

Computer Retail News

SELLING BUSINESS AND INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS

Wise men of Wales find stolen CDs

SOUTH WALES HAUL

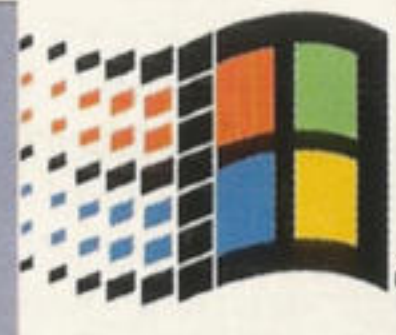
South Wales police are on the brink of halting a scam which put thousands of top name CD-ROM games on sale at markets across the country for the last nine months.

Reject pressings of games from publishers, including Electronic Arts and Microprose, were stolen from Wales based CD-ROM manufacturer PC Wise. Police have arrested four men for theft, none of whom work for PC Wise, and seized 30,000 disks worth up to £1.2 million.

The titles first appeared at computer trade fairs in November 1994. The most popular games were Little Big Adventure and Theme Park. Other titles included Wing Commander, Civilisation, and Transport Tycoon. They have been selling for £10.

ELSPA prompted the investigation. Its crime unit scored another success on 6 July when Nicholas Vivaldi, aged 30, was convicted of piracy. He was found with over 30 copies of a CD-ROM which contained almost £50,000 of programs.

Microsoft kick starts Win95 blitz



MULTI MILLION CAMPAIGN

Microsoft is gearing up for a multi million pound marketing campaign in support of Windows 95, which is still expected to make its 24 August launch. The upgrade to the operating system, which boasts 75 million users worldwide, is expected to make a huge impact at retail.

TV advertising will break just before the launch and will focus on Windows 95 the product, not Microsoft the brand. National press advertising will pick up the momentum post-launch. The packaging will have a blue sky background with fluffy clouds, which will appear on other Microsoft upgrades including Office, Works and Publisher.

Other software publishers will be supplying Win95 branded POS in support of their own

products. In addition to talkers and wobblers, Symantec is planning demonstration areas in major outlets with PCs running rolling demos and Symantec staff to show off the latest versions of Norton Utilities and Navigator.

Margin on the upgrade will be negligible but retailers are looking for opportunities to make money on ancillary products.

"We'll be offering reductions if customers buy Windows 95 in addition to another software

package," said Byte product director Steve Rigby. "We're also planning seminars: anyone can pay an extra £30 to get specific training."

Dave Chittock, WH Smith product manager, expressed similar plans: "We'll be building Windows 95 into our multimedia units which we hope will spark interest in other software."

WH Smith plans to operate 70 multimedia centres by Christmas.

By Guy Dixon

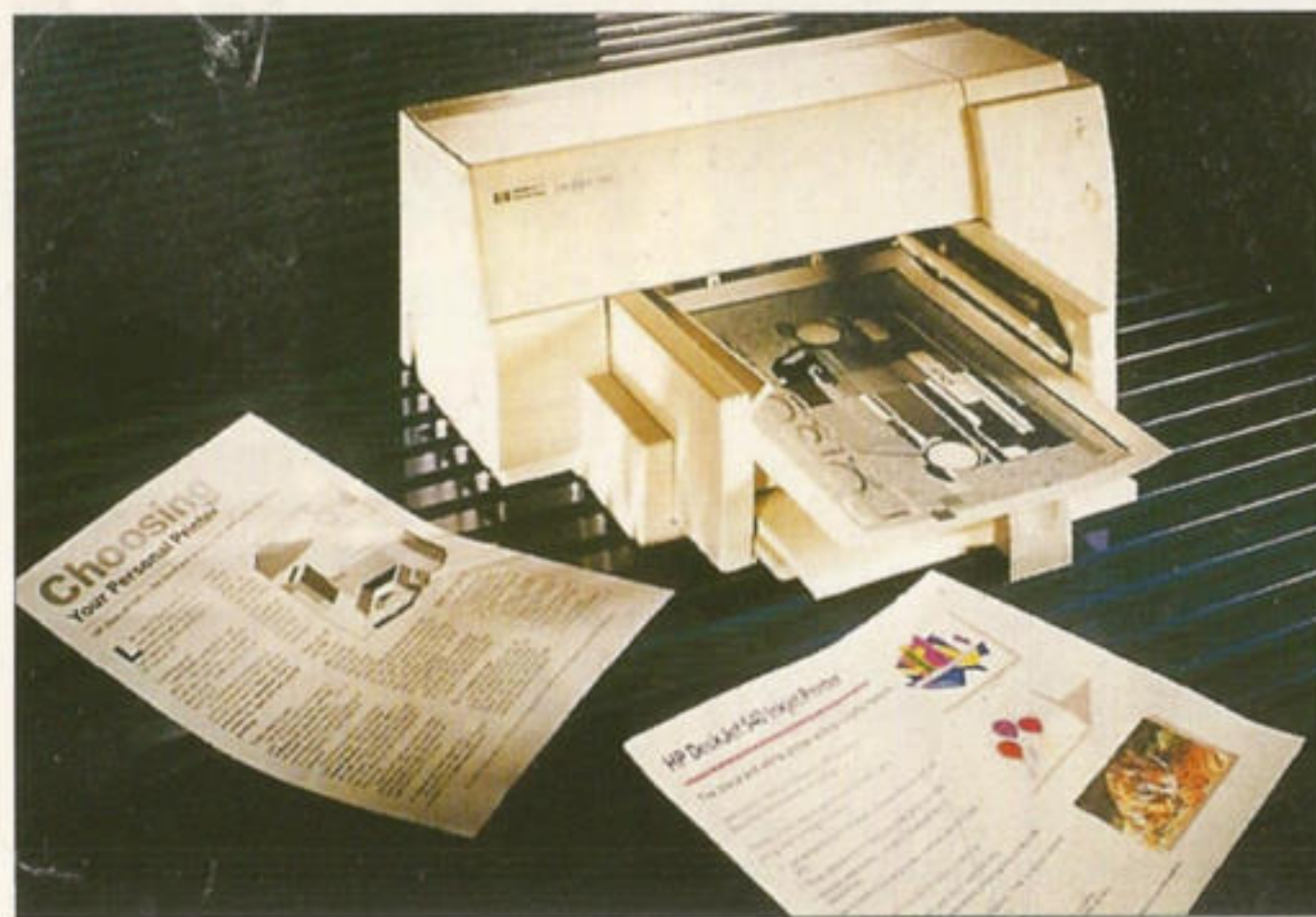
Alders pulls plug on HP blaming Escom pricing

PRICE CUTTING

Department store chain Alders has stopped selling Hewlett Packard printers, in response to Escom's continuous discounting of the products which made the firm look uncompetitive.

Its reaction to Escom's printer price trashing reflects the mood of a majority of retailers which are fed up with the situation and HP's reluctance to sort it out.

Michael Kraftman, marketing director of Tempo, said he had discussions with HP about the situation and referred to Escom's current deal of £229 on the Deskjet 540 as extraordinary. "Their pricing has started to stabilise but crazy offers make the whole market look stupid."



Alders computer products buyer John Williams said the decision to delist HP had been made purely because of the lack of margin available on the lines. "Escom were originally going

out at silly prices. Then they put prices up but they are still considerably below the margin we need to work on."

Richard Hanscott, HP's SoHo product brand manager, said Escom was at liberty to do as it wished. "We can no way influence their price but there is money to be made at this level. It is above cost price."

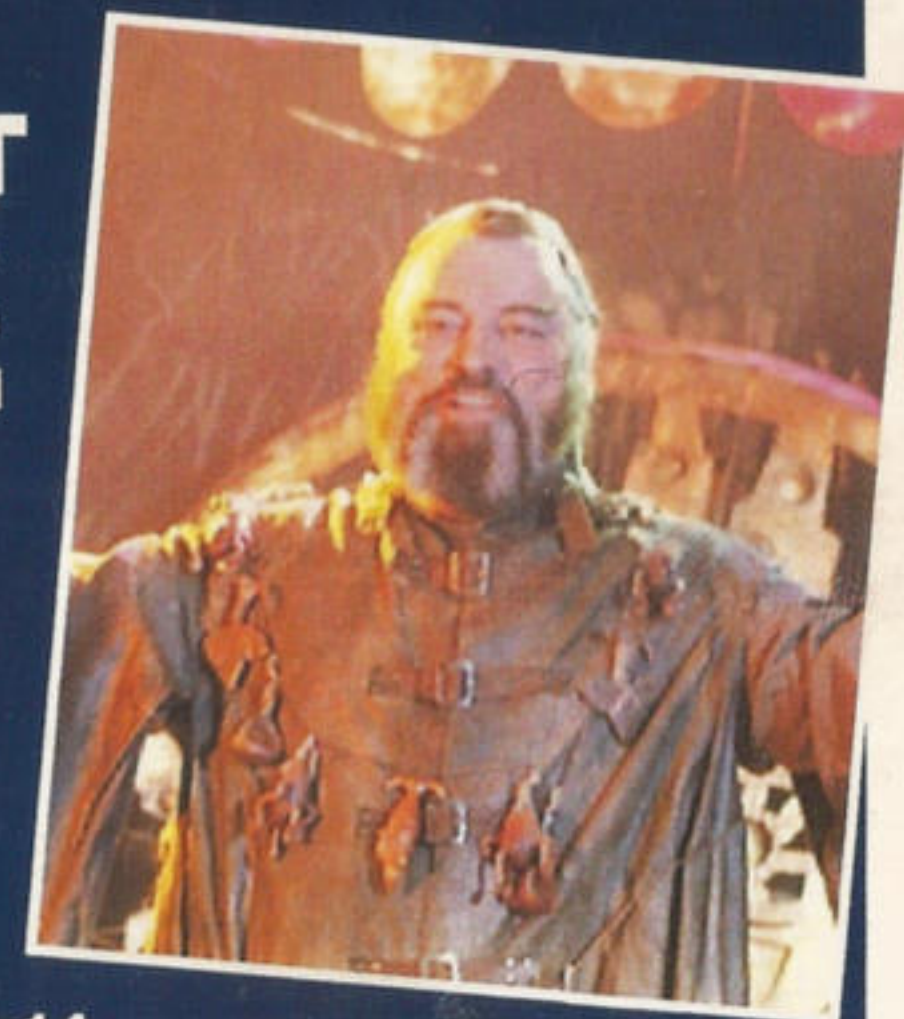
Williams said that if Escom's prices weren't matched, customers questioned the competitiveness of other lines or assumed profiteering. "The products were good and popular with people but we haven't lost any business going with Epson and Canon. Their margin is acceptable."

By Robert Blincoe

INSIDE

MOVIE TARGET

Games publishers, actors, film studios, special effects, cameras... action. CRN's man at the movies talks to the stars and the moguls about making interactive movies. p14



WAY OUT OR UP HIGH?

Are out of town superstores sucking the life out of the high street or is the battle for location reaching stability? p19



CARD SHARP

PCMCIA is dead - long live the PC Card. Few can remember what the acronym stands for, but to retailers it means high margin for small SKUs. p23



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Sega sees sell-out on Saturday



SATURN SELL-OUT

Saturn was a sell-out on day one and Sega officials are very pleased with the results from the launch of their eagerly awaited 32-bit console.

"One store opened at 7 in the morning and had sold three by 7.15," said Dave Clarke, Sega UK marketing manager. "The second shipment which goes out this week is on allocation too. Alan Sharam [Sega

UK MD] is looking very pleased," he added.

But CRN has received complaints from distributors, multiples and independents that the number of machines available was too few to meet demand and shops were losing sales by having to turn away disappointed customers. Of the larger distributors only Gem got the number it ordered, while Centresoft received just

50 of the 500 machines it had requested.

"It's better to have that complaint than how it was 18 months ago when everyone was shouting, 'how do we get rid of this stuff?'" retorted Clarke. "Whatever we do it's always the same. Indies feel they've been left at the back of the queue and that multiples get the lion's share of stock. But we've been fair with everyone;

the allocation has been in proportion to the scale of their business."

Thornley distribution claimed that although stock was limited at other distributors, it was able to satisfy all customers who participated in its indie Saturn programme, which included store visits from Thornley reps armed with POS materials and gift packs.

By Andrew Charlesworth

For one small Scottish retailer, Saturday 8 July turned out to be Sat-on Day.

“I read about the revised launch date in CRN and ordered six Saturns, RF cables and a load of software from Centresoft. I then spent hundreds of pounds advertising in the local press in preparation for Saturday, hired three extra employees to run in-store competitions and reorganised the entire shop with POS. Disaster struck on Friday when only one machine turned up. I had no pads, no cables and next to no software. Centresoft told me they had nothing left, having received only 45 machines from Sega and I got similar stories from other distributors. So far I've had to turn away £2,500 of trade. If Sega knew they didn't have the stock, why did they take so many orders?”

Does anyone anywhere have a spare RF cable?

SCART VS RF

Sega has drastically underestimated demand for RF cables, forcing retailers to turn away large numbers of customers intent on plugging Saturns into non-Scart TVs.

"This is a major cock-up," said Gerry Berkley, games manager at HMV. "A lot of punters want to use the Saturn on bedroom portable TVs which don't have a Scart connection. Asking customers to pay an extra £24.99 is bad enough but telling them to wait a couple of weeks adds insult to injury."

The independents have also been badly affected, unable to

get stock from empty handed distributors. Some distributors received no RF cables at all: "We ordered adequate quantities well in advance but absolutely nothing arrived," said Frank Ratcliffe managing director of Thornley.

According to industry analysts the shortage should have come as no surprise to Sega, with only a third of TV sets capable of supporting the Saturn. "Of the 35 million TVs in the UK only 11 million have Scart connections," said Gerald Harvey, head of economic services at British Radio and Electrical Equipment

Manufacturers Association (BREMA). However, over 80% of VCRs are equipped with a Scart port.

Dave Clarke, Sega marketing manager, told CRN that supplying more RF cables was a short term solution: "What we need to do is get people off RF and onto Scart. Lots of people don't realise they have Scart capability on their TV or VCR. But we're saying to retailers, don't lose a sale for the sake of a cable. Refer the customer to Sega and we'll sort them out. We'll ship RF cables directly to the customers if necessary."

By Guy Dixon

Enthusiasm and scepticism in press reactions to Saturn

MEDIA COVERAGE

Sega made an enormous effort to capitalise on press coverage prior to and immediately after the launch of Saturn, hitting all forms of media from national TV to specialist games press.

LWT's Movies Games & Videos, broadcast on Saturday itself, gave the console an effusive plug. It showed Clockwork Knight previewed 3D platformer Bug and used the same footage of Sega of America president Tom Kalinske that it took at E3.

The otherwise sober Daily Telegraph reached into the dusty depths of its thesaurus for words like "dazzling" and

"rocketed" to adorn an enthusiastic news item with little complaint except over Saturn's high price.

The Guide, from Saturday's Guardian, was more sceptical: "The might of Sega's marketing machine launches the Saturn, according to Sega 'the most sought after' of new generation games consoles (well, at least until the next one comes along). Pick of the software is still Virtua Fighter - ultra-violent beat 'em up or ingenious metaphor for the forthcoming no holds barred battle between the Saturn (available now, £399) and Sony's Playstation (technically superior, due out in

a couple of months, rumoured to be £100 cheaper)? You decide."

Future Publishing's Edge continued its pro-Playstation bias with a high profile editorial on page three of the August issue, headed: "Sega first off the mark, but is it running scared?" The piece goes on to suggest that in getting Saturn to retail early, Sega is not "really on the case" but "running scared", citing Sony's superior hardware, better software and greater marketing muscle.

Edge's six-page review of Saturn refers to the console as second class compared with Sony's Playstation.

Canon fires distributors and keeps retail all in the family

CHS & SYMONS SACKED

CHS and Hugh Symons have been canned as Canon distributors because the manufacturer wants distributors to concentrate on corporate and dealer sales, leaving retail business to Canon's in-house sales force.

Canon has stated that the two firms were axed because their business profiles and strategies did not match its own. CHS and Hugh Symons have been given three months'

notice and will stop selling Canon kit in September.

Canon general manager Bill McQueen said: "Over the last nine months the direction of Canon's channel policies has been to focus on the corporate and dealer market. Our four remaining distribution partners are best positioned to continue the rapid growth expected."

Jan Lawford, sales and marketing director of CHS, said this was not the end of the



relationship between Canon and CHS. "I would like to continue selling Canon printers under the right circumstances."

Hugh Symons is negotiating with other printer suppliers,

and has hinted there was not enough margin in the Canon products anyway.

Canon products are still available from Ingram Micro, Merisel, MicroP and ISI.

Sony days are here as console starts UK tour

PLAYSTATION ROADSHOW Sony and its new distributor Centresoft have announced a series of Playstation roadshow dates for indies.

Kicking off 1 August in Glasgow, the shows, hosted by Centresoft, Sony and ISM, will include Sony's plans for the Playstation launch and details of the marketing and service support available.

"The Playstation Centre distribution network will provide

participating dealers with many of the benefits which come from belonging to a chain, while still having the flexibility of being an independent," said Richard Steele, Centresoft MD.

Glasgow	1 August
Newcastle	2 August
Manchester	3 August
Southampton	8 August
Central London	9 August
Birmingham	19 August

Packard gets NEC cash to push home products

£100 MILLION BOOST

Retail PC specialist Packard Bell has sold a share of its business to Japanese giant NEC. The pair plan to co-operate in buying, developing and marketing video game consoles, PCs and set-top boxes. NEC paid \$170 million (£107.5 million) for a 19.99% stake in the US PC manufacturer and joins Group Bull on its board.

Analysts see the deal as providing working capital for the

rapidly growing Packard Bell. It strengthens both companies' global positions. Packard Bell was the fourth largest PC producer in the world last year and its estimated shipments of 2.3 million units were more than double those it achieved in 1993. NEC sold an estimated 1.9 million and is ranked fifth.

Worldwide, the companies plan to develop standards in key multimedia areas including MPEG and 3D.

Surfing Dillons tries out novel CD-i scheme

THREE MONTH TRIAL

Dillons has started a three month CD-i trial in 13 of its stores, demonstrating 50 children's and reference titles from the Philips range. The sites have been chosen according to the route taken by the Interactivator bus, which starts touring today to promote Philips multimedia software.

"Dillons was chosen because we felt we could get better exposure for our children's range, which tends to get overshadowed in traditional retail outlets," said Tessa Moore, Philips Media marketing director.

The 140-strong book chain is also offering an Internet access facility at its flagship Gower

Street store in London. The new Cyber Station sports eight Internet-ready PCs, which cost £3 per hour. Claire Studd, promotions manager at Dillons, told CRN that although it could be used to check for email and Net surfing, its

major function was to market Dillons' burgeoning Net related books. "We're developing our own Web pages and the public can use the Cyber Station in the same way as you might use a phone kiosk. But we're also



hoping that it will persuade customers to buy our Internet books." If successful, Internet stations could be rolled out to outlets in other major city centres with a high student population.

CD-ROM has been rolled out to 40 Dillons stores, each stocking around 30 titles, encompassing education and reference software. Twenty stores now feature dedicated multimedia demonstration units, with trained sales staff on hand.

By Guy Dixon

Gels and boys come out to play with Wella



SHOCKWAVES GAME

Hair care company Wella is out to prove it is at the cutting edge of style and technology by launching a video game, Shockwaves Express, to push its Shockwaves mousse and gel brand to trendy teenagers.

A hair-raising £1.1 million advertising and promotional campaign is set to run on Shockwaves products, TV, radio, and in teenage and computer magazines over the next two months to accompany the release.

"We wanted to create a street-wise and urban image which would appeal to our unisex market, but particularly to boys who are quite hard to reach," said Kari Daniels, Wella Shockwaves product manager.

Jim Lawler, one of the managing directors at Invisible Cities who designed the game, stressed that it wasn't just a vehicle for Wella. "It's about a gang of couriers who happen to be cool and Wella picked up on it. There's no-one in there with good hair. They've got crewcuts and Mohawks - they're all a mess," he said.

The CD-ROM costs £30 and will be available in selected supermarkets, Blockbuster, HMV and other games outlets by late August. 2000AD cartoonist Tom Carney worked on the graphics.

Escom to offer fax and print services

OFFICE WORLD TIE-UP

Escom has started offering small business print and fax services from its stores in a tie-up with its out of town retail partner Office World.

Five Escom outlets are initially selling the printing, binding, laminating and faxing services under the Office World Print Point banner. If the trials are successful the concept will be rolled out to 100 Escom stores by the end of the year.

The concessions use 500 square feet and share Office World's red and white corporate

colours. Escom stores in Taunton, Exeter, Harlow, Slough and Guildford are trialling the Print Points.

Escom operates eight concessions within the office supplies superstores. The new deal is described as "an extension of our business partnership" by Office World MD Simon Fox. The computer retailer intends to be in a further 40 Office Worlds by the end of the year.

The Print Points will be marketed by both retailers. The initial campaign will use direct mail to small businesses.

Nintendo hot on the case of the colour Game Boy

£2 MILLION CAMPAIGN

Not to be outdone by its 32-bit super-console competitors, Nintendo is fighting a rear guard action by backing its multi-coloured Game Boy range with a £2 million advertising campaign.

"We are giving the retailer the chance to optimise the sales of Game Boy throughout the summer and give the consumer an excellent value for money package without altering the existing purchasing process or asking them to handle premium stock," said Mark Edridge, Nintendo UK's director of marketing.

Gamers can now choose from a multi-coloured range, which includes red, yellow, black and

transparent. A coloured Game Boy costs £44.99 and comes supplied with a clear carrying case that can hold up to five game cartridges and a spare set of batteries.

Customers opting for the classic grey Game Boy with a software title can claim a free game bag by sending off a coupon collected in-store. The nylon bag sports the campaign message, "What Colour's Yours?" and on-pack stickers flag the promotion, which runs from 12 August to 25 August. Other POS materials include A2 posters and A4 counter cards.

To support the new range, the Nintendo Challenger is cruising the country. Featuring 50 screens and the latest games on

PC mags discount vouchers slagged

WINDOWS 95

News-stand magazines PC Pro and Computer Shopper are pushing consumers to buy Windows 95 from WH Smith and John Menzies. They are giving away £10 discount coupons for the product with their September issues, and they are redeemable solely at the two retail giants.

The promotion, organised between the magazine publishing house Dennis and the two retailers, has angered mail order advertisers. These companies see the voucher scheme as unfair competition and are now threatening to pull their adverts from the issues.

The MD of one mail order company said: "This has been short-sighted on the part of Dennis. They should have thought of the consequences before embarking on such a silly price promotion."

In its defence, Computer Shopper publisher Mike Thorburn said he doubted the two multiples would be able to undercut the off-the-page dealers even with £10 off their Windows 95 selling price. "I can see the advertisers' point to a certain extent but the redemption rate is very small on these promotions," he said.

The mail order company MD said: "It takes business away from us and other retailers and into Smiths and Menzies, who are not geared up to support and service the product."

Between the two magazines 350,000 coupons will be printed. Computer Shopper's September issue goes on sale 3 August.

CHART ACTION

Just one day of recorded sales was enough to thrust Sega's Daytona USA on Saturn up to number two in the all-formats CD charts.

One Saturday was enough to convince proud owners of Sega's £399 next generation console that it was worth investing a further £49.99 in software, adding Daytona to Virtua Fighter which is bundled with the machine. The less critically acclaimed International Victory Goal also made an appearance at number 12.

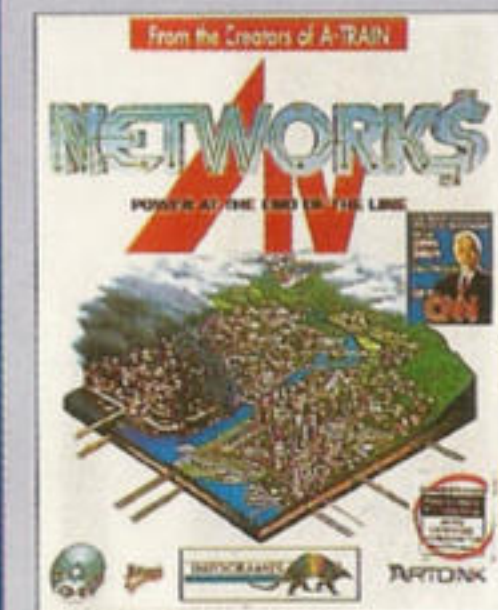
Anal retentives also got a boost with the launch of Infogrammes Aiv Networks, which they can add to their Sim City collection. The title also featured on Movies, Games and Videos, where James Coburn, who appears in the game, spoke very highly of the product. The MG&V presenter, however, added: "If you prefer killing space monsters then this game is not for you."

