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18-7-88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 195

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Spectrum acquires Howard

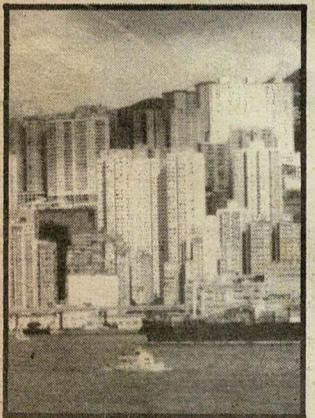
Clone manufacturer Spectrum has furthered its interest in the computer consumable sector by acquiring Sevenoaks based Russell Howard.

This comes at a time when 29.9 per cent of the firm's shares are up for sale after the resignation of non-executive directors Guy Cramer and Andrew Lindsay from the Spectrum board. Spectrum has been attempting to distance itself from Cramer since the embarrassing revelations of his involvement in the Barlow Clowes affair.

It is understood that a consortium including the full board of Spectrum directors has put in a bid for Cramer Holdings' shares.

The acquisition of consumables firm Russell Howard comes less than a year after Spectrum bought Match Data. Chairman Mike Stern told CTW: "We've been looking for strategic acquisitions with a view to making Match Data a nationwide leader in the consumables market. We're aggressively looking for other ways to spread our net across the UK."

INSIDE: MADE IN HONG KONG



During a recent visit to the Far East CTW was whisked into Commodore's factory in Hong Kong to be shown all the gadgetry. An insight into the toil and trouble of getting an Amiga together..... 8

THE EMERALD FILE

Nestled in Waterford, Ireland, Emerald Software reckons that it is changing the horrific reputation programmers and developers have for busting deadlines and shoddy work. Via an agreement with the Irish Government the firm - backed by Martech's publisher Software Communications - claims to have the resources and the spirit to reverse the trend..... 14

SOFT OPTIONS 17/LETTERS 18

Gold: more flak

US Gold was last week fighting fires on two fronts: potential legal action from Elite and considerable dealer disquiet over its new terms.

The Elite case rests on claims made against its game *Overlander* by Gold. According to one written statement by the latter, the Elite game is "a plagiarised product . . . (which bears) a marked resemblance to the original Atari coin-op game *Road*

Blasters (published by Gold)". Further, "there were even misleading direct comparisons on the telesales notes and advertising".

A second statement toned down these claims to non-specific generalisations about copyright.

An evidently annoyed Elite director Brian Wilcox told CTW: "We're treating the first US Gold statement as libellous. We asked them not to repeat the allegations. The second contained further innuendo. In view of this we are seeking an apology and a retraction. Failing this we reserve the right to seek damages."

US Gold refused to comment on both this and the dealer complaints, despite being offered numerous opportunities.

One distributor claimed to CTW that it was initially told by Gold that if it took Elite's *Overlander*, it would lose the chance to handle Gold's *Road Blast*

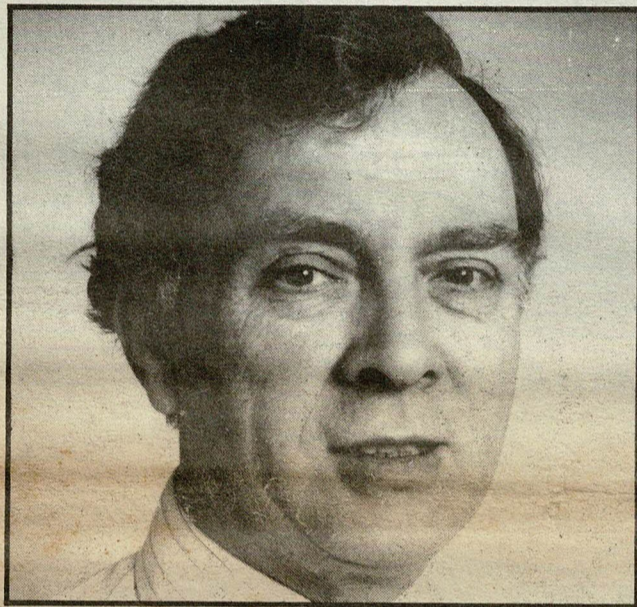
ers. This mirrors complaints the previous week about Gold apparently attempting to dissuade distributors from handling the Titus/Entertainment International game, *Fire and Forget* - which Gold also claims plagiarises *Road Blast*ers.

In support of its case, Elite forcefully pointed out that *Overlander* is "a completely original work which has been under development since May 1987". It complained that Gold is seeking to gain market advantage by creating difficulties over the title. Further, Wilcox argued that Gold in the past has taken advantage of Elite's forward-announcing of product by attempting to swamp its games with titles from Gold, Gremlin or Ocean.

The other battle Gold faces concerns its recent change of terms (CTW July 4th & 11th). Angry retailers complain that the firm is variously being greedy, unrealistic and unfair in seeking to reduce margins.

"In 40-odd years I've never found the need to get off my

Continued on back page



WILCOX: Annoyed with Gold and pondering legal action

Commodore back on the box

Commodore is gearing itself up for a television advertising blitz this autumn to rival those of the likes of Atari and Amstrad.

The leisure pound will be hard fought for on the tube with all three expected to bring out their big marketing guns for the pre-Christmas scramble. Atari will be re-running last year's ad. Amstrad is shying away from confirming any plans.

As widely expected the C64 will not be publicised on television with Commodore preferring to stress that the Amiga is its flagship product. Actual spend has not been arranged. Commodore is limiting itself to saying it will be "in the millions rather than the hundreds of thousands".

It is hoped that storyboards will be on display at September's PC Show and Commodore's recently appointed ad agency Evans Hunt Scott is currently drafting plans.

"We've been wanting to do

it for a long time," commented marketing manager Dean Barrett. "With the machine's music, speech and colour capabilities it lends itself well to television." He added: "Once the Amiga has been on television there'll be a greater acceptance of its ease of use."

Indeed, this is the pitch the ad itself is likely to take. Commodore has made no secret of the fact that it is specifically pitching the hi-tech yuppie market of compact disc recorders et al.

Commodore's last foray into television advertising was in 1985 with the infamous elephant publicising the C64. Barrett assured CTW that no animals are included in current marketing strategy. It is also unlikely that any popular personalities will be drafted in.

"The Amiga is a strong enough product on its own and it doesn't really need to be endorsed by anybody," said Barrett. Atari's ST promotion last year also stressed

Continued on back page

EMAP trumpets ABC success

EMAP last week went into full swagger mode with the announcement of record sales of its three leisure computer magazines.

In the December to June period, the firm recorded increases for each of *Computer & Video Games*, *Sinclair User* and *Commodore User*. The full significance of these figures will not emerge until the other leading magazine publishers release their own details in the next few weeks.

