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# CTW

**30.1.89 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 221**

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## Konix console: unveiled at last



**KONIX:** The flying...

After months of teasing, Konix has finally unveiled its sub-£200 games machine.

The Multi System console was previewed to *CTW* last week, ahead of its appearance at the British Toy Fair, Earls Court. So far the console has been greeted with a generally favourable response from those who have seen it.

Speculation about the machine had been circulating

months with *CTW* first revealing the console's existence back in early October. Konix has at last officially confirmed a range of details about the machine:

**Availability:** Konix is confident that the machine will be ready for its promised August launch, with the console initially being manufactured in Korea so that production can ramp up quickly. The Multi System will be priced at £199.

**Features:** The main emphasis



...driving...

of the machine is a steering device that can resemble that of a car, plane or motor bike. A host of peripherals will also be available including a flight chair, keep-fit bike and helicopter yoke. "We designed the machine so that you could continue to develop it, becoming something never available before. The user can build up what we think will eventually be the ideal system. We will continue to keep the user interested in the machine,"

commented Konix boss Wyn Holloway to *CTW*.

**Interest:** The firm claims to have already tied up software deals with Ocean and US Gold, with at least 20 other firms pledging to support the machine. Konix is already boasting advanced orders for the Multi System in excess of 100,000.

**Software:** Konix has confirmed that the machine incorporates a three and a half inch disc drive (*CTW* January 9th), run-



...riding Multi System

*Photographs courtesy ACE © Future Publishing 1989*

ning specially protected disks priced at £14.99. The modified disks will not be for sale, with Konix providing a duplication service to software houses in an attempt to prevent copying. The firm is denying that it will be taking a protectionist stance similar to Nintendo and Sega. "The concept of the machine is brilliant and hopefully it will be very successful. For Konix the protected discs are a good idea. It's a smart move as long as the whole

thing is done in a fair and proper manner," commented US Gold's Tim Chaney.

**Advertising:** The firm has set aside a £2 million advertising budget for the console, and a major TV campaign is due to break in September. Konix has chosen McCann Erickson to handle the account, but denies that its decision was influenced by the fact that McCann has the Nintendo account in the US.

## To lose one publisher is unfortunate...

In a major shake up, Focus Magazines last week lost four senior members of staff.

*Popular Computing Weekly* and *GamesWeek* publisher Trish Phillips, along with *Pop's* advertising manager Daniel Healy left the company

abruptly amidst much speculation.

Managing editor, and one time publisher, Brendon Gore is also set to leave Focus, as well as John Barnes publisher of the firm's two trade mags, *Retail Technology* and *Information User*.

Whilst there is some mys-

tery surrounding the departure of Phillips and Healy, Gore appears to have left as a result of his publishing stint not working out. Barnes has simply quit to join *PC Dealer*.

"Trish and Daniel's departure is a personal thing between the two of them. Neither of them had any rea-

son to leave, but they chose to on the back of a situation that occurred. Brendon's departure had been on the cards since October. He had a stab at being publisher, but things didn't work out. Perhaps we didn't give him enough time to prove himself, but we needed an instant response," offered Focus

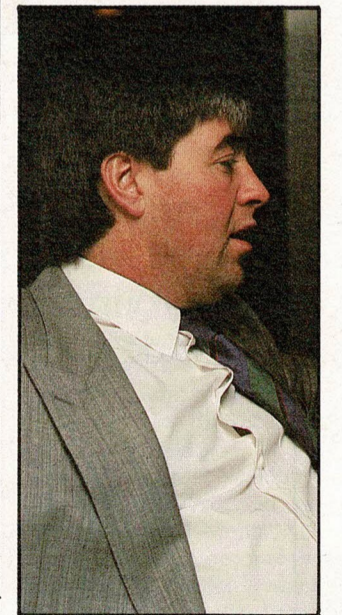
director Paul Coster to *CTW*. Prior to Barnes, Gore had been publisher on the two trade titles.

For the time being *Pop* and *GamesWeek* will be handled by Perry Trevers, who is also publisher of *Which PC?*, *QL World* and the recently acquired Amstrad affiliated mags -

Continued on back page

## Euro boss quits CBM

Major changes in Commodore's European management infrastructure look likely after the departure of general manager Harold Speyer later this week.



**FRANKLIN:** Tight lipped  
 CBM UK's managing director Steve Franklin last week confirmed Speyer's departure to *CTW*, but was reticent to comment on how the firm will re-organise as a result.

Continued on back page

## INSIDE: PC problem bugs Amstrad

### HACKED OFF

FAST superno and all round good egg of the software industry Bob Hay reports on the growing trend of organised hacking..... 8

### INNOVATE TO ACCUMULATE

You've heard the hype, you've read the rumour now *CTW* tells the truth. Words and pictures direct from Welsh Wales finally reveal the facts on the much anticipated Konix Multi System. And you know what they said, well some of it was true..... 10

### CENTRE CAUGHT

With the arrival of the prestigious Amstrad peripherals account Centresoft seems to have really got back to business. 12

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**SUGAR:** Troubled start for PC2000 range

Amstrad has admitted that there is a fault in the first batch of its PC2086 machines, while at the same time claiming it has solved the problem.

The fault concerns the hard disc controller and Amstrad claims it can be rectified by the addition of a 560pF ceramic disc capacitor. It also claimed that this was a "simple job involving a twopenny gadget that could be done in a minute".

Dealers were told of the problem last week and have been given detailed instructions for repair. Once a customer's machine is hit by the fault all data on the hard disc is erased and the dealer has to reformat the disc.

Amstrad confidently claim-

ed that the fault was restricted to the first batch of 2086s and that any machine delivered after January 18th will be fine. It added that it was only "about 15 per cent" of the said batch that would be affected.

A spokesman for the firm commented to *CTW*: "I think we've taken a very responsible attitude by letting everyone know the situation so that steps can be taken. Anyway it's really not that big a deal."

Despite the traditionally Amstrad bullshiness, however, the firm has been moved to take full page advertisements in the trade press warning of the fault and must now be concerned about an adverse affect on sales.

Perhaps an even greater

Continued on back page

# AMSTRAD TECHNICAL BULLETIN

## PC2086 HD HARD DISC CONTROLLER MODIFICATION



# PC2086 HD

A fault has been identified on (some machines fitted with) certain hard disc controllers used in the Amstrad PC2086 HD.

If this fault occurs, data read or write errors may be experienced when using the hard disc drive.

To solve the problem, and to prevent it arising, a 560 pf ceramic disc capacitor should be simply added between pin 44 of IC707 and ground. A suitable ground point is the ground side of C721.

It is possible with extreme caution, to add this capacitor without having to take the hard disc controller pcb out of the cabinet. Remove the top cover fitted over the expansion slots to reveal the back of the pcb which is situated in the expansion slot that is visible when

this cover is removed and the PC is placed on its front face. It is recommended that this work is performed as soon as possible.

**THIS CAPACITOR WILL BE ADDED TO ALL PC2086 HD COMPUTERS DELIVERED BY AMSTRAD FROM THE 18TH JANUARY 1989.**

For further information refer to Technical Bulletin No. 19, which has been mailed to all Authorised Business Dealers and Advanced Systems Centres. Additional information can be obtained by telephoning Amstrad's Technical Hotline on 0702 296944.

**NOTE:** If the PC2086 HD has been returned by a customer who has experienced this fault, the hard disc must be reformatted with the command `FORMAT C:/S`.



# Wilding plans computer only sideline as IBM joins chain

In a flurry of activity, office equipment dealer Wilding has been appointed as an authorised dealer for IBM and announced plans for its own computer-only store.

The firm has already lined up a central London site for the shop and commercial director Peter Newland told *CTW* he was "95 per cent certain" that the plans would be carried out.

If things go according to schedule the store will be opening in "around three or four months time". It will be stocking Wilding's range of Amstrad, Olivetti, IBM and Brother products.

"We looked at the market and decided that a move purely into computers was something

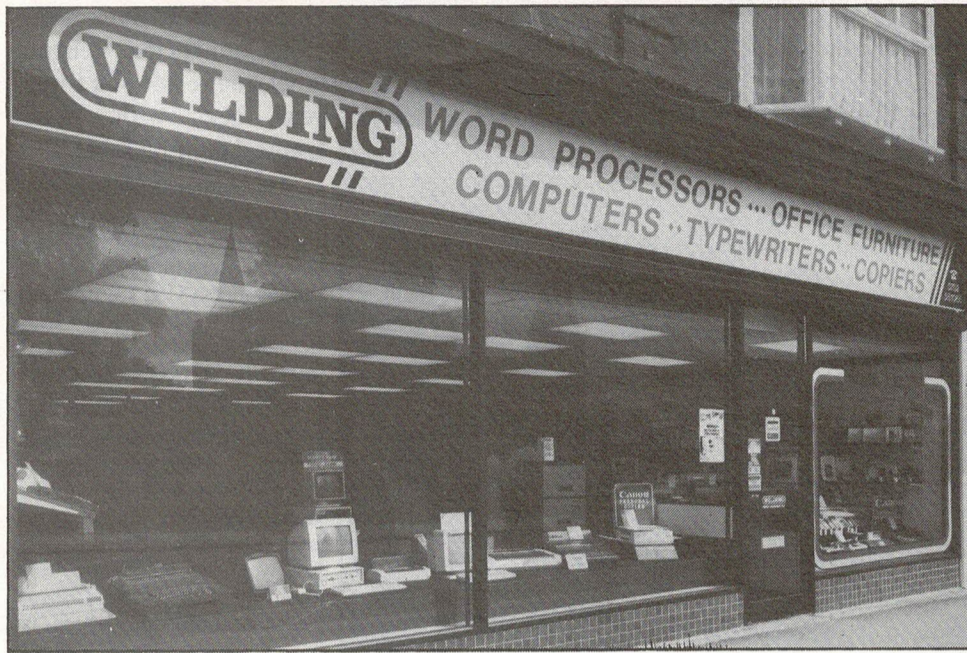
worth doing. We know that a few others have tried it and failed but we reckon we can do it. It's a great year for us and at the moment we're going great guns", commented Newland.

He added that if the computer-only store was successful Wildings would look towards expansion in that sector.

Regarding the IBM move Newland offered: "It's one of those decisions that you've got to make sooner or later and we just felt that the time is right now."

"We've always been pretty slow to do things and we've looked at this situation thoroughly and carefully and we reckon we've now got the people and expertise to cope with IBM product."

The firm will be taking IBM's PS/2 30, 50, 70 and 80 PCs.



WILDING: Branching out

## Tandon price cuts pre-empt PC2000s

With its eye on the promised arrival of Amstrad's 286 and 386 machines, Tandon has embarked on a major price cutting promotion.

The firm has slashed the price of its AT compatible from £1,500 to £999. This special promotion is designed to lead up to the *Which Computer?* Show with the offer closing on March 31st.

Tandon's 386 range has been reduced by up to 27 per cent, with the entry level single floppy version now starting at £2,799, whilst the top of the range model has been cut by £1,596 to £3,499. These reductions look likely to be permanent.

"We've always been a priced company, and our success so far has been attributable to setting price performance in front of the competition. We're aware of new products due to come onto the market so we've



TANDON AT: Under £1,000 - for now

set a price to get ahead of the field again. Hopefully it will stimulate new drive into Tandon," commented the firm's marketing manager Ann Barnbrook to *CTW*.

Barnbrook claims that the 286 machine will probably go

back to its original price when the offer ends, with the promotion being designed to take the heat out of Amstrad's AT whenever it becomes available.

The firm will be using the *Which?* Show to push its new 386 price structure.

## No retail squeeze for growing Tandy

Tandy has shunned reports of bad times for major retailers by announcing further improved financial results and plans to open a dozen new stores in the next couple of months.

The new stores will be situated mainly in the South East, including such sites as Felixstowe, Canterbury, and Dalston Cross (London). The firm intends to open some 70 new stores this year.

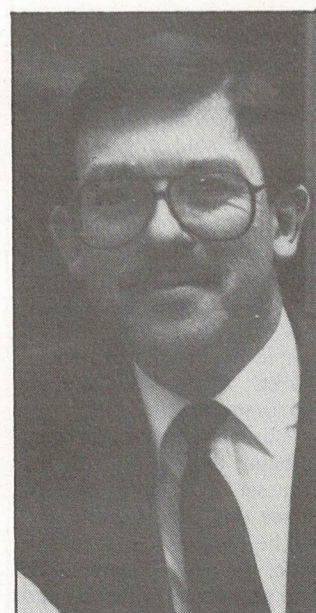
"We're ploughing ahead with our store opening programme and are on target to achieve 400 outlets by 1990. Our new stores are doing extremely well, and there has

been a tremendous growth in the sale of computers," offered Tandy's newly appointed computer marketing manager Graham Orr to *CTW*.