Microprose's Star Trek TNG has finally achieved what The People Who Know said it would, outselling all other CDs by a long shot. The game's success is partly due to its generous

£32.99 price tag, a long way off the original RRP of £54.99. Not to be outdone by the Saturn razzmatazz, 3DO is enjoying its 15 minutes of Warhol fame with EA's Wing Commander III. Widely lauded as the best 3DO title to date, Wing III helped 3DO claim 6.6% of CD sales. CDs themselves have pushed past the 25% of all leisure software mark for the first time. Even Mac owners have something to smile about in the all-format CD charts: Dark Forces and Discworld, two of the bestselling CDs on the PC, are now available for Mac.

On the cartridge front, a fresh injection of Brian Lara Cricket carts after all the shortages was sufficient to hook the Codemasters game back to the top. Fever Pitch, however, slipped back one place to number five, in spite of the sensationalist coverage in the national press. Currys is currently selling the Megadrive version for £37.99 and the SNES game for £44.99. The same retailer is selling Street Racer for £37.99, which has clawed its way up to the fourth spot. Meanwhile EA's FIFA Soccer 95 looks set to break the 200,000 sales barrier, making it one of the bestselling video games of all time. Acclaim's WWF Raw makes a surprise reappearance at number ten, largely due to heavy discounting in retail. Jungle Strike bounces up to 16 following its release on SNES which last week accounted for 80% of the title's sales.

Nothing worth commenting on is happening in the home computer charts.



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audit issue

VNU BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS

inshort

● Planning to go to ECTS by train? Not on 12 September, the show's last day, if ASLEF's strike plans go ahead. If the strike is on look for alternative travel information from Blenheim in these pages.

● Toy giant Hasbro has moved into the video game business and produced a piece of hardware called Hyperscore, compatible with both the Megadrive and SNES, which plugs into the telephone line and checks the player's score with others around the country.

● The pay of Gem Distribution's MD Paul Donnelly leaped 40% from £58,686 to £82,634, over the 56 weeks to June 1994. Chairman Peter Bellamy did even better, enjoying a 49% rise from £55,442 to £82,790. The increases follow a rise in turnover of 62% and a 49% increase in pre-tax profits to £515,876.

● Symantec has effectively acquired Delrina in a proposed share swap worth \$415 million. Symantec, best known for data protection and recovery, is hoping to expand its comms products alongside Delrina's WinFax.

● Future is accusing rival publishers IDG of breaking a gentleman's agreement, after IDG's Amiga Action offered a free full version of a computer game worth £20.

● Olivetti is joining forces with indoor adventure playground specialist Action Stations, which opened at Lakeside Thurrock at the end of last month and offers the use of multimedia PCs running educational software. Computers have also been installed in the rest area, allowing bored parents to surf the Net while waiting for their children.

● ELSPA is not just for games companies. Random House, traditionally a book publisher, has become its 90th member. Dorling Kindersley and Marshall Cavendish are also said to be considering membership.

● Philips has announced two CD-i packages, bundling the player with a TV and a video recorder. The CD-i 450 can be bought with a Nicam stereo TV and a copy of Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia for £599.99. A CD-i, TV, and video package is available for £999.99.

● VCI has bought book publisher Andre Deutsch, with plans to release Deutsche's sport and film titles on CD-ROM. Initial releases are likely to include Michael Manley's An Encyclopedia of West Indies Cricket and David Thomson's Biographical Dictionary of Film.

● Nintendo is to spend \$15 million on R&D facilities in the UK. Much of the investment is likely to go into Warwickshire based developer Rare.

● John Menzies is launching a loyalty scheme in Edinburgh with an unnamed retail partner, described as a "leader in its sector". In return for points collected, customers can choose gifts, travel awards or donations to charity. The scheme is to be rolled out throughout the nationwide chain over the final quarter.

● Marvel Media, supplier of Apple Mac peripherals, is to exclusively distribute Victormaxx and Cybermaxx virtual reality headsets. "We are in negotiation with a prominent high street retailer as well as a video store chain," said a spokesman for the distributor.

● Disney Interactive and 7th Level will jointly develop a CD-ROM game based on the Lion King characters Pumbaa and Timon, scheduled for release in the US this November and in the rest of world early next year.

● Ocean is to release Waterworld on all major formats later this year, following the release of the movie in August. The game promises three environments, including a 3D isometric level and undersea exploration.

● Ablac's Fisher Price Dream Doll House has won a Gold Award in the software category for the 1995 Best Toy Awards. Fisher-Price A-B-Cs, Kid Phonics and Kid Works 2 received Highly Commended certificates.

● Klik & Play for the Mac is to be launched in September, on floppy disk for £44.99 and CD for £49.99. It allows users to create computer games without programming skills. Minimum requirements include a 68020 processor, System 7.0 or better and 4Mb of free RAM.

Home shopping an impending disaster

INTECO REPORT

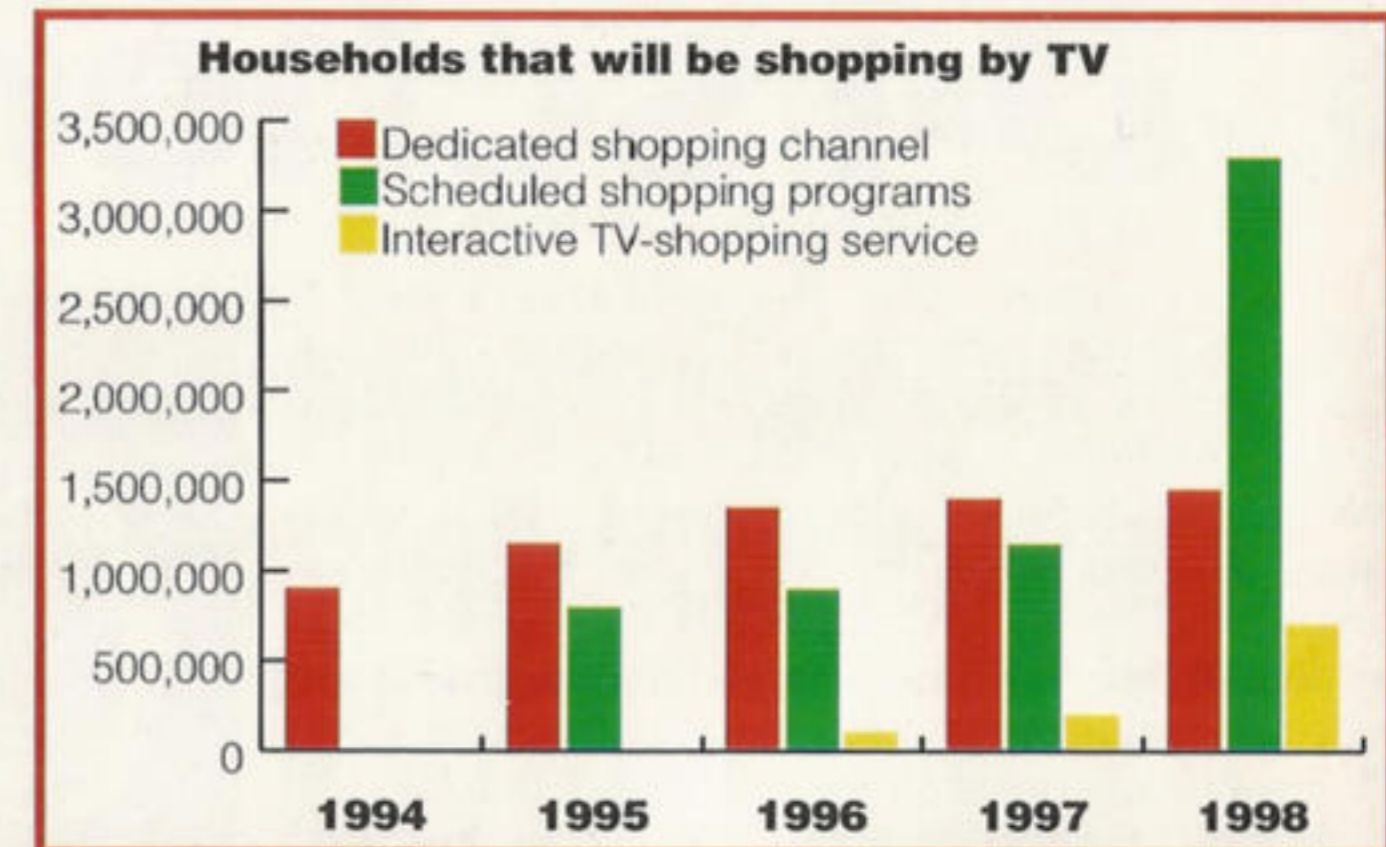
"The implications of home shopping and digital delivery on employment in retail and white collar service industries could be viewed as potentially catastrophic," warned a recent report by market research agency Inteco.

By selling PCs into the home, computer retailers are cutting the throats of their high street brethren. Armed with electronic catalogues, both offline in the form of CD-ROM and online over the Internet, virtual shoppers will have the same impact on our shopping habits that supermarkets did in the 1960s.

"It will be as though a bomb hit the high street," said Graham

Taylor, manager of the survey. "New home shopping service operators, not encumbered by the cost of retail premises or tele-sales staff, will start a war on price and delivery, moving competition between retail and direct selling into a whole new phase."

The report estimates that by 1998, 39% of all UK households with incomes above £20,000 per annum will have fast modems connected to their home PCs. By avoiding the costs associated with retail sites and staff, virtual stalls will be able to provide irresistible prices to their customers, who will be free to browse without any sales pressure.



Inteco also forecasts a user base of seven million home PCs by 1998, giving 32% of UK households access to CD catalogues. However, according to Taylor it

is the television rather than the PC that will ultimately become the preferred means of virtual shopping.

By Guy Dixon



Philips Media has teamed up with The Young Telegraph and The Children's Channel to promote The Interactivator, a double decker bus equipped with CD-i and CD-ROM demonstration stations. The bus is to visit 12 sites nationwide, coinciding with school summer holidays. The sites include the Eureka Museum, Alton Towers, Pier Approach, Bournemouth and Covent Garden. The multimedia circus will be giving away a CD-i player, software prizes and the opportunity to win a free subscription to The Young Telegraph. Minor celebrities have been invited, including Blue Peter's Tim Vincent.

SoHo still confused says Banner survey

READERSHIP SURVEY

The effort from manufacturers, magazine publishers and retailers to target small businesses is still only reaching a fraction of the audience, according to a recent survey.

The 1995 Banner Computer Readership Survey paints a picture of inadequately informed small businesses, confused by fast moving technology and distrust of technobabble.

Banner's survey of the SoHo market, encompassing businesses with one to 50 employees, found that less than half the businesses owned a computer at all and 65% have an annual computer budget of less than £5,000.

The majority of those with computers, 88%, use it for letter writing, while 79% use it for accounts, 74% for customer records, 64% for reports and newsletters and 36% for design. More than 75% make no

attempt to secure their data with regular backups, suggesting a big educational and sales opportunity for basic backup devices.

The survey says that SoHo users miss out on whole generations of technology. Sixty three percent are still using dot matrix printers, again suggesting an opportunity in selling inkjet or small laser printers.

When looking for advice on computer purchases, 30% turn to colleagues or associates, 21% go to dealers, 12% buy from superstores and 17% seek guidance from computer magazines. Nearly all - 90% - shun major trade shows.

Those computer vendors plying their wares via expensive TV campaigns would do well to note that 87% of the respondents watched less than 12 hours a week of commercial TV broadcast, but 63% listen regularly to commercial radio.

Curry power adds spice to Dixons yearly results

PRE-TAX PROFITS

Dixons' latest end of year financial results owe much to its perseverance with computer sales.

The figures show the company polarising into a chain of high street stores selling high volume personal electronic goods and a rapidly expanding out of town empire specialising in larger products.

Reporting a 37% increase in pre-tax profit to £100.3 million on a 10% increase in turnover to £1.54 billion, chairman Stanley Kalms said the increase in sales and profit over the last year is "due principally to the expansion and growth of Currys Superstores and PC World."

Currys continues its exodus

out of town with an 11% increase in profit to £863 million. Superstores account for 80% of Currys floor space, with 136 high

street locations closed and 32 superstores opened this financial year. There are now almost equal numbers of high street stores (199) and out-of-town stores (190). In the coming year 19 more superstores are planned, six will be resited and more high street stores closed.

PC World's turnover leapt up 84% to £124.7 million as the number of stores

doubled from seven to 14. Another ten are planned this year with an eventual target of 50 stores in total.



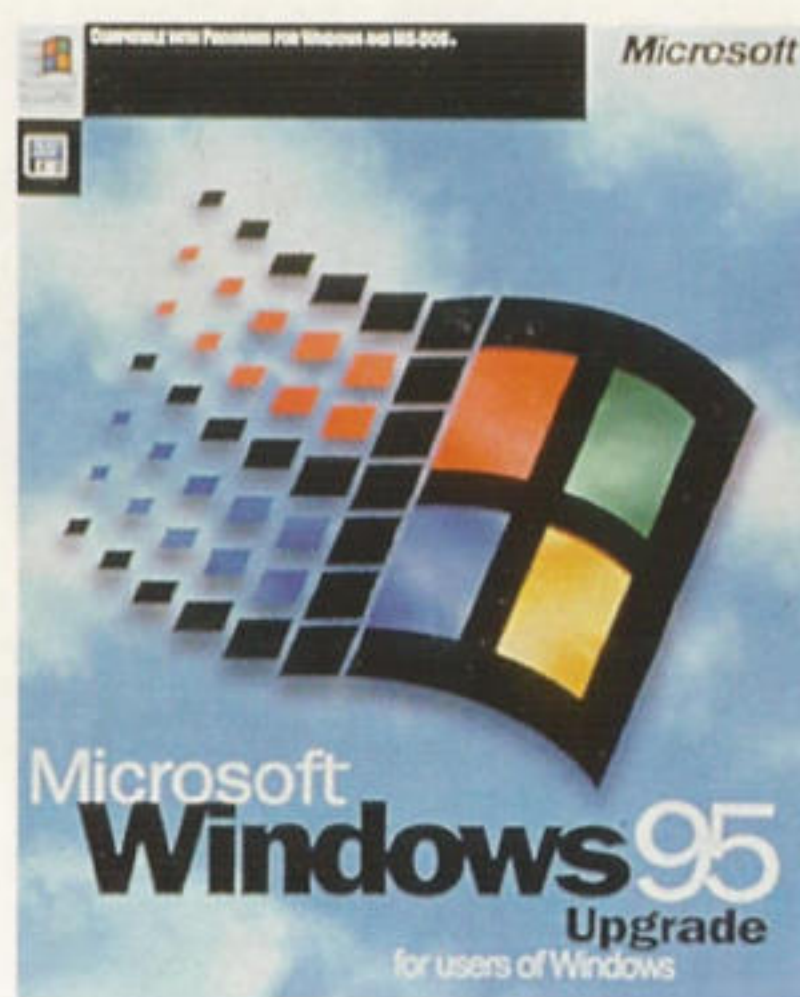
"Multimedia personal computers incorporating CD-ROMs took a substantially increased share of overall sales," said Kalms. "The group's substantial buying power for PCs and related products resulted in further improvements in gross margin."

Sales at Dixons high street locations remained flat at just over £520 million. The shops suffered from a decline in camcorders and 16-bit cartridge games, but 40 stores were converted to emphasise portable electronic goods, including new categories such as PC software.

Dixons plans to be running around 50 of its Link specialist communications stores by the end of the next financial year.



Ordering...



... Microsoft® Windows® 95 and other Microsoft Windows 95 products from Ingram Micro now or you could miss out on the sales opportunity of the year.

What's more, every copy of Windows 95 ordered prior to the launch date automatically entitles you to one entry into our Win 95 draw. You could win a week for two in the Caribbean or runners-up prizes including luxury weekend breaks and holiday vouchers. Winners will be announced on 14 September at the Ingram Micro Product Showcase, Wembley Exhibition Centre.

See weekly trade press for details of special Ingram Micro Windows 95 offers or call Ingram Micro sales on 01908 260160.

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THE NAME OF THE GAME

QUANTUM LEAP FOR VORTEX

The Vortex: Quantum Gate II is out on PC CD-ROM and Warner Interactive Entertainment is touting the product as a "full length Virtual Cinema interactive movie". The game comes on three CDs and features six hours' worth of digital video. It has already attracted an unusually large amount of editorial coverage, including appearances on The Big Breakfast and Movies Games and Videos, as well as MTV and cable TV. WIE is promising further coverage on national TV and radio, as well as the national press, consumer lifestyle magazines and specialist rags.

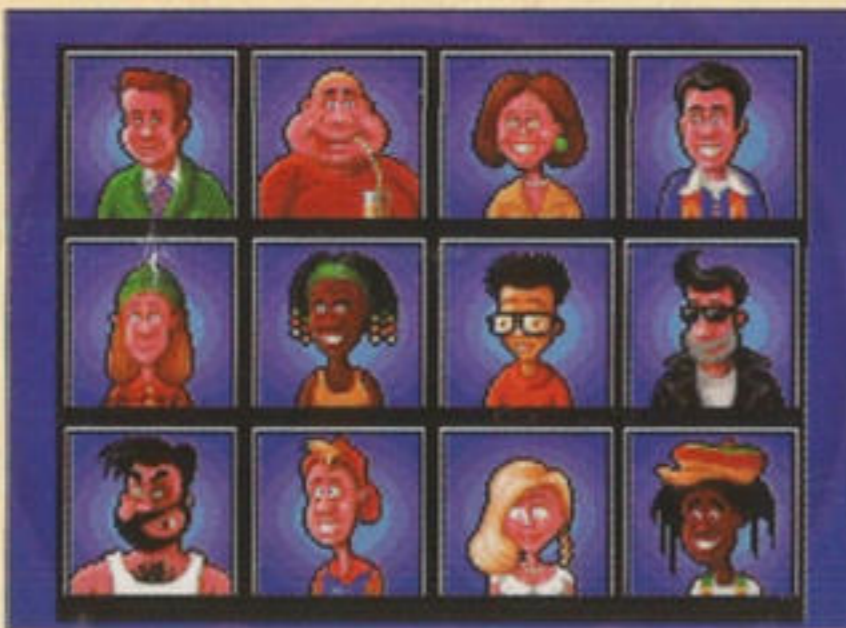


GOOD SPORTS IN THE WARNER CORNER

WIE is also putting its weight behind Sport Accolade, re-launching four of the PC CD-ROM range: Live Action Football, Hardball 4, Brett Hull Hockey 95 and Unnecessary Roughness. Available now for an RRP of £39.99, the pack is being advertised throughout trade and specialist press. Twenty-two-year-plus males are being targeted through male lifestyle mags. A cross-promotion with American Football team, the London Monarchs, is under way, with 50 free tickets being given away in retail promotions.

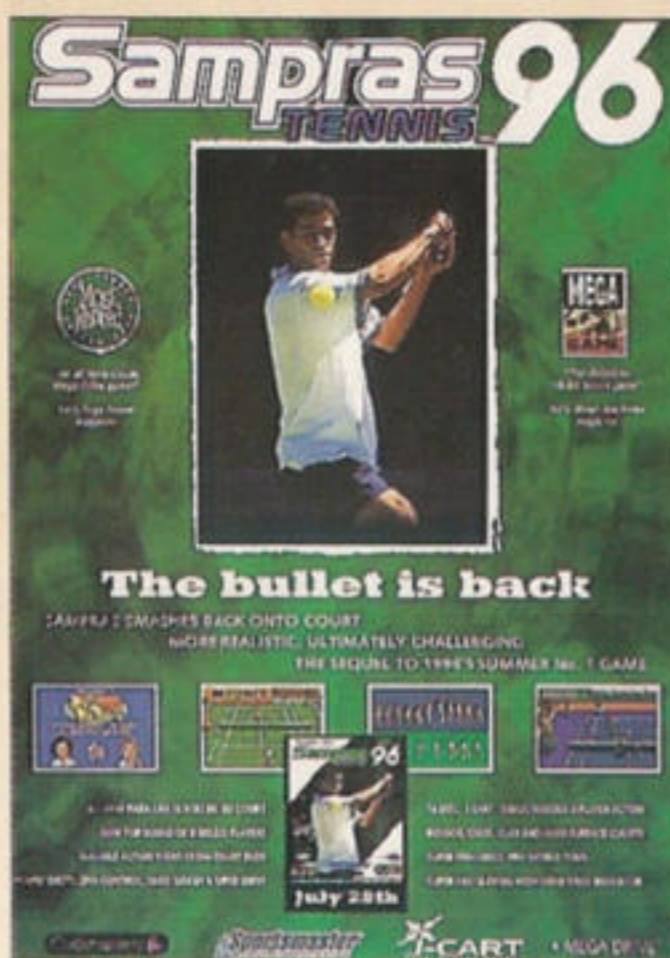
MASSIVE ATTACK FROM CODEMASTERS

Codemasters has released Micro Machines 2 on PC and PC CD-ROM. The first 10,000 purchasers of the game will receive a voucher entitling them to a free copy of the August edition of PC Attack. Hardware prizes are also on offer in a Design a Track competition, including a monitor and quad speed CD-ROM drives. Winners will be displayed on a PC Attack cover CD. The game has scored in the early nineties and featured on Scratchy & Co. POS materials include 3D standees and shelf wobblers.



CHAMP SAMPRAS IN MEGADRIVE RACKET

Sampras 96 launches on 26 July on Sega Megadrive and Codemasters is looking to repeat the success it had with Brian Lara Cricket. The big boys have probably hogged most of the orders already, though Codemasters may now have the confidence to go for a higher number of first shipment carts. Advertising has been taking place in the specialist magazines and poster sites have been selected around major towns and cities for the launch fortnight. 3D standees, videos, posters and wobblers make up the POS materials.



TIME WARNER IS OUT TO MUNCH

Namco's Ms. Pacman was launched on the Megadrive in the US three years ago and has since sold over a million copies. So confident is Namco of the game's sell-through that hardly a dollar has been spent on marketing in support of the game. Time Warner Interactive has now acquired the rights to sell the game in the UK and expects retailers to make reasonable margin on a cart costing between £19.99 and £24.99. The title is getting coverage in Sega Power's budget review and also features as part of TWI's in-store POS window cubes. Ms. Pacman is available now.

Novell halves 95 for its Perfect summer

PERFECTOFFICE PROMO

Novell has launched a summer promotion for its integrated business suite PerfectOffice 3.0, which entitles purchasers to a 50% rebate on a Windows 95 operating system upgrade.

The offer runs from 3 July to the end of September and also applies to those customers who purchase the Windows 95 upgrade before the end of September or within 30 days of

shipment, whichever is later. The latest date from Microsoft for the launch of Windows 95 is 24 August.

While the summer promotion lasts, all Windows users will also qualify for a competitive trade-up price - RRP £195 - for PerfectOffice 3.0.

"We won't be asking for any proof, we'll just have to trust they are Windows users," said David Benny, Novell business

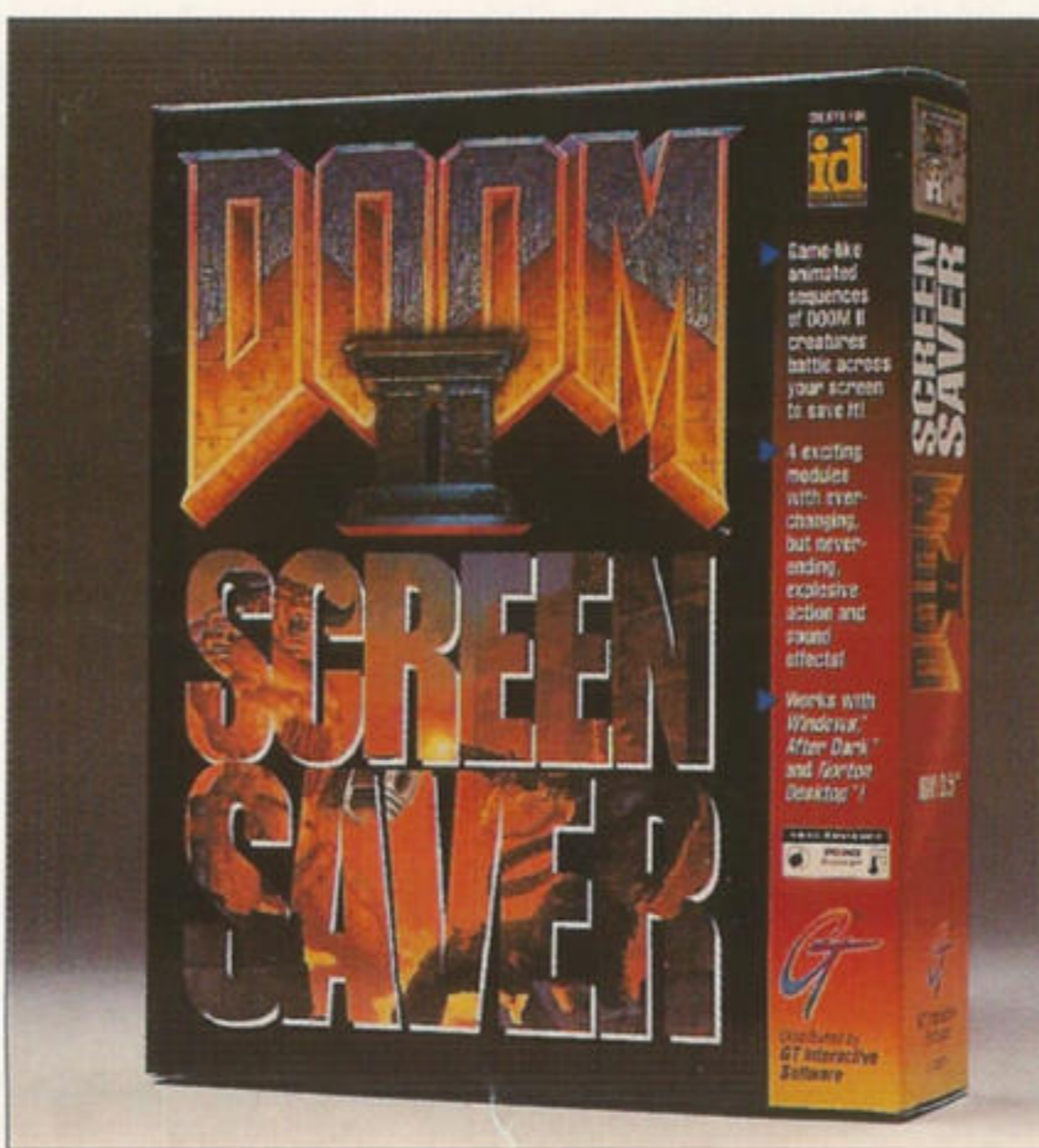
applications brand manager.