Nonetheless, the indications are at this stage that both *Crash* from Newsfield and Dennis' *Your Sinclair* have lost ground, enabling *Sinclair User* to leapfrog from

third to first in the Spectrum sector.

The figures confirm *C&VG* as the largest selling title, with sales up year on year by 8.9 per cent to 108,982. *SU* rose 7,500 on the previous six months to 85,615, and *CU* was up seven per cent to 69,006. The latter has now grown for each of the last six periods. By contrast, *SU* is showing its first increase in three years.

The rises across the board are said to be due to sharper designs and better targeting. Overall EMAP computer magazine publisher Terry Pratt said that *C&VG* could still put on another 10,000 sales with further tweakings.

"We've done a lot of research on *C&VG* and it's been redesigned as a result.



PRATT: Highest ever

It's now a lot closer to the way I would want it to be: the copy is snappier and it's looking much brighter," he said.

Cover-mounted gifts have played their part in the EMAP increases, and are set to continue. "Despite the rumours to the contrary, EMAP invented cover-mounts. There'll be more on the next couple of *Sinclair Users* and we'll review it after that. The November *C&VG* will also have a cassette."

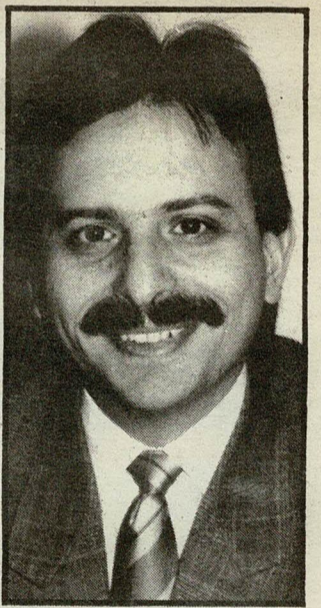
Neither Newsfield nor Dennis was in a position last week to give any indication of how their titles were doing. At Future, publisher Chris Anderson said that three of his Amstrad titles (*PC Plus*, *Amstrad Action* and *8000 Plus*) would all show increases. The all-formats *Ace*, it would appear, is likely to record the highest first ABC figure of any computer title, at around 50,000.

Mirror shows Image

Mirrorsoft last week duly launched its new games label Im-
ageworks at London's Savoy Hotel.

The label has been under preparation since the autumn, and its existence was first revealed last month (CTW June 13th). The Mirrorsoft label will not be abolished, but will act as an umbrella to the other labels. The firm has recognised that Mirrorsoft has too dowdy an image for general games publishing, hence the need for a more vibrant approach.

According to Mirrorsoft's boss Peter Bilotta the total launch bill for the new label - including licensed and sundry promotional activities - exceeds £1 million. The primary thrust is on 16-bit product since Bilotta claims that in 18 months there will not be an 8-bit market to cater for.



BILOTTA: New label

One idea on the marketing front is to give away a free Im-
ageworks' carrier bag with every purchase. However, the multiples are unlikely to agree to this.

Its first title will be *Sky Chase*, which will be released on the Amiga and Atari ST next month at £19.95. A further 18 titles will be released in its first year, with six before Christmas.

Imageworks has signed up what is claimed to be one of the most sought after programming teams in the business - The Bitmap Brothers. Its first Imageworks title will be a future sport strategy game called *Speedball*. It is due for release later this year and will initially be published on the Atari ST and Amiga at £29.99.

It has further been disc-
Continued on back page

OVERLANDER

THE ROAD GAME THAT BLASTS THE WAY



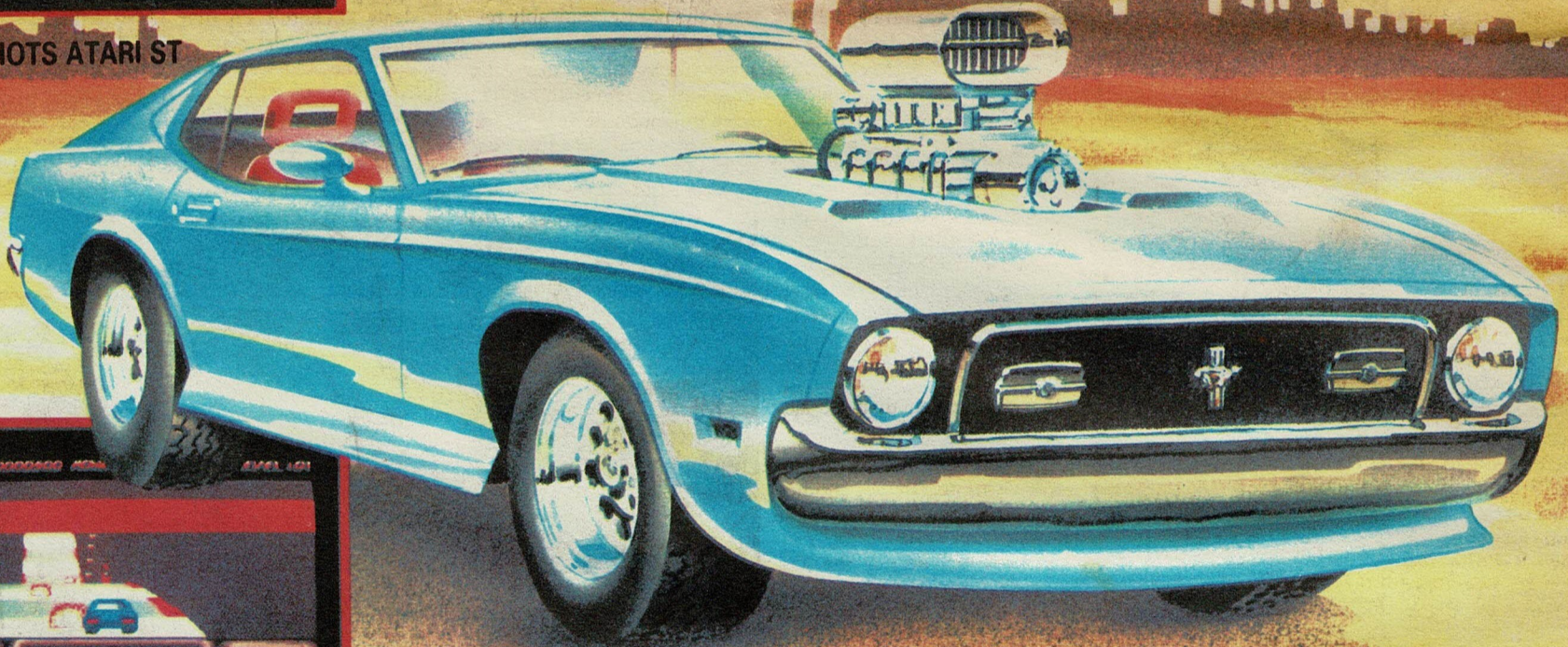
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Pole Position	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	N/A	✓
Pit Stop	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Outrun	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Road Blasters	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	N/A	✓
Chequered Flag	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
WEC Le Mans	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	N/A	✗
OVERLANDER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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AVAILABLE ON ATARI ST: £19.99
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COMING SOON

SYSTEM	FORMAT	PRICE
Spectrum	Cassette	£7.99
Spectrum	Disc	£12.99
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Amstrad	Disc	£14.99
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Mindscape unveils intent and searches for UK head

Top four US software publisher Mindscape last week began the trawl to find a director of European operations to head up its new UK based subsidiary.