Tandy's parent organisation InterTan has announced profits of \$18.2 million for the quarter ending December 31st - more than double the figure for the comparable period last year. Sales rose by 17 per cent from \$172.3 million to \$202.2 million.

Although no separate quarterly figures are available, it is claimed that Tandy UK performed very well within the company - which incorporates Europe, Canada and Australia.

"We're certainly not experi-



ORR: No doom and gloom encircling the doom and gloom you see in the newspapers, with Stanley Kalms claiming that the consumer electronics market is weak," added Orr.

## Prism warns of a year of two halves

Prism Leisure has posted pleasing half yearly results for the period ending 30th September 1988 but has warned of a disappointing second six months.

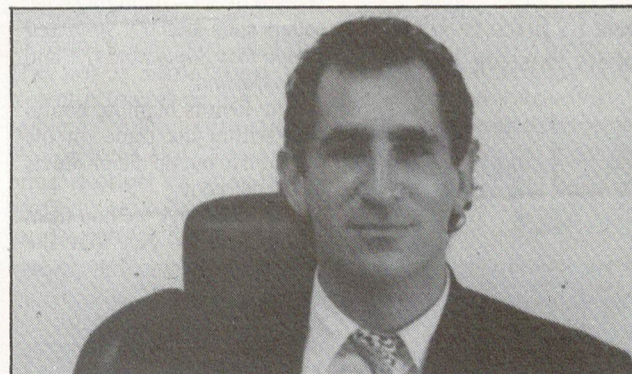
The group's turnover rose 11 per cent to £3.1 million with profits rising 22 per cent to £314,000. The firm does not give individual figures for its various leisure market interests so it is not clear what percentage of this figure is from the software division.

The firm's last set of full year

results for the period ending 31st March showed a turnover of 6.1 million and profits of £635,000. However, Prism chairman Geoff Young last week indicated that despite being ahead of schedule he did not expect to reach that figure in 1989.

He commented to *CTW*: "The Christmas quarter wasn't as busy as we'd like it to have been but fortunately there are signs that it is now starting to pick up."

Earnings per share for the period went up by over eight per cent from 4.8 pence to 5.2 pence.



YOUNG: Not a very merry Xmas

## Palan bosses fail with buy-out bid

The much vaunted buy-out of Palan's owner Prestwich has floundered on the rocks of rising interest rates and disruptive delays.

The management buy-out was first put forward last October (*CTW* 31st Oct) and was led by corporate finance director Philip Keane. At the time the mood was confident and a figure of around £50 million was rumoured to be involved.

Now, though, it has been decided that the deal was dragging on too long and that due to the rise in interest rates the sums that were done a few months ago now didn't add up.

Keane told *CTW*: "Quite simply we just didn't get it together in time. Situations like these cause confusion and uncertainty within a company and there comes a time when you have to make a decision to get back to business and get on with the job."

He went on to claim that the mood at the company was "relief that the uncertainty had been cleared up". Because of the delays the move was expected and the City was untroubled. The Prestwich share price dropped by just one penny.

Regarding the Palan situation Keane offered: "There are no changes due and I don't think they'll have noticed any shockwaves."

# CTW

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## Steele grips MD position

Richard Steele has been appointed managing director of Centresoft.

The move means that Geoff Brown is now chairman of the leisure and business software distributor. The firm is also currently looking to appoint a national accounts manager.

"It's just a recognition of what's happened over the last year really," offered Steele to *CTW*.

"It's certainly an exciting time for us, we had our best Christmas ever last year and there are a lot of interesting challenges coming up."

Steele had been sales director at Centresoft for the past three years.



STEELE: Moving up

# City braced for quieter Amstrad at half-time

With Amstrad's half-year figures due within a couple of weeks the City has again cooled hopes of anything but flat profits.

Indeed, analysts at Phillips and Drew have stuck rigidly to the forecast of a £70-75 million profit figure for the six months ending December. This would mean a drop of some £15-20 million against the corresponding figure last year.

Barclays de Zoete Wedd also moved nearer to P&D's somewhat bearish view last week when its own half year forecast fell from £80 million to £75-80 million.

BZW's forecast on profits for the year to June 1989 has inched down from £170 million to £165 million. Year to June 1990 predictions have fallen significantly from £215 million to £200 million.

Amstrad achieved profits of £160.4 million for the full-year to June 1988, but most City analysts are of the view that interim 1989 results will disappoint and new products – such as the middle and top-end PC2000 products – will not arrive in time to give Amstrad a second half profit surge.

Indeed, P&D is predicting that Amstrad's 1989 profits

will be down by £5 million on last year.

"This year will be a tough one for Amstrad. Although our medium outlook is very good, they've got a few problems at the moment," commented a P&D spokesman to CTW.

"A lot of people are pinning their hopes on Sky TV but with spending under pressure this year I don't think everyone will be rushing out buying satellite dishes."

BZW offered that it had recently sent out a sell note on Amstrad shares, expecting stock to underperform by around 10 per cent over the next couple of months.

# Now Lightning adds own Amiga bundle

Lightning has become the latest Commodore distributor to announce details of an Amiga software bundle.

Like competitors Addons and ZCL it has used the pool of leisure titles made available to distributors after several had requested Commodore's help in putting together a promotional pack (CTW January 16th).

But Lightning has also added utility package *Icon Paint* into the now common list of *Atax*, *Better Dead Than Alien*, *Backlash*, *International Soccer*, *Quadralien*, *Stargoose*, *Spitting*

*Image* and *Winter Olympiad*. Lightning's Amiga 500 Super Pack carries a dealer price of £298.95. The nine software titles have a nominal value of £176.40.

"We've replaced one of the other titles with *Icon Paint* – which is exclusive to us. We feel it enhances the package and makes it even more attractive," commented Lightning's joint managing director Loretta Cohen to CTW.

Meanwhile, Commodore would only offer last week that its promised official Amiga bundle is "still being put together". This is due around Easter time.



COHEN: Exclusive title

# Coders oldies move to £2.99

Code Masters is due to complete its price re-structuring next month when all of its existing budget catalogue moves up to £2.99.



CODERS RANGE: £1.99 no more

The firm increased the price of new budget titles from £1.99 to £2.99 back in November, keeping games released prior to that date at £1.99.

As of February 1st (Wednesday) all budget product will retail at £2.99 – including best-sellers such as *BMX Simulator*, *Grand Prix Simulator*, *ATV* and *Fruit Machine*.

The firm is blaming confusion within the trade on the decision to put up old products by 50 per cent.

"The feedback we had from our customers was that the trade preferred the £2.99 price-point. There had also been some confusion over what was supposed to be retailing at what price," commented Code Masters' Bruce Everiss to CTW.

"These products have always had a high value anyway and are still a third of the price of full price product which isn't so good."

# Impact aims to make impact on the beeb

Beeb leisure publisher Impact is offering distributors discounts of up to 70 per cent during February in an attempt to increase its standing in the world of publishing.

The firm, headed up by erstwhile Superior man Steve Botterill, started life as a mail order outlet for BBC titles. Now

though, Botterill feels the amount of product coming through for the machines has dried up so drastically that Impact must look to create titles itself.

"In this last year people have started dropping out of the Beeb market and left Superior as the only really major player. So we've seen a chance for ourselves to come in", he told CTW.

The discounts on Impact product range between 55 and 70 per cent depending on quantity ordered and will last throughout February. They are designed to entice the half dozen or so distributors that handle BBC product.

"We're giving people reasons to have a go and then once they've got over the initial barrier and they see them flying off the shelves they'll stick with it."

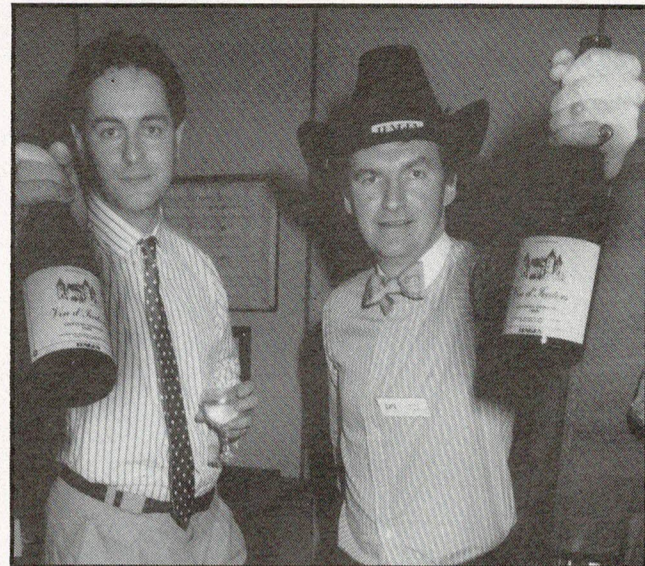
# Domark slots in Atari coin-ops

Domark last week officially launched its Tengen label, the result of a three year deal with Atari Games' coin-op label.

Atari Games publishes and markets Tengen software in the States, and Domark has been selected to publish the Tengen games in the UK, Europe and Australia. The deal was actually signed just before last year's PC Show at Earl's Court (CTW September 19th).

The three year contract begins in 1989, with a minimum of five coin-op conversions appearing in the first year. The first title, unveiled last week, is *Vindicators*, followed by *APB*, *Xybots*, *Dragon Spirit*, and *Toobin'*, which is expected to be released around the Christmas period.

Hailing the deal as "completely brilliant," joint Domark boss Mark Strachan commented, "I truly believe that



WHEATLEY & STRACHAN: Toasting Tengen

Tengen will provide the end-user with high quality, faithfully converted and thoroughly enjoyable games. The label indeed reflects our faith in the market and that of Atari in us."

The launch of the Tengen label follows the recent tie-up

with another major US publisher, Broderbund, at the recent CES in Las Vegas (CTW January 16th).

Domark will be selling Broderbund product in the UK in what is a reciprocal sales and marketing agreement.

# Duo hit by thieves

Audiogenic and development house Mr Micro both suffered burglaries recently, ironically, whilst working together.

For Audiogenic this is its second break-in in less than two months, despite being situated less than 100 yards from a police station. Several computers and various peripherals were taken, along with the petty cash.

"We've probably lost about £2,000. I know it's not a fortune, but it's not the money,

they devastated the place. Being so close to the police station one would have thought that after the first time they would have kept an eye on the place," commented Audiogenic's boss Peter Calver to CTW.

Over £15,000 worth of equipment was stolen in the Mr Micro raid which – with added irony – happened on Friday 13th. Disks, back-up disks and work that was currently in development, including an Audiogenic project, were also taken.

Fortunately for the Manchester based firm, on-site back-up disks were made for extra protection, so whilst being a major set back, the company is confident that it will be back on its feet within a few weeks.

"It's caused a hiccup, but once we've managed to restore the equipment we'll be up and running. I don't believe that anyone in this industry would stoop to industrial espionage and take nearly ten years labour. All they disks are watermark protected so if someone out there is using them, they will be found out," offered Mr Micro's boss Jim Gregory.

# CSS signs Psygnosis for States

Psygnosis last week tied up an exclusive distribution deal in the US with Illinois based Computer Software Services.

Under the new agreement Psygnosis is predicting around \$8-\$10 million in US sales for 1989, and the firm's US operation will be fronted by erstwhile Sub Logic sales manager Dena Kareotes.

"We've sold direct to distributors in the US for the last three years and it makes up a big percentage of our sales. We had dealt with CSS before, and were impressed. We've built up a good relationship and felt that they were the sort of people we could work with," offered Psygnosis director Jonathan Ellis to CTW.

This latest deal is described as being long term, with the firm set to release 17 new games this year. *Captain Fizz* will be Psygnosis' first release under the new US agreement, with sequels to *Barbarian* and *Menace* following shortly afterwards.

The firm is also currently negotiating European distribution deals, but as yet nothing is finalised.

# Video shops pause on VCS

TBD's Atari console push into video stores appears to have got off to a slow start, but the firm is reporting that overall the 2600 is selling well.

TBD re-entered the hardware market after several years absence back in November (CTW November 14th), with Atari's complete range of leisure machines. It was specifically looking to make inroads into non-traditional outlets with the console. The firm is blaming lack of time in the run up to Christmas for its initially poor impact.