To qualify for the 50% rebate on a Windows 95 upgrade, customers have to purchase PerfectOffice 3.0 and Windows 95 from the same retailer. They have to collect a coupon from a participating reseller and return it to Novell's fulfilment house with the purchase receipts for PerfectOffice 3.0 and Windows 95 by 15 October.

The promotion applies to all

purchases of PerfectOffice 3.0, whether bought as an upgrade, trade-in or full retail package of either standard or professional versions. PerfectOffice 3.0 is also available by trading in any other Novell product for an RRP of £165, although Benny said many resellers were still using the launch trade-in price of £145 or below.

The Novell promotion is not endorsed by Microsoft.



It's Doom time for screen-savers. GTIS has released id Software's Doom II Screen Saver, further capitalising on the success of the greatest PC splatter-fest of all time.

The screensaver carries a £19.99 RRP and contains four modules, all amounting to the same thing - dead things on screen. The screensaver is compatible with Windows, AfterDark and Norton Desktop screensaver utilities.



Combined CD drive is a first for Panasonic

REWITABLE OPTICAL

Panasonic has produced what it bills as the first combined rewritable optical disk drive and quad speed CD-ROM drive. Called the Panasonic PD System, it is on sale for £549 ex-VAT and retailers can expect to make £100 per box.

John Arundell, group marketing controller for distributor SDL, enthused: "It's a superb piece of kit. At £549 it's a snip and the price won't come down this side of Christmas."

Although SDL expects to sell most of its units to dealers selling to education establishments and Mac bureaux, it believes the product is a moneymaker for straight retail. "PC owners will want it. It's not mass market but it is a product for enthusiasts," said Arundell.

Optical disks for the drive cost £39 each ex-VAT and store 600Mb of data.

Skywell beats battered disties to Tornado deal

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS

Skywell has secured exclusive distribution rights to Electronic Frontier's Tornado range of modems. Sole supplier status was wrestled from Eurotech and ZCL, the latter of which is now in receivership.

The V.32bis models offering 14,400 bps have RRPs of £119 and £129 for the internal and external models respectively. The V.34 modems, giving 28,800 bps, are priced at £199 and £219 respectively for the

internal and external versions.

Paul Burke, strategic operations director, said retailers should be able to make £30 to £40 on the products. "That's high margin. Plus they can offer an external metal case and all the cables, including a telephone line splitter. Other modem manufacturers say £10 for a cable and £10 for a power supply."

The products are being repackaged and Burke promises dummy boxes for retailers by mid-July. He said the modem's



chipsets compared with the competition's, but that the Tornados were cheaper and came with a seven year warranty.

Hasta Pro Vista baby - screen star moves on

ADI OPTS FOR LOW END

Manufacturer ADI has called the launch of its first consumer monitor into a market stricken with severe shortages of low end product a fortunate coincidence.

The company had previously concentrated on high end screens but recognised there was money in selling upgrades to consumers. Extreme retail demand for cheaper monitors has caused the product drought.

ADI's 14in monitor, the ProVista 14, has an RRP of

£199 ex VAT but expects its street price to be £159 ex VAT. Sales director Alan Jai recognises



that in six months to a year consumers will be upgrading to 15in monitors, but at the moment they seek better quality 14in models. He said 60% of the market is still for 14in models.

"In the UK market lots of systems are being sold with cheap monitors with a 0.39 dot pitch. These give lousy focus and the reliability is not good," Jai added. "People are going to look for better screens from a professional monitor company."

The ProVista 14 has 0.28 dot

pitch in addition to front-mounted brightness, contrast and on/off controls and horizontal and vertical picture adjusters. It also offers an automatic power down feature that enables it to consume less than 5W in standby/suspend mode.

ADI expects retailers to make margin of between 10% and 15% on the monitor and is about to launch a brand awareness advertising campaign. The company also claims to have plenty of ProVista stock.

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Escom's low casualty count

● *Escom's TV campaign was so feared, NASCR members met to discuss it. But the German chain has merely poured oil on troubled waters for most retailers, reports Robert Blincoe.*

The overnight opening of 100 Escom stores in May raised blood pressures at multiples and independents but the firm's latest bid for the high street, a prime time nationwide TV campaign, has had the same effect on the competition as a low cholesterol diet and a swiftly implemented fitness regime.

The German manufacturer and retailer went on air on Saturday 1 July to promote itself, the opening of a further 39 outlets and the start of its summer sale. This made it the first

computer retailer to advertise its products in the UK on TV, not counting Dixons which has fleetingly mentioned PCs in its broadcasts.

The campaign lasted for two weeks and was broadcast in the London, Central, Granada, Yorkshire and Tyne Tees regions as well as nationally on Channel 4. Some of its slots were around 10pm, which is the choice broadcasting time to target prospective computer owners, and according to media buying experts the company paid top dollar for the positions. Including the printing of 18 million copies of its sale brochure, Escom has spent £750,000 on its media push.

But the move to television is just bringing heartburn relief to the channel during a slack sales period. Escom is coughing up money to increase awareness in computers at a time when most retailers are sitting tight waiting for the run-up to Christmas. The likelihood is that it will feed its smaller competitors because its budget machines don't offer everything consumers expect, it has a growing reputation for system unreliability, and sometimes it just doesn't have the stock.

NASCR's group buying organisation, the Network Buying Group, held a meeting six

weeks ago to discuss the Escom situation. And there Richard Gandy, MD of Marlowe dealership Computer Cavern, offered this pulse soothing advice: "Don't panic, take advantage of this." He found the TV blitz increased general awareness of computers, and reveals a number of NASCR members have just enjoyed very good weeks.

The TV advert has been praised on creative grounds but criticised for not addressing the viewers watching at the times broadcast. David Lawton, computer marketing expert and joint MD of concession retailer Function 4, believes Escom's PCs will appeal more to businesses than home users because the firm doesn't yet have its multimedia specifications right, even though it was going ahead talking to first time buyers. "The advert is aimed at the consumer, but you need to know about computers to understand them."

Steve Rigby, Byte product and marketing director, thought the Escom brand wasn't yet strong enough to carry the format it had chosen for its TV debut. "Escom is not a known brand. The advert should have introduced the company and maybe shown a few of the stores. I'm not very keen on that Man from Escom thing."

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Lawton feels it was pertinent that Escom is promoting itself as it wades into secondary high street locations vacated by Rumbelows (enjoying a six month rent-free period) at the same time that Dixons is fleeing similar sites. The fact that Dixons is the only other retailer to put PCs on the box is telling because it is Dixons who everyone else in computer retail thinks will suffer the most from Escom. What was originally seen as a threat to everyone is now only considered a threat to high street multiples which can advertise in big style (Escom has a projected £6 million promo budget) but don't have the reputation of in-store, in-depth computer expertise.

Retailers responded to Escom's initial 100 store roll-out like it had mistaken chronic indigestion for a major coronary. But what really set off the palpitations was a national press campaign with a £66,000 regional paper parade shouting PCs for

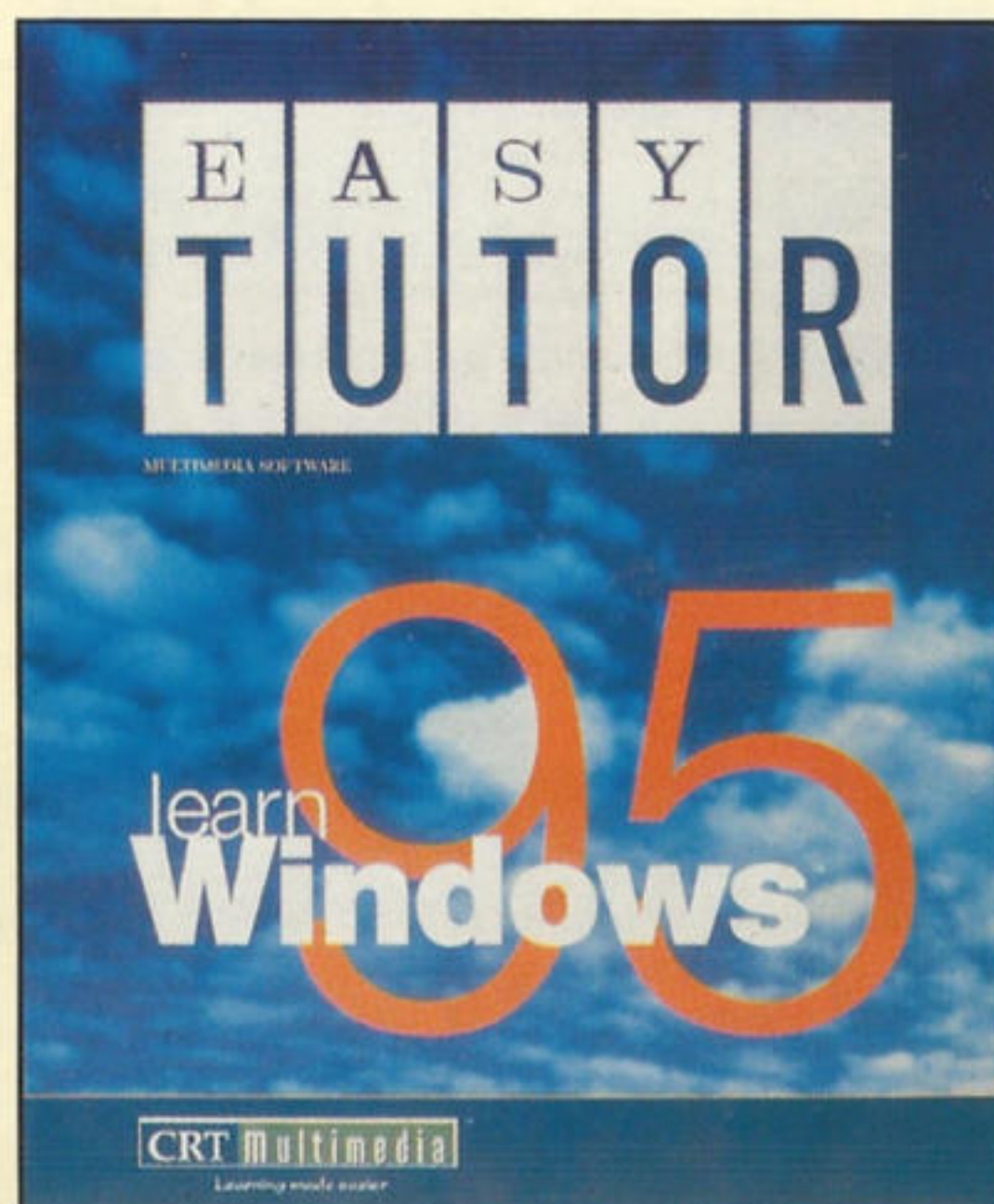
£499. Then reality struck. Escom offered a limited range of specifications, its cheapest machines didn't come with a mouse or Windows, it had stock problems, it had quality problems, and the layout of its hurriedly inhabited stores looked cheap. This was reinforced by the plain cardboard non-retail packaging which had once housed machines imported from Mitac in Taiwan, as part of its display.

Steve Rigby admitted that a lot of visitors to Byte stores were brandishing Escom brochures but said it was very easy to sell against the products listed. He was also scathing about the quality of Escom's systems. "We've had a lot come in for repair which apparently they [Escom] can't sort out themselves. We charge about £40 an hour."

But while Escom is promoting computer retail, and turning

consumers to rival stores through its flaws, it is selling machines because its prices are competitive. The result is that Watford Electronics is showing off a sub-£600 machine in its latest brochure and Time has been forced into the £500 plus bracket by the chain. And Rigby admits that sales of Byte's own brand machines have taken a hit since Escom appeared in force, although the impact on the big name machines is negligible.

The MD of one mail order house is sure Escom's affect on the market is not all harmless wind. "They are affecting business, no doubt about it. We have seen a drop in margin and I can see Dixons losing a lot."



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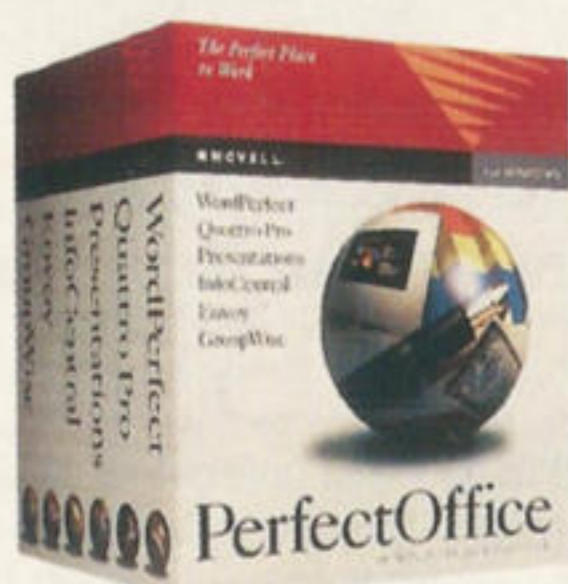
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*Redemption will be by way of a rebate. Offer applies to a maximum of five rebates per customer address. A maximum rebate of £45.50 inc. VAT will be redeemed for each copy of Windows® 95 upgrade. No carriage costs will be refunded. For VAT registered businesses the refund is given on a net value basis only. Novell is a registered trademark and PerfectOffice™ is a trademark of Novell, Inc. in the USA. Windows® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation in the USA and/or other countries. © 1995 Novell, Inc. All rights reserved.

A lesson from the bully boys

If Dixons' rivals adopted its tough nut policy rather than slamming it, our Tim thinks they'd look rather less wimpy by comparison.

The reputation of Dixons buyers as the hard talking bully boys of the industry has reached almost legendary proportions during the last year or so. PC manufacturers in particular like to talk in hushed, respectful tones about the nerve wracking business of striking a deal with Dixons. None of them, though, are ever prepared to go on the record about what they really think of the UK's leading computer retailer, for fear of a visit from the boys.

True, Alan Sugar, the timid little flower, has stood up to be counted, turning his back on high street and superstore in favour of mail order. But this is a man who announced last week that his next great business venture is to be electric facial massagers. How the mighty are fallen.

Meanwhile, Dixons goes from strength to strength, publishing end of year results that in the current economic climate are simply phenomenal. Underlying profits were up an amazing 37% on last year, with like for like sales for the first nine weeks of this year ahead 75% of 1994 figures. Cast your mind back to February when the whole industry was complaining of post-Christmas blues, and you begin to appreciate how well Dixons is doing.

Things look fair for the future too. The Currys and PC World out of town superstore strategy appears to be working a treat, with Currys' profits rising by 11% from a base of 389 stores. A further 20 Currys stores and 10 PC Worlds are set to open in the next year. Given the demise of Rumbelows, Comet's poor performance and the Regional Electricity Companies' withdrawal from the

talking shop

Dixons goes from strength to strength, publishing end of year results that in the current economic climate are simply phenomenal

superstore model (bar Norweb), Dixons could quite easily sweep away allcomers in a market where demand is expected to be relatively strong in the coming years.

On the high street, the revamping of the Dixons format with more emphasis placed on software and portable electronics reflects the need to generate more sales per square foot. Yes, sales have dropped again this year. But put the Dixons brand up against rivals like Radio Rentals or the newcomer Escrom and it looks positively robust. And all the while, the experimental Link format for mobile phones and comms products is rapidly turning into a nice little earner with 30 or so stores destined to be trading by Christmas.

All in all, the tough nuts of the trade are doing very nicely thank you. Respect is definitely due. Isn't it odd, then, that when Stanley Kalms stands up at an industry dinner to warn manufacturers to stay loyal to the channel or get stuffed by Taiwanese clones, he receives the kind of write-ups that would make Al Capone blush?

The tough nut approach somehow doesn't go down very well with the traditional PC community. And yet, given the Dixons Group results, it just doesn't make sense that the UK's most successful retailer should receive such opprobrium for pushing its suppliers around. After all, keeping suppliers on their toes is all part of being a good retailer.

Mothercare, for example, is hardly known as a ruthless operator yet it has slashed the number of its suppliers from over 150 to

under 50 in just a few years, with few complaints from the industry. For those manufacturers that have managed to maintain a relationship with Mothercare (and believe me they all wanted to), it's simply the way of the world that they are asked to automate their systems, slash margins, stay loyal and operate on a flexible, just-in-time model in order to reduce the retailer's logistics and stockholding problems. For some reason, though, when Dixons turns round and tells industry big shots like Compaq, Apple and Microsoft that they need to do more to help the channel if they want to shift volumes through Dixons, Currys and PC World stores, mutterings of rebellion are transmitted through the trade press.

Of course, there is the little matter of a looming Monopolies and Mergers Commission enquiry into price rigging which may have something to do with Mr Kalms' desire to see his suppliers close ranks. In public he has dismissed the enquiry as "not a serious issue"; in private he must realise that with power comes responsibility.

By gaining an upper hand in the UK computer retail market, Dixons is bound to come under scrutiny. And its relationships with its key suppliers will be put under stress, given the apparent hunger of consumers for computer products. If the enquiry goes against Dixons and vendors find alternative routes to market - through catalogues, rival retailers or online services - the gloss could quickly rub off the Dixons stock.

No wonder, then, that the company is seen to be so aggressive. The current conditions require an aggressive approach to the marketplace, and aggression clearly works.

If there's one lesson to be learned from Dixons Group's success it's that there's no room for softies in this industry. A stronger bark and bite policy may just be what this industry needs against companies like Compaq and Microsoft, intent on using their millions earned in the corporate arena to roll over the consumer marketplace. Rather than tut-tutting at the strong language and unobtrusive arm twisting, other retailers should be applauding Dixons' attempts to prevent the supplier's tail from wagging the retailer's dog. One day we may all have good cause to thank the so-called bully boys of the industry.

Tim Wright is a freelance journalist

Thank God it's Saturday

So Sega got Saturn out ahead of the competition. Son and boy-across-the-street are hooked but the grown-ups might find it falls short on several counts.

Schofield & Son

Wow. Amazing, great, cool... and that was before we'd even taken it out of the box. Once we'd got it set up, not only did our outside consultant come to look - that's the kid across the street - but he brought his dad along too.

Saturday 8 July had arrived, and we were taking our first look at Sega's new 32-bit Risc powered parallel processing CD-ROM based games console, thanks to a two week loan from the new PR company.

First impressions were favourable. The Saturn was very easy to set up, being supplied with nice long Scart and power cables. It worked first time. All the games were visually attractive, had good music and sound effects, and were easy to play.

Indeed, three out of our four games - Virtua Fighter, Daytona USA and International Victory Goal - are better than anything else we've seen, including FIFA Soccer on the very similar 3DO console from Panasonic. Of course we haven't seen everything, but we've got the Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter games and a huge collection of soccerabilia.

Daytona USA is, of course, a lot like Virtua Racing on the Sega 32X, but it shows off the extra facilities provided by the Saturn's dedicated graphics processor. Putting it alongside Atari's decade-old Pole Position shows just how far we've come, graphically, although in truth the two games aren't all that different. Once loaded and running, Saturn games also seemed to work just like cartridges, with few of the annoying delays you sometimes get while code is loaded from disk. This may be due to more careful game design, although the megabyte of memory devoted to buffering the double speed CD-ROM drive must also be a factor.

But even the Saturn falls short in a few areas. Our main bone of

contention is that it only comes with one controller when everyone knows it's vital to have two. This seems a bit cheapskate in a £399.99 package. Another omission is the switchable RF cable needed to connect the console to a standard TV ariel socket. The Saturn comes with a Scart cable, which is what we used, and it certainly gives better results. However, anyone with an old television set - or foolish enough to buy a new one that doesn't include a Scart socket - will need to pay extra for the RF cable. Presumably retailers will be aware of these problems. I trust they will make sure customers don't walk out of the shop with machines that they won't be able to use or (in the case of the second controller) that they won't be able to use to the full.

"Can we buy one?" Son asked, halfway through the second day's play. "Errrr, well..." There is, of course, another problem: the price. It's not hard to spend £100 or less on a games console. I've spent far more than that on a sound or graphics card for a PC. But the Saturn, like Panasonic's 3DO player, is in a different league. Get the console, an extra controller and a couple or three games and the bill is going to come to more than £500, which is not a casual purchase. Even if it's bought as One Big Thing For Christmas And You're Not Getting Anything Else it is going to bust many a budget. And Christmas is five months away.

Of course, the Saturn is more than just a games console. It will also play audio CDs, audio CDs with graphics (the CD+G format)

Even if Saturn is bought as One Big Thing For Christmas And You're Not Getting Anything Else it is going to bust many a budget

and Photo CD discs. Add a digital video cartridge and it will play MPEG encoded films and pop videos on Video CD disks, too. But we already have several CD players, including a Sega MegaCD, and our Philips CD-i player already plays Video CD, so the extra facilities are not compelling for us.

The price of CD based consoles is also going to limit the number of multiple purchasers. It's really not that unusual for families to have both a Megadrive and a SNES, or some other combination of machines. You can buy four consoles with extra controllers and games and still have change from £500. However, the chances of people buying a 3DO player and a Saturn and a Sony Playstation PS-X are pretty damn slim. This puts pressure on buyers to be extra careful about their choice.

As a result, I don't think Sega is going to get much benefit from rushing the Saturn to market. It certainly did well out of being first with the Megadrive, selling a new 16-bit console against Nintendo's old 8-bit Entertainment System. However, the Megadrive was cheap and there was no credible opposition anywhere in sight. This time Sega might expect to do well from selling the 32-bit Saturn against the 16-bit SNES, with Nintendo's Ultra 64 almost invisible on the horizon. But the Saturn is not cheap and credible opposition is coming along in a couple of months. While the Saturn might sell to Sega loyalists, the rest of us will want to try a Playstation first.

Indeed, even the Sega loyalists could be having second thoughts. Those who have added a MegaCD player and a 32X to their Megadrives must have spent the price of a Saturn, or more, for similar facilities. They may need reassurance, not about the success of the Saturn but about Sega's continued support for MegaCD and 32X games. After all, unless it is fed with a stream of new hit games, a games format soon dies....