The firm has at last unveiled its plans for a UK assault, in the wake of its recent US Stock Market flotation. The primary surprise is that it is expecting that the bulk of its sales will be derived from low cost business products, rather than from the leisure titles for which it is best known.

The new operation is expected to be active by October, following a low key debut at the PC Show. Contrary to rumours, there are no plans for the firm to sell direct to dealers. Sales will go through

the customary distribution channels.

As yet, Mindscape boss Roger Buoy has no one in mind for the UK post. He told CTW last week that he is most likely to choose someone with detailed knowledge of the low cost business market.

The first product to be released in the UK will be *Numbers Up*, a terminate and stay resident spreadsheet. This is due to be launched at \$99 in the States, but no price has yet been decided for over here.

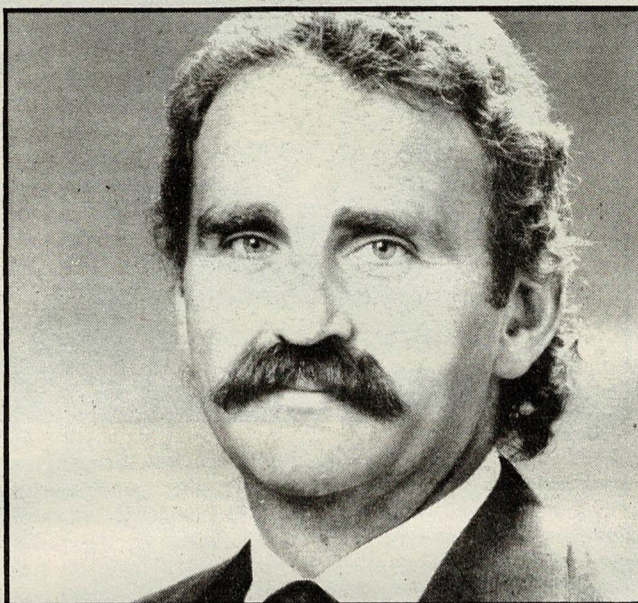
On the games front, *Willow* will be out to coincide with the release of the George Lucas film. The latter has been panned by some critics in the States (it was memorably dubbed "déjà voodoo"), but Buoy stresses that he has confidence in the title since the film has already grossed \$140 million nonetheless.

Beyond that are sundry sports titles. Some graphics adventure games will remain with Mirrorsoft.

Meantime, it has also emerged that Mindscape has tied up the rights to publish the computer versions of a number of major Sega games in the US. Including the likes of *Out Run*, *Space Harrier* and *After Burner*, this deal is expected to be worth some \$12 million at wholesale prices.

Buoy claims that Mindscape is now the fourth largest US leisure publisher behind Activision, Electronic Arts and Broderbund. Its recent Stock Market listing raised some \$8-8.5 million after charges to fund future expansion.

On the imminent UK launch, he offered: "We just know that we have to be here and our expectations are high. We believe that the whole



BUOY: Searching for UK boss
European market will be more important to us in two years than the US. For now, it's a question of building a

significant operation carefully and professionally: there's no point in rushing it and getting it all wrong."

First shifts to Frontline

First Software has metamorphosed into Frontline Distribution.

The name change at the Amstrad upwards firm has been prompted by a recognition that the old tag no longer accurately describes its activities, since hardware these days accounts for over 60 per cent of sales. But it is not related to any apparent confusion with the similarly titled 1st Software.

"We're very much a sales and marketing driven company looking to maximise all our activities. We found that dealers didn't really appreciate the level of our expertise and the breadth of our product portfolio," Frontline's marketing director Nigel Rix told CTW.

At this stage, it is not yet clear whether the switch is in any way an attempt to smarten up the company's profile in preparation for a Stock Market listing. Back in the autumn, such a move was planned, but then came Black Monday.



Frontline MD Mark Mulford: Carving out new identity

Writs set aside as the BT/Hewson row ends

The protracted programmers' wrangle between Telecomsoft and Hewson has been ended, with both firms steadfastly making no comment on the issue.

Back in September last year, Hewson cried foul when Telecomsoft apparently poached its programming team Graftgold, allegedly causing them to break the terms of their contracts. Since then, the BT offshoot has published sundry Graftgold games pending full and final settlement.

At the same time, numerous court hearings have been held. Last week, both parties decided to call off the dispute. It would appear that one factor in the cessation of hostilities was the spiralling legal costs.

Telecomsoft now has the full rights to publish another four Graftgold titles, the first of which - *Soldier of Fortune* - will appear before the PC Show.

"There's no way I'm going

to comment about any of this. We've got a gentleman's agreement to say nothing," offered a tight-lipped Telecomsoft boss Paula Byrne. Hewson's eponymous headman Andrew Hewson merely referred enquiries to a bland 52 word agreed statement which predictably incorporated the phrase "amicably reconciled".

Such a total press exclusion zone is unprecedented, at least in the skirmish beset leisure market. Reading between the lines of the dispute, it would appear that Telecom-

soft has offered Hewson some form of recompense for the loss of programmers under contract, for both parties are stressing that they are happy with the outcome.

On future Graftgold releases, Byrne said that she did not believe in tying up programmers on excessively lengthy deals. "There's no time restraint on the next four titles and if they still want to be published by us after that, then we'll negotiate another deal. There's no point in having anyone locked in for years and years if they don't want to be."



Flashback to PCW '87 when Telecomsoft stole the headlines by securing the Graftgold deal under the nose of Hewson

Peace breaks out as mags back new Arena

Following the success of this spring's Computer Arena, the leading computer magazine publishers last week backed plans for a 1989 version.

The event has a threefold function. Firstly, it aims to provide a forum for free and frank expression of significant matters affecting the leisure software industry. To this end, leading industry figures from both hardware and software firms are shortly to be pitched as guest speakers.

Secondly, in gathering together disparate figures who wouldn't otherwise meet outside the PC Show, Computer Arena provides a chance for sundry deals to be done. The third factor is that the event is intended to be pleasurable - something which is less of an occupational hazard than it once was in an industry which has become increasingly concerned with showing just how serious it can be.

There will also be a new group of awards, chosen collectively by the magazine publishers.

