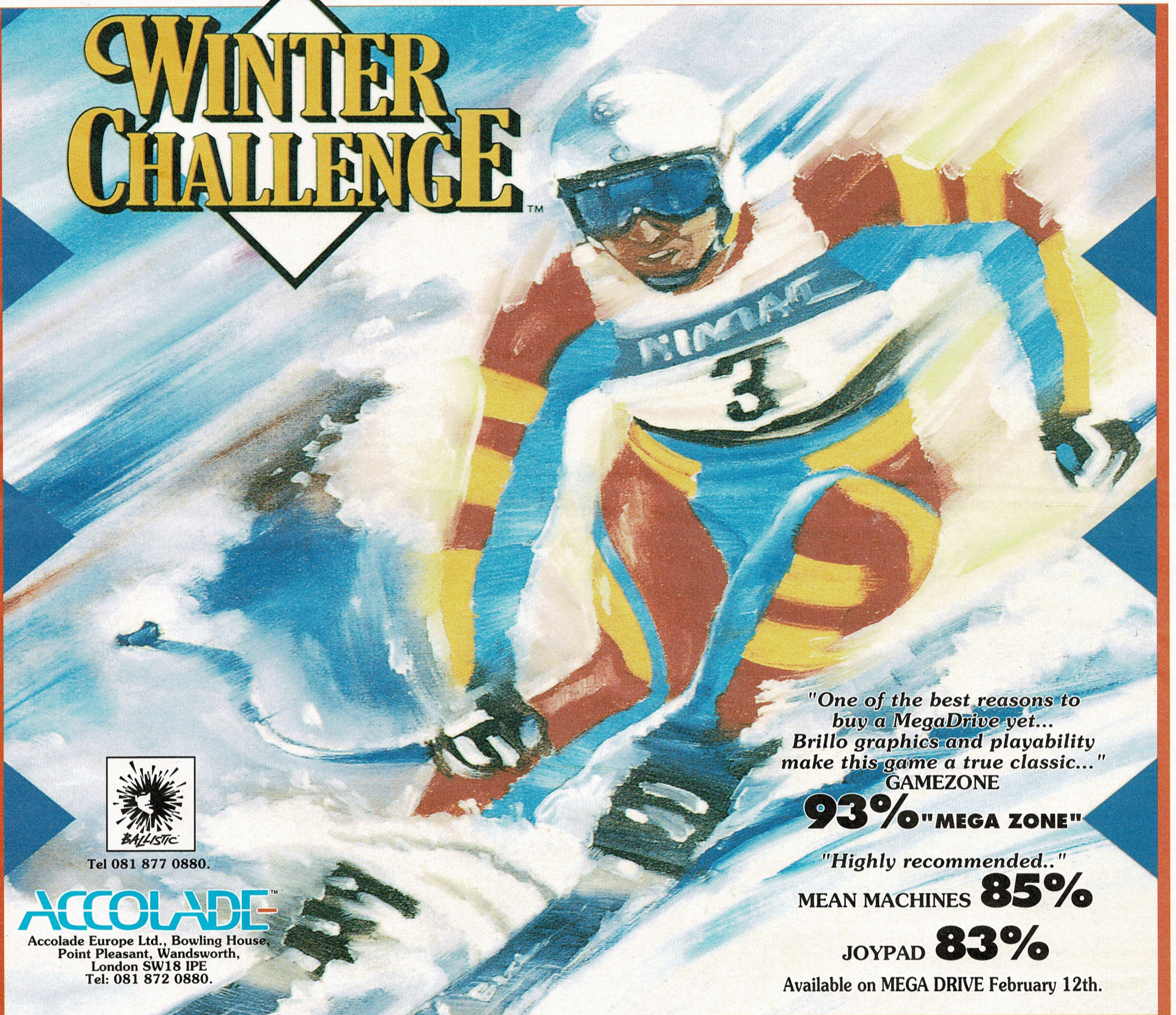
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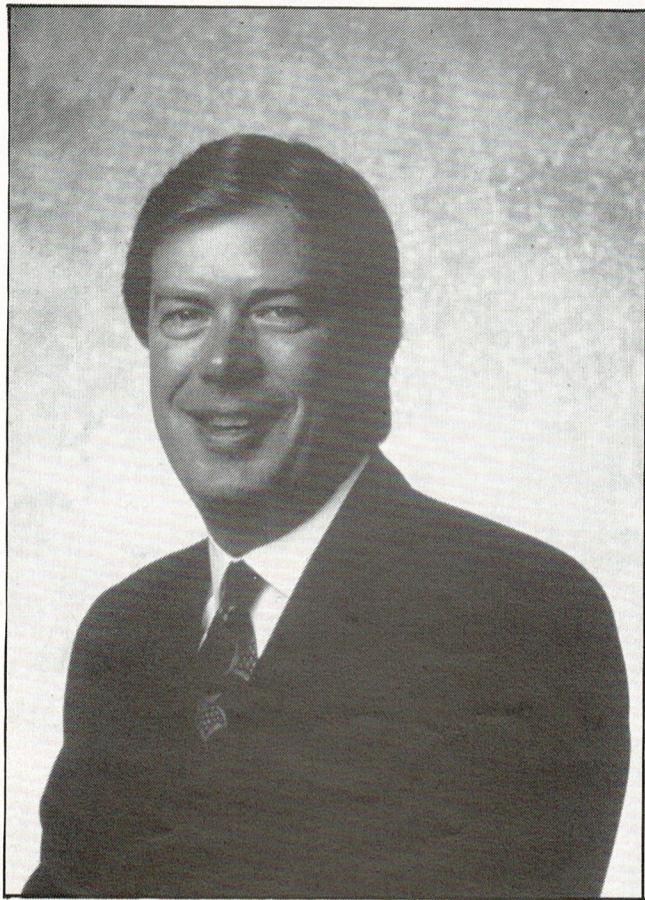
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SPOTLIGHT: INSIDE EA — PART ONE

HATS OFF TO LARRY

Electronic Arts' recent growth has been quite phenomenal. Its strong home formats foundation has been built on with energetic expansion into the 16-bit console market. This week DAVE ROBERTS talks to the firm's president Larry Probst and European boss Mark Lewis about the greenhouse effect. Next week he meets some of the affiliates that have helped fuel the growth...



PROBST: Turning EA's background into hi-tech console riches

There was, quite literally, no getting away from Electronic Arts' success at the Las Vegas CES.

Everywhere you went, the familiar logo was prominent. In the home formats section, in the Sega village and in the Nintendo new town, EA was everywhere.

There was no actual proof that it had the catering franchise, but I had my suspicions.

Domination of the home formats wasn't much of a task, there aren't that many firms left to dominate. EA managed quite easily with its whirligig of affiliates. (See separate interviews next week).

Its position at the centre of the floppy world is no real surprise. In the mid-late eighties, while many competitors ran for the shelter of the 8-bit NES, EA decided to weather the storm.

Now, it's still raining, but there are fewer players vying for the shelter of sales and, ironically, the previous automatic sunshine in the world of Nintendo is beginning to be affected by a little drizzle. But as storm clouds gather...