Jack Schofield is The Guardian's computer editor

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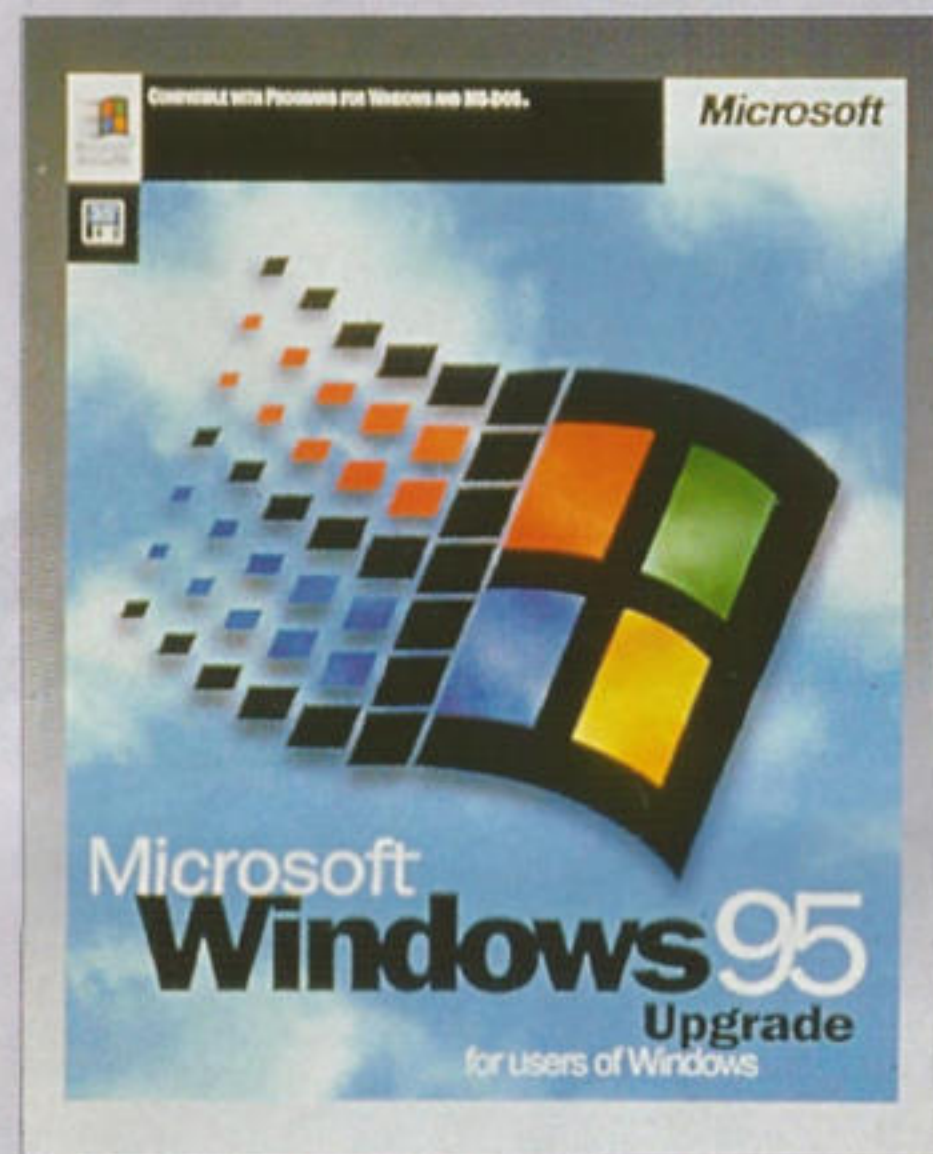
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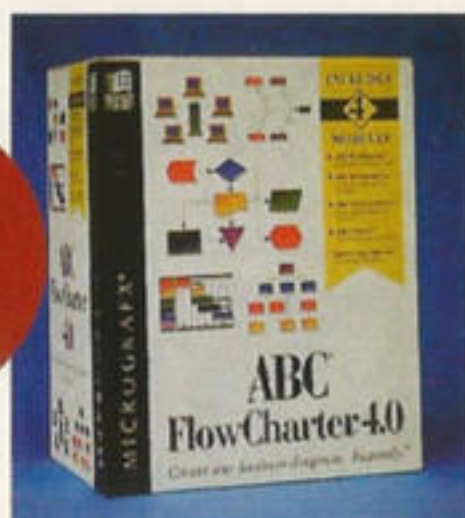
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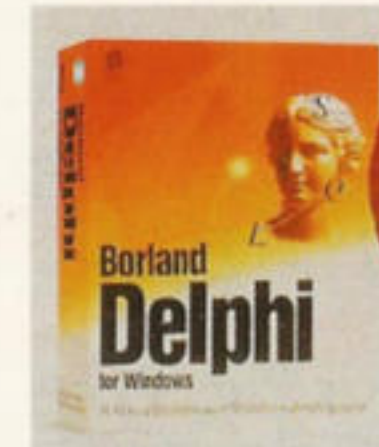
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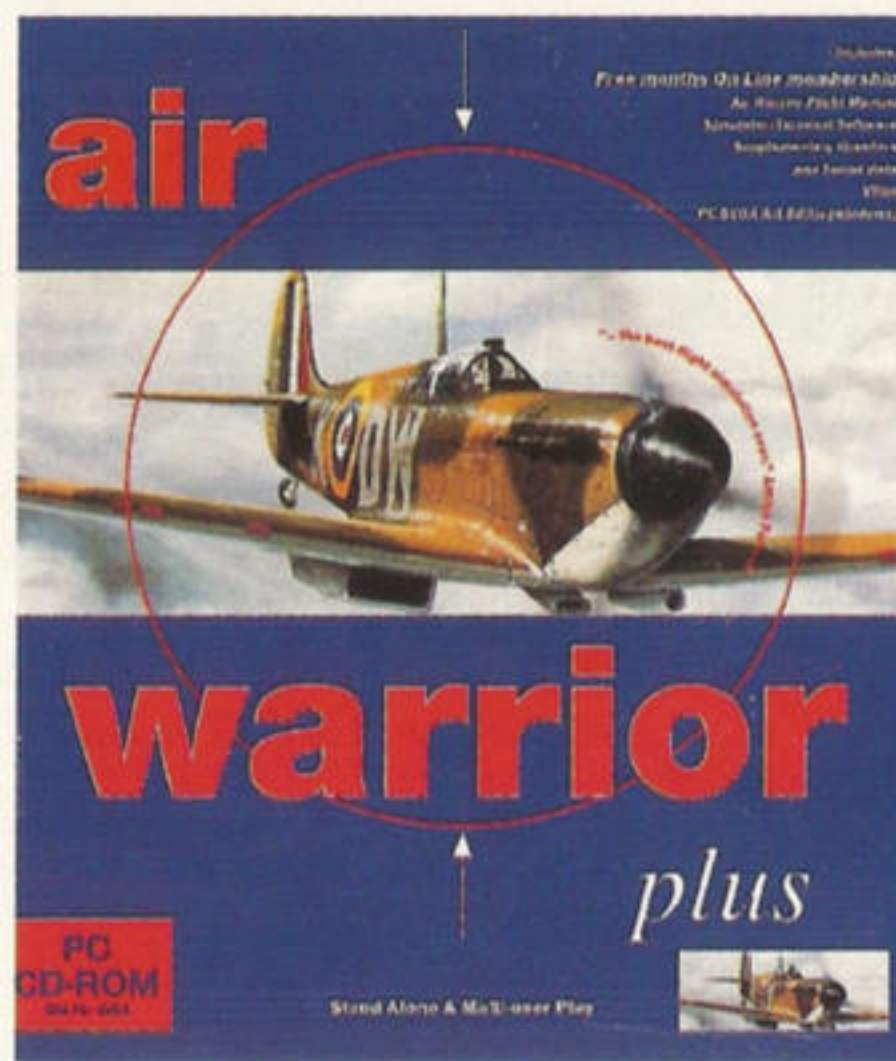
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CD-ROM DRIVES

TOSHIBA 5302B CD-ROM DRIVE



Supplier: Koch Media
Telephone: 01252 714340
Release Date: Out now
Price: £199

Description: Quad speed ATAPI CD-ROM drive.

Special Features: MPC-2, Photo CD, White Book Video CD and CD-i compatible and it can play single, double and quad speeds. It is half height 5.25in standard form factor.

Selling Points: Koch Media has put the Toshiba drive into shelf friendly retail packaging. The orange box carries a picture of the drive and boldly states the Toshiba name twice on the front and back. The product's main features are listed on the cover and full specs are given on the side of the box.

KXL-D720 PORTABLE CD-ROM DRIVE

Supplier: Panasonic
Telephone: 0500 404041
Release Date: Out now
Price: £250

Description: Slim portable CD-ROM drive to be used with notebooks.

Special Features: Connected through a standard PCMCIA Type II card which is supplied, and offers transfer rates of 300kb/sec, access times up to 295ms and a memory buffer of 128kb.

Selling Points: Operates from mains power using its own AC adaptor or six AA batteries and has a built-in power saving sleep mode. It supports numerous CD formats and can play audio CDs through standard headphones. It comes with a one year return to base warranty.



SCANNERS

COLORMOBILE OFFICE

Supplier: Primax
Telephone: 0031 3404 85300
Release Date: Out now
Price: £249.99

Description: Hand scanner with motor attachment to allow for smooth scanning, and a sheetfeeding unit to help scan business cards, ID badges etc.

Special Features: Supports images from black and white to 24-bit true colour resolutions, from 100 to 400dpi. It comes with Image Pals Go Photostyling

software and PresentIT presentation software.

Selling Points: Scans up to A4 sized documents, and its trackpad guides the movement of the scanner via its built-in rails, ensuring straight scanning across a document. A cut-down product without sheetfeeder, trackpad and presentation software called the ColorMobile Direct costs £199.99.

UMAX PAGEOFFICE

Supplier: IMC
Telephone: 01753 830999
Release Date: Out now
Price: £399

Description: Desktop scanner which can import any printed material into a PC.

Special Features: Comprises a 300dpi greyscale scanner with ten sheet document feeder. Scans A4 documents in around 6.5 seconds once a single button has been pushed. Images are automatically directed into hardware linked software applications including OCR, email, faxing and printing.

Selling Points: Expected to retail for £299. Includes three software applications - PageImage, an image editing module; PageFile, an electronic filing system; and PageType, which allows items like blank forms to be filled or documents annotated.



PERIPHERALS

ALFA OPTIC-PC MOUSE

Supplier: Golden Image
Telephone: 0181 900 9291
Release Date: Out now
Price: £29.95

Description: PC mouse which instead of using a mouse ball to control the pointing shines a beam of light onto a reflective mouse mat which registers any movement of the device.

Special Features: Comes with its own metal mouse mat and full driver software for DOS and Windows. It works with all PCs from XTs to Pentiums and has a resolution of 350 to 3,500dpi.

Selling Points: The only moving parts of the mouse are the buttons, allowing claims that the product is more durable than mouseball mice and don't need cleaning. Golden Image estimates optical mice are more responsive than regular rodents and improve input accuracy by up to 50%.

GAMES

AIV NETWORK

Supplier: Infogrames
Telephone: 0171 738 8199
Release Date: Out now
Price: £44.99
Format: PC CD-ROM

Description: Based on models



of capitalist business management. As head of AIV Group the objective is to increase turnover and expand the group's business interests. The player also has the opportunity to speculate on the stock market and diversify into a variety of investment opportunities.

Special Features: A true to life economic simulation where the player is faced with economic and social situations, which include strikes and freak weather conditions.

Selling Points: If the player fails he must live through the humiliation of bankruptcy.

ASCENDANCY

Supplier: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Telephone: 0181 960 2255
Release Date: Mid-September
Format: PC CD-ROM
Price: TBA

Description: Ascendancy is a battle for the planets, where players must develop their own power and knowledge in order to explore and conquer the rest of the universe.

Special Features: Every game is different as the player faces a new star map and a different combination of opponents every time.

Selling Points: Includes SVGA graphics and digital sound effects.

GAMES PERIPHERALS

ALFA ALIEN JOYSTICK & ALFA THUNDER JOYSTICK

Supplier: GoldenImage UK
Telephone: 0181 900 9291
Release Date: Out now
Price: £14.95, £34.95

Description: AlfaAlien claims a smooth ergonomic grip that allows for left- and right-handed play. It features two fire buttons. AlfaThunder Joystick features four fire buttons and includes a multiway push button that can operate any combination of fire buttons.

Special Features: Both claim an eye-catching shape and smooth grip.

Selling Points: They're joysticks.

REFERENCE

BODYWORKS 4.0

Supplier: Softkey International, Guildsoft UK
Telephone: 01752 895100
Release Date: Out now
Format: CD-ROM
Price: £39.95 ex VAT

Description: Bodyworks 4.0 is an upgrade of the encyclopedia of the body, Bodyworks.

Special Features: Virtual reality for practising dissection, 3D imaging and information on health, nursing and diseases.

Selling Points: New quiz section, making it useful as a learning tool for medics as well as informative for the curious.

INTRODUCTION TO ARCHEOLOGY

Supplier: Emme UK
Telephone: 01923 240050
Release Date: Out now
Format: CD-ROM
Price: £39.99

Description: Takes you on an architectural dig back to real sites from the 17th century.

Special Features: Full motion video instructional segments, hundreds of illustrations and a glossary of computer terms.

Selling Point: Developed in co-operation with museums. Forthcoming releases include The Renaissance of Florence, Learn to use the Computer and Van Gogh.

VIDEO CD

EXECUTIONS

Supplier: CD Vision
Telephone: 0171 240 7764
Release Date: Out now
Format: CD
Price: £14.99

Description: The controversial documentary programme which looks into the history of the death penalty.

Special Features: Follows the arguments for and against capital punishment through the 20th century, putting state murder under the spotlight.

Selling Point: Executions has already caught the eye of the media, with coverage on BBC news, ITN, and Sky.

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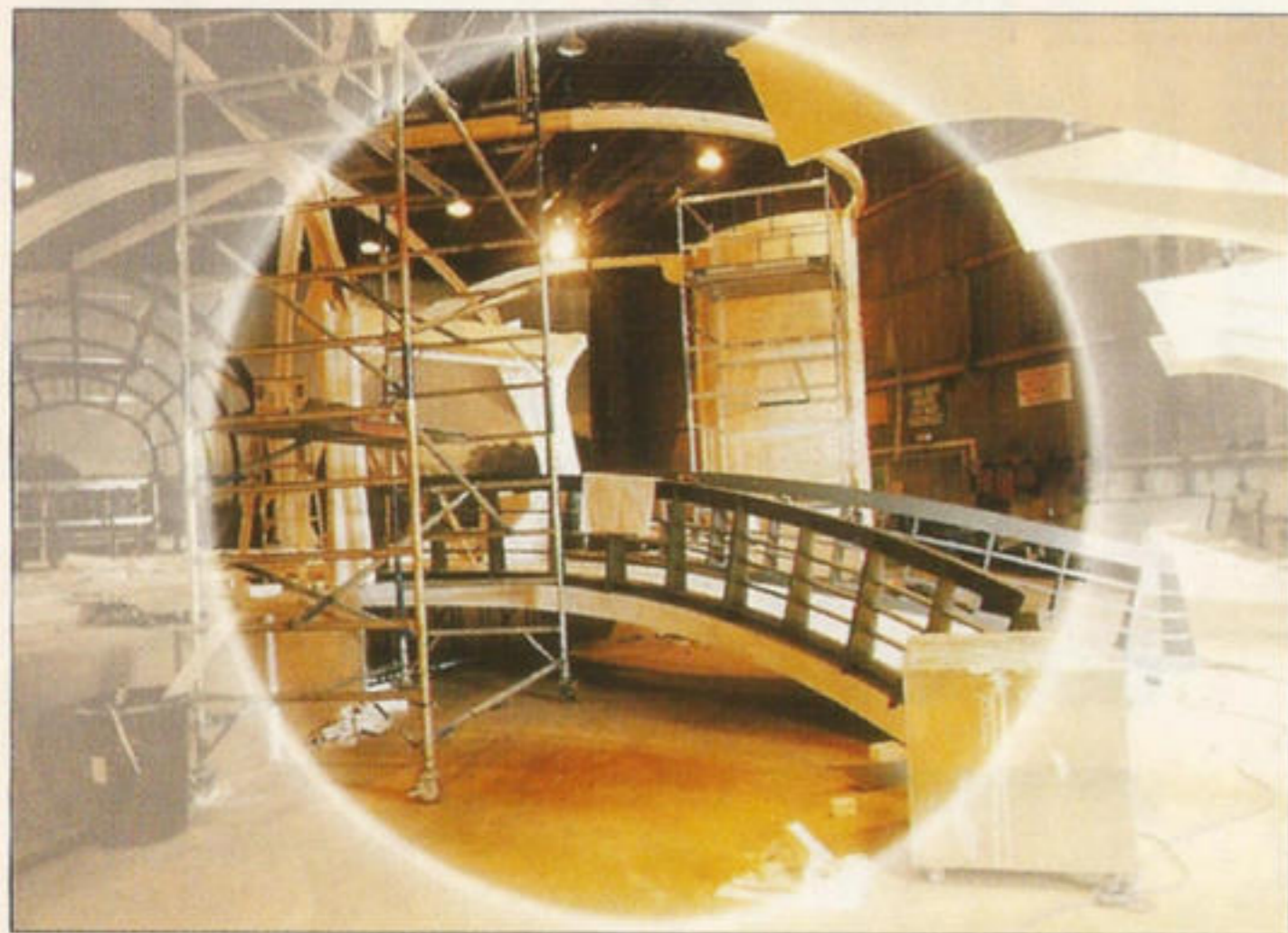
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Darkening

brightens disaster movies



Interactive movies have traditionally been a bit of a dog-in-the-limp gameplay and B movie actors strutting their stuff unconvincingly. But with *The Darkening* EA is promising something much more sophisticated. Guy Dixon reports.

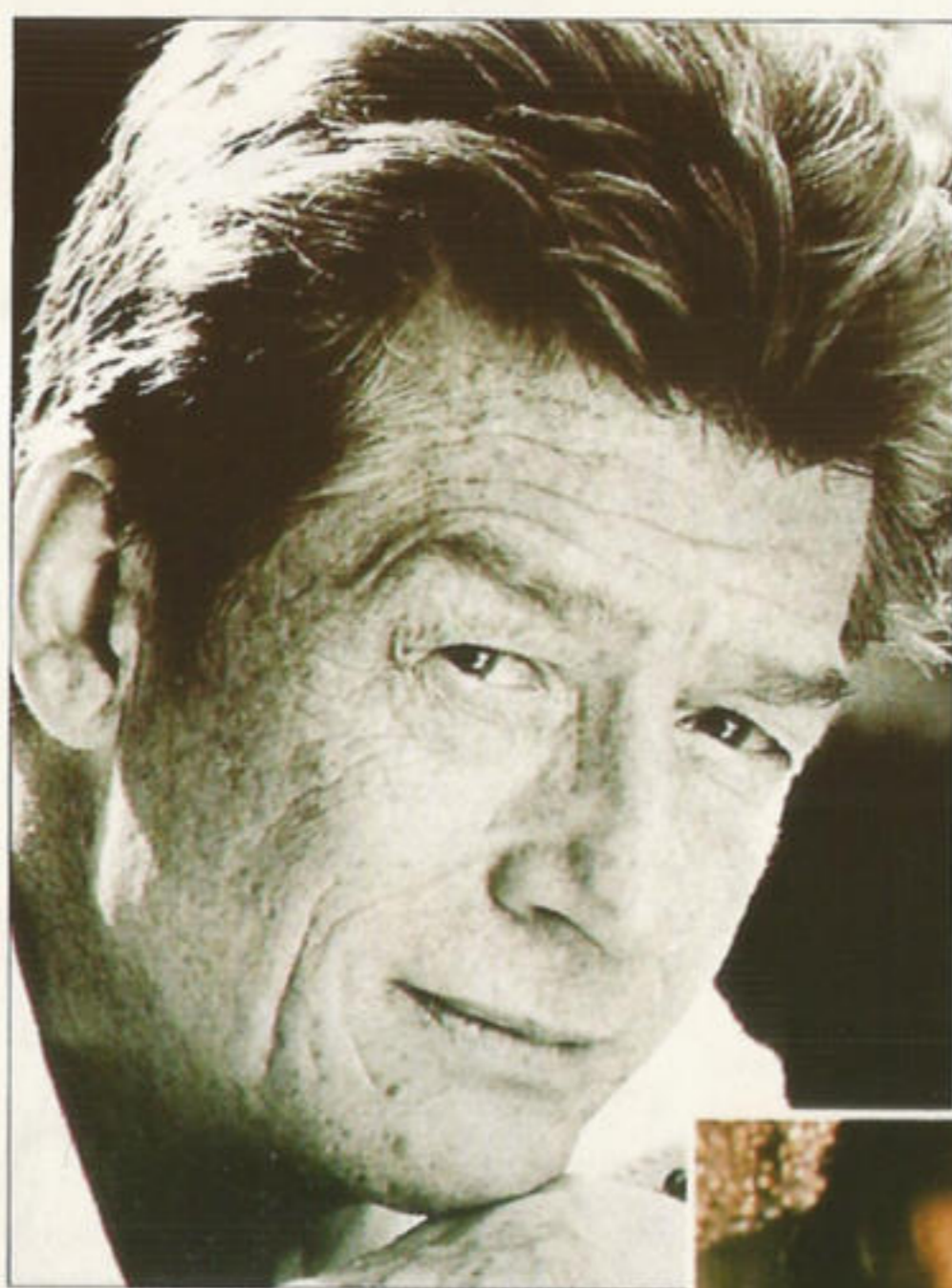
Video dildonics, information superhighway, realtime game, hypermedia — terms used to puff up a fledgling multimedia industry but which haven't lived up to their hype.

To this list many would add interactive movie. Crammed with video clips that don't do anything, boasting a revolutionary means of story-telling and the occasional B movie actor, interactive movies have consistently failed to deliver.

"The term instantly puts me on the back foot," says Bart Saunt, product manager at Virgin. "Interactive movies have traditionally been used to sell the PC as a leading games platform, doing things that consoles can't match. But gameplay has often been forgotten."

Not all interactive movies have been a disaster. Since its launch last Christmas EA's *Wing Commander III*, developed by Origin, has sold 150,000 copies. Starring Mark Hamill, Malcolm MacDowell and John Rhys-Davies, it helped save the interactive movie from becoming yet another multimedia casualty. Even the sceptical Saunt takes his hat off to the game: "*Wing III* got it just about right. It combined the gameplay of a title like *Frontier Elite* and managed to incorporate video without losing any arcade punch."

With the success of *Wing Commander III* behind him producer Chris Roberts is working on the sequel, while his brother Erin has launched *The Darkening*, EA's most ambitious project to date. *The Darkening* is the first interactive movie to be made in Europe; filming at Pinewood started at the end of May and will be followed by 12 weeks post-production. With 50 actors, 500 extras and 30 sets, this is no small scale production.



EA has assembled an impressive cast. Clive Owen of *Chancer* fame plays the main character Lev Arris. Awakening from cryogenic storage, he finds his memory has been wiped clean. To rediscover his true identity he interacts with a cast that includes the likes of Christopher Walken, John Hurt, Brian Blessed and David McCallum.

Attracting big name film actors to the project has not been easy. A combination of ignorance, better offers and the fear of being upstaged by *Sonic the Hedgehog* has proved an uphill struggle. "When my agent first asked me if I wanted to be in a computer game I didn't have a clue what he was on about," explains Clive Owen. "In fact I don't think I'd even touched a computer before."

Marrying the two industries should be easier next time around. EA has signed a contract with the British Actor's Equity Association, covering talent appearing in interactive media



productions. Indeed, the actors' union appears to be getting quite excited about this new source of employment. "It is entirely possible that interactive movies will become a major new entertainment form," says a spokesman. "This change could in future be seen as being as important as the birth of television."

Besides, once the cameras start to roll, the work is little different from a conventional film. "Apart from the number of sets involved



Medhurst. "To generate that level of immersion you need big name actors appearing in TV quality video. That's why we're spending so much on film."

For Medhurst, user input is the interactive movie's most important contribution. "Rather than being pulled through the linear experience you get in a TV programme or a film, the user actually has to make an effort. Make more money, see more footage or do a deal, it's all up to the user."

The Darkening promises considerable technological improvements over previous interactive movies. Although widely acknowledged to be groundbreaking for their time, titles like US Gold's *Under A Killing Moon* failed to provide a credible game playing environment,

Under *A Killing Moon*, has described her frustration at having to abandon her acting skills. "As an actress I'm trained to read a script and to develop my character from it. But this script didn't let me do that. With one take I'd be falling in love with the guy, the next I'd be smacking him in the mouth."

The Darkening uses some blue screen techniques but most of the film will retain the original photorealistic backgrounds. Using new compression techniques, Medhurst is promising broadcast quality video footage.

To achieve this kind of quality the game will almost certainly need a serious amount of hardware, extending the target audience beyond the traditional boy gamer. "We want to attract the people who've recently spent £2,000 on computer equipment at home to run Windows. They've got a Pentium 90 with 8Mb RAM and they are looking to do something other than word processing and spreadsheets," says Roberts. "That means we've got to make the interface as user friendly as possible, which means getting away from the traditional flight sim approach where you've got 15 million keyboard presses to deal with. To help us get around the problem we've hired designers from a corporate background."

But when it comes to interactive movies on a Hollywood scale, Roberts is cautious. "Though this Christmas is likely to be twice as big as last year, it'll probably be a few years before we have a market big enough to afford the very biggest stars. Besides, the economics of making a feature film are totally different. Rather than spend \$40 million on one interactive movie and get \$50 million back, we're better off spending that money on ten separate titles." ■



and lots of staring directly into the camera, it's the same as doing a movie," says Owen.