This year's even in Jersey

was organised by Newsfield (the company behind *Crash*, *Zzap* and *The Games Machine*). In an attempt to offset any possible criticism that it was set up in part to benefit the firm, next year's version has the backing of all the leading leisure magazine publishers.

Last week's meeting included figures from EMAP (*C&VG*, *Sinclair User*, *Commodore User* and *The One*), Dennis (*Your Sinclair*, *Computer Shopper*, *MicroScope* etc) and Future (*Acc*, *ST/Amiga Format*, *Amstrad Action* etc),

as well as CTW. It was chaired by the head of Pr for Montbuild (PC Show) Matthew Pudney, thus stalling any further notions of partisanship.

It is intended that Computer Arena '89 will have around 150-200 attendees paying in the region of £300 for a three day event. Any resulting profit - which is not especially likely - will be channelled into charity.

At this stage, it is almost certain that it will be held in a foreign location, with Amsterdam heading the suggestions'

list. The principal argument in favour of this is that going abroad guarantees that everyone will stay together in a way that a UK location would not.

The meeting represented an unprecedented coming together of the publishers. Customarily, they contrive to remain even more aloof from each other than their games publishing counterparts. Though there was some inevitable bantering about ABC sales figures and advertising rates, there was nonetheless unanimity about the usefulness of Computer Arena.

CTW

Computer Trade Weekly

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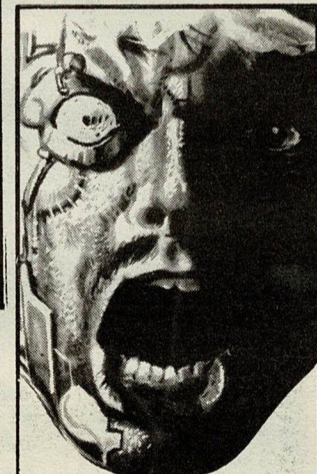
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Gold Rush

WARNING: Stocking Thalamus's HAWKEYE will seriously increase your profits due to the GOLD RUSH promotion! Among the thousands of HAWKEYE games being shipped are three gold and six yellow cassettes. When a customer finds a gold cassette they win a Amstrad Studio 100, find a yellow cassette and a ghetto blaster is won. You win a prize too! Prize cassettes... out soon... be a winner with HAWKEYE

THALAMUS

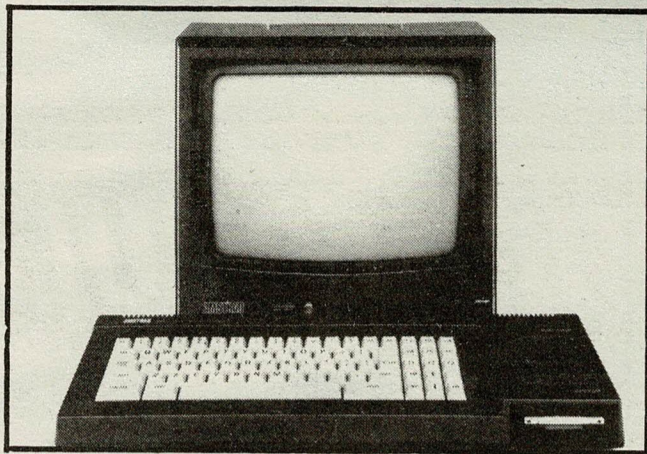
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Amstrad homes in on CPC desk offer

It is now almost certain that Amstrad will be bundling the CPC range this autumn with an intention of pitching the 'homework' market.

CTW first carried details of the offer a few weeks back (May 30th), when Amstrad was sounding out the trade with such a move in mind. According to sources close to Amstrad the bundle will be launched nationwide and backed with television advertising.

It is also understood that a clock radio will be included in the bundle. Thus, the CPC will include a flat top desk, colour monitor and TV tuner. The price will be around £499



6128: Homework hook (£100 more than current levels).

This, coupled with the advertising campaign, will give the machine a much needed shot in the arm. Sales

have been less than impressive as a pure games machine and the homework tag is likely to appeal to the public. Dealers, as always, are sceptical.

ASA wrath muted for once

Computer firms have once more incurred the wrath of the Advertising Standards Authority - only this time much less so than usual.

Leading the way for the fourth time in the past twelve months was Amstrad. The complaint centred on the firm's promotion including WordStar and its LQ3500 printer. Two national chains were found by the ASA to have an insufficient grasp of the deal when questioned.

Amstrad was thus advised

by the body "to ensure that retailers take every step to administer similar promotions correctly in the future".

Elsewhere, Martech was rapped for advertising Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix on the Commodore months ahead of availability. Martech responded by citing its difficulties with programming house Andromeda (CTW *passim*) and said that monies received for the game had not been banked.

It was duly warned nonetheless "that it is not acceptable to feature goods in advertisements until their

availability has been fully determined". Virtually every software publisher of any note has received just such a warning at some time.

In a notably thin crop, the only other computer-related complaint concerned an Acorn Master promotion by the Romford based outlet Lan Computer Systems. It too was requested to pull a claim about apparent cost savings which didn't stack up.

Overall, three is believed to be the lowest level of complaints against computer firms to the ASA in several years.

Budget: Hewson goes alone

Fresh from its BT settlement (see page 3) Hewson has severed its budget links with Mastertronic.

Its cheapo labels Rack-It (£1.99) and Rebound (£2.99) are being relaunched in the next few weeks with both originals and re-releases. The first two of the latter are Thalamus' *Sanxion* and Hewson's own *Uridium*. By the year end some 13 titles in all will have

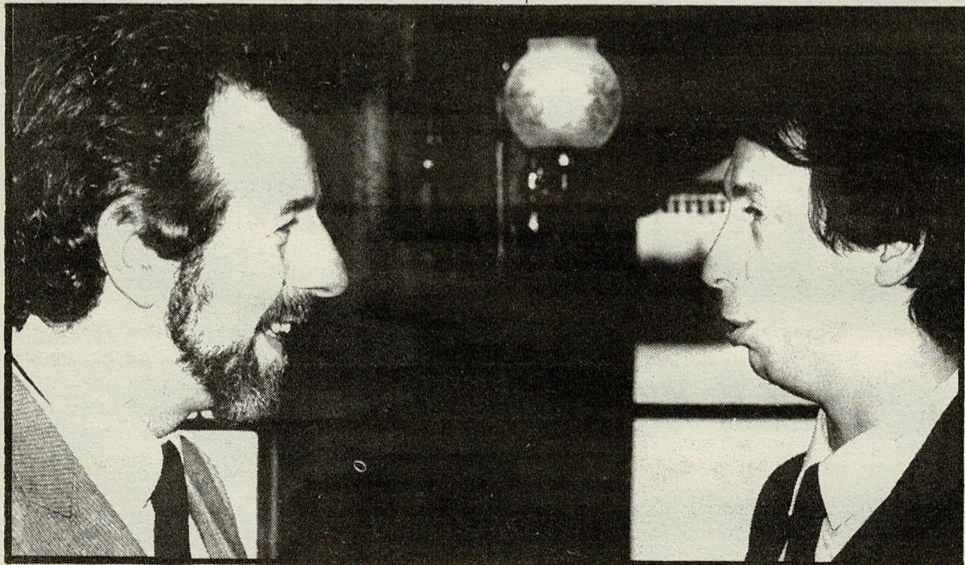
been published.