We interrupt this feature on behalf of the campaign against meteorological

metaphors. They're obvious, tedious, they go on for far, far too long and are almost impossible to get out of.

...battling against the raging winds, planting fresh footsteps in virginal snow.

Now, however, the firm finds itself in the enviable position of also being one of the most prolific cartridge publishers in the world.

Indeed, president Larry Probst claims that EA is the most prolific 16-bit cartridge publisher in the business. He's probably right — and what a business to be in.

Sega and Nintendo's global rivalry has reached new levels of intensity with their 16-bit systems and that rivalry is driving the new market along at a frightening lick.

Except for Probst and European boss Mark Lewis, it isn't frightening at all, it's bloody marvellous. Asked which one they think will be the overall winner, neither will give a definite answer. The truth is they probably don't care.

As Probst points out: "They're going to proliferate 16-bit consoles and we're going to benefit."

Absolutely, undoubtedly and probably massively. But, in a strange, rather convoluted for the sake of a

feature sort of way, it's also rather surprising.

Electronic Arts, after all, was one of the great console refuseniks. It dared to say no to NES and lived to tell the tale.

Neither Probst nor Lewis would look particularly, er, wicked with a baseball cap stuck on sideways and the words "crucial" and "dope" do not sit comfortably in their vocabulary.

The 8-bit market does not suit EA and it wisely refused to try and stoop to conquer. Thus, it built up this image as almost the antithesis of a console publisher.

But really it was just waiting for Nintendo and Sega to catch up, to move into the 16-bit market and onwards to CD. "We are a 16-bit publisher." Probst and Lewis drop the phrase into the conversation so often, it almost becomes a mantra.

Having said that, EA is spoiling the karma somewhat, with two 8-bit games due for launch in the UK in the next few months. *Immortal* will be out in the early summer and a Gameboy title called *Jordan Vs Bird* is also on the way.

Immortal will go through Bandai, and when the Super NES titles start to trickle through, they will also take the official, Nintendo-signposted route.

Jordan Vs Bird, however, will not be going through Bandai. But this is no rebellion, no breakaway, it seems that Bandai just wasn't overly enthusiastic about handling the game.

Mr Jordan and Mr Bird are apparently big names in American basketball and Bandai possibly felt that such an all-American licence may not be the ticket in the UK.

You can understand the thinking, of course, just look at that *John Madden* game, no hope, and *EA Hockey*? Do me a favour.

The slight difference of opinion has not influenced Lewis' distribution decision. He states simply: "We looked at other channels and just decided that Bandai would do the best job."

His choice was also certainly not swayed by any sort of reverence to Nintendo's wishes. Both he and Probst have views on the console giant and they are comfortable about expressing them.

Probst opines that Nintendo's Stateside SNES launch was "not as successful as it could have been" and Lewis believes that the firm has got "a helluva job on its hands" if it is to achieve its goal of overhauling Sega's Megadrive in the UK.

Cart blanche

It also has a fiercely and rather mysteriously independent relationship with Sega. It has its own cartridge manufacturing deal and seems to be able to release product at will.

Both men also feel that Sega's CD drive may hit the ground staggering when it is launched this summer. Probst offers: "We've only just got our development machine, they really have left it very late."

And it is therefore very early to say exactly what the firm will be putting out on the Mega CD, although that nice Mr Madden should figure somewhere.

Of more immediate concern is EA's Nintendo push, for which this NES and Gameboy dallying will be a mere pre-ambule. The real action will be on the Super NES, a far more natural home for the firm's products.

Unfortunately, in Europe, the pre-ambule may be followed by something of an amble. EA only has three Super slots. Compared to the Megadrive glut we are used to from the firm, this is a real famine.

Not surprisingly, that

Madden chap has already reserved one of the slots. It lead the way in the States and will be available in the UK as close to the SNES launch as possible.

Probst gives some idea of how well the title has done so far: "Across all formats its sold in excess of three quarters of a million. On the Megadrive, worldwide we've sold 300,000 and in the UK we've done around 50,000."

Yeah, yeah, I still say these American sports things don't really work.

Another definite for SNES in Europe is *PGA Tour Golf*, again a title with something of a pedigree — a hit before it's released.

That leaves a slot open for one more title on the Nintendo system. Most people's perfect fit would be *Populous*, EA has other ideas.

The rights to its mould breaking (and, as it turned out, mould making) God game have already been passed on, to Acclaim in the US and to Imagineer in other territories.

"We're limited to three choices", explains Lewis without really having to be asked. "We feel that the third slot can be better filled by another title. Something with more action."

It's an interesting choice and one which comes from what is possibly the most successful 16-bit console publisher in the market. Who's going to argue?

The choice also brings up the question of exactly where the firm sees itself now and where it wants to go.

At home with the range

Probst is adamant that EA is still absolutely committed to the home market. He points out that it has more computer format SKUs lined up for '92 than it releas-

ed in '91. He estimates that EA's business is currently split just about 50/50 between computers and consoles. But the computer half does include its myriad affiliates and there is a feeling that one half is more equal than the other.

When products are at their early stages, the possibility of console translation is a factor. Probst concedes: "When we look at new projects, we're more likely to fund ones that will be appropriate for multi-format release."

If *Populous* is not considered terribly suitable for the SNES, what would the firm's reaction to the germ of the game be now, "add a shoot-em-up section"?

Nay, nay and thrice nay insist both Lewis and Probst. "We'll always be willing to try something new, explore market niches", Probst claims.

Let's hope so. One worry about the console onslaught is that it could help turn the '90s into one long karaoke night. Arrogance over-riding originality, pretender after presumptuous pretender producing imitation after pale imitation.