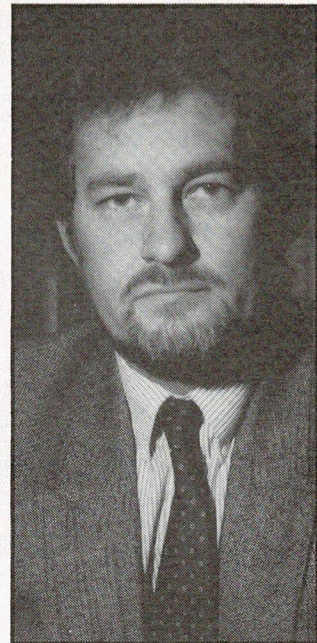
"We still intend to do damage with the 2600 outside the computer industry, but so far very few video stores have taken the console. We don't see this as a major problem, and we can achieve our objective given time," offered TBD's David McWilliam to CTW.

In the meantime TBD is keen to forge closer links with Atari, and will be working with the firm to organise a sales training scheme later in the year.

TBD is currently offering two special packs on the 2600

– the Action Pack including *Soccer*, *Volley Ball* and *Battle Zone*, and the Early Learning Pack with *Cocky Man*, *Alpha Bean* and *Big Bird*.

The firm claims to have a fair amount of Atari software outside the packs, but will be looking to further extend its range in conjunction with Atari.



MCWILLIAM: Time restraints

# Codemasters

## GOLD

4 Soccer Simulators is Codemasters first full price game. Selling well it has already charted. The new C64 conversion and imminent Amiga and ST versions will keep it selling. ST Rugby and Amiga Ski are already out and selling. Both games timed well for the peak season of the sports they simulate.

*four great games*  
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"These four games are absolutely brilliant! Everything you could possibly want in computer soccer - these games have it all! Amazing playability!"

SPECTRUM 48K/128K CASSETTE

**Codemasters GOLD**

**ADVANCED RUGBY** Simulator

**ADVANCED RUGBY SIMULATOR**  
 It's the middle of the five nations championship and there's a Lions tour on the way. Armchair enthusiasts can practice for all this excitement with this excellent game. **£19.99**

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**Codemasters GOLD**

**ADVANCED SKI** Simulator

**ADVANCED SKI SIMULATOR**  
 Amiga owners can capture all the excitement and atmosphere of the Alps with this amazing game. Timed nicely for the ski world cup. **£19.99**

COMMODORE AMIGA 500/1000/2000

"A very sophisticated simulation indeed - realistic Ski jumps and competitive two player action - all enhanced with breathtaking graphics and excellent sampled sound effects!"

**Codemasters GOLD**



# Smith gets to the Core but stays with Gremlin

Gremlin's sales manager **Jeremy Smith** has left the firm to set up his own coding house but will continue to work for the Birmingham based label.

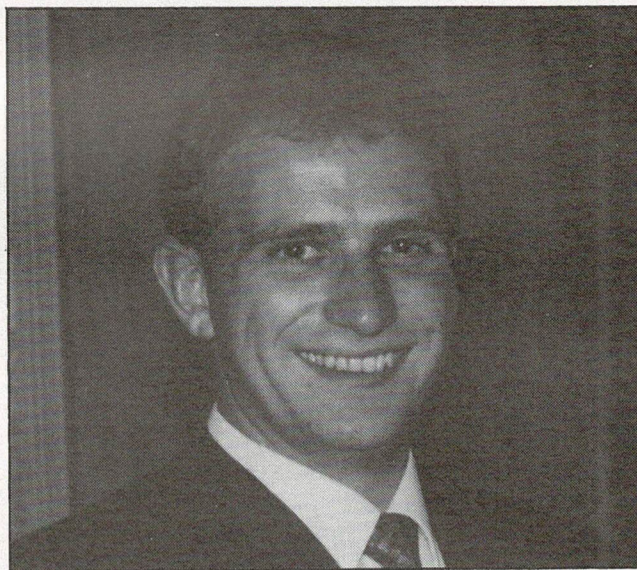
His new venture is called Core Design and will also be based in Birmingham. Gremlin boss Ian Stewart claimed he had no objections to the move

and added that he believe Smith's work for Gremlin would be unaffected.

"The idea was to give him a little more freedom to work on Core. The whole arrangement makes life a whole lot easier because now at least we know what the situation is regarding when he's working for them and when he's working for us"

Stewart offered to CTW.

Stewart went on to say that the much vaunted *Federation of Free Traders* would be out this week after missing its original pre-Christmas deadline. He enthused: "There's a lot of excitement about the product and with the amount of interest people are showing it looks like it's going to do really well for us."



SMITH: Leaving and staying

# Accolade appoints & ponders

After last month's split with Electronic Arts, Accolade has now poached EA's erstwhile vice president of affiliate labels.

Randy Thier joined the firm last week and will be vice president of international affairs. Part of his job will be to decide Accolade's future in the UK market.

The firm's president Alan Epstein commented to CTW: "Randy is going to be looking at all the opportunities open to us and will recommend a course of action for us."

He did not seem to put too much store in the strong trade rumours that a licensing deal with MicroProse was imminent. "I can only say that the rumours certainly didn't come from here," he insisted.

Epstein added that a final decision regarding the UK market would be made in a month's time.

# Which? votes SLDP

This year's *Which Computer?* Show is to be opened by Social and Liberal Democrat party leader Paddy Ashdown MP.

The self-styled action man of the House of Commons will tour the show and will then be guest of honour at a lunch where apparently an "informal exchange of views on the future of British information technology, trade and industry" will take place.

Mr Ashdown is described as a "keen computer user" and claims to carry a portable machine with him at all times.



ASHDOWN: Attending Which?

Meanwhile, Microdeal is claiming to be the only leisure software publisher attending the show.

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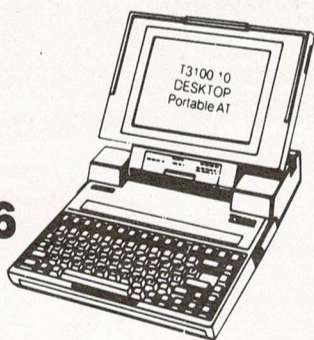
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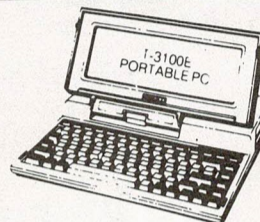


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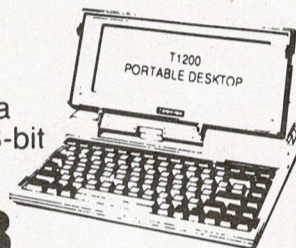
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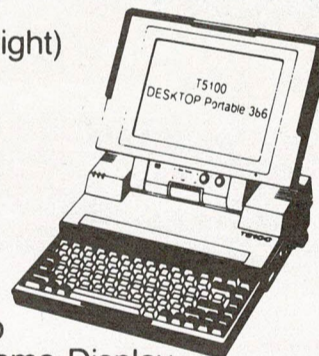
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# HACKING — NUISANCE OR PIRACY?

Over the past few months all sectors of the trade have become increasingly aware of the self-styled 'cracking crews' — groups of computer enthusiasts who get kicks from breaking software protection and then illegally copying the product. Many revel in 'computer stardom' as a result — but what they do is illegal and harms the industry. BOB HAY co-ordinator of the Federation Against Software Theft, offers his own thoughts on the problem . . .

The juvenile antics of the hackers who attended a recent trade show wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the name of their particular Hacking Crew only indicates how desperate they are to be noticed.

They try to obtain some rather perverse self gratification in their hum-drum lives by parading for all to see the fact

that they indulge their fantasies by committing acts which are contrary to the law of the land.

I have been aware of the existence of such groups now for some time and spoke out recently about one group calling themselves the "Kent Team" who, as a result, ceased all activities. Indeed, the individual whom I suspected of

being their leader took the precaution of speaking with me to disavow any connection with the group.

On raid after raid pirated software is seized which when examined bears information about these so-called "cracking crews" and in many cases they scroll messages of greetings to each other in a quite nauseating fashion. From their mess-

ages one can see that they have undoubted ability, but it is the ability to dismantle rather than to build.

One of the reasons that has persuaded me not to speak out about these people till now is that in discussing their antics one is apt to give them just what they so obviously crave — notoriety.

Rather than dwelling on

their activities I would like to examine the problem from a different angle.

Whilst the hackers would like to suggest that their expertise is of such a high order that they can circumvent any technical protection put in place by the software publisher; I feel certain that, were it not for the availability of copying devices, their activities would be held in

check more easily.

## Court in the Act

In October of last year the Appeal Court of Paris awarded one million Francs in damages to a company called La Comande Electronique — the French distributor for Ashton-Tate — against a Parisian company called PC Mart because of "unfair competition and incitement to piracy through the sale of devices such as Copy II PC, Option Board, Zerodisk and others."

A similar action was concluded here in the UK in 1987 when a distributor agreed to withdraw a copying device from the market when faced by the threat of legal action by Lotus.

Faced with the advent of DAT (Digital Analogue Taping) the music industry decided last year that it had to seek legislative protection from copying devices and so it lobbied Parliament when the copyright, Design and Patents Bill was going through committee and FAST was more than happy to support it with the result that in November 1988 the Act 1988 received the Royal Assent.

Section 24 (1) of that Act now says:

Copyright in a work is infringed by a person who, without the consent of the copyright owner:

- (a) makes,
- (b) imports into the United Kingdom
- (c) possesses in the course of a business, or
- (d) sells or lets for hire, or offers or exposes for sale or hire,

an article specifically designed or adapted for making copies of that work or having reason to believe that it is to be used to make infringing copies.

It was also made a criminal offence by virtue of Section 107 (2) (a) of the same Act.

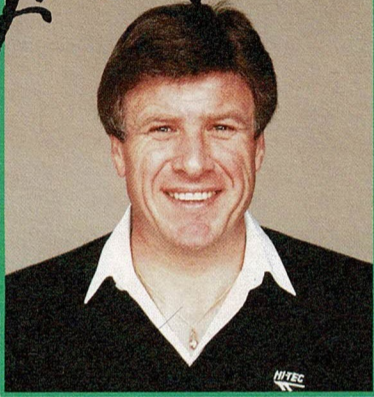
I know that there are many people in this industry who legitimately use copying devices to carry out legitimate work but their unrestricted availability to the general public poses more and more of a problem to software authors and, given the ingenuity that exists in the computing industry, I cannot for the life of me see why other methods cannot be evolved.

It should not be overlooked that in America where many of these products originate, the making of an archival copy of a program is expressly permitted by law.

In the UK the making of a back-up requires the consent of the copyright owner, so there is a great difference in the legal status of such products here in the UK. A company which either makes, sells or distributes copying devices should therefore be circumspect about the way in which it markets such products or be prepared to face the consequences.

Is 1989 going to be the year when further progress against piracy is going to be aimed at copying devices? I certainly hope so.