"We've made money and we're really quite pleased with what Mastertronic have done for us. Overall, they've done a good job. But the budget market has really opened up in the last twelve months and we think we're in a better position now to handle our own business," boss Andrew Hewson explained.

Initial sales pump-priming will be handled by Active

Sales' ubiquitous boss Robert Stallibrass. Thereafter, Hewson is likely to bring it all in-house.

Aside from Thalamus, no other third party deals are in the offing. Asked in the wake of the Graftgold settlement about the prospect of handling some of BT's back catalogue, Hewson said (a shade unconvincingly) "Who knows what might happen? It's a possibility..."



Tronies' Heath and Hewson's Hewson now split

Newsfield rejigs members

Staff shufflings at Newsfield recently resulted in former Elite marketing manager Geoff Grimes being appointed publisher of all the Ludlow firm's titles.

Also in the shifts, advertising supremo Roger Bennett joins the board of directors as does financial controller John Fellows. *The Games Machine* - formerly edited by Oliver Frey - will now be in the hands of John Rose, erstwhile editor of *The Home Computer Club*.

And the forthcoming consumer video title *Movie* will be edited by Tim Smith whose previous experience includes *Video Business* and *Video Trade Weekly*. Grimes was initially drafted in to research the prospect of a video title after his departure from Elite.

Wilding acquisition opens Tyne gateway

Business retail chain Wilding has bought Tyne and Wear Office Supplies in a deal worth up to £450,000.

This will have secured the chain's position in the north east which had represented something of a hole in its strategy. Wilding had pledged to have nationwide coverage

by the end of next year. Tyne and Wear currently operates from a showroom and warehouse, although that will be changed into a normal retail outlet. Another Wilding store is planned for Newcastle later in the year.

Commercial director at Wilding Peter Newland told CTW: "We decided that we couldn't make a fast enough presence in the north east

without making this acquisition." When asked if more would be made in other blank spots such as Wales and Scotland he said "not necessarily but it's possible".

Currently, Tyne and Wear only carries Olivetti computers but it will now be stocking Wilding's full range dominated by Amstrad's business line up.

R&R gains first chain

R&R has been appointed as an exclusive distributor to Children's World, which is an expanding chain of retail outlets owned by Boots.

Sales manager at the distributor, Finuala Kavanagh argued that the company was chosen because it offered the best service.

R&R will provide Alternative budget product, amongst

other lines. Kavanagh said that this will not result in her company receiving unfair favouritism, as "everyone will be given a fair chance".

In order to obtain this account R&R had to fight off opposition from rivals such as Centresoft and Leisuresoft.

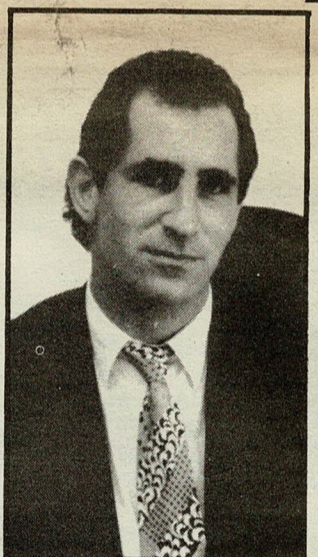
The flagship store is located in Cricklewood. Other stores will later be opened in city centres, including Croydon. At present there are ten outlets. R&R has been told that this figure will rise to 14 be-



KAVANAGH: Multiple deal fore the end of the year, and again to 40 before next Easter.

The deal represents R&R's first multiple account.

Prism tight lipped on City predictions



YOUNG: Wait and see

Analysts are predicting an increase in Prism's yearly profits due within two weeks, and the firm has hinted at a new division.

The unnamed entity will be unveiled this summer and will operate through Prism in the UK and its Pittsburg subsidiary Prism Leisure USA. It's conceivable that the announcement will coincide with financial results.

City analysts appear to be more interested in next year's figures and are concentrating on developments in the USA and a recent acquisition in the pub entertainment industry.

One predicted profits of £550,000 for this year against £522,000 last time. Prism though has warned against playing with figures prematurely calling these "conservative".

Chairman Geoff Young restricted himself to commenting: "Wait for two weeks and you'll have the figures", although he did not appear wholly displeased with national newspaper predictions.

Burns and Porter - the pub quiz organisation firm acquired by Prism earlier in the year - is expected to contribute heavily to next year's profits. That cost Prism a maximum of £950,000.

Redwood snapped by Beeb

Acorn User's publisher Redwood has been bought by BBC Enterprises.

This marks BBC Enterprises' first move into the computer magazine arena with its current line up consisting of *Radio Times* and a few other publications linked to television shows. Redwood itself also publishes *Educational Computing* as well as *Hairflair*, *Airport*, *Expression* and *M&S Magazine*.

Redwood's bosses - which include Acorn founder Chris Curry - will retain their involvement in the company. BBC Enterprises director of magazines John Thomas takes the helm at Redwood as chairman.

It's not clear as yet whether BBC Enterprises will be expanding Redwood's computer publishing interests.

Mastertronic off to Virgin

Mastertronic will shortly be moving to Virgin Games' premises in west London.

The switch is in line with The Tronics' "curious talk of rationalisation" (CTW June 6th), which indicated that certain functions common to both Mastertronic and Virgin would be merged. It is being strongly stressed that the move does not represent any cutting back.

"We've always told everybody since the Virgin deal (CTW Oct 26th) that at some stage we'd be putting the two companies together. But that doesn't mean that we're about to become a full subsidiary of Virgin as everybody's been saying, and it doesn't mean that it's in any way related to what Richard Branson is plan-

ning to do with Virgin as a whole," Mastertronic director Geoff Heath said.