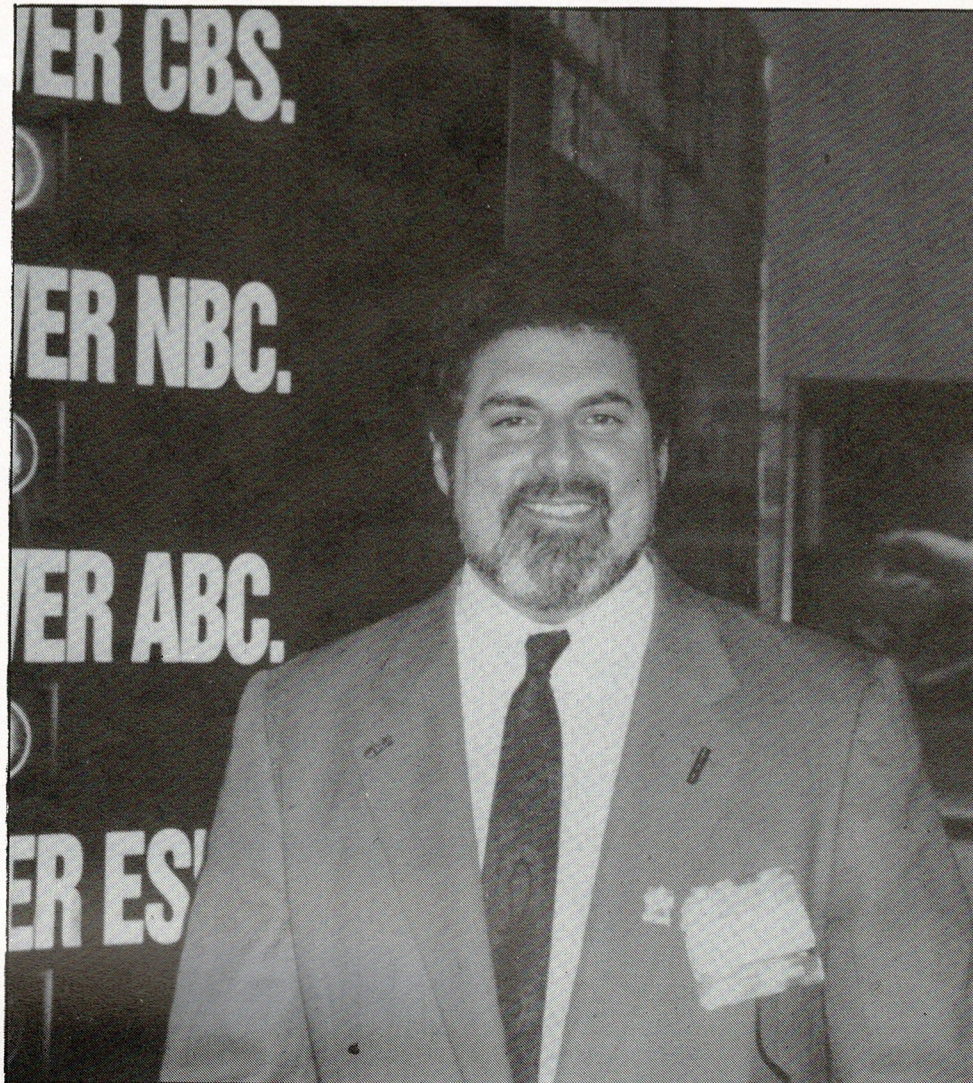
EA has always sung its own song and must continue to do so.

Its track record suggests that it will, so let's show some faith and hope that exploring niches doesn't turn out to be just *Populous II, III, IV* etc.

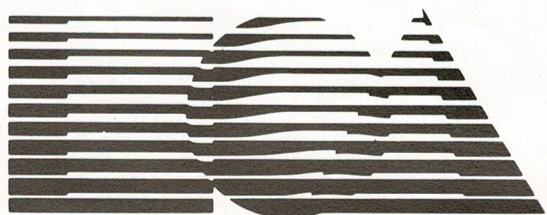
EA's certainly earned some faith. It's produced some of the most original games in leisure computing's history and is now regularly releasing some of the best on console.

It would be a major shock and, indeed, disappointment if it did not continue to do so.

Ever wondered who that Larry guy is that people are said to be as happy as? Wonder no longer, here's your man. □



LEWIS: Enjoying Sega and Nintendo's rivalry to the full



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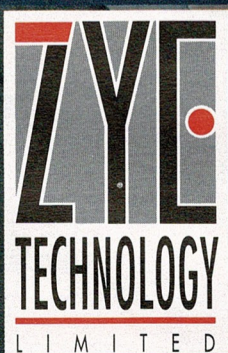
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NEWS ANALYSIS: LYNX SOFTWARE

SCRUTINY ON THE BOUNTY

In the past, people have always pointed to the Lynx' apparent dearth of software as its weak spot. That all changes this year though, with Atari planning a software bonanza for the machine. RONNIE DUNGAN reports...

If you're Chinese, this is the year of the Monkey. If you work at Atari UK, this is the year of the Lynx.

There's a strong body of sceptics which believe neither, and Sega and Nintendo are starting to think there may be something in this Chinese mythology lark.

Confidence is high at Atari though, recently released figures claim that the Lynx has a UK user base of some 150,000, and the firm is hoping to have 600,000 in by the end of the year.

That claim will be met with hoots of derision from both Nintendo and Sega — particularly Nintendo, which

estimates the Lynx user base to be just 45,000 units. Atari, however, is determined not to let the big boys shout it down.

Verbose chest beating is nothing new in the console market, particularly in hand-holds where Atari has always claimed that the Lynx is the superior machine,

Nintendo that the Gameboy is hippest, and Sega that the Game Gear is just....er...more fun.

It must be extremely frustrating for Atari, which really, truly, honestly seems to believe that the Lynx is the better machine.

But technical superiority is sometimes a little more

difficult to promote than fashion, as the man who invented the Betamax video will confirm.

All Nintendo has to do is point to a huge catalogue of readily available titles, and some UK sales figures to poo poo Atari's claims to the throne.

Sega just points to the fact that it's called 'Sega', and anyway, it is rather more concerned with Nintendo than Atari — after all, the Lynx only has four titles available, doesn't it?

Well, it did when it was launched. Even the *Califor-*

nia Games cartridge that came with the machine had more events within it.

Critical massing

This year though, Atari has been beating its head against the locker and seems to be all fired up. At the moment, Lynx lad can buy around 40 titles for his fave machine, and by the end of the year there will be over 65 titles.

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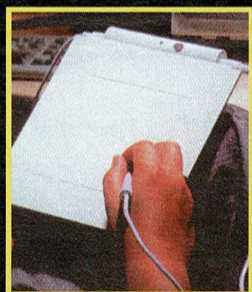
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The machine has now passed a critical stage in its development according to Atari's marketing manager Daryl Still.

He says: "It is starting to take off. We now have 150,000 users in the UK and we're obviously adding to that all the time. Publishers also see it as a viable option, more and more are looking to publish games for it."

No one has yet been trampled in the rush to get a third party Lynx licence. At the moment, there are just eight third party titles available, but the coming months will see useful games like *Lemmings* and *Shadow of the Beast* from Psygnosis, and *Stryder* from US Gold emerge.

Whereas Sega and Nintendo are a little bit protective about third party software releases (understatement of the millenium in Nintendo's case) Atari imposes no such restrictions on the amount of software that a firm can release for the machine.

Indeed, in an effort to build
Continued on page 23

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SCAN

CONFESSIONS OF A PROFESSIONAL GAMESPLAYER

Socialising was always tricky for the games pro. Obsessive waggling activity had to be carefully hidden from even the closest of friends. But, as *gamesnost* sweeps the nation, has 'coming out' really become any easier? CIARAN BRENAN thinks not...

"I wouldn't join any club that would have me as a member."
Groucho Marx

What did they talk about at parties when you were in your prime? Sorry... unfair question for most of you that.

Anyhow, I can still vaguely recall distant conversations about whether Jimmy Page was a better guitarist than Andy Summers, or how the Honda ZQ1,000,000 was faster to 60 than the Yammy LMN3 (or whatever, I was never very good at the motor-cycle name game) which generally happened about

five minutes before my body finally rejected the cider transplant I'd just given it. Nowadays though, I can hardly squeeze up to the fridge to rescue another Carling Black Label from among the hellish quantities of exotic dips and designer waters that have taken up residence, without hearing

some Aqua Libra-sipping ex-yuppie describing how he — or, even more frequently, she — has just got past the seven-headed cave monster at the end of level three of *Super Marioworld* on the Game Boy. Game dropping has become all the rage — and to be perfectly honest, I'm star-

ting to long for a return to the days when I was embarrassed to tell strangers what I did for a living — even if they were the sort of scum-sucking swine who sold ad space or worked in The City. Imagine my horror on New Year's Eve when, having completely struck out with the hottest chick on offer at a particularly unpleasant gathering of upper-class twits (actually, I think it may have been the host's mother, but New Year's eve is a desperate time which calls

for desperate measures... and anyhow, how could she have resisted lines like "and what cloud did you fall off?") I was set upon by the party bore who had somehow discovered what I did for a living.