# Emlyn Hughes



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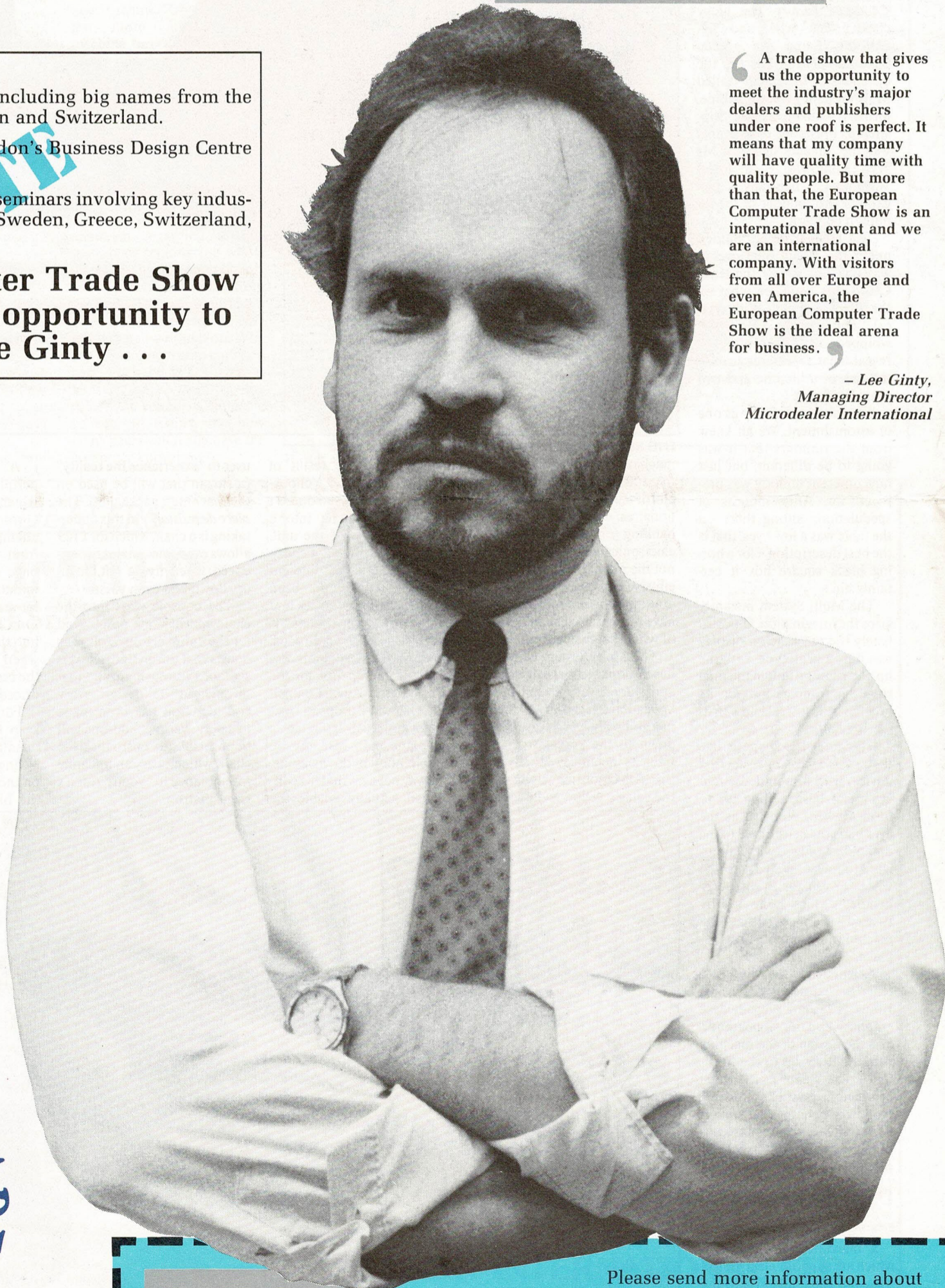
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| Activision/Mediagenics    | Palace Software           |
| Addons                    | Palan Distribution        |
| Arnor                     | Players-Pandora           |
| Audiogenics               | Silica Distribution       |
| British Micros            | Telecomsoft/Firebird/     |
| CDS Software              | Rainbird                  |
| Codemasters               | Watford Electronics       |
| Compact Software          | <u>USA</u>                |
| Computer Manuals          | Accolade                  |
| CRL Group plc             | Baudville                 |
| Database Publications     | Mindscape                 |
| Direct Disk Supplies      | Software Publishers Assoc |
| Domark                    | <u>GERMANY</u>            |
| Electric Distribution     | Ariolasoft                |
| Electronic Arts           | Rushware (Rainbow Arts)   |
| Elite                     | Profisoft                 |
| Equinox Business Systems  | <u>SPAIN</u>              |
| Exocet                    | Micro Digital             |
| First Media               | <u>SCANDINAVIA</u>        |
| Gem                       | Stralfors                 |
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# TAKING A DREAM TO MARKET

Who would risk everything they have ever achieved by taking on the mighty Nintendo and Sega with a sub-£200 games machine? Who would believe that such a thing does not have to be a square box? Who wouldn't laugh at the idea of a Welsh joystick firm doing such a thing? And who would do it whilst brimming with untold confidence? KELLY BESWICK met the man and the machine, Wyn Holloway and the Konix Multi System . . .

We'd all heard about it, and the rumours were circulating around the industry like wild-fire. We knew it was a games machine, but just what had Konix done that was going to be so different? Was it a car? Was it a plane? Was it a motor-bike? - well, all three really.

The atmosphere at Konix's Ebby Vale plant was reminiscent of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. The lucky chosen few who had figuratively found the golden ticket, were to at last see the unveiling of the much trailed Multi System games machine, formerly known as the Slipstream. Presiding over events was the amiable figure of Mr Wyn Holloway - a jovial Welshman, naturally gregarious and founder of the £5 million concern.

The angular object hidden under the Konix blue overall was puzzling to say the least. Could this really be what all the fuss was about? With typical flamboyance Holloway whipped off the covering to reveal what represents to him the risk of a lifetime and two years hard slog.

The initial reaction was one of astonishment. We all knew from the rumours that it was going to be different, but just how different nobody was prepared for. After months of speculation, sitting there on the table was a toy - yes, that is the best description - for a boring black square box it certainly ain't.

The Multi System instantly grips the imagination. Unfortunately the machine on display was only a prototype, with the up and running unit in the final stages of preparation for its preview at last weekend's British Toy Fair.

The console's shape is like that of a space age steering device, with a moulded circular metal base, tailing up to form a wheel. But just as the eyes had got accustomed to the unfamiliar gadget, with a flourish Holloway pulled off the wheel to replace it with bike handles, which were swiftly twisted round so that the machine now resembled an airplane.

Aesthetically the Multi System is extremely pleasing. Konix is placing considerable emphasis on its appearance, and the design of the machine certainly lives up to the firm's innovative approach when producing joysticks. Indeed, Holloway believes that such is its design the actual electronics of the console fall into second place.

## Dad's the way to do it

There are hundreds of machines on the market which are superior electronics-wise and capabilitywise to the one that succeeded. Look at the Sega and the Nintendo - the Sega is a far better machine. There's obviously something magic out there in the user that sees something in that person's



THE KONIX MULTI SYSTEM: What all the fuss is about

machine. We could sit here all day and try to come up with it, and if we did we'd all be millionaires. With ours we're banking on the visual. The electronics will help, but it is not the main thing," offered an effusive Holloway, who, being a multi millionaire himself must have more than just an inkling of what that magic formula is.

The Multi System certainly has the looks to make one sit up and stare. Every aspect of its appearance seems to have been methodically considered down to the very last detail. Even its metallic grey and electric blue colouring, along with the canary yellow switches are

claimed to be the result of extensive research. "By choosing these colours a dad doesn't feel childish walking into a shop and trying out the unit. Also the colours are not cheap looking. A totally different impression would have been created if it had been black and red." Such attention to detail is typical of the Konix approach.

A host of peripherals are already in the pipeline for the Multi System's August launch in the UK and European market. Not only can it imitate a car, a plane and a bike, just on the main body of the machine, Holloway believes that his console can actually enable the

user to "experience the reality" (a slogan that will be used on the machine's packaging). The *piece de resistance* in this undertaking is a chair, which for £129 allows every movement experienced when flying left, right, up, down and even twists.

The console clips into the chair and has one power lead for the entire set-up. Holloway boasts that the chair can take a six foot 18 stone man, and that throughout its design every consideration has been made to safety. Various add-ons will be available to customise the chair, which bears an uncanny resemblance to Woody Allen's *Orgasmatron*.

A more conventional peripheral is the light gun, which is rather more Flash Gordon than Rambo in an attempt to appease any qualms from pacifistic parents. But once again all is not what it initially appears, for in its quest for realism a special recoil feature has been incorporated into the gun, which means that when it's fired it pulls back in the crook of the arm. It will be priced at around £40.

For about the same price a keep fit bike will also be on offer, and again realism is the by line. When a hill approaches on the screen a mechanism on the bike tightens up causing

authentic resistance whilst peddling. In addition a £99 helicopter yoke is currently under development, which leads one to believe Holloway's claim that the "permutations are endless. These are a lot of things that we'll be keeping back until August let's just say you ain't seen nothing yet".

Okay, so the actual look of the console far exceeds anything else on the market, but ultimately people are going to get bored admiring the sturdiness of its structure and the originality of its design. Grey and blue can only hold the attention for so long, as can the novelty of all the promised peripherals. At the end of the day this fascinating object has one purpose and that's obviously to entertain with exciting and high quality software.

It is this that could actually make or break what initially looks like being a surefire winner. Over the past year Holloway has been in negotiations with all the major software houses, and claims to have already tied up deals with Ocean and US Gold. At least 20 other firms are said to be showing more than just a passing interest, with signed contracts popping through the Konix letterbox almost every day.

"The problem is not finding software houses, our problem is choosing which ones we want. There will only be a limited number of firms writing for the machine," claims Holloway with his customary confidence. But it would seem that no software houses have actually started writing for the new console yet, with the likes of US Gold still awaiting the arrival of a development machine.

## Protect and survive

The games will be produced on specially protected three and a half inch disks, priced at £14.99 across the board. "We're not saying that these disks are going to be 100 per cent copy proof, but what it will eliminate is the schoolyard copying which is about 90 per cent of the problem. The disks look to all intents and purposes identical to normal disks, but there are modifications and it's done on a need to know basis - there's only three people in this company who know."

Konix will not be selling the modified disks, but will be providing a duplication service to software houses. "After the expense we've gone to in protecting the software media, we don't want to create another link in the chain where it's possible for disks to get onto the market."

Holloway is keen to stress that Konix is not taking the protectionist stance of Nintendo and Sega. "The only thing we're trying to do is protect the software market. Nintendo use a big a heavy stick and we're not."



Not a reject from the Thunderbirds prop dept., simply the Multi System light gun

When the machine is actually launched Holloway is confident that there will be at least 15 titles available, rising to 40 by Christmas and a possible 100 after a nine month period on the market. It looks likely that a high proportion of the early games will simply be conversions from top ten hits, but as the console establishes itself, more of the titles will be specifically designed for the Multi System.

Returning to the console itself, the initial production of the machine will be in Korea, with manufacture switching back to Wales after an estimated 12 month period. "If we began in Wales it would be impossible to ramp up as quickly to meet the advanced orders," which Holloway claims are already in excess of an incredible 100,000. German software distributor Rushware is believed to have already ordered a considerable quantity of units.

If this is the case then the proposed £3 million ad spend in plugging the console would seem somewhat superfluous. As well as trade ads, Konix is going in for a major TV campaign starting in September, having chosen McCann Erickson to handle the account. The fact that McCann handles Nintendo in the US is claimed not to have influenced the decision, and that the firm was the best equipped to portray the desired "fun image".

Holloway's apparent loquaciousness clearly belies an astute business acumen. Such was the need for secrecy in the initial stages of the console's development that two members of staff departed from the

company as a result of not keeping their mouths shut. Holloway offers the old cliché "did they jump or were they pushed," but by keeping the machine so tightly under wraps, the small snippets of information that did leak certainly whetted the industry's appetite - a shrewd strategy.

### Shop flaw

Holloway is maintaining the tight lip tactic with regards to what stores will be stocking the console. "Several high street chains are pitching for exclusive distribution rights, but at this stage all I'm prepared to reveal is that it won't be in any discount stores. I don't want a price war on my hands."

At the recent CES, Holloway was spotted in deep conversation with a top buyer from Boots, and whilst he admits that they did have "chats" little else is forthcoming on the matter.

Only the electronics of the console were taken to Las Vegas, but Holloway claims that the response was astonishing. "It really took me by surprise because of the size of the Nintendo market over there. I took it over to show one company, but I ended up having at least 12 people in my suite all the time I was there."

With Epyx being Konix' exclusive joystick distributor in the US, it would seem likely that Epyx was the company Holloway specifically went to see. Having stated in the past that the two firms have a "tremendous business relationship" an additional tie up for the console at this stage does not appear too far fetched. Indeed, despite Nin-

tendo's stronghold Konix plans to have the Multi System in America by 1991.

"I don't have any problems selling the console. There are distributors and dealers willing to take the console in practically every country," is Holloway's dogmatic response to the competition.

Holloway intimated that distributors in the UK would not be overwhelmed with the margins on offer. "We will be offering good margins, but it won't be what they're used to. Yet the product will sell so they should be happy with the discounts." Once again the firm is reticent to provide any further details on prospective deals.

Being primarily a joystick manufacturer, it is questionable whether Konix is geared to cope with the faults that are bound to occur with any new machine. "Obviously with the more functions the machine has, the design concept has to be looked at very closely. We've carried out extensive destruction tests and thickness and stability has been increased on all the moving parts until we felt they had a very good life cycle. Hopefully this will eliminate a lot of the initial problems."