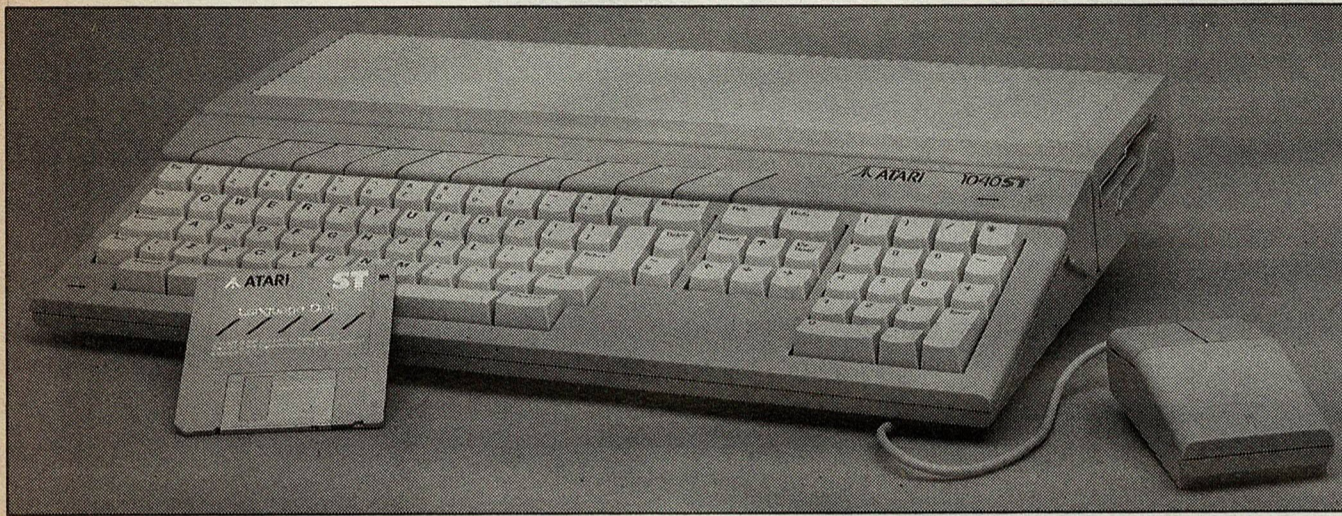
The move has in part been prompted by Virgin's design company moving out of the Vernon Yard location, thus creating space for Mastertronic. Heath additionally stressed that far from there being any resultant redundancies, the firm would actually be recruiting extra staff.

Meantime, Mastertronic will soon be releasing the first 8-bit versions of *Psygnosis*' games such as *Barbarian*, under the terms of a deal hatched earlier this year. The titles will appear on its Melbourne House label.

"The basic concept is that 8-bit owners have been a bit disappointed that *Psygnosis* only publishes 16-bit product, so we're stepping in," Heath added.

The Atari ST

NEW - 1040 WITH MODULATOR



The 1040ST-F has a retail price of £499.99 for a 1Mb RAM computer with 1Mb double sided disk drive built-in. Now, SDL are pleased to announce that we have stocks of the new 1040ST-FM which has all the features of the 1040ST-F, as well as a built-in TV modulator. Not only do we have stocks, but this stock is available at the normal ST-F price, with the normal 20% dealer margin.

£499.99 INC VAT
DEALER PRICE EXC VAT **£347.82**

With Mono Monitor **£599.99** INC VAT
DEALER PRICE **£417.38** EXC VAT

With Colour Monitor **£798.99** INC VAT
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1/2Mb 520ST-FM - LAST FEW IN STOCK!

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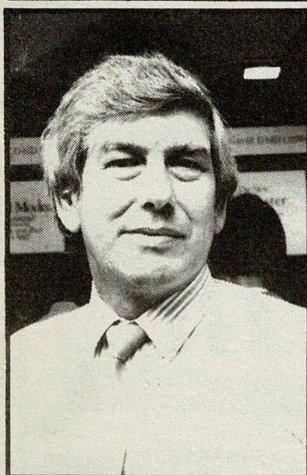
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SNIPPETS



MORDECAI: Nutterd Curious whisperings concerning one of Amstrad's top brass reached CTW last week. Apparently the esteemed Mike Mordecai went absolutely berserk when he found that builders working at the Amstrad offices had shut off a computer. Mordecai - in true Amstrad style - made it known to the builders that he was not well pleased, politely enquiring: "What dickhead has unplugged my computer?" The guy then crisply head butted Mordecai and wacked him over the head with his spirit level. The result? Six stitches to the poor man's bonce. Who said Amstrad is full of head cases? Confusion and misunderstanding over Code Masters charity effort *The Race Against Time* has been cleared up with new inlay cards featuring Carl Lewis. Formerly the packaging featured Jesse Owen but complaints from the Jesse Owen Foundation caused the recasting . . .

Palace Software - shortly due to ship the much munched over *Barbarian II* - has drafted in former Mastertronic men John Mearman and Lesley Bossen to handle sales efforts in the UK and Europe . . .

DTP specialist **Laminex International** has launched a colour transfer system which transforms photocopies or laser prints from black and white to colour, *PCS 1000* retails at £495 and can produce multi-colour prints up to A4 size . . .

Long standing chartist Godfrey Rust is set to leave **Gallup** in September. Rust joined the company five years ago and has been involved in compiling charts for ten years. He is expected to stay in the music industry. no direct replacement has been appointed . . .

Tandem Computers last week upped and moved to its new £15 million headquarters near Heathrow airport. The firm claims that its UK half year revenues have increased by 65 per cent on the corresponding period last year .

Logotron has sent out a "corporate video" to its distributors outlining the firms plans and pumping its products. It's being claimed by the company that this is the first such venture of its kind. "We're trying to get the message across to people used to getting tons of bumf," said a spokesman . . .

Next year's *PC User Show* will be held at Olympia, London during May rather than June. This is probably

due to the latter month being a notoriously dull one. Organiser EMAP Exhibitions will be hoping that by bringing the show forward a little someone might actually launch something of note next time. *PC User '89* will run from May 9-11th . . .

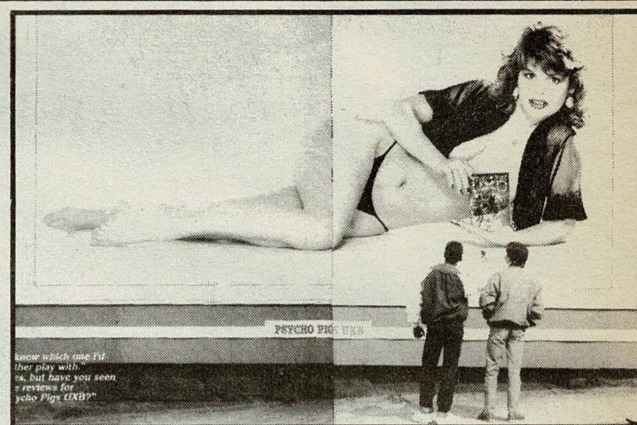
Erstwhile **Top Ten** product manager Daryl Still has quit the firm to concentrate more on his development company Godax . . .

Following on from the recent deal to take *Fleet Street Editor* into its 50 Business Point

stores, **Tandy** is currently evaluating Mirrorsoft's time management package *Timeslips*. It retails at £69.99, with *Timeslips Plus* coming in at £149.99 . . .