Topping the hip parade

Within seconds I was surrounded by a drooling mass of plummy-voiced ne'er do wells, demanding to know if the Megadrive is better than the Amiga or if I had really met Sonic in person ('no madam, that was Simon Harvey'). Suddenly I had become some sort of cross between the Dali Lama and Kylie Minogue — everyone wanted either to touch my hem or tap me for the answer to the ultimate question: "is it better to play *Tetris* by score or by lines?"

It seemed like hours passed before I was able to distract their collective attention ("look everyone, isn't that Tom Watson of *Renegade*?") and slip out the bathroom window — only to find that the same vixen who'd rejected me so cruelly only minutes beforehand was now waiting with the engine of her Ferrari running, and purring seductively that we should go somewhere quiet so that I could "push her buttons".

Lord help us! What's becoming of our society? Is it only a matter of time before *Gamesmaster* replaces *Top Of The Pops* and *The Chart Show* in the hearts and minds of our children? Can it be long before we see the Bit-map Brothers on the cover of *Smash Hits*?

I know what you're all thinking... "Wow, we're big time at last!" But don't you believe it — remember that, of all the games that these low-lives are blabbering about, not one of them had even the slightest bit of British (not to say European) input in its development. We're always going on about how the British have the best designers and game developers in the world — but if that's the case, then why hasn't anyone ever heard of them?

Scandal in the wind

I was interested to see among the mass of vastly inaccurate and fabricated rubbish that they usually print in this rag that my fellow scribe Colin Campbell is leaving a steady job at Future Publishing for a new career at some firm called Pegasus.

This seems to me to be a bit like asking for a transfer from Arsenal to Torquay United — so why are you doing it Colin? Is there something going on that we don't know about? Maybe he's about to do a 'Michael Thomas' and reveal what he really thinks about Future's equivalent to George Graham.

If he did, it would certainly make a pleasant change from all of the flowery nonsense that's been printed about Future Publishing in the Nationals over the last couple of weeks.

Does anyone else smell an imminent flotation? □

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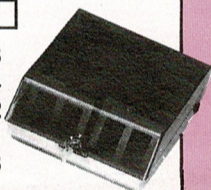
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SPOTLIGHT: BRITISH TOY AND HOBBY FAIR, EARLS COURT

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

The Earls Court Toy Fair, held last week, has never been a must on the computer retailer's calendar of pressing events but it isn't a bad place to go and sample the view from the other side of the High Street. JON SALISBURY of *World Toy News* donned his toy industry spectacles (definitely not rose tinted) to tell readers of *CTW* just what their toy counterparts thought of video games being part of their show...

Video games successfully bridged the gap between toys and technology — and what a relief that has been to the average toy retailer!

Nintendo and Sega finally proved to toy retailers in 1991 that trouble-free, promoted, mass-market games machines really do exist. At last everyone could relax, confident that they would now be able to steal back all that business from those bloody computer shops!

The five years between 1978-1983 convinced the toy fraternity that computer

games were bad news — sorry, BAD NEWS!! The industry's infatuation with the microchip back then caused nothing but mayhem and disaster and long memories were the main reason that the UK was so late in acknowledging the potential for the new generation machines that we now see. Companies like Mattel, Parker, Milton Bradley and Coleco caught massive colds and retailers felt the fall-out with shelves crammed with unsaleable stock.

"We never caught up with the demand until it dropped

dead," is one famous quote of that era and, well into last year, many people were still reluctant to 'risk' selling video games again.

But Nintendo and Sega took the sneeze out of computers, previously locked away in dangerously hormonal teenage boys' bedrooms, and put them firmly in the living room. Having cracked that taboo and brought TV games out into the open, toy retailers didn't take long to be convinced that this was a category that they should be claiming as their own.

The final evidence, if any were needed, was the naming of Gameboy as the British Association of Retailers' Toy of the year during the Earls Court Toy Fair last week (See front page).

The Pursuit of Perfection

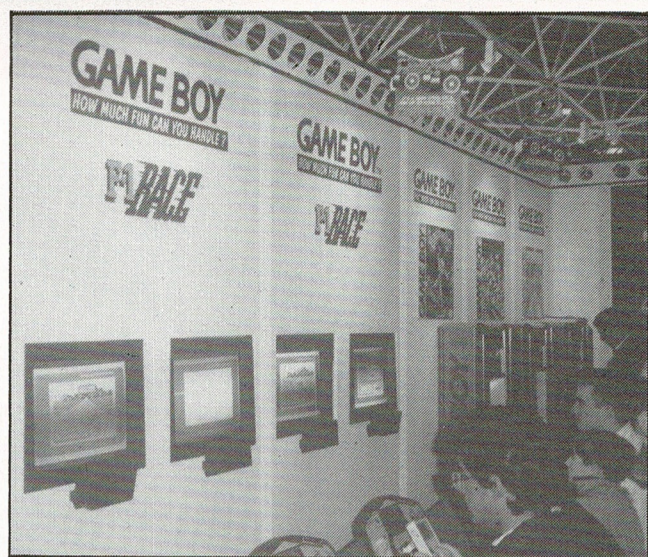
You'd think that Gameboy, Megadrive or NES were strange bedfellows for Thomas the Tank Engine or My Little Pony, but think again: toy shops have no problem selling games as disparate in their intended target audience as *Trivial Pursuit* (basically aimed at

pissed adults, bored after another dodgy curry at their friends' house) and the copy of *Hungry Hippos* intended to shut little Johnny up, so why not video games?

Against the backdrop of a video game business now thought to be worth over £250 million in the UK (that's 25 per cent of the total toy market and growing) Earls Court in 1992 should have been a user-friendly show for toy retailers, a place where the average toy shop would learn more about the direction the video games market will now take. On this score, the message was confused.

Earls Court saw Bandai firming-up the numbers it revealed in *CTW* last week, true, together with the official unveiling of the SNES, but it also saw Sega missing a golden opportunity to ride the wave of its fabulous recent publicity in the USA.

"I came here to talk to Sega and all I find is a bank of bloody computers," one highly influential toy retailer said. Software makers were similarly uninviting in their presentation and proved the point that they are still more at home in consumer computer shows where they have to keep hoardes of 15-year



BOY ABOUT TOWN: The toy world's fave

old boys entertained.

The average toy retailer — probably aged 52 and accompanied by his wife who is also his business partner — doesn't give a monkey's about technological superiority and certainly doesn't want to play with the damned games. His business re-invents itself every year anyway, so all he wants to know about is the right deal for the right product so that he can get it on the shelf and flog it!