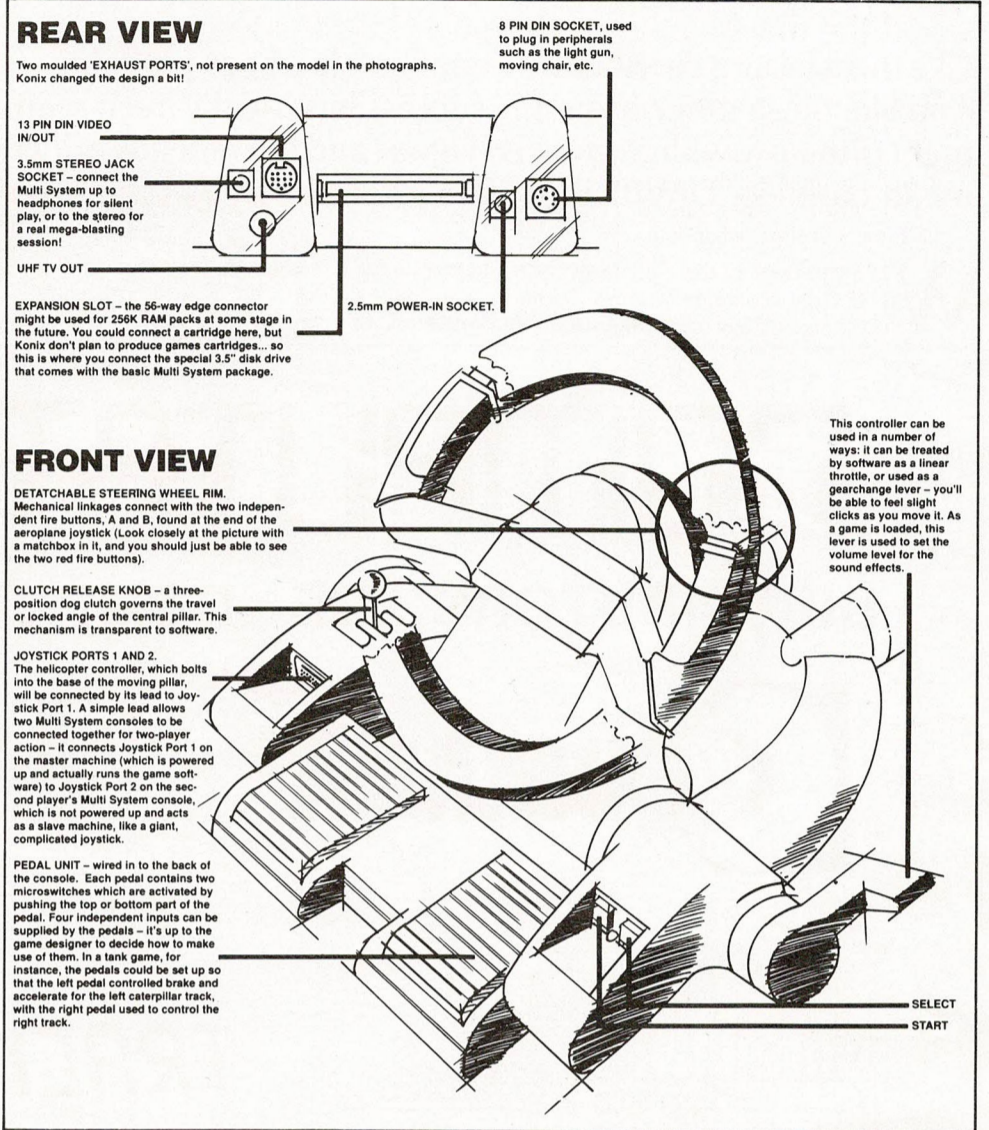
Konix is taking a novel approach regarding repairs. Instead of sending the whole machine back, components can be purchased directly from the firm. "The user has to have value for money, and musn't feel he's being ripped-off. Why pay for an engineer to change a part when he can change it himself for a third of the price?" It sounds a laudable concept in theory, but how many users will really have the computer know how?

After two years in development Holloway can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. This latest venture is indeed a massive risk, and the future of Konix rides on the console's success. "For me it's everything. I've invested everything I've ever made, and some

that I haven't. Yet you're a long time dead."

But one gets the distinct impression that failure hadn't really crossed Holloway's mind. Such is his confidence in the new machine that a full blown computer is already in the pipeline.

"If the Multi System is successful we do have a product already visually designed, which again has more than one function. It's a fairly powerful unit for the general home market, and we hope to do a similar thing to what Amstrad has done to the hi-fi market."



How it all works

Courtesy ACE © Future Publishing 1989

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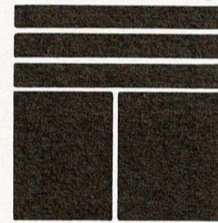
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# INTRODUCING THE HARD LINE ACCORDING TO CENTRESOFT

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When you think of the US Gold combine (as sooner or later we

all must) you think of a few things. Primarily you think of US Gold itself, you think of

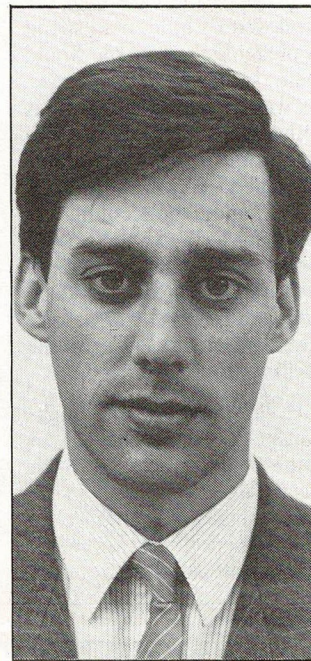
Centresoft the games distributor and if you concentrate really hard you'll remember

good ol' Gremlin as well. What does not immediately spring to mind is Centresoft the busi-

ness distributor.

The Birmingham based company took up the business

challenge a couple of years ago when the whole market was getting over excited at the mass market potential of PC products. Initially all seemed to be going well for the firm. It was a surprise winner of CTW's 1988 business software distributor of the year title and it even began to get mentioned in such worthy organs as *Microscope* (a sort of grown up CTW).



NEAL: Learning lessons

By its own admission though those early days were fired far more by enthusiasm than knowledge. Like a participant in a gold rush the firm was incredibly eager, mightily confused and often looking in all the wrong places but fervently convinced that somewhere there was some serious money to be made.

Last year, however, things suddenly went quiet. Centresoft's profile in the business market became subterranean and many people began to wonder if it had given up the ghost completely. An impatient *Microscope* certainly lost interest.

Now though it's back, maybe not with a vengeance but certainly with an important new contract to distribute Amstrad's complete range of peripherals.

#### Fallow the leader

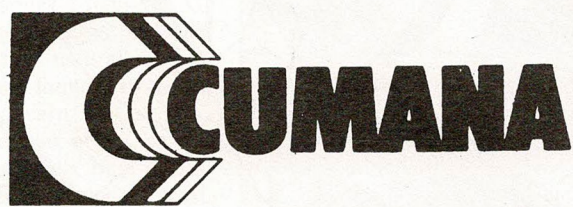
It is headed up by David Neal, a refugee from the games side who just happens to have a fair bit of knowledge on the business side. He explains just what went on in these fallow years: "We may well have been quiet on the market place but there was an awful lot going on internally. For a start we replaced the whole sales staff—now that's not as bad as it sounds, really."

Actually without wishing to sound too harsh it probably is. The problem being that in the early days the sales team were just existing members of staff on the games side who drew the short straw and were

Continued on page 19

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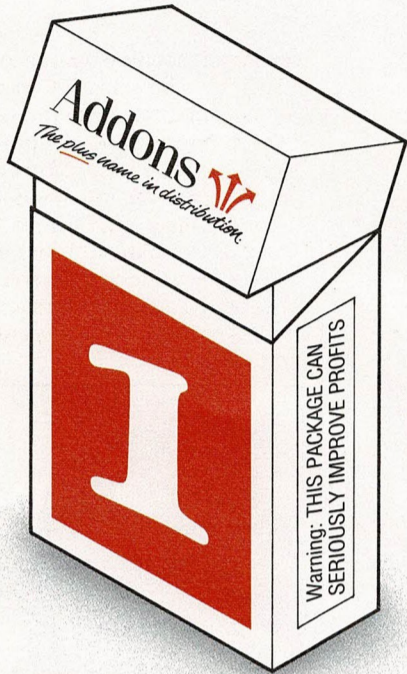


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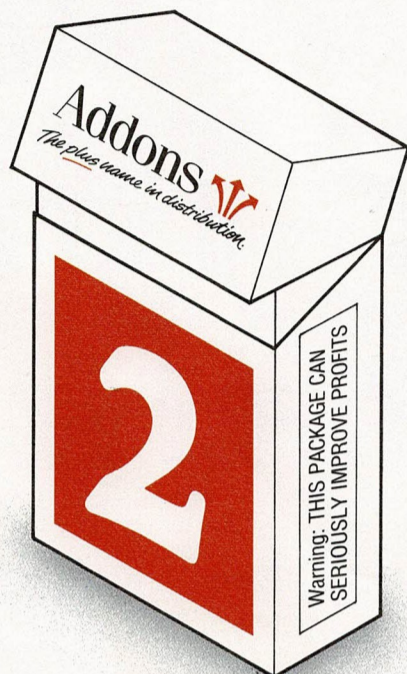


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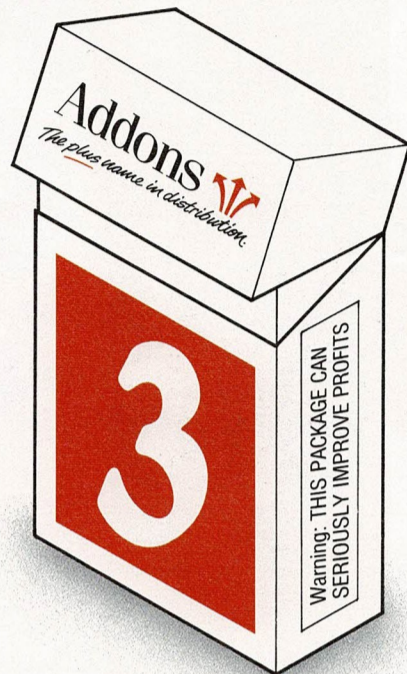
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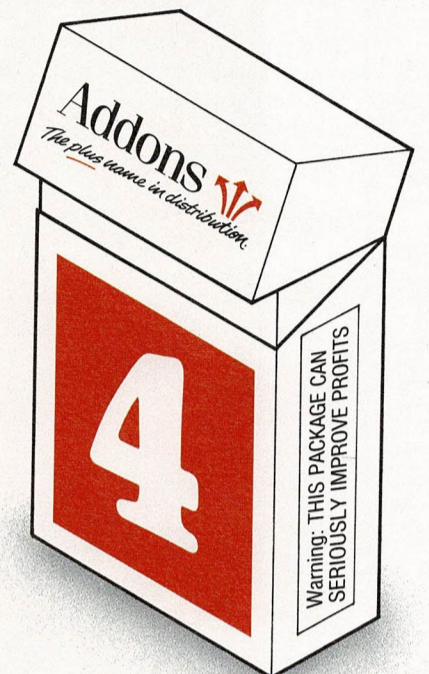