Oh dear. *Zzap* has had to grovel its way out of an unfortunate mishap on its reviews pages. The August issue carried a review of **US Gold/Capcom's** *Streetfighter* but in fact it was an appraisal of a free B side version of the product. Newsfield has profusely apologised to Capcom and Gold . . .

Still with **Newsfield** and **US Gold**. Pages two and three of this month's *Zzap* feature what must be the most sexist ad in computer games history. It features a virtually naked girl on a billboard holding a copy of Gold's *Psycho Pig UXB*. Two repulsive boys are standing in front. "I know which one I'd rather play with," says one. The reply: "Yes, but have you seen the reviews for *Psycho Pig UXB*." Please could we have a letter from *The Bug* about this . . .



Ideologically unsound?

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The usual tele-sales call is all very well for getting a dealer's ear.

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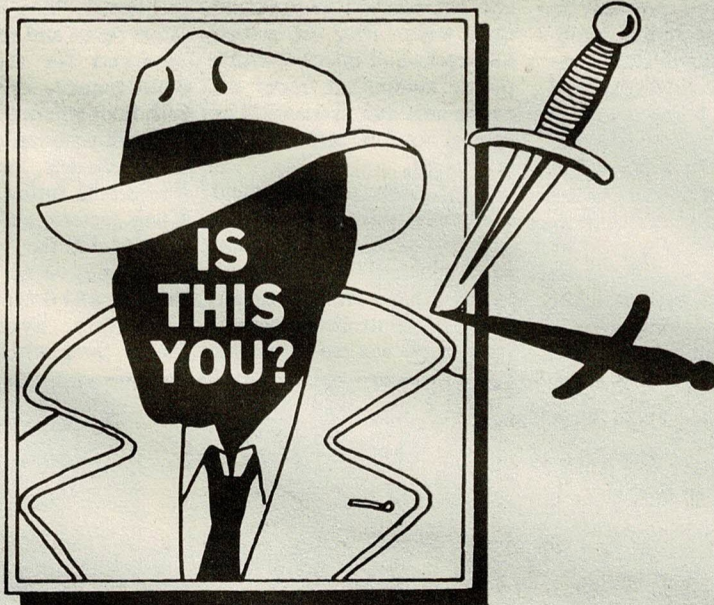


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MADE IN HONG KONG

As a generality, the computer trade doesn't think too often about how and where computers are actually made. It doesn't have to, of course: sales and marketing and distribution and bundling deals all matter so much more. But the process of manufacturing and assembling are actually far more interesting than would be imagined at first glance. Making his CTW editorial debut, CTW's publisher TOM STOCK – who just happened to be in Hong Kong – files a report about Commodore's main factory in Kwai Chung, Hong Kong . . .

More than a thousand Chinese women work two eight hour shifts a day, eight days a week on 11 floors of a high rise factory in the Kwai Chung district of Hong Kong. Every day, five and a half thousand units leave the production line. Every week, thirty three thousand machines are packed into containers and driven down to the nearby port. Every year, the best part of two million individual products leave Wing Kei Road on their long journey to Europe.

Commodore's factory at 2-12 Wing Kei Road nestles amongst a number of similar blocks populated by Western household names. DEC, Motorola, Dow Chemicals and AT&T have production plants within a long stone's throw. "Labour is cheap here," the plant's general manager John Malliris explained. "Though it's more expensive than, for example, Taiwan or the Phillipines, it's up to seven times cheaper than in Germany, and four times cheaper than the United States."

Malliris, a Greek-American from Boston, has lived in Hong Kong for 17 years, having previously been employed by NCR and Honeywell. He co-ordinates the production of C64s and Amiga A500s from an office 11 floors up, overlooking the harbour and the city of Hong Kong. Nowhere in Hong Kong is ever far away, although its appalling traffic congestion ensures nowhere is that close either.

To those familiar with large factories in the West the CBM plant comes as a surprise. The land shortage is acute, coupled with a labour shortage which affects the whole manufacturing industry in Hong Kong. Factories are built upwards, occupying as small a ground area as is practical, and the competition for that cheap labour is fierce.

Some local companies have already made the big move over the border into the Republic of China where labour and land are both plentiful and cheap: after the restoration of the colony to China in 1992 it is likely that many more will make a similar switch.

"Manufacturing in a vertical unit like this presents particular problems," Malliris continued. "In effect the factory contains several self-contained production plants. Each floor requires its own supervisor, and there's a constant shifting of materials and people. In many respects it is not all that efficient – particularly when compared with a European or American factory – but we have little choice. There is too little land available for industrial development."

Straight jackets

The factory itself seemed constantly alive – even

on the Saturday afternoon of my visit. The four lifts disgorged hundreds of women at every stop, all dressed uniformly in white jackets with Commodore emblazoned on their backs, all carrying something, though more often than not it was impossible to discern what.

Each floor is air-conditioned, but the landing areas and lifts are not. Each journey took them from a controlled temperature environment into one of sultry steaminess and back again. A pervading smell of sweat and oil filled the stairwells: cool, fresh air filled the production areas. The contrast was overwhelming.

I had accepted the invitation to visit Hong Kong offered by CBM's UK boss Steve Franklin in an effort to get to the bottom of the quality control problem experienced by most UK based dealers.

Did the answer lie in the manufacturing stage? It seemed preferable to take the trip to answer the question.

Malliris was dismissive of the suggestion. "Operating problems are not built in here," he insisted. "Every stage of manufacturing has a quality control test built into it somewhere. I guarantee that every machine which leaves this factory leaves it in good, working, reliable order."

"If there are problems – and I accept your suggestion that there are – then they must result from any number of alternative factors, of which the most likely is transit damage, in particular to the UK."

Franklin was swift to counter the charge. "The new plant in Peterborough has been established precisely to eradicate those transit problems. We're aware that a computer which has travelled from Hong Kong to Germany, to be repacked for the UK, is likely to suffer vibrational problems. Once we are fully operational at Peterborough, every computer will be tested again and will not be dispatched in anything other than perfect working order."

Many a retailer will raise



This line deals with 5,500 units – every day

his eyebrows, and even stifle a gasp of disbelief at such a statement, but both Malliris and Franklin were adamant.

The manufacturing process at Wing Kei Road begins on the tenth floor. The top floor is reserved for management and administration. On floor ten the wafer chips are cleaned in a series of high temperature vats in a machine designed and installed by Malliris himself. Racks of chips are plunged in and out of different chemical soups through 27 different steps, all controlled by computer, and untouched by human hands.

Stacked into another machine which strips them of surplus copper and bends their connectors into the familiar U shape, they are split into individual chips, and carried down to the ninth floor where they are settled into racks and injected with a plastic compound under extreme heat and pressure. The central nerve of each machine is encased.