Toy retailers see so many new products every year that they can't but help being thick-skinned. The average toy manufacturer probably has 50 new products to talk about so there's a lot of ground for buyers to cover at a toy fair like Earls Court.

The multiple toy retailers like Toys R Us, Woolworths or Argos can afford to be more considered because their buying teams

specialise in market segments, but the run-of-the-High-Street independent toy retailer simply hasn't got the time. He wants facts, prices and, above all else, the reassurance that comes from a highly personal face to face confrontation with his suppliers.

The toy industry is famous for rubbishing great products — even when they are at their peak — and there is still talk of the video game bubble bursting in toy circles.

That said, the toy market in the UK has needed a product like this to take up some of the recessionary slack of the past two Christmas seasons and remains in a buying mood.

But you should never presume that a feisty independent toy retailer will come to you to buy — you'll probably have to go to him. □



SEGA: Complaints of an 'unfriendly' stand

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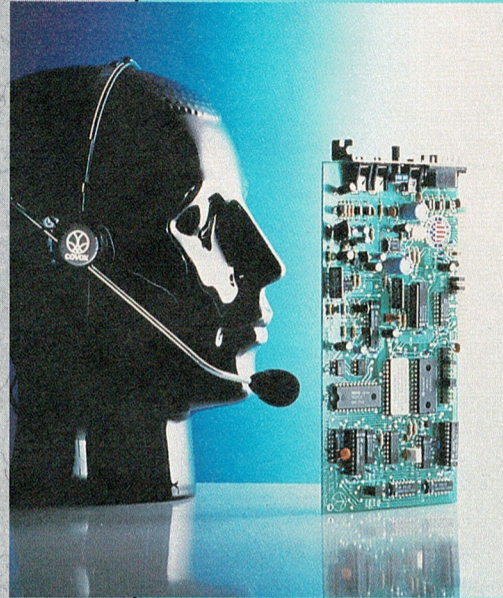
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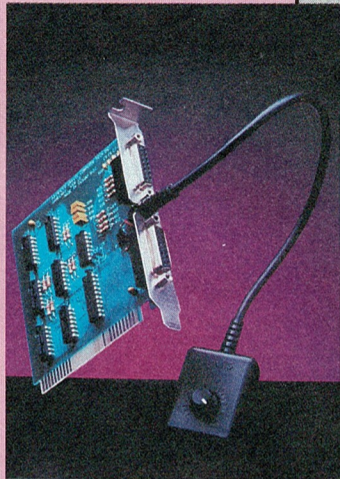
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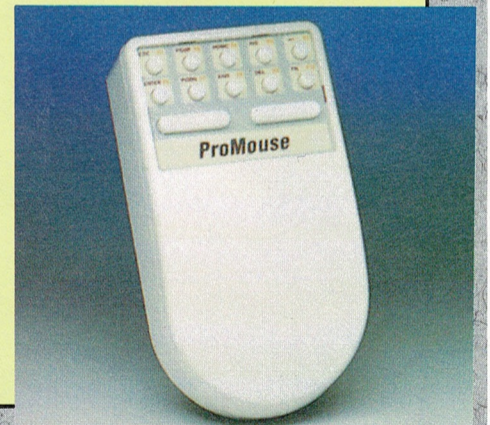
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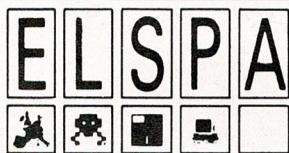
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CHARTALK

Compiled by Gallup on behalf of ELSPA
WEEK ENDING January 25th 1992

ALL FORMATS TOP 20 16-BIT (FULL PRICE)

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	FORMATS	PUB. LABEL
1	1		WWF WRESTLEMANIA	ST AG PC —	OCEAN
2	2		JAMES POND 2 — ROBOCOD	ST AG — OT	MILLENIUM
3	4		BIRDS OF PREY	ST AG —	ELECTRONIC ARTS
4	19		OH NO MORE LEMMINGS	ST AG PC —	PSYGNOSIS
5	9		LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2	ST AG —	GREMLIN
6	6		ROBOCOP 3	ST AG —	OCEAN
7	3		MICROPROSE GOLF	ST AG —	MICROPROSE
8	10		ANOTHER WORLD	— AG —	DELPHINE/U.S. GOLD
9	13		HEIMDALL	— AG —	CORE DESIGN
10	20		DIZZY COLLECTION	ST AG —	CODE MASTERS
11	7		J. WHITE W'WIND SNOOKER	ST AG —	VIRGIN
12	24		FIRST SAMURAI	— AG —	MIRRORSOFT
13	—		2HOT 2 HANDLE	ST AG —	OCEAN
14	18		FOOTBALL CRAZY CHALLENGE	ST AG —	ANCO
15	8		MAN. UNITED EUROPE	ST AG PC —	KRISALIS
16	5		POPULOUS 2	ST AG —	ELECTRONIC ARTS
17	12		KNIGHTMARE	ST AG —	MINDSCAPE
18	14		LEANDER	— AG —	PSYGNOSIS
19	29		MEGA—LO—MANIA	ST AG —	MIRRORSOFT
20	39		TERMINATOR 2	ST AG PC —	OCEAN
21	38		4 WHEEL DRIVE COMPILATION	ST AG —	GREMLIN
22	16		THE SIMPSONS	ST AG PC —	OCEAN
23	17		WOLFCHILD	ST AG —	CORE DESIGN
24	31		SOCCER STARS COMPILATION	ST AG —	EMPIRE
25	21		ALIEN BREED	— AG —	TEAM 17
26	22		NINJA COLLECTION	ST AG —	OCEAN
27	15		FUN SCHOOL 4 (5-7)	ST AG —	EUROPRESS/SW
28	25		LEMMINGS	ST AG PC —	PSYGNOSIS
29	35		BATTLE ISLE	— AG PC —	UBISOFT
30	11		BOARD GENIUS	ST AG PC —	BEAUJOLLY
31	30		REALMS	ST AG —	VIRGIN
32	36		MONKEY ISLAND	ST AG PC —	U.S. GOLD
33	23		CRUISE FOR A CORPSE	ST AG —	U.S. GOLD
34	—		AIR LAND SEA	— AG —	ELECTRONIC ARTS
35	32		SUPERSPACE INVADERS	ST AG PC —	DOMARK
36	—		JETFIGHTER	— — PC —	U.S. GOLD
37	—		EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE	ST AG PC —	CDS
38	—		SKULL AND CROSSBONES	ST AG —	DOMARK
39	—		MOONSTONE	— AG —	MINDSCAPE
40	—		PLAYER MANAGER	ST AG —	ANCO

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

ALL FORMATS TOP 20 8-BIT (FULL PRICE)