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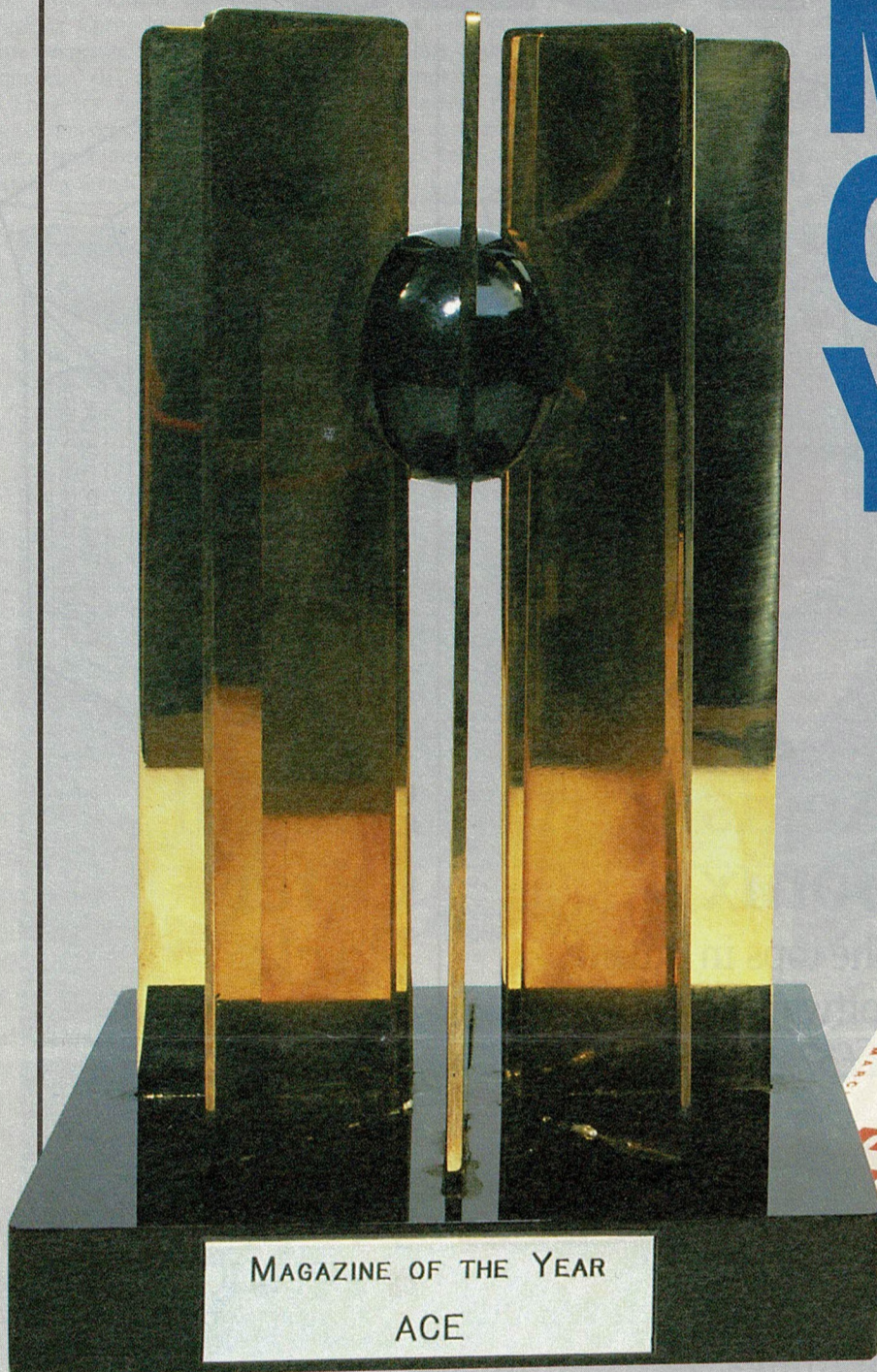
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A big thank-you to everyone who voted ACE MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR and to those who didn't – keep watching. We intend to change your mind by the time voting comes around this year.

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\*Based on random sample from readers' survey in February issue.



# The Release Schedule

Software Information Services

30/1/89  
WEEK 4

New leisure software

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

## AMIGA

BAAL	19.95	END JAN	PSYGNOSIS/PSYCLAPSE
BARBARIAN II	19.99	FEB/MARCH	PALACE
BILLIARDS	19.95	IMMINENT	ERE/INFOGRAMES
COSMIC PIRATE	19.99	FEBRUARY	OUTLAW
CRAZY CARS II	24.99	END FEB	TITUS
CUSTODIAN	19.99	MID FEB	HEWSON
DARK FUSION	19.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
EARL WEAVER COMMISSIONER'S DISK	9.99	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
GALDREGON'S DOMAIN	19.99	IMMINENT	PANDORA
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	19.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	24.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
KENNEDY APPROACH	24.95	IMMINENT	MICROPROSE
NEUROMANCER	24.95	LATE FEB	INTERPLAY/EA
RINGSIDE	24.99	MID FEB	E.A.S.
SHOOT-EM-UP CONSTRUCTION KIT	24.99	FEBRUARY	OUTLAW
SKATEBALL	19.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
TEENAGE QUEEN	19.95	OUT NOW	INFOGRAMES
TIGER ROAD	24.99	EARLY FEB	CAPCOM/U.S.GOLD
TV SPORTS FOOTBALL	29.99	OUT NOW	CINEMAWARE
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	24.99	MID FEB	MELBOURNE HOUSE
ZANY GOLF	24.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS

## AMSTRAD CPC

AIRBORNE RANGER	D 19.95	IMMINENT	MICROPROSE
AIRBORNE RANGER	T 14.95	IMMINENT	MICROPROSE
BARBARIAN II	D 14.99	FEBRUARY	PALACE
BARBARIAN II	T 9.99	FEBRUARY	PALACE
CHUCK YEAGER'S ADV FLIGHT TRAINER	D 14.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
CHUCK YEAGER'S ADV FLIGHT TRAINER	T 8.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
CRAZY CARS II	D 14.99	MID FEB	TITUS
CRAZY CARS II	T 9.99	MID FEB	TITUS
DARK FUSION	D 14.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	T 9.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	D 14.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	T 9.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
GRAHAM GOOCH	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	D 14.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	T 9.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
STREET GANG	T 1.99	IMMINENT	PANDORA
SUPER SNAKE SIMULATOR	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
THE ARCHON COLLECTION	D 14.95	OUT NOW	ELECTRONIC ARTS
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	T 9.99	FEBRUARY	MELBOURNE HOUSE

## AMSTRAD PCW

FISH!	24.99	JANUARY 25	RAINBIRD
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## ARCHIMEDES

FISH!	24.99	JANUARY 25	RAINBIRD
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## ATARI ST

ANDES ATTACK	9.95	OUT NOW	LLAMASOFT
B.A.T.	24.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
BARBARIAN II	19.99	IMMINENT	PALACE
BILLIARDS	19.95	IMMINENT	ERE/INFOGRAMES
BISMARCK	24.99	OUT NOW	PSS
CHAOS STRIKES BACK	14.99	MID FEB	MIRRORSOFT/FTL
COSMIC PIRATE	19.99	FEBRUARY	OUTLAW
CUSTODIAN	19.99	MID FEB	HEWSON
DARK FUSION	19.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
DRAGONSCAPE	19.95	FEBRUARY 16	SOFTWARE HORIZONS
F-16 COMBAT PILOT	24.95	EARLY FEB	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FEDERATION OF FREE TRADERS	29.99	JANUARY 31	GREMLIN
FINAL COMMAND	24.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
FUSION	24.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
GALDREGON'S DOMAIN	19.99	IMMINENT	PANDORA
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	19.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
GRIDRUNNER	9.95	EARLY MARCH	LLAMASOFT
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	19.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
IRON LORD	24.99	EARLY FEB	UBI SOFT
JOAN OF ARC	19.99	OUT NOW	U.S.GOLD
ORBITER	24.99	END JAN	MIRRORSOFT
RINGSIDE	24.99	MID FEB	E.A.S.
SKATEBALL	19.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
SKYFOX II	24.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
TEENAGE QUEEN	19.95	OUT NOW	INFOGRAMES
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ZANY GOLF	24.95	JANUARY 25	ELECTRONIC ARTS

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ACTION SERVICE	T 9.95	IMMINENT	COBRA/INFOGRAMES
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DARK FUSION	D 14.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION	T 9.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
FINAL FRONTIER	D 17.99	MID FEB	PSS
FINAL FRONTIER	T 12.99	MID FEB	PSS
FIREZONE	D 17.99	END JAN	PSS
FIREZONE	T 12.99	END JAN	PSS
FISH!	D 19.99	JANUARY 25	RAINBIRD
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	D 14.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	T 9.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT	D 14.95	IMMINENT	ACCOLADE/EA
GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT	T 9.95	IMMINENT	ACCOLADE/EA
HOSTAGES	D 14.95	LATE JAN	INFOGRAMES
HOSTAGES	T 9.95	LATE JAN	INFOGRAMES
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	D 14.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE	T 9.99	JANUARY 30	ELECTRIC DREAMS
IRON LORD	D 19.99	EARLY FEB	UBI SOFT
IRON LORD	T 12.99	EARLY FEB	UBI SOFT
MODEM WARS	D 14.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
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SKATEBALL	D 14.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
SKATEBALL	T 9.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
STREET GANG	T 1.99	IMMINENT	PLAYERS
SUPER SNAKE SIMULATOR	T 1.99	IMMINENT	ALTERNATIVE
T.K.O.	T 9.95	IMMINENT	ACCOLADE/EA
TOMCAT	T 1.99	IMMINENT	PLAYERS
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	D 19.99	MID FEB	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	T 9.99	MID FEB	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WARLOCKS QUEST	D 14.95	EARLY FEB	ERE/INFOGRAMES
WARLOCKS QUEST	T 9.95	EARLY FEB	ERE/INFOGRAMES

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CRAZY CARS II	5.25 24.99	END FEB	TITUS
F-16 COMBAT PILOT	5.25 24.95	END JAN	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FAST BREAK	5.25 24.95	JANUARY 26	ACCOLADE/EA
FINAL FRONTIER	3.5+5.25 24.99	MID FEB	PSS
FIREZONE	5.25 24.99	END JAN	PSS
MODEM WARS	3.5+5.25 24.95	LATE FEB	ELECTRONIC ARTS
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PUFFY'S SAGA	5.25 19.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
SKATEBALL	3.5 19.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
SKATEBALL	5.25 19.99	LATE FEB	UBI SOFT
SPEEDBALL	3.5+5.25 24.99	OUT NOW	IMAGE WORKS
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WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	5.25 24.99	MID FEB	MELBOURNE HOUSE
WASTELAND	3.5+5.25 24.95	FEBRUARY 1	ELECTRONIC ARTS

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WAR IN MIDDLE EARTH	T 9.99	FEBRUARY	MELBOURNE HOUSE

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CAPTAIN BLOOD	D 14.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
DARK FUSION	D 12.99	FEBRUARY 7	GREMLIN
EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER	D 14.95	IMMINENT	AUDIOGENIC
FISH!	D 15.99	JANUARY 25	RAINBIRD
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS	D 12.99	FEBRUARY 14	GREMLIN
MINI-PUTT	D 14.95	JANUARY 30	ACCOLADE/EA
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TRIVIAL PURSUIT	D 19.95	OUT NOW	DOMARK

*Out Now* = Released within the last month.

*Imminent* = Expected at time of publication.

Dates given are expected release dates. Please allow for slippage. Software Information Services is a department of Inter-Mediate Ltd.

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TW	LW	WK	Title	Publisher	Formats
1	3	48	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AT MS
2	2	7	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	SP CD AM ST AG
3	1	5	ROBOCOP	OCEAN	SP CD AM
4	4	7	AFTER BURNER	ACTIVISION	SP CD AM ST
5	10	54	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AG
6	16	34	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
7	11	5	KNIGHTMARE	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM MS ST
8	6	6	THUNDER BLADE	US GOLD	SP CD AM ST AG
9	5	8	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	SP CD ST AG
10	8	15	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	SP CD AM BB EL ST
11	13	11	FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR	KIXX	SP CD AM C1 ST AG
12	24	4	JET SET WILLY	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM BB EL C1 AT MS
13	14	20	GAUNTLET	KIXX	SP CD AM AT MS ST
14	15	19	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	SP CD AM BB
15	25	6	MOTORBIKE MADNESS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM ST AG
16	29	5	LEADERBOARD	KIXX	SP CD AM AT ST AG
17	12	3	THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
18	35	6	ACE 2	CASCADE	SP CD AM C1
19	28	33	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
20	29	1	BMX NINJA	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
21	9	4	FALCON	MIRRORSOFT	ST AG
22	17	6	R-TYPE	ELECTRIC DREAMS	SP CD AM ST
23	19	11	SKOOLDAZE	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD
24	21	10	COMMANDO	ENCORE	SP CD AM
25	22	13	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
26	7	7	GIANTS	US GOLD	SP CD AM
27	30	29	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	SP CD AM ST AG
28	RE	4	RETURN OF THE JEDI	DOMARK	SP CD AM ST AG
29	RE	3	FORMULA GRAND PRIX	ALTERNATIVE	SP AM
30	RE	29	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
31	23	13	ADVANCED PINBALL SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
32	RE	2	GRAHAM GOOCH TEST CRICKET	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM BB EL C1
33	31	50	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
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35	RE	9	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	SP CD AM
36	RE	5	TURBO BOAT SIM	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
37	RE	45	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM BB EL C1
38	26	4	YABBA DABBA DOO	BUGBYTE	SP CD AM
39	36	56	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
40	RE	10	ACE OF ACES	KIXX	SP CD AM AT MS

## SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

Publisher	Units sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
OCEAN	11.7	10.6	14.9	6.6
CODE MASTERS	9.7	8.5	6.4	7.6
ALTERNATIVE	8.4	10.0	6.6	10.4
FIREBIRD	7.1	6.5	5.3	4.5
ENCORE	6.5	4.5	4.3	4.8
US GOLD	6.1	4.6	7.3	4.3
PLAYERS	4.8	3.5	3.2	5.2
KIXX	4.1	4.3	3.5	4.4
MASTERTRONIC	3.6	6.0	4.6	9.8
ACTIVISION	3.2	2.4	4.5	—
CASCADE	3.1	1.6	1.5	1.0
SEGA	2.8	1.2	1.6	—
MIRRORSOFT	2.1	2.2	2.2	—
BUGBYTE	1.7	1.2	0.9	1.1
MELBOURNE HOUSE	1.5	1.9	3.6	—
ZEPPELIN	1.4	1.3	0.6	0.6
MICROPROSE	1.3	1.1	1.5	1.0
RACK-IT	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.8
GRAND SLAM	1.0	0.8	1.3	0.7
SYSTEM 3	1.0	0.3	1.0	—

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

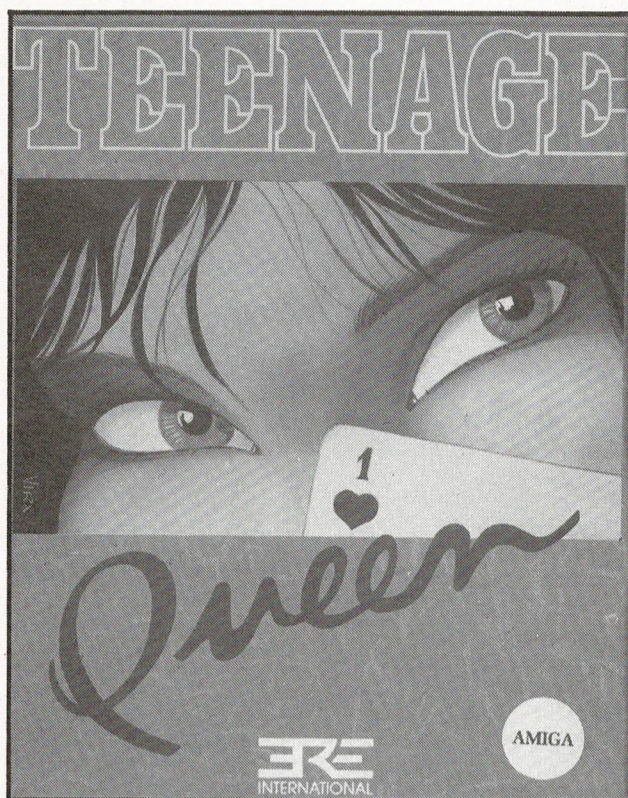
Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	43.6	44.2	42.4	44.0	28.0	29.3	28.5	30.0
COMMODORE 64	23.2	23.3	23.8	24.4	22.4	22.8	22.0	24.9
AMSTRAD	17.0	15.8	15.3	13.1	18.1	18.0	17.2	19.1
ATARI ST	5.5	4.4	5.5	4.4	11.1	9.1	7.5	8.2
AMIGA	4.3	3.2	4.0	3.4	7.0	5.2	5.2	5.0
ATARI	1.8	2.0	1.5	1.5	3.9	4.0	3.3	2.2

## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

Units Sold			
This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
81	124	129	100

# Soft options

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



**△ ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Wasteland* (PC-£24.95) Sounds a bit morbid this, with the player roaming around in a post nuclear Las Vegas suburb. Features include "subplots, puzzles and surprises" in what is no doubt a very adult-orientated game in the US.

**△ INFOGRAMS:** *Teenage Queen* (ST-£19.95) Another supposed example of AOS (adult orientated software) — but in truth it will only be bought by kids who fancy a game of cards with a French girlie who'll giggle at the drop of a nightie.

**△ DIGITAL INTEGRATION:** *F-16 Combat Pilot* (PC-£24.95) This firm is sometimes overshadowed by the publicity pulling simulator MicroProse. But DI has been around for ages and has built up a handy reputation for solid

product — especially if it's got anything to do with flying.

**△ GREMLIN:** *Federation of Free Traders* (ST-£14.99) Notwithstanding the odd delay here and there, Gremlin's marketing department has done well to build this up as a highly desired new title. It remains to be seen if sales will match the hype — but, from all accounts, it won't be surprising if they do.

**△ INFOGRAMS:** *Billiards* (Ag-£24.95) Bit of a strange one this, with hardly any pre-launch publicity. But then again just what is there to say about a game that's even more boring than snooker?

**△ RAINBIRD:** *Legend of the Sword* (PC-£24.95) Another well packed, well designed Rainbird effort makes it onto the PC — if a little late.

**△ US GOLD:** *The Games — Winter Edition* (Ag-£19.99) Let's hope Gold

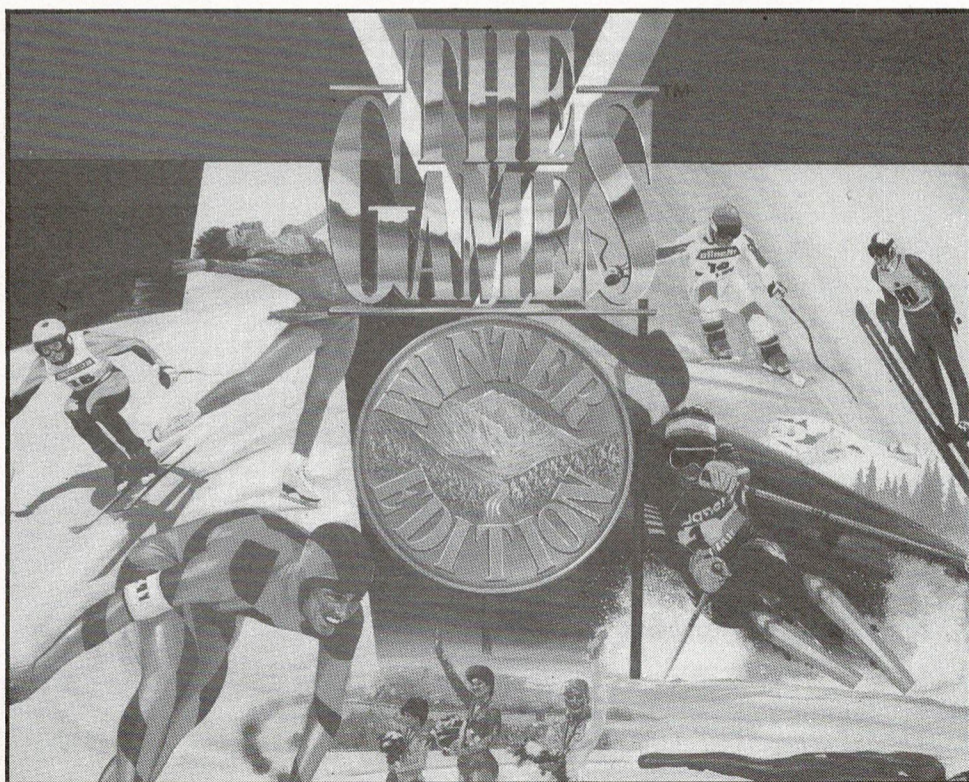
doesn't have the same releasing problems with its 1990 World Cup licence as it has had with this official 1988 Olympics game. Otherwise Gold might as well title the footie game *World Cup '91* right now and have done with it.

**△ PSYGNOSIS:** *Baal* (Ag-£19.95) The firm may be one of the most bashful in the whole market when it comes to exposure but there's little doubt about the quality of most of its product. This shoot-em-up will keep most Amiga buyers happy, but the cover might cause the odd youngster to hide behind the couch — it's horrible

**△ AGAIN AGAIN:** *The Munsters* (STAgSpC1 864Am-£9.99-£19.99) This is the big test to see if budget conqueror Alternative can cut the mustard in the big bad world of full-price. Whatever you do, don't expect it to sell as many as *Operation Wolf*.

**△ AGAIN AGAIN:** *Tracksuit Manager* (STAg-£19.99) This was one of the surprises of last year. Originally published by midget indie Goliath, it gave *Football Manager II* and everyone else's footie games a real run for their money in the summer. Goliath doesn't seem to think that it can repeat this on 16-bit by itself, though, thus the tie-up with Again Again.

**△ ALTERNATIVE:** *Who Dares Wins* (AmSpC64-£1.99), *Oink* (AmSPC64-£1.99), *Rick the Roadie* (SpAm-£1.99), *Back to School* (Sp-£1.99) Another batch of oldies re-released at pocket money prices — which are so low even the bad games are almost good value.



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

## SPEAKEASY

## Hounded by faulties

We as a family have been in the retail trade for over 30 years and without question the Christmas of '88 has been our worst ever.

Our problem has not been with the decrease in consumer spending, but rather a problem of faulty goods and goods of poor quality. The product that we have had the most problem with has been the long standing and ever faithful Commodore 64.

As most companies do before the run up to Christmas we brought stock in October and November just in case there was the usual "shortage" in December.

We purchased our Commodores from Lightning Distribution via our rep. After we tested the first batch of computers we had quite a high rate of faulties. As Commodore had put together a pack consisting of the computer, cassette unit, software and a joystick we had to test the whole pack.

Commodore's faulty procedure via Lightning is that if any item within the pack is faulty then the whole pack is to be returned (within 21 days from MY date of purchase the pack is replaced, but after 21 days the faulty items are returned to a Commodore repair agent).

We spoke to Lightning about the faulty items and they

were replaced, so we started testing the replacements and in the mean time we ordered more stock as customers were starting to put a deposit on the packs for Christmas.

Again we had some faulty units, mainly the cassette unit that was in the pack would not load the software that was supplied. I spoke to Lightning and said that we were having problems and that if we still had Commodore equipment coming back to us faulty after Christmas that we would be sending them back to Lightning for credit.

Just at the beginning of December the regional sales manager for Commodore came to see us and find out why we kept sending machines back to Lightning. I explained the problems that we were having and that again if we had machines coming in faulty after the Christmas holiday we would be returning them to Lightning for credit.

At this he said that Commodore had its returns procedure and that was that, and he also implied that we were the only shop that was having these problems anyway so it must be us. We kept sending machines back to Lightning and they kept replacing them with new ones.

Christmas came and we had sold all our stock and the

machines we had tested in November and early December and had spent weeks in customers' wardrobes were opened up on Christmas morning and surprise surprise some of them did not work — not straight away, because we had tested them, but after a few hours or a few days.

We opened our shop on the Tuesday after Christmas and we were inundated with Commodores that would not load software or would not come on or would not power the cassette unit. I tried the Commodore's returns procedure on a few of my customers saying that I was sorry but their machines were out of the elusive 21 days from my date of purchase and would have to go away for repair and understandably they said that they were not very happy as they had only used the machine a matter of days and that they would like a new machine or a refund.

Over the past two months we have had almost 60 Commodore 64 packs back faulty. At present we are having about two to three machines a week come back faulty. My company is not prepared to purchase new stock to keep replacing faulty packs. We have several customers that are on their third or fourth machine in as many weeks.

Several of them have said that they are disgusted with Commodore and will be writing to them to say so. As we have had so many machines faulty I cannot justify sending any Commodore 64 packs off to be repaired. I mean we have got problems now, you can just imagine what it could be like over the next 11 months (and the customers are within their rights to have a refund at any time).

I have given Lightning all the details of the machines and stated my position with regard to sending them back. Lightning's returns department have contacted me and said that they have all the details and that they are dealing with it!!!

At the beginning of January I spoke to Ken Gregory, Lightning's national sales manager, who said that they had had some faulty Commodores back but no where near the percentage that we were having (between 40%-50%).

During the past week I have contacted other companies who have all said that they are having the same returns problems with Commodore 64s. We have about 20 machines

still to go back to Lightning at the moment.

I have written this letter to let your company know what the situation is with regard to the poor quality of what was such a world leader, and the attitude of a company that was again a world leader but seems to be on a downward slide with problems such as these.

Yours sincerely  
Robert Miles  
Managing Director  
Miles Better Software  
Cannock

— Miles Better certainly has had a torrid time with the C64 over the past few months. In fact, a return rate of 40-50 per cent is simply disgraceful and one that can surely do nothing but spur Commodore into sorting the problem out as soon as possible (as soon as possible already being too late as it is).

The problems this outlet has had are either the tip of an iceberg or a quirk. Presumably, if the majority of retailers had been experiencing even half the number of faulties Rob Miles has suffered there would have been a major outcry from the trade — unless, of course, everyone has

simply got used to how bad things are.

But if this 40-50 per cent figure is representative of doing business with Commodore, then the C64 would certainly not be retaining its 'trustworthy' tag. Lightning — which by all accounts has been rather more sympathetic than some other distributors might have been — puts Miles Better's problems more down to bad luck than any epidemic of faulty machines.