Of the five million dollar budget, 80% is going on actors, salaries and Pinewood facilities. "When people come home from work I want them to play another level of the *Darkening* rather than switch on the TV and watch *Coronation Street*," explains technical director Adam

creating instead a peculiar combination of real life actors superimposed on a computer generated background. Actors are filmed in front of a blue screen "chromakey" background and edited out afterwards.

Such techniques tend to cause problems with actors, who can't practise their art in the way they are accustomed. Margot Kidder, who played the barmaid in

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STREET DATE: 17th July 95

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Novices

No experience necessary. The growth of retail into the mass market depends on persuading virgin users they actually need a PC. Drew Cullen talks to five major manufacturers about how they intend to go about it.

urgently required

There have been many false dawns in the PC retail market, as Amstrad and Commodore have found to their cost. But the market is poised for huge growth. Around 15% of PCs sold in the UK go through retail, a share which will rise to 50% by the year 2000 according to figures quoted by IBM.

This implies a huge explosion in the number of home users. No-one knows exactly how many households own a PC, but the rough and ready figures quoted by most manufacturers put the penetration at 15 to 18% of UK households.

This time it looks like it could be for real. Three years ago Apple and IBM were the only top name manufacturers active in the retail sector. Now Compaq and AST have joined the fight. Direct vendor Dell retired hurt from the retail fray but will probably weigh in again when it sorts out its current round of growing pains.

And then there is the extraordinary example of Packard Bell. The company joined the ranks of the world's top PC manufacturers on the back of its retail-only channel policy in the US, which paid off with the explosion of the SoHo market in that country. It is now exporting the formula to Europe, bolstered by the 1993 injection of capital from the nationalised French computer firm Groupe Bull, in return for a 20% stake.

Peter Bromage, Packard Bell's UK sales director, says: "There is no guarantee that the PC retail business will necessarily develop into a mass market. But the momentum is quite clearly moving in that direction."

But getting to the mass market means attracting the demographically crucial C1 and C2 social groups who are unlikely to buy a PC in the first place. Compared with the rock-solid As and Bs who are already PC owners they have less disposable income and are less likely to be familiar

with PCs through work. They are also less likely to read computer magazines, which rules them out for mail order companies like Dell and Gateway.

These are the PC virgins. If predictions of mass market penetration are to bear fruit, retailers and manufacturers need to attract these people into the stores.

Ask the vendors when and how they will do this and surprisingly you will find them in agreement. CRN talked to five leading PC manufacturers - AST, Compaq, IBM, Olivetti and Packard Bell - all of which are gunning for the retail channel. Their major concerns were positioning, price, signing up the right retailers and being nice to them, financing, and creating demand through advertising, merchandising and promotions. Proper positioning comes down to selling the benefits of the PC rather than how fast it goes. Vendors have great experience of selling PCs to business, where conversations revolve around price and performance, but this is meaningless to Joe Punter.

IBM sort of understood this when it launched the PS/1 in 1989 but the benefits were too few to attract more than a foolhardy minority and the machine looked like a dog. "It doesn't matter if you're first, it's what you do that counts," Graham MacPhee, IBM consumer business manager, admits. "Just take the name PS/1. That was thought up by propeller heads for what was then a niche market."

Customer benefits today are much greater, thanks to the mighty Microsoft and the spread of multimedia. The quad speed CD-ROM drives bundled with Encarta and other educational/lifestyle software are powerful business drivers. This is a software thing which PC manufacturers can exploit through bundling and promotions.

Schools are a great help. Our educational system may be a political free-fire zone but it has done a splendid job of ensuring

"IF YOU WANT TO PLAY CUBIST" and primarily concern yourself with abstract forms rather than lifelike representation that's fine with me! Mum said, "but only after you've tidied your room!"

So I did and so I became an artist "primarily concerned with abstract forms" well at least for an hour or so, thanks to Microsoft's Fine Artist. It's like having an artist's studio crammed inside your computer. I can make Cubist posters, one minute, Expressionist stickers the next, and Pointillist badges after that and some really cool Neoimpressionist stuff after that.

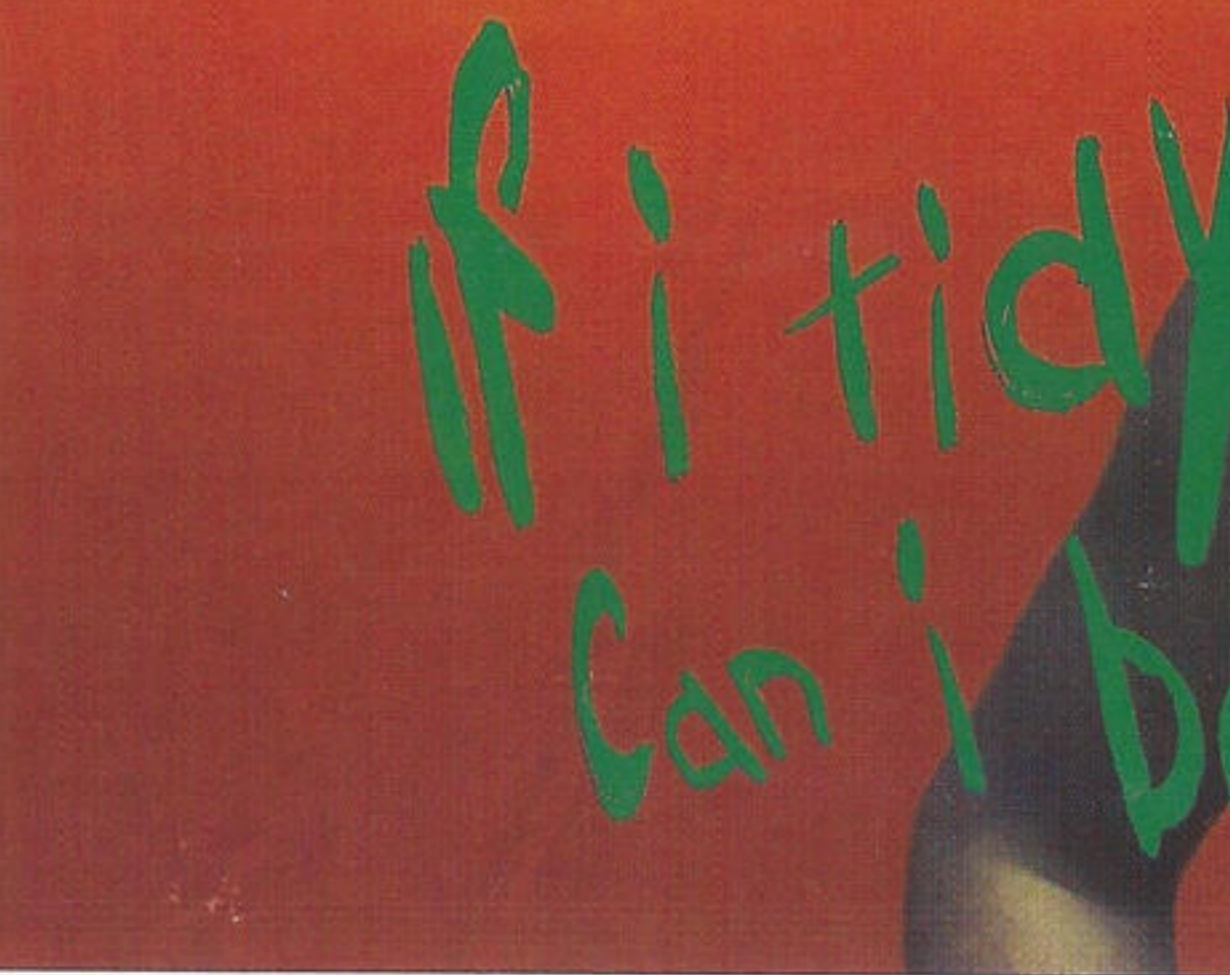
This guy named McZee who wears a Hawaiian shirt and a Davy Crockett hat and a kilt and plays the bagpipes is my muse. He runs both the Fine Artist museum and painting studio. He knew and inspired all the great artists like Turner and Cézanne. (Between you and me, I think some of these modern artists really need to meet McZee.)

And when I'm in the mood to be Shakespeare, I'd write Hamlet 2. McZee helps me there too. But unlike Shakespeare's work, mine will have really cool pictures because I've got McZee and Microsoft's Creative Writer and The Bard didn't. But I digress. Mum says Fine Artist is a great way for me to express myself artistically and learn basic art techniques at the same time. I think it's a great way to get me to tidy my room.

Microsoft

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?

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Virgins have got to be coaxed. We will all have to sharpen our act. We (the manufacturers) have the ideas but the execution is in the hands of the retailers themselves

Graham MacPhee, IBM

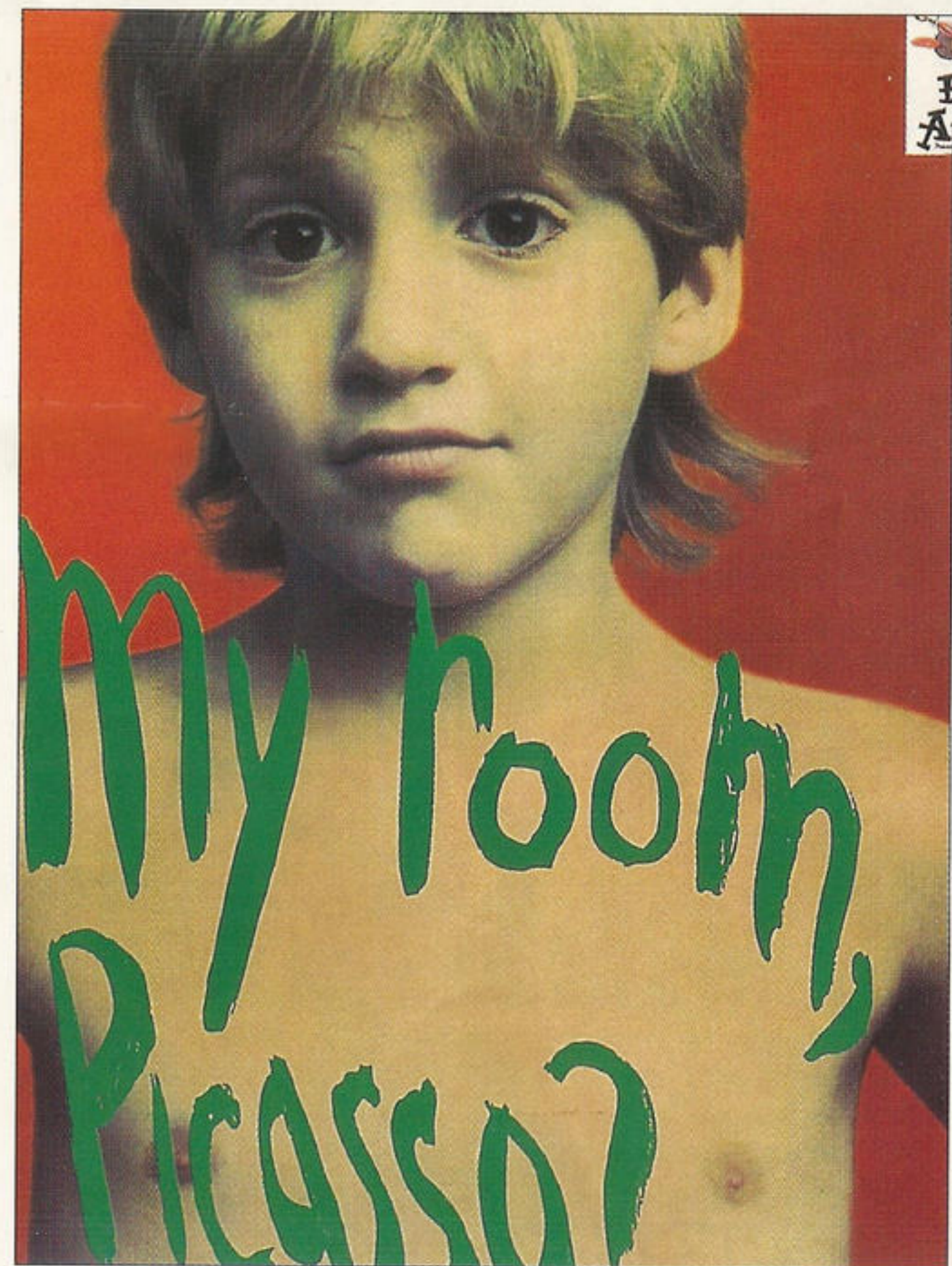
that our young are computer-literate - and primed to nag their parents to buy them a computer for Christmas. According to research commissioned by Packard Bell, customers like the fact that PCs are multi-functional and feel less guilty about spending big bucks when they think the PC will help their children with their homework.

Education is the great retail sales driver, says Bromage. "It is

the greatest single factor in converting the PC into a must-have from a wouldn't-it-be-nice-if..."

Microsoft is currently playing on this with its national press advertising campaign. "Forget Goldilocks and the Three Bears, tell us about Sartre," begins the Encarta 95 copy, which accompanies a picture of two young girls. Annoying but effective.

According to David Clarke,



Compaq's UK consumer director, advertising and PR are important tools to create demand. He ruefully admits that Compaq's £2 million TV ad campaign in the run-up to last Christmas counted for little when it was unable to supply enough kit. "It is true we under-scoped the market. Packard Bell picked up demand that we created. But what's the alternative - to create no demand at all?" This year Compaq is gearing up for a fivefold increase on last Christmas' sales. "Compaq will return to the medium again this year," says Clarke. "We concentrate on TV advertising at the right time of year, the fourth quarter. It is very expensive."

Hence the importance of press advertising and PR, an altogether cheaper way of creating demand. At any one time Compaq's consumer PR agency, The

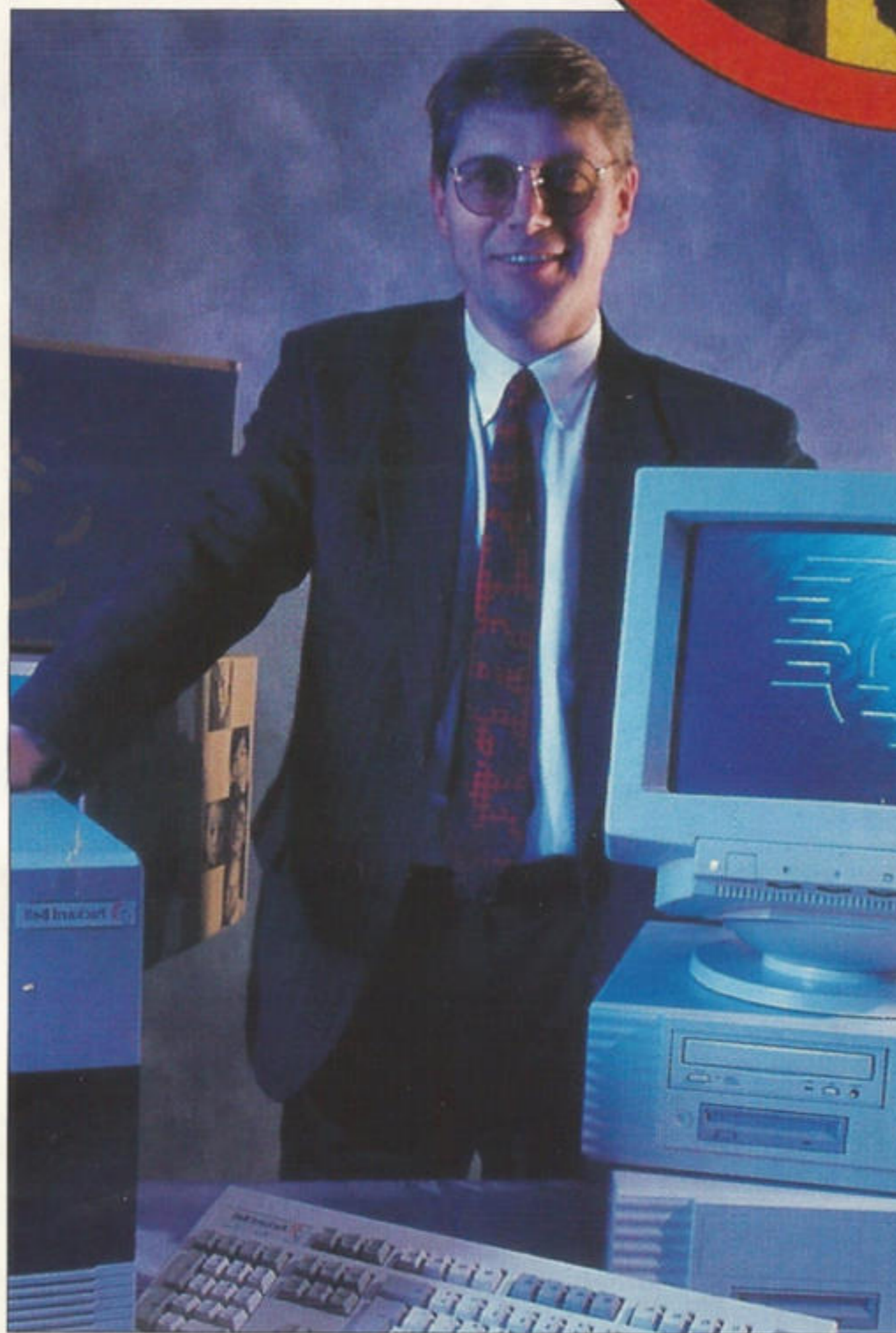
Red Consultancy, is involved in up to 20 projects for its client. "Red recently supervised a recent survey on homework," says Clarke. "That got us 50 radio interviews, 12 TV slots and lots of press coverage where we could put forward the benefits of PCs in homework and, more subtly, the Compaq brand."

Mothers are often the real driving force behind family purchases, say all the manufacturers. Graham Hopper, general manager of AST Europe, says: "The pressure to buy comes up through the kids and is routed through her." AST ran an advertorial promotion with Microsoft in the April issue of Good Housekeeping.

Entry level prices have gone up slightly in the last year while sales have continued to climb. The reason is simple, according to Clarke: PCs are much more

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**"If I tidy my room, can I
be Picasso?" - Microsoft
gets to the parents
through the kids (left)
The Man from Escom
does it in his own
inimitable style (right)**



feature-rich today than they were a couple of years ago and customers are prepared to shell out for the extra benefits. Packard Bell's top selling product in the run-up to Christmas last year cost £1,299 and outsold the £999 model by seven to one. Guess which one was the multimedia version.

MacPhee says: "There is a sweet spot in the market between £1,000 and £1,500. The manufacturers will continue to introduce PCs at this price while moving up a processor every six months." He describes this rapid obsolescence as total madness but adds brightly: "The consumer does not need to know all about that."

Deferred payment options are essential to seed PCs into the mass market. Store cards, interest-free terms and buy now pay later are some of the many sales aid tools which retailers can and should deploy (see CRN 3 July).

Once the manufacturers have created demand they need a fulfilment channel. The vendors diverge as to how the retail channel should be best constructed to maximum effect. This is more an internal argument concerning winning market share than differing opinions on how to turn the mass market on to PCs. AST, Packard Bell and IBM publicly subscribe to a belief in the maximum number of outlets with the minimum

There is a greater awareness of the fear that exists among first-time buyers. Parents are quite fearful - though not their children - and they have to be sold in a way they can understand

Peter Bromage, Packard Bell (right)

number of retailers. In other words they are betting the farm on the major multiples, which in turn means the Dixons/Currys/PC World axis and a few, very few others such as the ubiquitous John Lewis. Many first-time buyers, it appears, like to buy their PC in a store from which they have already purchased a product.

Compaq operates a more open policy. Its retail-specific PCs are available on a take it or leave it basis through its distribution channel but it also concentrates its fire on the multiples. This makes perfectly good sense for the manufacturers, which want to get the best return on their investment, but it does not have particularly favourable implications for the independent retailer. There are all too few incentives for indies to carry major retail brands. This presents an opportunity for second tier manufacturers, which make a big effort to court independents. But even when the manufac-

turers have, for better or worse, signed up with their chosen retailers, they still have no guarantee that individual stores will sell their products. It is not enough to place big co-op funds at the disposal of the retailer and let the shops get on with it.

Manufacturing reliability and good support are key to a successful relationship. Sales staff sell products they are comfortable with so it is essential for the manufacturer to build face-to-face contact through training and merchandisers. Bromage says: "Retailers want product on which they can make a reasonable margin and which does not come back. This enables them to make more money from their extended warranty business. We supply rolling demos which show what the PC can do. The salesman can concentrate on selling rather than explaining."

Hopper is also keen on comfort. "Once you get people into the store the reality is that very few think, 'I must have an AST

or a Packard Bell'. Our focus is on the shop staff making sure that they are comfortable with AST and really well trained."

Each manufacturer we spoke to emphasised the importance of training shop staff. Bromage says: "There is a greater awareness of the fear that exists among first-time buyers. Parents are quite fearful - though not their children of course - and they have to be sold in a way that they can understand."

Packard Bell's attempt to soothe the anxious buyers extends all the way from packaging to what Bromage calls the out of box experience: "We want to make sure that first-time customers can get up and running immediately. All the connectors have colour coding and our PCs are all supplied with Product Navigator, a tutorial environment, which takes the fear factor right away from the people."

The PC manufacturers set great store by their merchandisers, whom Chandler describes as "the last link in the chain", in liaising with shop staff. Hopper agrees: "We put a lot of effort into the merchandisers, who make sure staff are comfortable

with products and carry out ongoing training, as well as working on the displays and making sure that the rolling demos work."

According to MacPhee, the quality of PC merchandising is uninspired. "Virgins have got to be coaxed. We will all have to sharpen our act. No-one has made the merchandising exciting yet in store for the PCs but that must come. We (the manufacturers) have the ideas but the execution is in the hands of the retailers themselves."

Manufacturers can play their part with local in-store promotions, believes Chandler, who says customers are swayed by deals happening on the day. "There are lots of local promotional issues we can work on - it is not all about big national advertising campaigns. Curiously enough, people place more faith in adverts placed in local papers than in nationals." Chandler is keen on special offers, which enable him to counteract major quality brands like IBM and Compaq on price while defending the brand against lower cost brands such as Packard Bell, or AST.

Olivetti runs promotions four times a year, at key points in the buying cycle. It prefers to offer software through a voucher scheme rather than through bundling software. The rate of the vouchers enables the company to double the number of promotions per year. Olivetti is currently running a Pick 'n' Mix promotion on the PCS42/52, which entitles buyers to a choice of three software games, education, leisure or business packages worth a nominal £400.

PC manufacturers are convinced that PCs are turning the corner into mass market territory. And more and more retailers are convinced too. The emergence of Escom onto the UK high street will result in tough trading times in the PC retail sector at least for the next few months. Retailers may be competitive but they tend to slug it out at higher margins than Escom is working on.

The German-owned hybrid PC manufacturer/retailer is conducting a market building exercise by offering astounding price promotions. How long it can sustain this campaign is anyone's guess. Nevertheless, more and more retailers are piling into the PC business. While PCs carry lower margin than other big ticket electrical goods such as TVs they are a hell of a lot more expensive, which means the retailer makes more money per transaction. And at certain times of the year PCs are moving off the shelves as quickly as TVs.

All that remains is to convince the customers. MacPhee says IBM is only now getting to grips with retail, but emphasises that every company is in the same boat. "I recently attended a conference hosted by Dixons where I met my counterparts from several other PC companies. None of us knew each other, which is an indication of how immature the [PC] market is. We are all virgins together and we are all going to make mistakes, and that is comforting."