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	FORMATS	PUB. LABEL
1	1		WWF WRESTLEMANIA	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
2	2		DIZZY'S EXC'T ADVENTURES	SP CO AM —	CODE MASTERS
3	3		THE SIMPSONS	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
4	4		TERMINATOR 2	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
5	5		DIZZY COLLECTION	SP CO AM —	CODE MASTERS
6	6		CARTOON COLLECTION	SP CO AM —	CODE MASTERS
7	9		SUPERSPACE INVADERS	SP CO AM —	DOMARK
8	14		SOCCER STARS COMPILATION	SP CO AM —	EMPIRE
9	8		LEMMINGS	SP — —	PSYGNOSIS
10	13		BIG BOX	SP CO AM —	BEAUJOLLY
11	16		NINJA COLLECTION	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
12	7		TURTLES — THE COIN OP	SP CO AM —	MIRRORSOFT
13	17		PITFIGHTER	SP CO AM —	DOMARK
14	11		KIDS PACK	SP CO AM —	ALTERNATIVE
15	10		RAINBOW COLLECTION	SP CO AM —	OCEAN
16	12		MAN. UNITED EUROPE	SP CO AM —	KRISALIS
17	19		PAPERBOY 2	— — — OT	MINDSCAPE
18	—		TEEN. MUT. HERO TURTLES	SP CO AM OT	MIRRORSOFT
19	—		FUN SCHOOL 3 (5-7)	SP CO AM OT	EUROPRESS/SW
20	—		DOUBLE DRAGON 3	SP CO — —	STORM

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

GALLUP SALES PANEL STRUCTURE

The Gallup figures above are based on retail sales recorded through a panel of independent computer software retailers, the entire WH Smith and John Menzies chains and a selection of Virgin and Woolworths stores. A number of key chains, such as Boots, Dixons, Argos and Toys R Us, do not currently supply sales information. Thus, companies who are particularly strong in such stores are understated.

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CTW STOCKWATCH

by Mark Ramshaw

Leisure Suit Larry — one of the most enduring PC game characters — has never really hit it off with the Amiga gamesplaying crowd, but all that could change with the release of Sierra's *Leisure Suit Larry 5*.

Anyone who's been keeping count will probably be aware of the absence of a number 4 in the series, and so will be relieved to hear that the plot of *Larry 5* revolves around finding the missing disks from the previous episode. And so from a fairly innocent plot, a wholly innuentous series of lusty and lame jokes are dragged out of the gutter.

Taken as a computer game with a humour and intellect on par with Benny Hill it's all good fun (if not entirely in good taste) and the sex-driven, sorry, mouse-driven command system is well up to Sierra's recent high standards.

I'm not too sure how many adult Amiga owners there are out there, but the humour at least appeals to the lowest common denominator. Is there a (dirty) Mac version planned, I wonder?

Abandon hope

Gradually upping its British profile with each subsequent release, Electronic Zoo's new *Abandoned Places* seems to be getting everything right. Reviews in the bag include 80% from *Amiga Format*, 92% from *The Gamesman* (along with the claim that it's the best role-playing game they have ever played), 83% from *Zero* and a mid-80s mark from *Amiga Action*.

In essence, *Abandoned Places* is a role-playing game with added length and breadth. They may say that size isn't everything, but it's not doing *Abandoned Places* any harm.

The fantasy role-playing



market is certainly a commercially viable one, since the breakthrough of products like *Eye Of The Beholder*, and so despite the occasional lapses in to tech-head territory, it shouldn't affect the success of *Abandoned Places* any.

The Zoo is concentrating on pushing the point of sale direct to the shops, shipping out sample packaging, packed with information, review snippets and the colour map which come with the game. Advertising covers the range of Amiga publications, along with *Games X* and *Zero*.

Video nicey

Gremlin continues its steady stream of quality releases with *Videokid*, a respectable little Amiga and ST release. This home-grown console-styled tale of a kid stuck in various video scenarios (wild west, fantasy, etc) is unlikely to break any

new ground, but there have already been some enthusiastic reviews (such as an *Amiga Action* Accolade, and *Games X* Game of The Week).

Gremlin was its usual professional level of point of sale, with A2 posters, four different kinds of badges and four different standee designs to support the multi-scenario theme of the game.

Advertising is similarly comprehensive, with single page ads in *CU Amiga*, *ST Action*, *Amiga Action*, and *The One/Amiga*. Consumer awareness will also have been heightened with the benefit of a playable demo on *Amiga Power*.

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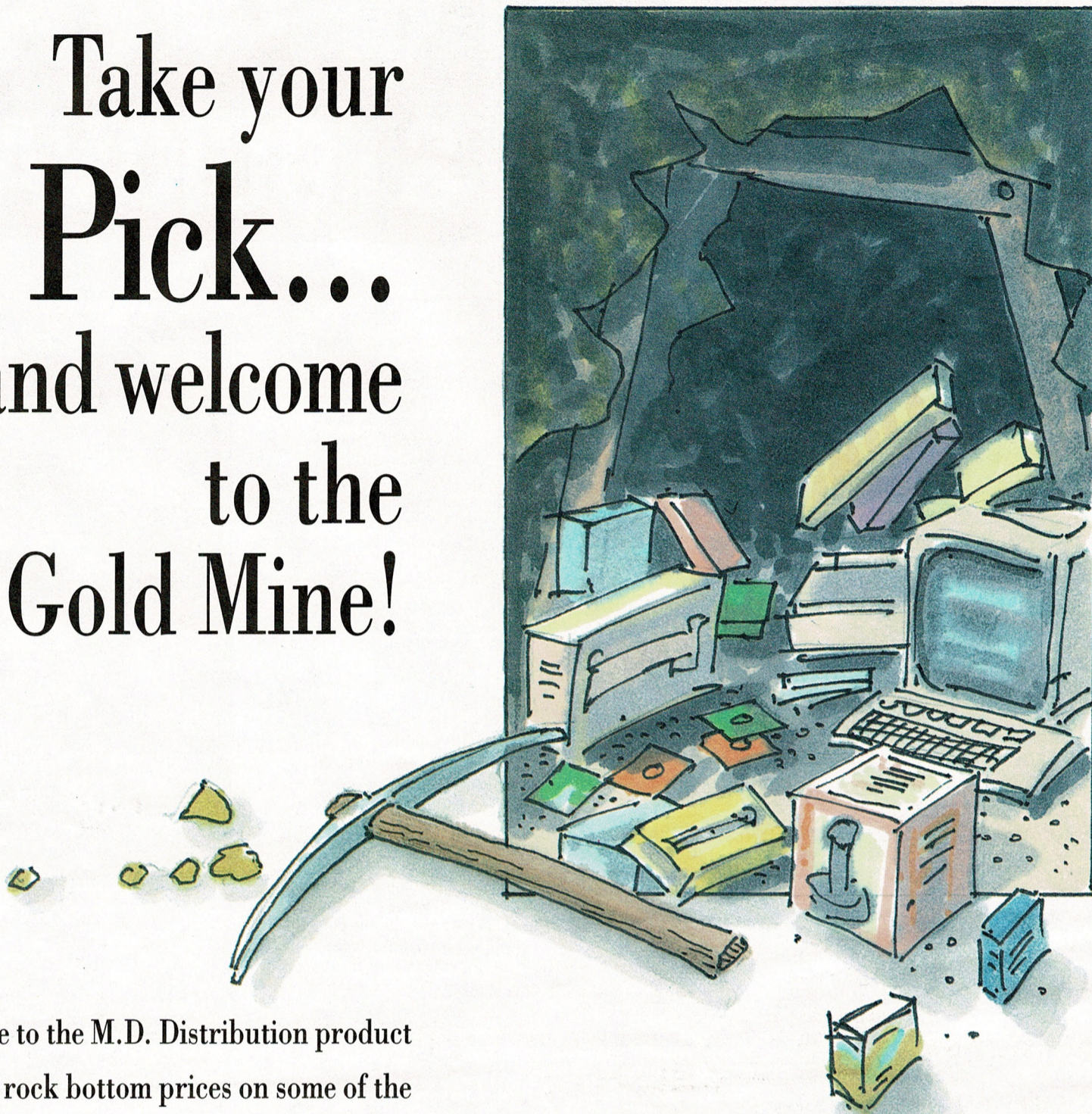
Mark Ramshaw is deputy editor for *Amiga Power*.