Lightning's joint managing director Loretta Cohen offered to CTW that she simply did not understand why such a high rate of machines should be causing problems — Lightning's overall return rate on C64s was put at around two per cent.

Meanwhile, if such return rates are shared by other dealers then this will presumably show up in the results of the CTW Retailer Survey (questionnaire published last week).

If that survey shows a generally poor level of quality control then Commodore will certainly take notice. But how much notice depends on the number of responses. So to all dealers out there, for your own sake please take the time to fill in the survey and send it along to us.

## Stripping the thieves bare

Regarding so-called software piracy, more correctly software theft, I would like to respond to some of the comments recently made by the thieves in the computer media.

Firstly, let's not glorify these petty criminals by conjuring up romantic images of swashbuckling pirates. These people are spineless thieves who attempt to hide their crimes behind lame excuses.

These thieves commonly claim that they are fed up with seeing fat software publishers raking in the money. What nonsense.

How many leisure software companies do you see traded on the stock exchange? And think about all of the companies who have gone out of business. The reality is, that this is a small industry in which

it's very tough to make money, let alone rake it in and get fat. Would these thieves use this as an excuse to steal from Woolworths?

What about the argument that games are too expensive. In reality, games are priced all over the map and like any product, you get what you pay for. As with any other business, games are priced at a level which reflects the cost of bringing the product to the consumer: programmers, publishing staff, distributors and retailers all need to make their living from this product.

When a product loses sales, people suffer. When people suffer, they lose interest, and will leave the industry for another more lucrative career.

If we lose talent, we lose innovation. This, together with dwindling resources to support ambitious projects, will press the industry toward standardisation and increasing reliance upon licenses and tie-ins to achieve market penetration.

We, as an industry, are mocked by these pirates, who flaunt their crimes with 'Kent Team' T-shirts, telephone numbers front-ended onto software, and proud pseudonyms.

Anyone involved in software piracy, no matter the scale, is committing a crime, punishable by law. We have a trade body in FAST, we have retailers happy to supply information, so we should aid Bob Hay *et al* by taking a positive stance against all reported cases of software theft, and doing all in our power to act against all reported cases of software theft, and doing all in our power to act against organised piracy. The time has surely come for this maturing industry to unite to a common cause.

Simon Jeffery  
Sales administration manager  
Electronic Arts

FAST's co-ordinator Bob Hay rightly points out in his article elsewhere in this week's issue that the oxygen for these thieves (for this is what the so-called hackers truly are) is publicity, or more poignantly notoriety.

CTW, then, could be accused of giving these groups exactly what they wanted (in letters like the one above), accusations would only come from those who are always ready to criticise anyone trying to tackle a tricky subject head on. If CTW ignores this whole area, however, it would be just as guilty as all those others within this industry that treat piracy with apathy.

For it has to be said that these groups have friends within firms who pass on products. That is surely one area where all companies in this area can take a long hard look at themselves. It is only by fully revealing the damage that can be done by organised hackers — and highlighting just what pathetic little boys they are — that some might be exposed.

Whilst nothing is done other easily led computer enthusiasts will be taken in by those "romantic images of swashbuckling pirates" and start up their own groups or join existing ones.

It has been said already by Simon Jeffery and it will be said yet again here in CTW, "if this industry wants anything to be done about software theft it has to get off its backside and act."

Also pointed out in Bob Hay's article in this week's issue is the danger caused by copying devices being freely available to a public that is obviously only going to use them for illegal gain.

Consumer mags taking a harder line — putting the industry's good before the revenue from the odd quarter page copying device advert — would be a start at least. If no one knows a product exists, no one will buy it.

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# INTRODUCING THE HARD LINE ACCORDING TO CENTRESOFT

Continued from page 12

dragged kicking and screaming into this sober new environment.

The concept that wasn't grasped was that this new environment really was completely different. There really is more than boring titles that distinguish business product from the latest *Ninjas In Space* offering. With business customers you just can't tell them it's

a *PC User Smash* and expected to take an order, the demanding little devils are even apt to ask awkward, unreasonable questions like what a product

actually does. In moving to this new market Centresoft grasped the nettle but not the concept.

A candid Neal admits that naivety was something of a problem. "To sell business soft-

ware you need to be a professional, you certainly can't have people that are games orientated, this isn't just an order taking exercise."

He adds that waking up to that fact was the turning point for his department and the spark that caused this current blaze of optimism. But surely in the silent months that preceded it there were times

when the business division's position within the US Gold group was as secure as a football manager in the Italian league. Surely the group's boss Geoff Brown considered replacing the department with something more profitable and easier to understand - like a coffee machine.

"There were certainly times when assessments of the

department were made which were not that great and its future was looked at. But we came through and now we're doing a great job for them. It says a lot for this company that they stood by us."

## Golden hindsight

So thanks to US Gold's faith (and perhaps a little prayer) the business division now has eight full-time sales staff and is looking to appoint more on the back of the new Amstrad contract. In fact, many things seem to have happened as a result of the Amstrad deal, not least of which is pushing Centresoft right back into focus as a low cost business distributor.

"It really was a vitally

important move for us. We've always been very much in the Amstrad market but we were trying to tap it with other firms' products. It really just made sense for us to be selling Amstrad product."

"Our typical dealer - if we have one - you see is an Amstrad type dealer who has 80 per cent business product and then 20 per cent 16-bit games. They're the sort of people that were quick to catch on to the explosion caused by the Amstrad PC machines and have stuck with them ever since. We've done pretty much the same thing and so when we move they move."

So with upward mobility seemingly the vogue of the day where will Centresoft move to next? How long before it abandons its £250 limit and moves into the world of hardware proper?

Well apparently not for a long time. Neal claims that in the foreseeable future the firm has no ambitions in that direction. He trots out the usual stuff about knowing limitations and walking before running, but this time he seems to really mean it.

"The high end of the market is well catered for by Frontline and P&P etc. We've had our fingers burnt before in '87 when we took products we thought we were ready for but just couldn't handle, to prove it we've still got some of those products gathering dust in the warehouse."

So for now at least product lines from Sagesoft, MAP, Mirrorsoft and of course Amstrad will continue to provide the backbone of the division.

## Nealy there

Regarding competition Neal is bullishly dismissive in true US Gold style. Many would regard the firm's main threats as coming from firms like Microdealer which like Centresoft started purely in the leisure market and are only now really getting down (or perhaps up) to business.

Neal has other ideas: "Those people have got a lot to learn and they're going to find out pretty soon that it's not as easy as they think. It really is a different ball game and we've got about three years head start on them."

The only people he really sees as the face to face opposition is Gem and even there he doesn't seem perturbed. "I think they're probably more worried about us than we are about them because I've always said that if we ever took this business seriously we would be a real force. I think now that time has come."

"The point is that there is room in our market for someone like ourselves to step in and clean up. At the moment there's a real lack of professionalism in the low end of the market. We want to be seen as the Frontline of the sub-£250 sector."

As a parting shot Neal strays slightly from the reserved corporate line and admits "the ultimate aim is to become the ultimate distributor which means taking on the Frontlines and P&Ps of this world." He reckons that with a lot of time a little luck and a following wind that goal may one day even become realistic.

A touch optimistic, but at least it might make *Microscope* take notice again.

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# Which? portable talk fails to ruffle secretive Olivetti

Olivetti is remaining tightlipped about its promised new range of PCs due for launch at *Which?* in a few weeks — but sources are suggesting that a new portable machine is on the cards.

The speculation has arisen as a result of the firm's plan to phase out its existing twin

floppy M15 portable, which starts at £1,175. This would leave only the M15+ — which boasts a 20Mb hard disk — carrying the Olivetti banner in the expanding portable market.

Olivetti's micro marketing manager Bob Garrett told *CTW*: "We certainly see the portable sector of the market as one that is wider than our current product range. For ages we have intended to do something

about that. But you'll just have to come along to *Which?* if you want to see what we're doing."

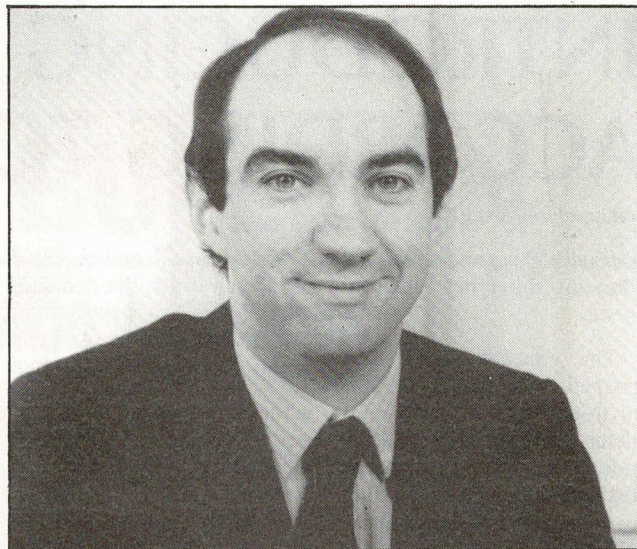
Meanwhile, Olivetti claims that it now has some 40-50 dealers handling its education-pitched M200 launched in September.

It claims that the machine has so far been ordered in small numbers by a wide variety of educational customers rather

than gaining any major volume commitments.

"We certainly sold more than we planned in '88. And it's certainly taken us back into sectors which we previously sold the M24 into," added Garrett.

The M200 starts at £849 for a twin floppy mono version, and with an educational discount of 20 per cent this falls to £679.



GARRETT: Wait and see

## Focus loses foursome

Continued from front page

*Amstrad Computer User*, *Amstrad Professional Computing* and *Amstrad PCW Magazine* (*CTW* January 9th).

At the time of going to press Focus was denying Barne's departure, claiming "we are still talking. Nothing is official and as far as we're concerned he's still with us". Yet Barnes offered: "I will be leaving very soon. I've been at Focus too long".

Contrary to Coster's claims Phillips was denying any undisclosed reasons for her swift departure. "For the past six months I've been planning to set up a training company and with it being a new year I thought it was time for a new start. I hope to get the company up and running in the next few weeks, providing advertising and editorial training".

## PC problem bugs Amstrad

Continued from front page

worry for the firm could be the damage this latest episode will have on the reputation of the rest of the 2000 range which is due to arrive in the UK within the next couple of months.

"We realise it won't enhance sales but it should certainly only have a minimal affect", offered Amstrad.

## Euro boss

Continued from front page

There are a number of options currently being discussed by senior US management. These range from Commodore simply replacing Speyer to a complete shift in how the European operation functions. Some sources are suggesting that each separate territory may in future report directly to the US rather than to the current European headquarters in Frankfurt.

"Harold Speyer has left of his own accord to run his own company. There is nothing being hidden. I can't comment right now on what changes are planned within Europe at the moment," offered Franklin.

Meanwhile, Commodore last week appointed David Pleasance as sales director for its consumer electronic's division.

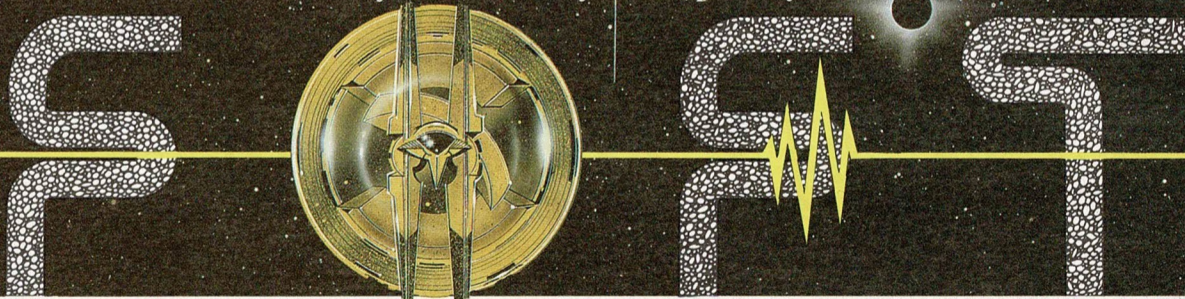
The move is more an elevation in status for Pleasance in recognition of his service to the firm than any major role change.

"Obviously David will now be party to some of the other things that go on within the company apart from selling," added Franklin.

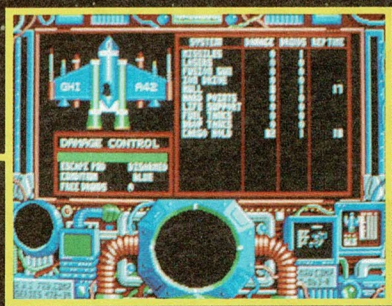
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