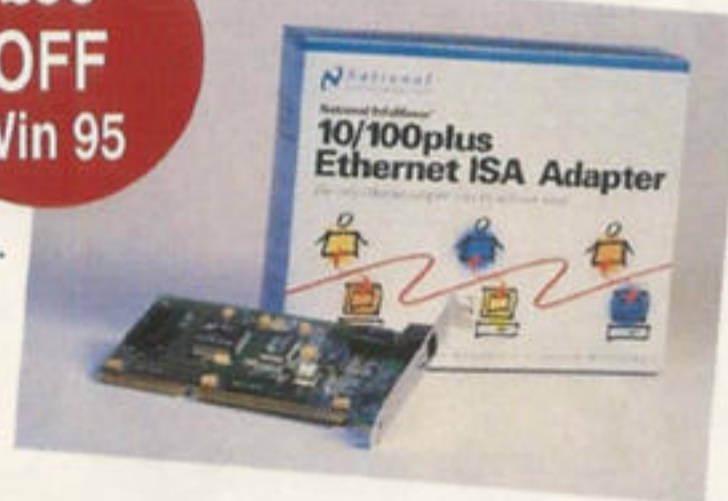
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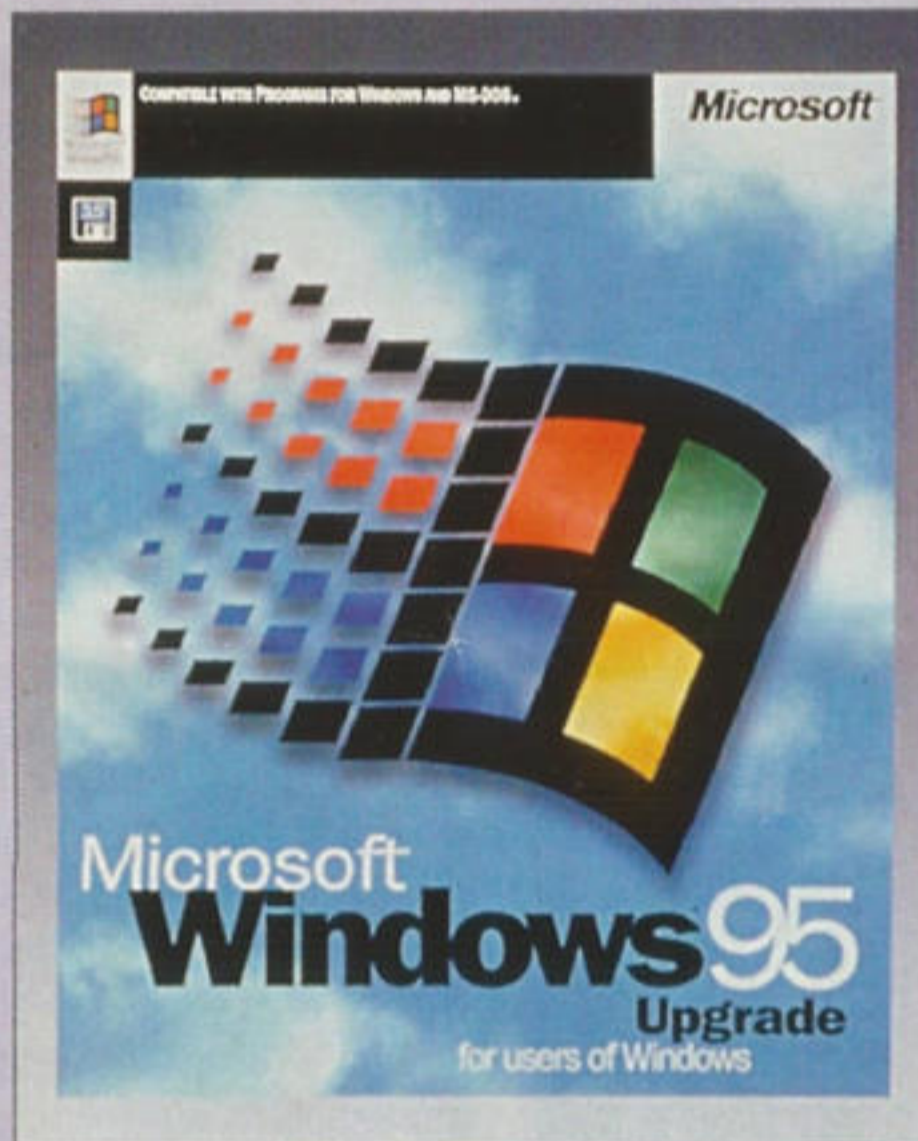
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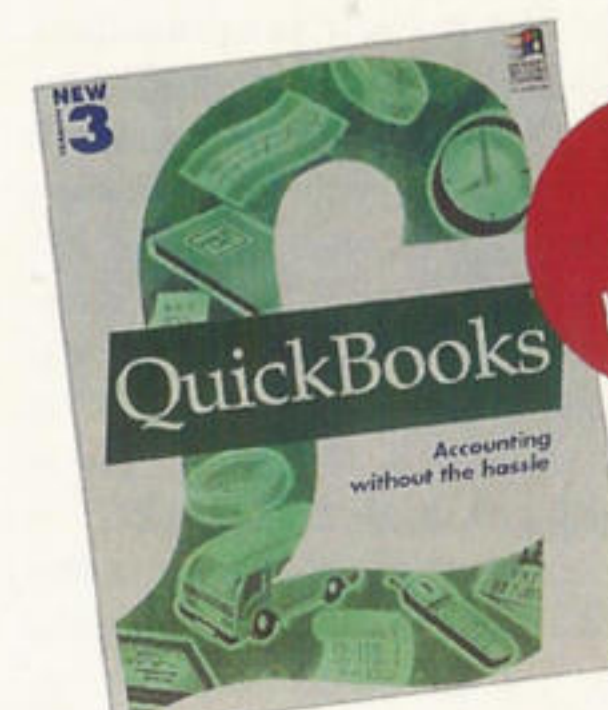
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It's not who you are these days, it's where you are. If you're a high street multiple your average customer will be computer illiterate; if you're an out of town superstore you're dealing with the boffins. So choose your location with care: the gap is growing all the time, as Chris Mellor discovers.



Currys, John Lewis, Boots, WH Smith, Dixons and Toys R Us can all be divided into two broad categories – out of town and high street.

Tony Savage, senior consultant at the retail information and technology consultancy RMDP, reckons the most simple differentiator is the number of tills. A high street outlet will have one or two EPOS tills, an out-of-town superstore will have six or more. Similarly, the superstore will have six or more PC brands and specialist staff while high street outlets tend to have fewer brands and less well trained staff.

This pattern seems stable, which explains why Savage is not optimistic about Escom's Rumbelows takeover. "They want to try and emulate what they did in Germany. Personally I don't think they'll succeed."

The message is that there is little room for specialist computer multiples. It's consumer electronics now if you want to be a high street multiple, or it's superstore status. No in-betweens.

An out of town store is typically a b-i-g store with lots of floorspace and it sits in the middle of a car park. PC World's Croydon store is a vast shed with lots of computer ranges, vast amounts of software and racks of

peripherals. The staff are reasonably specialist and you can buy support services and compare different brands of PC or printer, sound card or modem. Good prices, lots of kit, easy parking and knowledgeable staff. So why does WH Smith sell PCs too when you can probably get a better deal at PC World?

According to David Miles, retail channel manager at Compaq, the answer is quite simple. It's not that there is a high street profile and a shopping mall one. Instead, there are buying profiles that suit the brand identity and the location of retail outlets. It's a question of which type of selling environment the

There could be a growing polarisation between the high street chains and out of town superstores. Specialist retailers could get squeezed out, especially in the main conurbations where the superstores are concentrated

customer feels comfortable in and how they view the PC. If they see it as computing equipment and they don't know about such things they won't buy. If they do know about it, they'll buy from Dixons if they want a

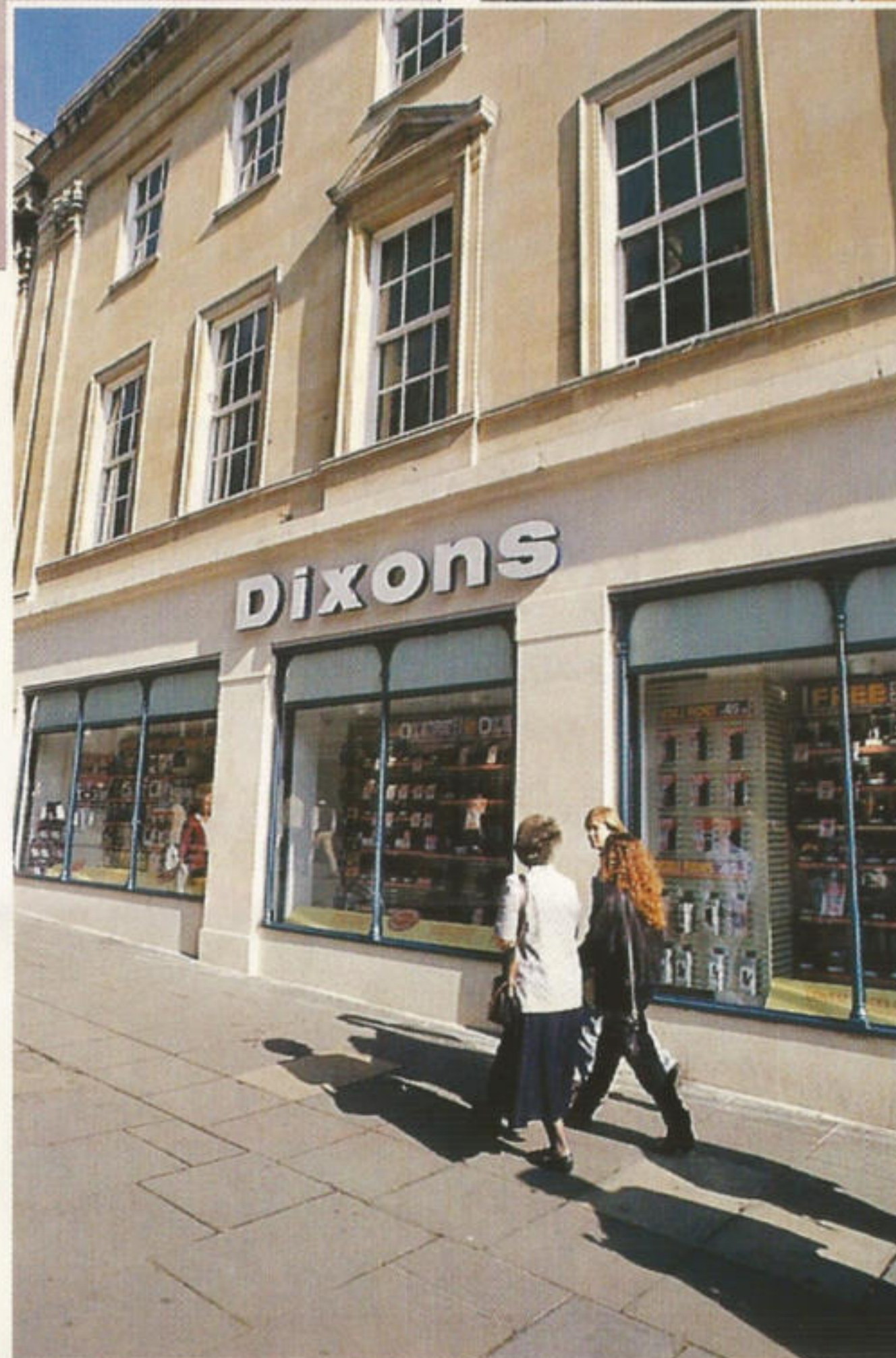
low price and standard stuff, from PC World if they need to compare kit and talk to specialist staff, and from a specialist high street store if they need better service and local knowledge than PC World can supply.

There were more TVs and washing machines sold into the home a couple of years ago than PCs, yet games consoles were flooding into the home. So computers disguised as consoles could get in. This was not lost on manufacturers. They realised the home market was a great untapped market. But – and it was a big but at the time – the kit had to be top notch, very customer friendly and most certainly not clumsy derivations of business PCs. And moreover, they wouldn't win retailers like John Lewis and WH Smith if they treated them in the same way as the average computer electronics store.

Packard Bell provided the example needed. It concentrated entirely on the retail sector, ignoring the business desktop. It built feature packed product to top notch specifications and loaded systems with what retail purchasers wanted. It tailored delivery and support arrangements to what retailers wanted. If a retailer wanted delivery to a central point or to many points they could have it. Thirdly, they didn't do anything to devalue the retailers own branding.

This worked spectacularly well with Dixons. The main brand was Dixons, the sub-brand was Packard Bell with Dixons using it as price/feature leader in its own advertising. Earlier this year Packard Bell introduced a combined PCTV and its Rooms GUI. Vendors like Apple, Compaq and Olivetti sat up and took notice. As life got tougher in the business market they went for the home buyer too, firstly for the SoHo buyer, secondly for the edutainment buyer. That is, firstly for the PC World buyer, secondly for the WH Smith/John Lewis customer.

Apple decided to upgrade the engineering of Macs and add-ons like printers to make them superlatively easy to install and use. Today the company is doing so well at this that it is going ▶



head to head with HP in selling cross-platform colour inkjet printers like the Colour Stylewriter 2200.

Compaq similarly re-engineered for the non-computer literate home user. Michael Norris was recruited in 1993 to run its consumer division. He said Compaq needed to "create elegant products, but we want them to be as intuitive as possible". So we got Presario, an all-in-one desktop with integrated multimedia which can be set up in under 20 minutes. A Performa 5200 Mac is also operational in well under half an hour.

It's multimedia that vendors have to thank for moving the PC in the average Joe Consumer's mind away from techie computer and towards hi-fi/VCR status. It can educate my kids, it can play games just as well as those seedy consoles, and maybe I'll be able to play, oops, work with it too. Multimedia edutainment removed fear and reinforced buying justification.

Compaq UK recruited David Miles from Packard Bell, where he had helped build UK sales up to high levels. He is a retailer first and foremost. He gets weekly EPOS reports from all his retail outlets and tracks buying levels closely. This is not a business where you can take your eye off the ball. He plays to the fact that there are different buyer types. For example: "An awful lot of people would rather shop on Saturday and Sunday and want free parking. They're not disposed to go to a high street."

Do sales at the relatively few large malls equal sales in myriad high street outlets? Compaq isn't saying anything beyond the fact that WH Smith "has been immensely successful for us". RMDP's Tony Savage reckons: "The majority of electrical goods are now sold from out of town operations like Tempo and Comet." So the same should be true of computers.

Apple's Bianca Walker, imaging products marketing manager, confirms this for Apple and says that superstores have about 75% of Apple's unit sales in the retail channel while the high street has 25%. But it's changing. They're moving closer together as Apple expands into new high street outlets like John Lewis. Walker expects superstore sales to level out as Apple saturates that channel.

High streets have been having a tough time recently. If consumers appear to be missing the feel-good factor retailers must have the feel-bad factor. Disaster has struck Rumbelows. Nine of the regional electricity companies are saying goodbye to their showrooms, Future Zone is in the red zone after a poor Christmas and WH Smith, that blue blood retailer, has issued a profits warning. Verdict consultant Hilary Monk reckons many retailers are pinning their hopes on Christmas, having decided this summer will be a washout.

And yet if you talk to David Miles you'll find he is really upbeat, really enthusiastic about the results of being able to sell

It's not that there is a high street profile and a shopping mall one. Instead, there are buying profiles that suit the brand identity and the location of retail outlets. It's a question of which type of environment the customer feels comfortable in

Presarios in a non-electrical environment. He says consumers browse at Smiths, they buy magazines there, they buy games and they see the CD software demonstrated on Presarios. Because WH Smith has such a powerful and reassuring brand identity it confers immense credibility on Compaq. So for consumers who are changing their image of the PC from one of those minicomputer technical type things to a means to an educational/entertainment end, this is the place to shop. Such customers, according to Miles, "will not shop in a technology environment".

Compaq has the exclusive PC franchise at WH Smith; Olivetti is in a similar position at Boots. Both these suppliers have had to

produce consumer friendly kit and support their retail outlets in new ways. Compaq, Apple and Olivetti have learned from Packard Bell and are now applying that mix of product superiority and retail channel support to blue chip high street retailers.

Thus Compaq helped to train WH Smith staff over a six to nine month period and are responsible for delivering and installing the PCs in customer's homes. Smiths is a carrier bag environment. People don't walk out of there with anything bigger than a few magazines or a book. This means the PCs have to be delivered and installed promptly. A benefit is that the stocking levels in the stores are low - just one Presario per store for demo purposes. Great for profitability.

Miles makes an interesting point when he says there is often a "correlation between people who serve in shops and people who buy in them". This feels right, doesn't it? You couldn't imagine a WH Smith shop assistant buying a PC in a Byte superstore or a PC World assistant going off to John Lewis to get a Pentium SVGA, 12Mb RAM, 500Mb hard disk job.

This is borne out by a comment from Tony Savage about Dixons, which tried to set up dedicated computer sections within some of its shops. He says it was never successful in terms of return: "It never seemed to really pay for itself." In other words, a store cannot depart from its identity which persists and its buyer types are loyal to it.

What is life like for a smaller high street PC specialist? Viking Computers has a neighbourhood location in Norwich. Proprietor Ian Cutmore says it has two tills and two PC lines: IBC and Peacock. It will sell mainstream brands if customers want, but Viking reckons you pay a lot for the name. His customers know what they want and come to Viking for a good deal and very good service. Viking offers free lifetime technical and software support.

Norwich has a Dixons and a WH Smith but Cutmore doesn't reckon much on its competitive strength. His staff are "infinitely more knowledgeable than Dixons". There is no superstore within a ten mile radius. What if one opened? "Everybody's struggling nowadays. People are cut-throat and the market has

gone down so much. If PC World opened ten miles away everyone would suffer."

It looks as if there could be a growing polarisation between the high street chains and the out of town superstores. Specialist retailers could get squeezed out, especially in the main conurbations where the superstores will be concentrated. David Miles believes that off-the-page mail order suppliers could get squeezed as well. "It's a multimedia-only environment now... with immediate non-technology appeal."

The proportion of mail order sales to PC sales in general to consumers is one in two. Fifty percent of PCs bought in the UK are bought off the page. Savage says: "I was surprised it's such a high level. It's due to very attractive prices and well established companies like Time, which advertises in the quality Sunday papers." Amstrad could be on to a good thing.

Miles believes PCs will be everywhere. There will be a need for multiple retail outlets because there are multiple buyer types and they feel comfortable in different places. Computer retailing is maturing fast and the PC is losing its specialist image and becoming a technology like hi-fi that is ordinary and accepted. PCs will, in Miles' words, "be everywhere where electronic goods and media are". High street outlets will service, in the main, the non-computer literate. The computer literate will go to the superstore, technology buffs to the local specialist. A balance is emerging. Now, where's that feel-good factor?