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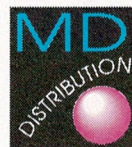
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SPEAKER'S CORNER

CUT THE CRAP

Commodore this week revealed that total UK sales of the CDTV had reached 15,000-17,000 units by the end of 1991. This is a start, but still some way short of even Commodore's own cautious projections. MARK SMIDDY argues that, to be successful, Commodore must continue to eradicate the use of buzz words and jargon in its marketing...

So Commodore has finally got its house in order. After months of speculation over the CDTV's future, arguments over who could sell it, bickering over its market sector and so on — some light is showing at the end of the tunnel.

November 1991 saw the year drawing to a close and Commodore slash £100 off the retail price of a unit some viewed as an over-priced CD player. The company also announced it was forming a Japanese CDTV consortium to develop new titles — including motion pictures (?) for the system.

All very fine and nice — but that's not the root problem. Grab Mr Average, test his knowledge by asking "What's a video?" and most people will reply, "It's a black box under my telly I record *Coronation Street* on" or something similar. People know what videos are, most are comfortable with the idea of a box they can use to record TV programmes and films. Even if they don't have the slightest conception of how a VCR works, they can accept it does a job. Just like the washing machine, tum-

ble drier and vacuum cleaner before it, the humble VCR has become part of our daily lives.

Not so the computer. I heard of an accountant recently whose loathing of computer technology is such that he refuses to use the things. When his partners installed a new system he did not even learn how to switch it on — let alone use the software, something that theoretically would make his job easier. Personally, I have every respect for the fellow — why should he break a lifetime's habits and move over to a new fangled gadget?

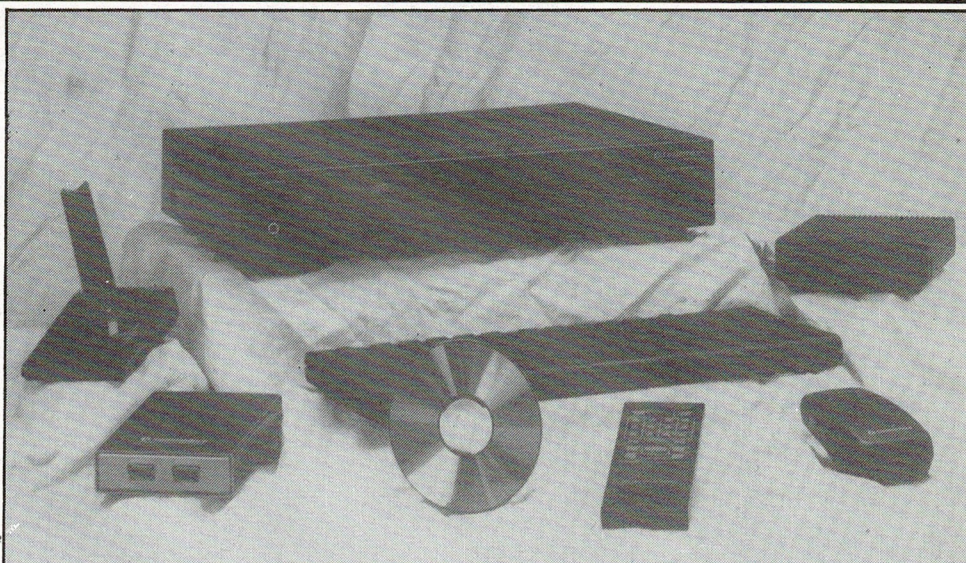
Yet, when said accountant gets home of an evening (after driving his computer controlled BMW) I'd lay level bets he relaxes in a comfortable armchair and reaches for the remote control to his (computer controlled) TV and video. While in the kitchen his wife calmly operates a program on her (computer controlled) tumble drier and cooks dinner in the (computerised) microwave.

Computers are what we make of them. Stick so-

meone in front of a keyboard and they balk at the idea of a machine that may be smarter than they are or may eventually replace them altogether. This was presumably in Commodore's mind when it developed the CDTV — remove the keyboard, neglect to mention that dirty word computer, and you're on to a winner, right? Wrong.

Malice in technowonderland

Technology has moved so rapidly in the last ten years, we have all-but forgotten the malice and contempt with which almost all new gadgets are regarded when they first appear. Commodore spent so much time denying that central to the CDTV was the epitome of the most despised invention of the latter-half of the 20th century, it almost tripped over itself in the process. People's natural fear of progress and technology was aided by some great jargon such as "interactive multimedia", and who can forget "full-screen, full-motion



CDTV: A jargon free zone at last?

video", or the timeless classic "open architecture"? — the latter sounding like a skyscraper whose advanced, natural ventilation system relies on the lack of windows or walls.

Ask yourself, what does interactive multimedia mean to you? Like it or not, the majority of the world's English speaking population would find it hard to break down — let alone take a stab at what it means. Like most good jargon it's meaningless rubbish, patter, vernacular, gobbledegook.

It breaks down like this: Media is the plural form of medium, a word (in this sense) that can be defined as "a means of distributing information." Television, for instance, is a news and information medium. Multimedia derives from the Latin *multus*, meaning much or many; so multimedia is,

therefore, a plural noun relating to the user of several forms of media such as television, slides and audio in a teaching environment.

Although CD ROM may combine these, it remains essentially an individual item; a black box if you like.

As if that wasn't enough they added *interactive*, defined in Collins English Dictionary thus: "Allowing or relating to the continuous two-way transfer of information between a user and a central point of communication system such as a computer or television." So in other words, they dreamt up another phrase to describe the common or garden remote control TV set.

As you can see, the whole thing starts to go round in circles as I attempt to prove that black is white; and existentialism is a serious science.

All this lingo, served up as it most certainly was, with lashings of intellectual advertising has merely served to confuse the public even more.

If CDTV is to succeed, and for Commodore's sake it must, someone will have to call a foul on the use of buzz words. People are frightened enough of computers as it is, without being assaulted by a barrage of meaningless hype.

Come on Commodore, let's see this machine doing what it does best — educating and informing. CDTV is a machine for the nineties, but jargon must be abolished so ordinary folk can see and accept it for the innovation it is; not scared off by the needless overplay of technology.

Otherwise this black beauty might turn into an expensive white elephant. □

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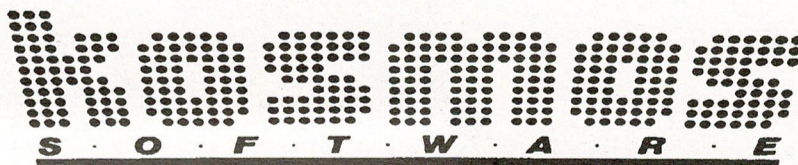
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SPEAKEASY

Sales full of wind

As that boy Jonathan Rignall at *Sega Force* well knows — or perhaps (given past successes) he doesn't — there are two methods for determining/guesstimating the performance of a magazine at such an early stage in its life. Namely:

Retail Audits: These are embarrassingly inaccurate as, typically, no more than 200 outlets are sampled from a pool of around 45,000. Indeed all magazine

distributors of any worth will agree that anyone who relies on these for proof of performance will gladly believe his own hype and suffer the consequences later.

Analysing WH Smith returns: Universally acknowledged as being the most accurate methods of determining a magazine's sales. However, this can only take place three weeks after the second issue is on sale. *SegaPro* Issue 4 is out now, *Sega Force* Issue 2 is only

just out. So there's no way master Rignall could have used this method for his so-called independent audit of Issue 1.

We know the first issue of *SegaPro* sold over 42,000 (excluding exports and non-newstrade outlets) and the signs are that each successive issue is bettering that. Why is the lad Rignall "reluctant to put a figure on what he believes to be the current circulation (of *Sega Force*)?"

Quite how the nipper Rignall can claim *Sega Force's* debut issue is selling 20% more than *SegaPro* is

mind-boggling. A figment of a fevered brow indeed. If, as he claims, things are so rosy, why has *Sega Force's* former editor Stuart Wynne joined the ranks of *SegaPro*? A case of the captain not going down with the sinking ship?

To quote that quotable youngster Rignall, "we will ABC this magazine in July and what we say will be proved." There's being bullish and being full of bullshit. Take your pick.

Richard Monteiro
Paragon Publishing
Trowbridge
Wiltshire

SCRUTINY ON THE BOUNTY

Continued from page 10

up its catalogue of titles it's a case of come one, come all, and, the cynics say, come anything.

"We don't impose any restrictions on software, and we're quite happy for there to be three versions of a game on Lynx, Gameboy, and Game Gear because ours will stand out as the best."

Bored games

A part from the Lynx' apparent technical superiority, Atari also seems to be hoping, in a rather big

way, that people are beginning to get tired of the more basic Gameboy machine, whilst relying on the Game Gear's current lack of software to hold it back. Ironically, the same problem that the Lynx has been plagued with until recently.

"The indies have caught onto the Lynx as the better machine. A lot of people go into independents for advice before they buy a machine and they recommend it, which has put us ahead in the race of the coloured hand-helds.

"We expect a lot of Gameboy owners will now be looking for the next big thing, which will be colour hand-helds. Of course there's absolutely no reason why they can't own both a Gameboy and a Lynx. It's a natural progression for all those who have not had a computer before but own a Gameboy."

The thing to bear in mind of course is that the Gameboy has that enormous catalogue of titles available for it, a lot of which are very sexy, so it may take some time for people to get bored.

Lynx software is getting sexy though, in a big way. Atari claims to have a number of major film titles for the coming months. It's staying tight lipped, but one of them features a large man who dresses as a bat, and, having already had the original *Bill and Ted* game, *Bill and Ted 2* is apparently almost certain to arrive.

Remember the glut of celeb tie ins last year? Gazza with Lynx, Schoffers with Game Gear, Graham Gooch with Game Gear, George Bush and Prince William with Gameboys.

It all got a little bit stupid at one point. Well, Atari is determined to get the ball rolling again. The next few weeks will see a plethora of popsters who prefer playing *Toki* than toking on a joint, or shoot 'em ups to shooting up.

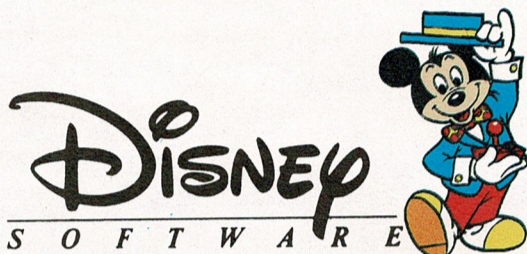
"The Lynx is one of the hip happening things. The word has spread to the streets," says Still, donning baseball cap and shades and adopting aggressive arms folded Uzi toting stance. "Kids are forming groups in schools, you have Lynx users in one corner and Gameboy users in the other."

The year of the Lynx eh? Well it certainly has a nice ring to it. But it will take more than a few well placed rock stars to do the trick.

Fair's fair though, the firm has started promisingly with a cross promotion on one of the biggest videos of the year, *Robin Hood*, promising more of the same. So whether or not this goes down in industry history as the year of the Lynx it won't be for lack of trying.

"It's an opinion forming machine. The number of games that were available was an important factor, but once you get over the 40 games stage it isn't. No one buys more than five games a year anyway."

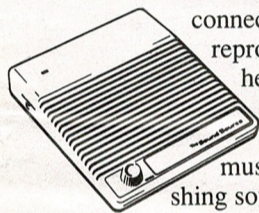
Does that mean you only need five games to have a successful machine? It's a thought isn't it. □



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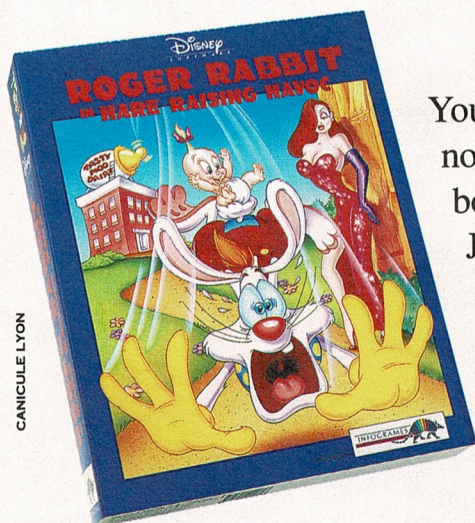


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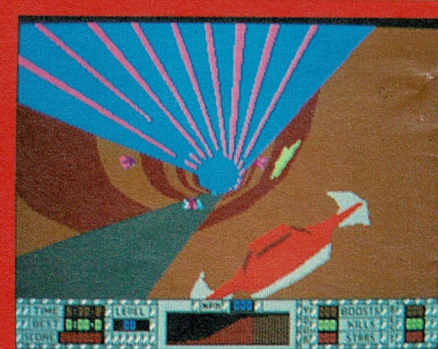
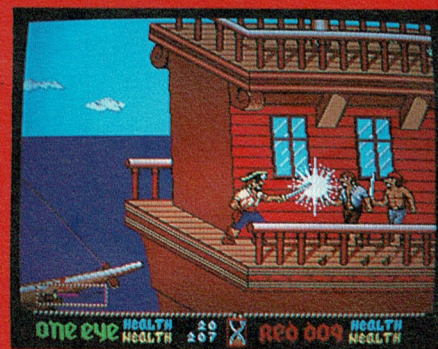
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