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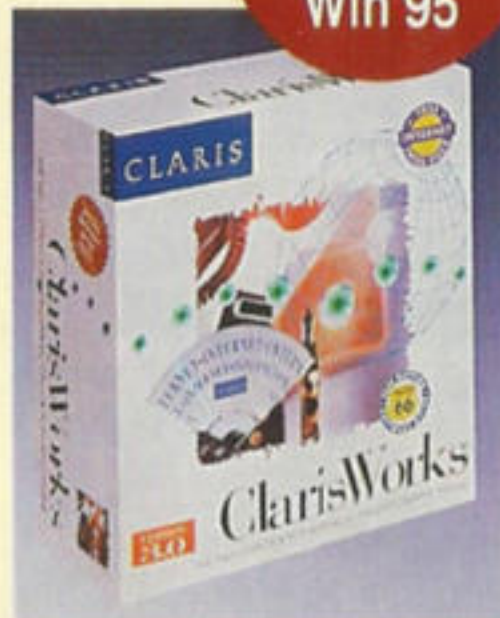
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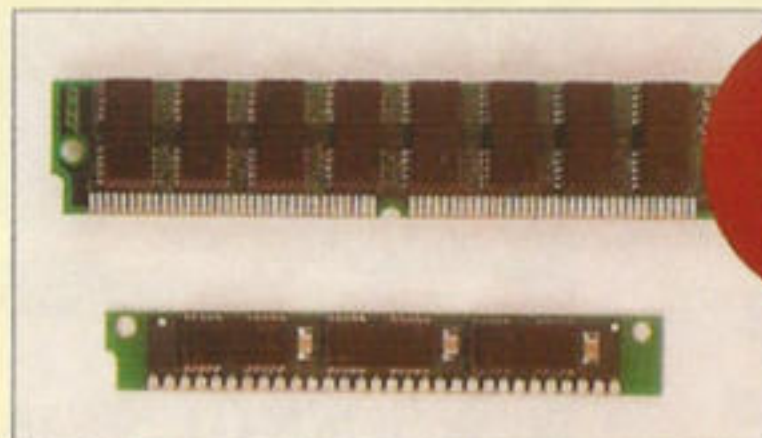
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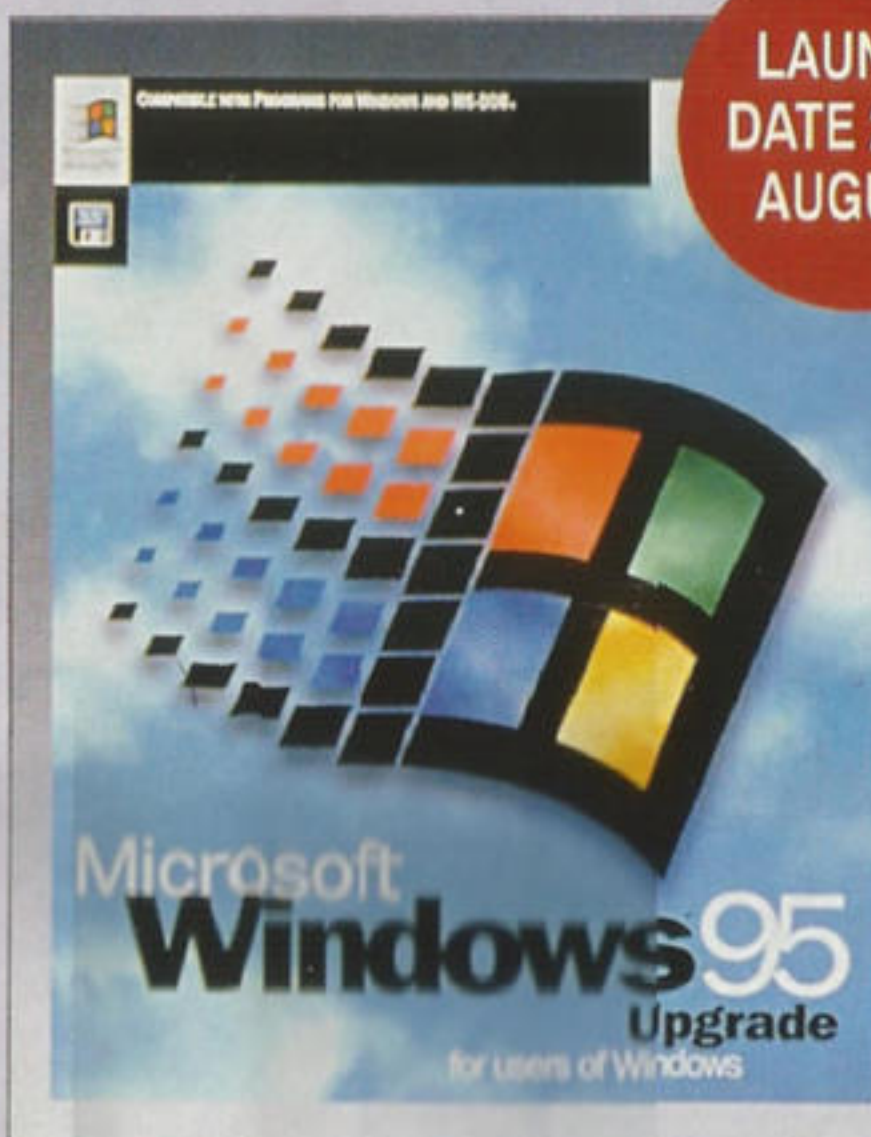
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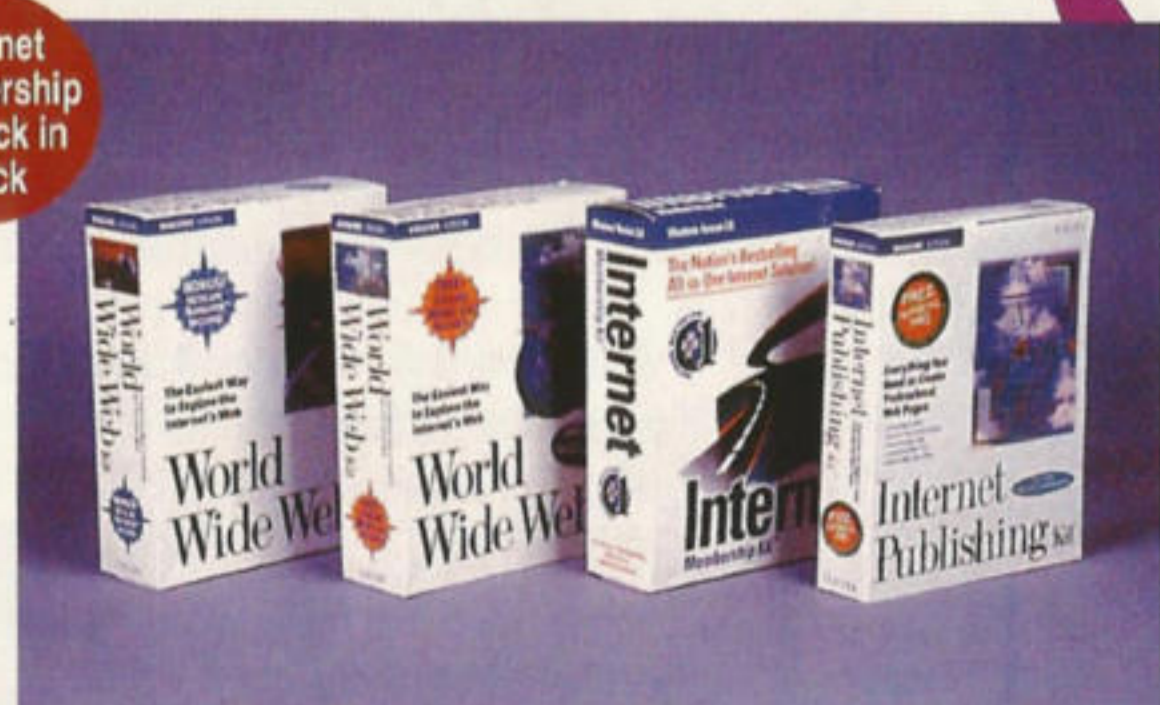
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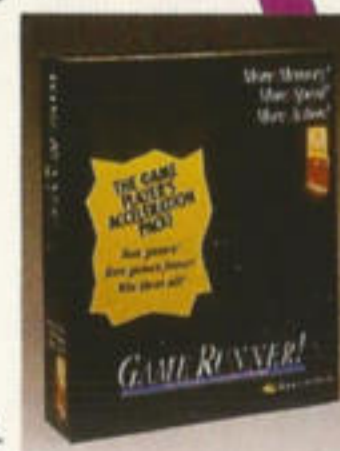
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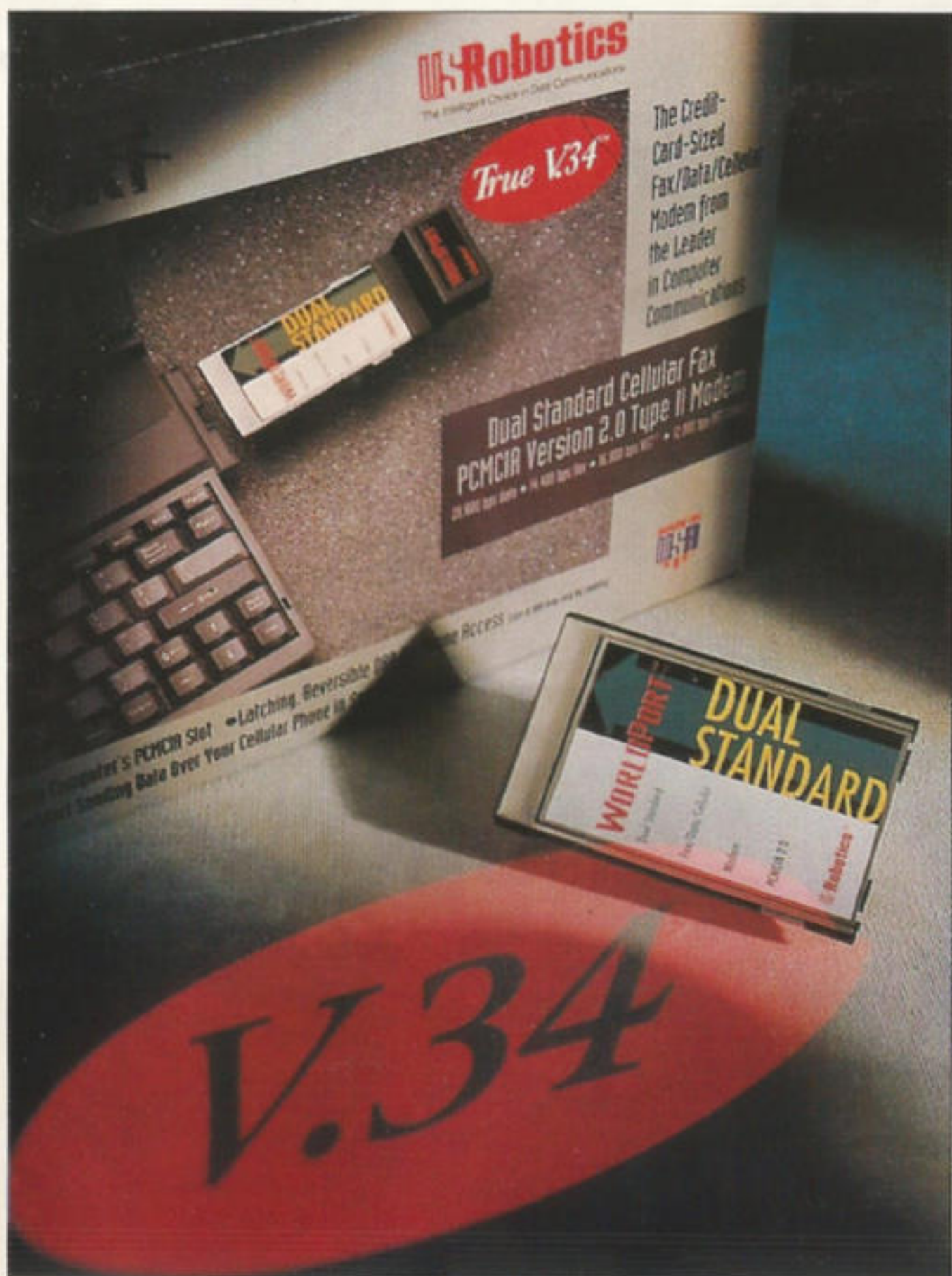
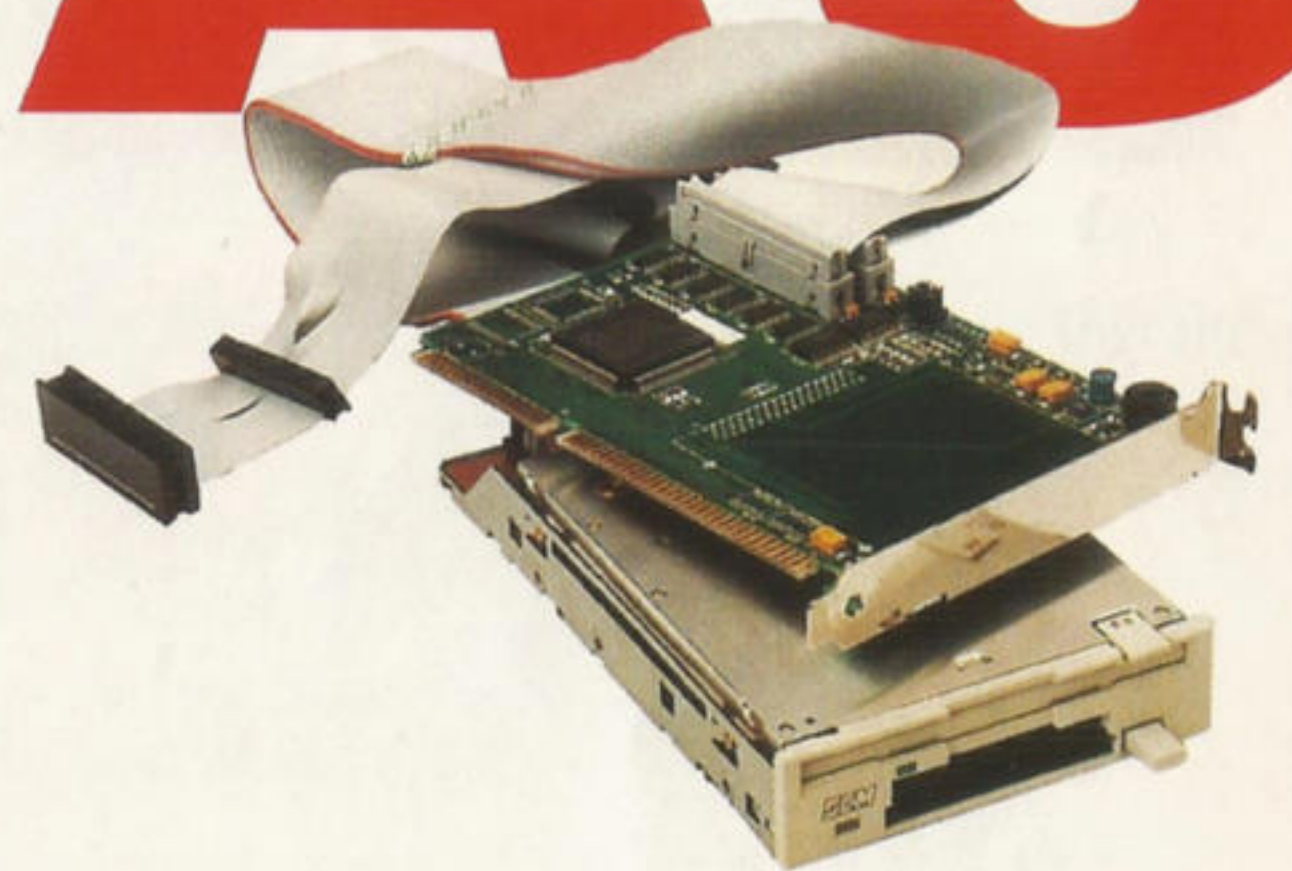
Quarterdeck Game Runner: Part No: 1460261



Ps, Qs and CMCIAS



The credit card sized PCMCIA card is the perfect product – high margin, low shelf space and rapidly growing sales. And the good news is that interest is at an all-time high. But just when you'd got your tongue around the acronym they've gone and changed the name. Nick Edmunds explains.



The PCMCIA card has had a difficult past, standards and compatibility being the main problem, but the picture is now looking a lot more rosy. The number of units shipped is up – estimated to be around 132,000 in the UK in 1994 – and the figure may double in 1995. With an average retail price of £300 this is a lucrative market.

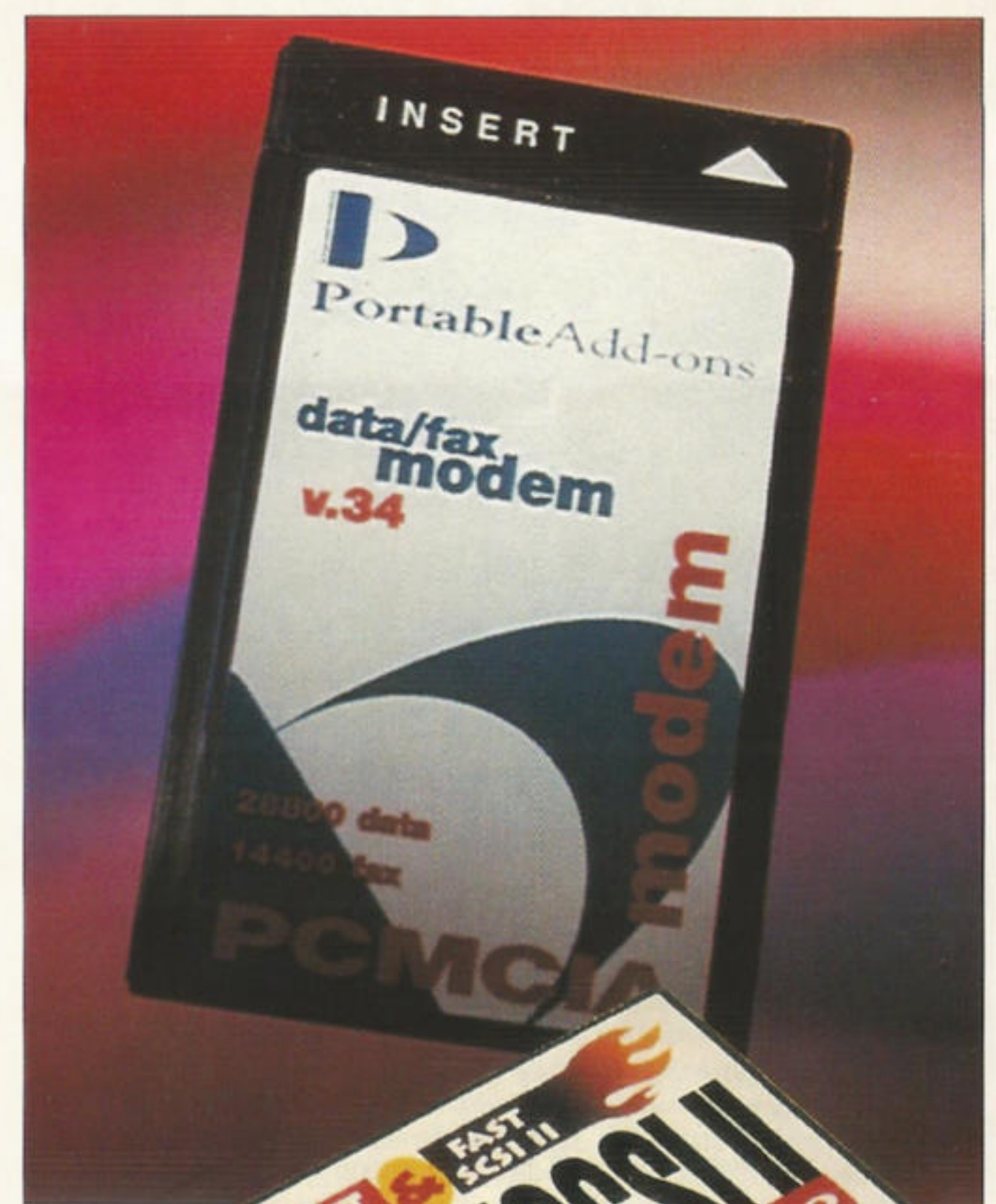
The Personal Computer Memory Card International Association was formed in conjunction with JEIDA (Japan Electronic Industry Development Association) to agree standards for manufacturing storage cards for personal computers. The reasons for accepted standards had become all too obvious to the association members. No standards meant confused customers, which impacted seriously on sales. September 1990 saw the announcement of the PCMCIA Release 1.0 specification for DRAM, Flash and ROM storage cards.

Exactly one year later Release 2.0 appeared, with added I/O standards for data and faxmodems, hard disks and LAN connectors. Release 2.1,

which covered the software interface description of Card and Socket Services, was introduced in September 1993.

The final specification update, which made people sit and take notice, occurred in November 1994. This latest version of the card's technical definition introduced a raft of new features and, most unusually, changed the name of the product. The mouth-filling "PCMCIA", which the industry has struggled with for five years but finally come to accept, now vanishes to be replaced with PC Card.

PC Card brings improvements including the ability to have multi-functions: i.e. a modem and network interface, 3.3v compatibility, power management, DMA (Direct Memory Access) and a brand new 32-bit wide CardBus interface. This latest version is a well received step forward which prepares the ground for more sophisticated and faster cards. But the name change has had a mixed reception. The term PC Card, deliberately used with no release number, is designed to be less confusing but customers, not conversant with the latest marketing theories, are still asking for PCMCIA cards. In addition, many users use "PC card" as a generic term for expansion boards that fit inside a PC. Farcically, the retailer is often driven into confirming that the customer is referring to "a PCMCIA card" in order to



Above from top: SCM Swapbox Floppy PCMCIA combo; Portable Add-ons Ethernet plus PCMCIA card; Sound and Vision from Portable Add-ons

Top and middle: US Robotics Worldport. Bottom: Multitech Multimodem

avoid the very confusion the name change was intended to avoid. The change of label is no big deal but it represents another misunderstanding with a technology dogged by incompatibility.

PCMCIA was designed as a means of expanding storage on a PC. Just like VL and PCI it is in essence a bus. It is supposed to have devices plugged into it which communicate with the host system. And just like VL and PCI, early versions of both bus and expansion cards revealed

gaping holes in either the specification or its interpretation by manufacturers. Getting early PCMCIA cards to work with PCMCIA slots on different machines proved a frustrating affair. Sometimes they would work, often they wouldn't. While incompatibility can still be a problem today with more esoteric devices, the vast majority ▶



WATCH YOUR SALES GO!



Above, left to right: Joe Amodio, Ian Loader and Kim Rose of TDK. Middle: Steven Bradshaw, US Robotics product marketing manager. Bottom: Nigel Parry, MD of Portable Add-ons

of interface issues have been solved. This is good news for the card suppliers and even better news for retailers. Support calls are dramatically reduced on the more established applications which represent the lion's share of existing sales.

The standard was always aimed at the portable market and this is where products are being used. Although reliable market information is difficult to establish, two of the biggest distributors – Guildford-based Portable Add-ons and PPCP of Feltham, Middlesex – broadly agree on market split. Sixty percent of PCMCIA products sold are modems and neither company sees any reason for this to change in the next year. Of these modems, 80% are V.32bis 14,400bps and 20% V.34 28,800bps models. But with prices plunging – Portable Add-ons quoted an average V.32bis figure dropping £100 to £250 in a year with V.34 expected to follow – it is estimated that the V.32bis/V.34 split will be 50:50 in 12 months' time. Network cards, particularly Ethernet interfaces, are the next biggest application and take up around 20% of those sold. PPCP says that Ethernet outsells token ring cards at a ratio of around six to one. The remaining 20% cover a vast and burgeoning area of new applications on the format.

The PCMCIA modem market, therefore, is getting bigger. Portable PCs have been a growth area for some time – just look at Toshiba, a portable-only supplier shooting up the PC league – and PCMCIA sales are hitching a ride. It is estimated that 50% of all portables are now sold with at least one PCMCIA card installed.

Adding this sort of value to a sale helps the vendor's bottom line. With the share of portables going through the retail channel increasing – sources suggest it is now up to 20% from 15% a year ago – the opportunity to increase turnover through sales looks promising.

PCMCIA explained

The diminutive PCMCIA card plugs into a slot, usually built into the side of a notebook PC, to provide peripheral functions. These can be anything from modems to security products. The card must be 54mm wide but its depth varies depending on the type. Its length, though defined as 85.6mm, is not crucial as the card protrudes from the body of the PC to allow for any connecting leads. Type I cards are 3.3mm deep, Type II 5mm and Type III 10.5mm.

All hard disk storage devices are currently Type III (they need the depth) but Type II models are under development. Many portable PCs have a Type III slot incorporating two connectors which will accommodate two Type II cards. As Type III cards hog the whole slot, Type II devices are more useful.

The PCMCIA connector, safely hidden at the end of the slot, has 68 pins so the card requires a reasonable plug to position it in place. Removing cards can sometimes be a problem as the ejector mechanism is not always up to the job.

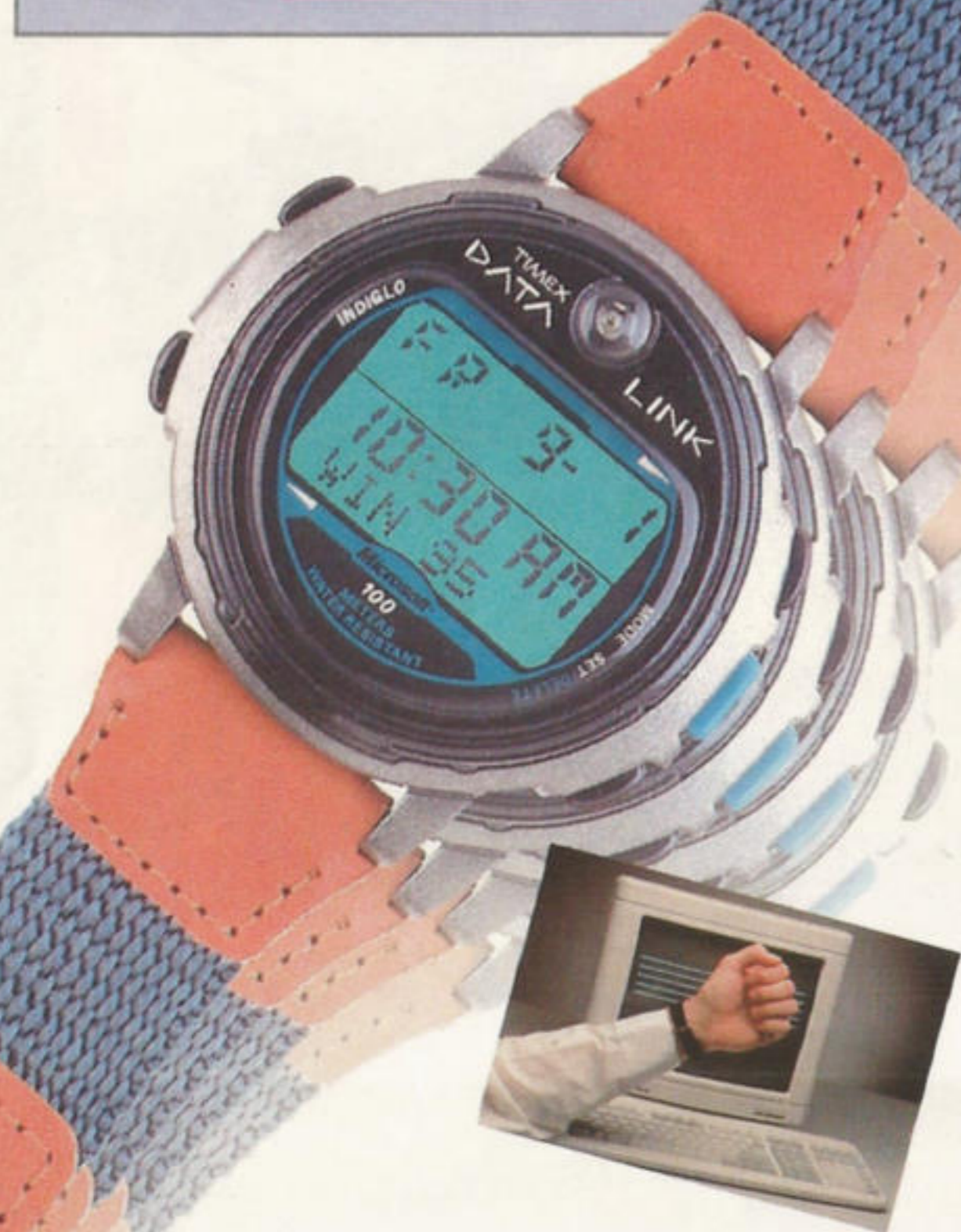
Most portable PCs now come with Card and Socket Services from Systemsoft, Award, Phoenix or DataBook. This interface provides the essential connection between your PCMCIA card, the PCMCIA bus and the PC system bus. Your new PCMCIA card will plug straight into your PC and be recognised immediately. Some specialised cards come with enabling software and drivers which bypass the Card and Socket Services to grab machine resources directly. This non-standard approach can present problems when running with another card and misses out on such features as hot-swapping, the ability to plug and unplug devices while the PC is running.

Many PCMCIA storage cards use Flash solid state memory which needs its own specialised file system. This can be based on AT Attachment, a mapped form of normal IDE, but as Flash memory cannot be rewritten, whole blocks of data have to be written on another part of storage when a file is updated. The "old" Flash memory can then be erased in blocks, a slow process best carried out in the background.

PCMCIA XIP (eXecute In Place) cards are available for some portables – the Hewlett Packard OmniBook for example – where applications can be executed directly from ROM stage without being loaded into main system memory. The system has not been taken up by PC manufacturers to any significant degree.

The latest PC Card PCMCIA updates provide a substantial technical advance. The existing PCMCIA bus on all current cards and machines is 16-bit. The CardBus specification within PC Card is 32-bit, providing a powerful 132Mb/sec throughput at 33MHz. This is good for multimedia, particularly video. The low 3.3v compatibility will help with power saving and make components smaller.

The multi-function capabilities of PC Card specification will probably do most to boost PCMCIA take-up. This will allow the packing of more functionality into less space and free up PCMCIA slots.



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While most PCMCIA sales activity is in the single function modem/LAN area, its future may well lie in the amazing expansion of uses and features. In the longer term, if such a large percentage of portable PC customers continue to buy modems as add-ons we may well see V.34 chipsets on the PC's motherboard, reducing card sales in this area.

Although the PCMCIA card was originally designed for storage applications, sales in this area have disappointed many suppliers. But there are still a large number of storage products on the market. PCMCIA suffers, as it did from the outset, from being expensive compared with the standard PC hard disk.

The name change has had a mixed reception. The term PC Card is designed to be less confusing but customers, not conversant with the latest marketing theories, are still asking for PCMCIA cards

Portable PCs have been a growth area for some time and PCMCIA sales are hitching a ride. An estimated 50% of all portables are sold with at least one PCMCIA card installed

PCMCIA storage cards come in a number of technologies and a number of formats, both solid state (Flash, SRAM etc) and tiny hard disk. Prices have fallen dramatically over time – a 260Mb hard disk is now available for £399, the same as the equivalent 130Mb model in November 1994 – but so have standard hard disk prices. PC-to-PC data swapping is one use for removable PCMCIA storage but the ubiquitous network, found in even the smallest companies, does the job better. The security benefit of removing your data easily from your PC is one attraction, as is the ability to send hundreds of megabytes by post in a small, light and robust package. But despite a promising start, PCMCIA storage looks set to remain a niche area with many disk manufacturers pulling out of the market.

Multi-function PCMCIA cards will be big. They take up

no more space than a single function card yet free up a port on your PC. Already there are a large number on the market. Typical is the £479 Sound Blaster compatible New Media sound card which includes a SCSI-2 interface. A combined modem and LAN connector is another obvious choice. And there is no reason for the number of functions to stop at two. Three, four or more functions will no doubt appear on one card. Other PCMCIA cards already in production include an encrypting card which securely encodes all your hard disk data, making it unreadable without the card. There is a PCMCIA card which acts as a digital camera (you use the screen as a viewfinder), an ISDN card in the format, a video capture card and a cheap and cheerful PCMCIA games port adaptor including a "joypad" for just £69.

We can expect to see more PCMCIA-capable desktop PCs "borrowing" cards from portables. And Windows 95, with its Plug and Play capabilities, will be particularly suitable for external devices such as PCMCIA cards. The future for PCMCIA is looking bright.



Contacts

Portable Add-ons
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Morgan lot at

Morgan's

In the grey market you never know what you'll be selling from one month to the next. But in leading grey retailer Morgan there is one constant - MD Bob Nicklin believes cleanliness is next to godliness. Nicholas Blincoe checked out his gleaming shop floor.

For anyone who still wants to believe in progress, Morgan Computer Company must come as a pleasant surprise. When Bob Nicklin started the company back in 1975 it amounted to nothing more than a secondhand camera shop on Tottenham Court Road. Twenty years later it is a thriving business specialising in one of the toughest sectors of the industry - end of line and surplus stock computers.

Nicklin remains managing director and sole owner of Morgan. There is no point asking what happened to the original Mr Morgan, he never existed. Nicklin explains: "I used to have a partner who started a string of companies and he'd name each one after a different classic sports car. He's disappeared now."

Other members of Team Morgan have stuck around for longer. Tom Willett joined in the early 80s. He finds it hard to believe now, but in those days there was healthy competition between the camera and computer departments. Today only the Tottenham Court Road store stocks photography equipment and this counts for just 1% of total turnover.

Around the corner from the original store is the largest of Morgan's four shops. On a busy corner of New Oxford Street, it sits at the heart of a growing computer store mecca on the shores of upmarket Bloomsbury. Morgan was not the first store to hit on the idea of moving just out of Tottenham Court Road. When it took the site in 1987 there was an Entré shop opposite; fortunately it closed immediately. Tom Willett says: "When we opened we were carrying stock out of Entré and bringing it straight through our own door."

The story highlights both the joys and the problems of the computer industry's grey market: Morgan never knows what it will be selling from month to month. Nicklin says: "Sometimes it's 75% printers, then nothing. A year ago we had six

The Morgan Flyer July 1995

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MORGAN COMPUTER COMPANY

Store Visited: New Oxford Street, London
Store Type: Morgan is the country's leading retailer in the grey market of surplus inventory, end of line items and bankrupt stock
Owner: Bob Nicklin
History: Morgan has grown through other people's mistakes. Even the owners seem surprised that it was so easy
Growth Potential: The company has no problem finding stock and is in the enviable position of having no real competitors



the ROMs because the manufacturer's name was flashed on the screen." The New Oxford Street store receives deliveries three times a week, once more than either the Birmingham or Manchester shops. The prices will already have

The other main hazard in the Tottenham Court Road area is theft. An estimated one-in-ten shoppers are there to steal, says Nicklin. This is hardly a problem for Morgan since most of the stock is kept behind a long white counter. The counter is almost bare apart from the till, which Willet insists should always be the main focal point. "When we were looking for a new stock control system we were shown all these fancy tills. We said no, we want a proper till." Presumably one with a good loud ring.

Aside from its retail operation, Morgan runs a Corporate and Educational department and a mail order division. Its main success in education has been with the Training Enterprise Council, the series of companies set up to provide basic training to the unemployed. Nicklin points out: "You don't

need a new computer to teach someone how to use one." Nor for the majority of office jobs. Morgan has had some success selling to individual departments of the very largest companies, as well as to one of the London boroughs.

Anything bought through mail order will be delivered the next day by Interlink. Nicklin stresses the importance of finding a reliable cargo firm. "A few years ago I had a punter ring me up once to say: 'I'm just watching a guy roll your monitor up the path.' That's how it was being delivered, end to end up the garden path."

The mail order customers are attracted through newspaper adverts. Nicklin finds the national papers particularly useful. "If we do a deal on Tuesday, we can put an ad in one of the papers on Wednesday and by Thursday we're selling them. If we put

an ad in the computer press the product could sit on a shelf for a month. Computers are not like wine. They don't age."

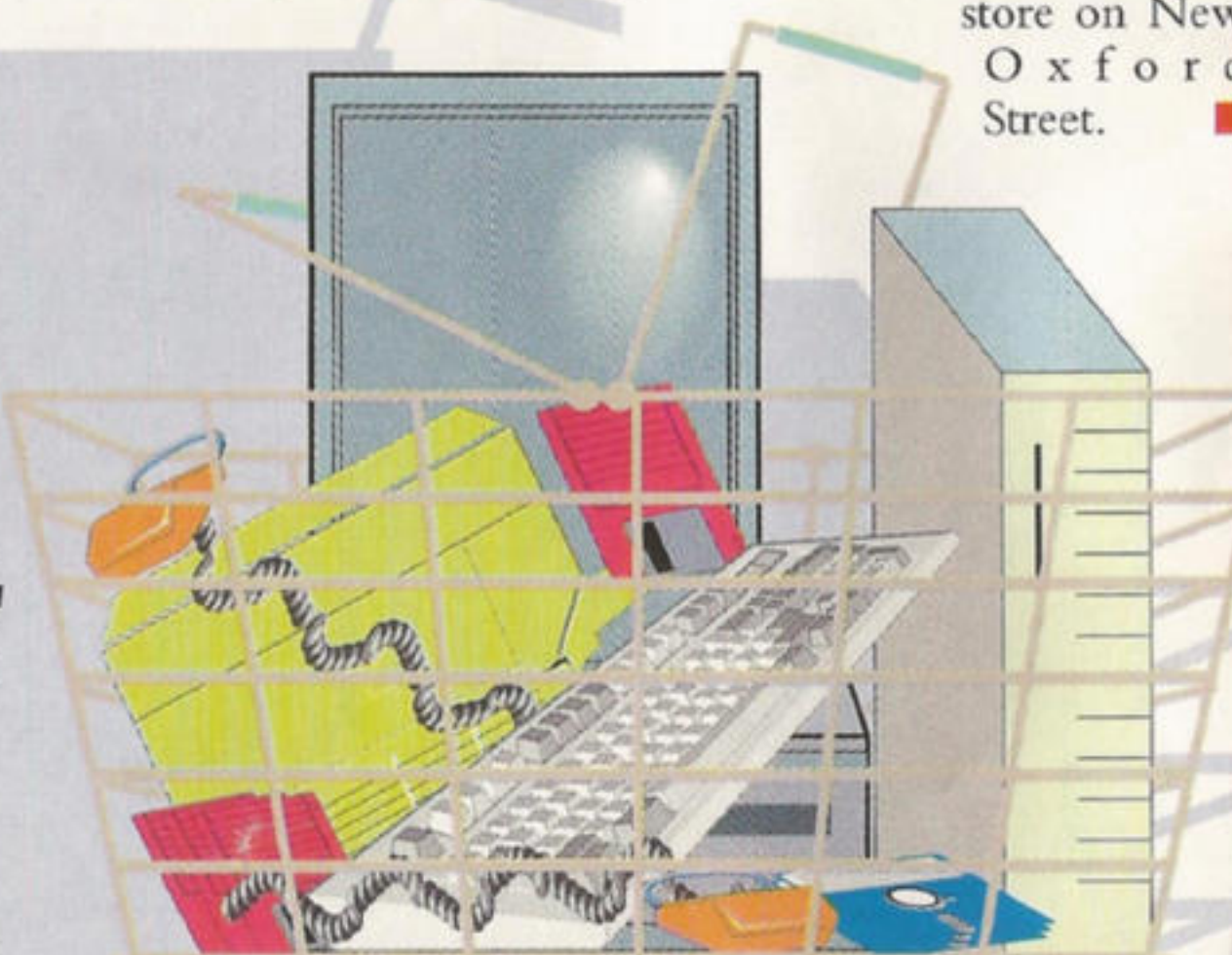
The adverts, as well as the 50,000 flyers sent to the customers on the database, are illustrated with line drawings of the machines on offer that month, whatever they may be. Unusually, Morgan employs an illustrator, with the advantage of producing its own clean, coherent and cheap graphics. The disadvantage is that some of its more troublesome customers insist on counting every knob and button on the drawings in case the picture falls foul of the trade description act. Nicklin is willing to suffer a little aggravation if that's the price for producing a clean and well presented, if basic, flyer. If you want to read one you will find them stacked next to the till on the counter of the clean and well presented, if basic, flagship

store on New Oxford Street. ■

Basket Case

The majority of the products sold through Morgan are not available anywhere else. Below are a few of the bestselling items:

- ★ **Blue Lightning 486 IBM manufactured PC, 429Mb drive, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb video, 14in colour monitor, DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1 plus Microsoft software** £699
- ★ **Microsoft Office** £125
- ★ **Daewoo manufactured 386 colour notebook** £499
- ★ **Philips CD-ROM drive** £79

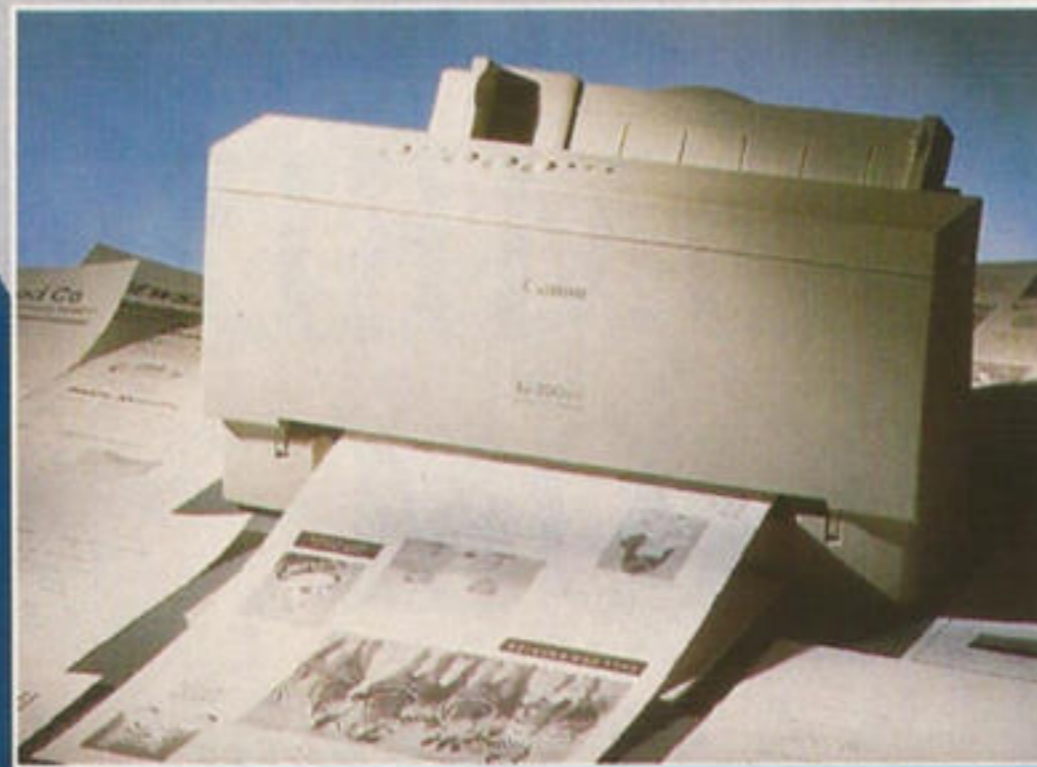


been determined: the store managers only have to pile them high and keep the boxes presentable. Cleanliness and presentation are particularly important to Nicklin, who expects his staff to wear collars and ties. He points out that computers have a clean, even disciplined image and suggests his attitudes are shared by all retailers across the board. "If I ever have an argument with a manager I always end up saying the same thing: if people preferred dirty shops, Boots would start buying dust and spreading it around its stores." If Morgan seems especially clean, it is because there is nothing in the shop that could become untidy. The New Oxford Street branch is all white floor and blue Dexion, and piles of boxed machines. Extra shelves around the walls and windows display machines in running order. The store is set at a busy crossroads and Morgan makes the most of its window space to tempt passers-by. The windows allow the workers to keep an eye on their cars as they are towed away. Since the London boroughs began enforcing their own traffic laws Nicklin and Willet have their cars impounded regularly, sometimes twice on the same day.

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Amstrad beauty shows off flawless complexion

Snoop joins the search for fine dryness lines as football chairman moves into the home beauty market.

Fed up with selling just vulgar tacky stuff like PCs, Alan Sugar is branching out into beauty appliances, Snoop hears. The first in a family of Sugar beauties – an electronic facial toner – will be launched in September. You may laugh, but remember Amstrad opened up the hi-fi market in the 1970s and the PC market in the mid-1980s with budget products that sold en masse.

Beauty salons charge about £40 per session for the electronic equivalent of a facelift, using industrial strength machinery



Before and after: exclusive pics of Sugar retrieved from the Amstrad laboratories

that costs about £5,000. If Sugar has guessed right again and home facials become the thing of the mid-1990s, his £200 electronic face flattener may bring a smile once more to hard pressed electrical goods retailers.

Whether it's a success in the shops or not, Snoop can testify to its effectiveness: the before and after pictures of a test run on Alan Sugar himself were "retrieved" from Amstrad's secret beauty laboratories run by the eminent Korean macrobiologist Li Posook Shun. Of course, Sugar couldn't stay that way if he wanted to be served a beer in the Spurs directors' box so Li Posook simply refitted the electrodes, reversed the polarity



and bingo! the familiar stubbled jowls were with us again.

One on-going mystery which Snoop is still investigating is why the hype continues about the Internet. Specifically, why do self-promoting Net gurus keep appearing on the BBC and in otherwise respectable newspapers, claiming the Net is the greatest democratising force since Gutenberg invented the printing press or the Greeks invented the democratic concept? A few years ago Al Gore, the US President's cybernaut, suggested it would be a good idea to build an information superhighway so the whole of the civilised world (i.e. the USA) could communicate via computer instead of doing lunch. No sooner had the words left his mouth than numerous Net heads claimed the Internet was just that highway.

Let's get this straight – the reality of the information superhighway is a dirt track trodden down by anoraks. It's the CB radio of the 1990s. For every useful bit of info there's 1Mb of meaningless drivel; for every serious user there's an army of nerds.

One day, one day, it will be useful. But for now it's a great

wheeze selling modems to hapless punters who want to surf the Net in the sure knowledge they'll only do it once. It's the

equivalent of selling fine art CDs to sad cases who haven't got friends to impress but want to feel arty about their vulgar PCs.



Spotted outside Sony's London HQ – a Segarian in a sandwich board handing out Saturn literature, all part of Sega's promised guerrilla marketing tactics

Snoop would love to hear from his readers, not just on issues of security: industry gossip is always useful for building files on suspects. You can talk to him at CRN's editorial offices on 0171 316 9527, fax him on 0171 316 9519, or the electronically aware can email him courtesy of eden@cix.compulink.co.uk.

LETTER

We've got F-Zeros Jack

In Jack Schofield's column of 3 July he mentions that Son is after F-Zero for the SNES but does not hold much hope of finding a copy. Well, I have some good news, because we seem to have the whole country's stock of the game and are selling it at the incredible price of £12.97.

We are part of Beatties and there are Virtual Reality sec-

tions in all the stores, of which there are 68 around the country. So I am sure that if Jack goes along to his local Beatties there will be plenty of F-Zeros to please Son.

Mark Smith
Store manager Virtual Reality
Queen Street
Cardiff

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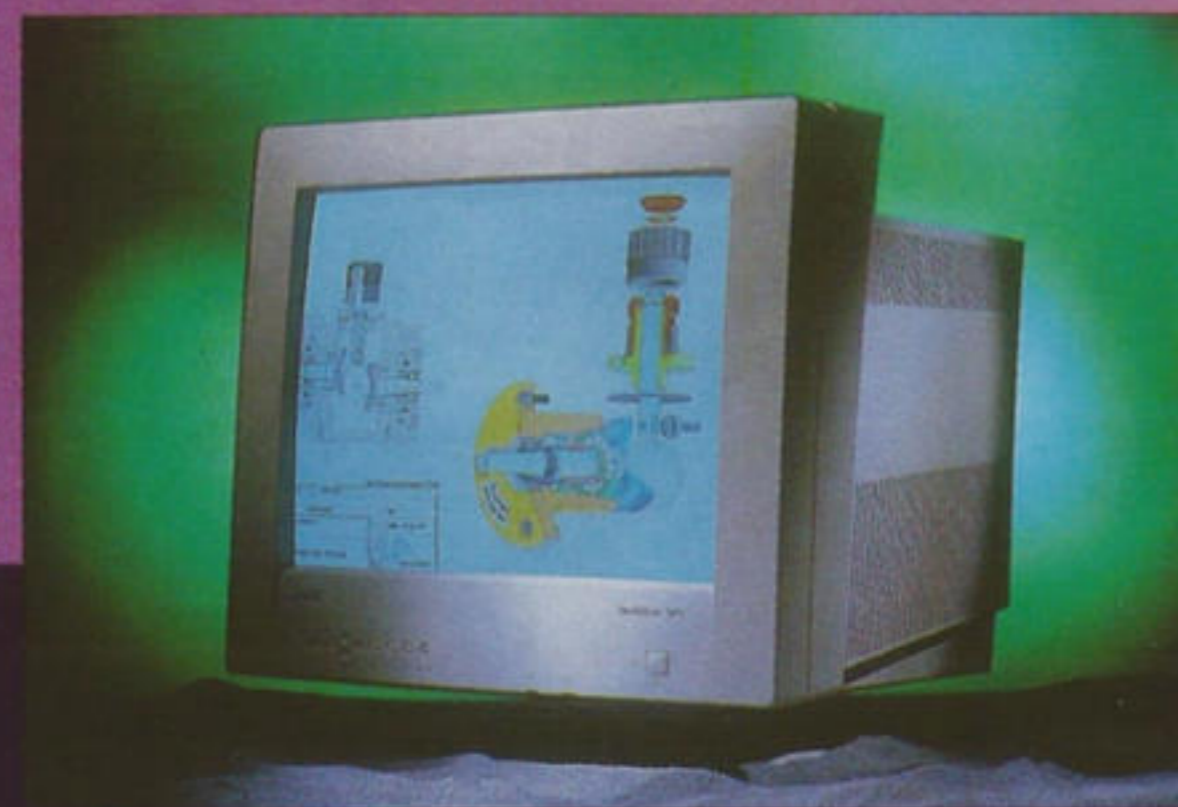
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THE RETAIL CHART

WEEK ENDING 8/7/95

home computer all formats

Computer
**Retail
News**
SELLING BUSINESS AND INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS



KEY: AG Commodore Amiga, AA Commodore A1200, ST Atari ST, AP Apple Macintosh, PC PC compatible, OT Other

1	1	Ultimate Soccer Manager FORMATS: AA AG PC	Impressions
4	2	Colonization FORMATS: PC AG	Microprose
3	3	Premier Manager 3 FORMATS: AA AG PC	Gremlin Interactive
2	4	Theme Park FORMATS: PC AA AP AG	Electronic Arts
6	5	FIFA International Soccer FORMATS: PC AG	Electronic Arts
5	6	Sim City 2000 FORMATS: AP PC AA	Maxis
8	7	Doom II FORMATS: PC	Virgin
9	8	Super Skidmarks FORMATS: AG	Guildhall Leisure
7	9	Sensible World of Soccer FORMATS: AG	Virgin
13	10	Skidmarks FORMATS: AG	Guildhall Leisure
16	11	UFO: Enemy Unknown FORMATS: PC AA AG	Microprose
▶ MAJOR MOVER ◀			
18	12	X-Wing/B-Wing/Imp Pursuit FORMATS: PC	US Gold
10	13	Rise of the Robots FORMATS: AA AG PC	Time Warner
12	14	Jungle Strike FORMATS: AA AG PC	Various
14	15	Manchester United – The Double FORMATS: AG PC	Krisalis
17	16	Cannon Fodder 2 FORMATS: AG PC	Virgin
15	17	PGA European Tour FORMATS: AA AG	Ocean
20	18	Dawn Patrol FORMATS: PC AG	Entertainment
23	19	Sam&Max/Indi Atlant/D Tentacle FORMATS: PC	US Gold
21	20	Tie Fighter FORMATS: PC	Virgin

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NE	21	Nascar FORMATS: PC	Virgin
26	22	Discworld FORMATS: PC	Psygnosis
NE	23	Frontier: Elite 2 FORMATS: AG PC	Gametek
28	24	Kick Off 3 FORMATS: AA AG PC	Anco
11	25	TFX FORMATS: PC	Ocean
27	26	The Lion King FORMATS: PC AA	Virgin
19	27	Overlord FORMATS: PC AG	Virgin
RE	28	Mortal Kombat 2 FORMATS: AG PC	Acclaim
RE	29	Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1 FORMATS: PC	Microsoft
▶ HOTSHOT DEBUT ◀			
NE	30	Powerdrive FORMATS: AG PC	US Gold

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Our next issue
won't be published until
SATURDAY 5 AUGUST

The next issue will see
changes to these charts.
LOOK OUT for business software,
CD and all-format games charts.

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cartridge

all formats



KEY: MD Sega Megadrive, NI Nintendo console, OT Other, SG Sega 8-bit, GA Nintendo Game Boy, SN Super Nintendo, GG Sega Game Gear

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1	1	Brian Lara Cricket FORMATS: MD	Codemasters
3	2	Theme Park FORMATS: JA MD	Various
5	3	FIFA Soccer 95 FORMATS: MD	Electronic Arts
9	4	Street Racer FORMATS: SN MD	US Gold
4	5	Fever Pitch Soccer FORMATS: MD SN	US Gold
8	6	Mortal Kombat 2 FORMATS: GA GG MD SN SG MX	Acclaim
7	7	Super International Cricket FORMATS: SN	Nintendo
6	8	PGA Golf Tour 3 FORMATS: MD	Electronic Arts
2	9	Rugby World Cup 1995 FORMATS: MD	Electronic Arts
10	10	WWF Raw FORMATS: GG MD SN GA	Acclaim
11	11	Micro Machines FORMATS: MD GA SN NI GG SG	Various
13	12	Zelda - Links Awakening FORMATS: GA	Nintendo
14	13	The Lion King FORMATS: MD GG SG SN GA	Virgin
12	14	Super Bomberman 2 FORMATS: SN	Virgin
20	15	Rise of the Robots FORMATS: MD SN GG	Various
▶ MAJOR MOVER ◀			
34	16	Jungle Strike FORMATS: MD GA SN GG	Various
17	17	NHLPA Hockey 1995 FORMATS: MD SN GA	Various
10	10	NBA Live 95 FORMATS: MD SN	Various
23	19	Pete Sampras Tennis FORMATS: MD GG	Codemasters
15	20	Gameboy Gallery FORMATS: GA	Nintendo

19	21	FIFA International Soccer FORMATS: MD SN GG GA	Various
22	22	Streetfighter 2 Champ Edition FORMATS: MD	Sega
21	23	Cannon Fodder FORMATS: MD SN JA	Virgin
16	24	Super Return of the Jedi FORMATS: SN	Virgin
27	25	Sonic the Hedgehog 2 FORMATS: GG MD SG	Sega
24	26	Winter Olympics FORMATS: GG MD SG SN	US Gold
▶ MAJOR MOVER ◀			
36	27	Kirby's Dreamland FORMATS: GA	Nintendo
30	28	World Cup USA 94 FORMATS: GG MD SN GA SG	US Gold
32	29	Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story FORMATS: MD SN GG SG	Virgin
25	30	Road Rash 3 FORMATS: MD	Electronic Arts
26	31	Animaniacs FORMATS: SN MD	Konami
33	32	International Super Star Soccer FORMATS: SN	Konami
35	33	Micro Machines 2 FORMATS: MD GG	Codemasters
RE	34	Donkey Kong Country FORMATS: SN	Nintendo
39	35	Lemmings 2 FORMATS: MD SN GA	Sony
29	36	Toe Jam and Earl 2 FORMATS: MD	Sega
28	37	Eternal Champions FORMATS: MD	Sega
RE	38	Desert Speed Trap FORMATS: GG SG	Sega
RE	39	Starwing FORMATS: SN	Nintendo
40	40	Super Streetfighter 2 FORMATS: MD SN	Various

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See page 12 for details of Air Warrior Plus, available soon from Pinnacle.



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