The downward movement continues, past the research and development department (into which CTW was not invited) where faceless operatives in controlled environment suits worked in silence

behind closed doors. A floor below, the chips are tested in a department designed and built by Malliris.

"This was the first such test area in Hong Kong," he boasted, albeit without malice. "Now there are two more. The Chinese are such great copiers."

Efficient chips

Every single chip is subjected to three tests: parametric, analogue and audio-visual. Three women sit all shift in front of colour monitors watching for visual irregularities. "We only have about a one per cent failure rate at this stage," Malliris claimed.

Whisked out of the air conditioned environment again, the tested chips plunge past floors seven and six which are reserved for storage and maintenance, down to the fifth floor where they join two separate production lines.

At present, and for the foreseeable future, the Hong Kong factory only produced the C64 and the Amiga A500. Two lines wind their way through and down the factory separately, bypassing the fourth floor which is desig-

nated another storage area. PCBs appear recognisable as the production line runs smoothly through the hundreds of silent women.

"The Government, in effect, is the trade union in Hong Kong," Malliris explained. "It sets some regulations – although not wages – and arbitrates over serious problems. Women, for example, are not allowed to work overtime without permission, nor are they allowed to work overnight after the end of the 3pm to 11pm shift, although Government extensions can be applied for to meet particular manufacturing deadlines."

"Women are also restricted as to how much weight they are allowed to carry. In this factory a fully assembled 128D represents the maximum allowable weight."

The stacks of machines on the third floor represent the only bottleneck in the factory. Here the various resistors and connectors are inserted onto the PCBs by computer controlled robotic machines. "This area," Malliris continued, "is the production limiter. I can increase production on demand in every other unit in the building, but every machine must pass through here, and the machines aren't fast enough to cope with an increase in demand."

Gently I suggested that either more machines, or a redesign could alleviate the problem. Malliris looked through me. "We're talking millions here," he replied. "Many millions of dollars, US." It seemed pointless to continue.

As the chips join the PCBs, and the PCBs enter the chassis, so the Commodore computer becomes a recognisable product. Amigas and C64s leave the factory in various stages of completion.

"We manufacture mainly to keyboard finish standard," Malliris continued. "Every country requires a different keyboard or power supply, so it is only rarely that we have an order from one particular region large enough to justify its completion here. Mostly we dispatch nearly finished machines which are subjected

to final assembly in the country of destination."

Tall stories

As we talked on the first floor a line of C64s packed in presentation boxes for the UK came trundling along the line, as if to disprove the point. They teetered onto a line of rolling bearings and disappeared through a hole in the floor to the dispatch area.

Down on the ground floor two shipping containers were being manually loaded. Up to five containers a day leave the factory, depending on the stage of completion of their contents. Obviously, a container full of presentation packed 64s will not carry as many units as one full of Amigas without their keyboards. The container port is only a couple of miles away.

Back on the top floor, away from the surge of labour, Saturday afternoon continued. Only the shop floor works weekends, and the administration area was strangely quiet and empty. What limits were there?

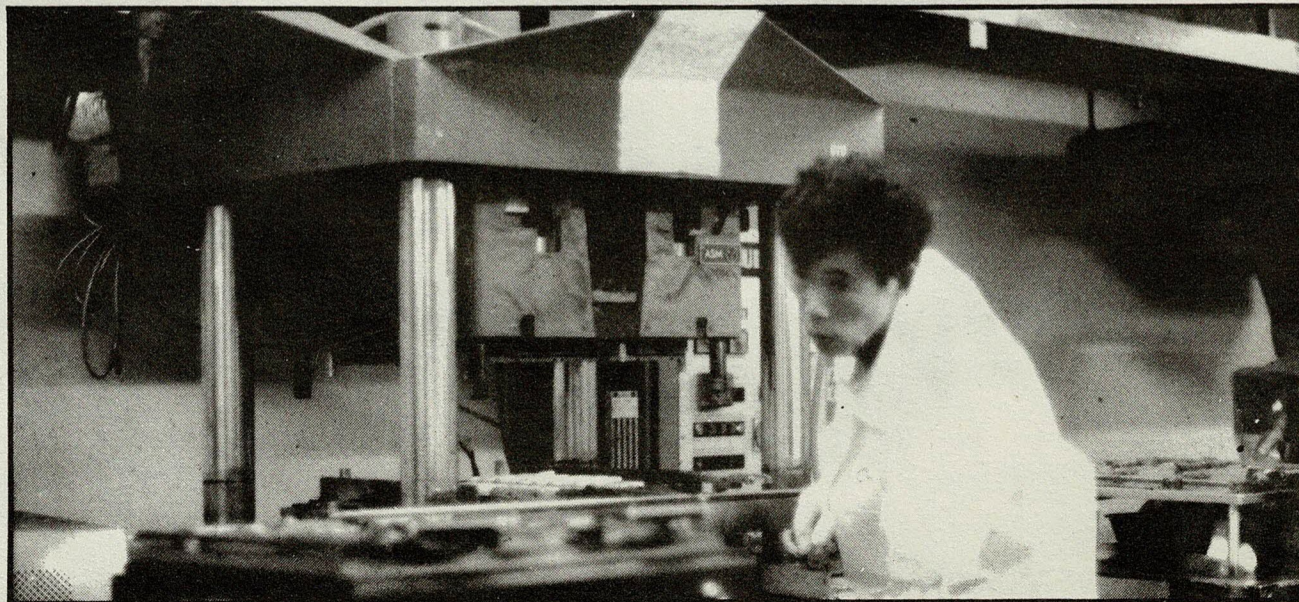
"Primarily we are limited by the availability of labour," Malliris repeated. The shortage is acute, and the competition for semi-skilled operatives is intense. Wages are governed by this labour shortage, and expansion is difficult because of it.

"Secondarily, the availability of land precludes physical expansion on this site. Unlike in the West where we might inhabit a site of several acres, of which adjoining parts may be developed when needed, here in Hong Kong it is impossible to expand laterally. If Commodore wished to dramatically increase the output from here, we would have to move to another site with an even taller building."

"Another factor limiting expansion is unrelated to both the land and labour situation," Tomkins intervened. "The D-Ram shortage is as much a factor in delaying any required expansion as anything else. We have been managing all right so far, probably better than anyone else, but I foresee the present situation obtaining for at least another twelve months. It has been made worse by the technological change in demand from 246 x 1K to 256 x 4K D-Rams."

Returning to Bangkok the next morning to rejoin the excellent ZCL dealer excursion (*That's quite enough puffery – Ed*) both Franklin and I found our conversation dominated by the realisation that the Commodore factory, its people and processes had been completely outside our experience. Although we are both familiar with the products it manufactures – he, hopefully, more than I – we both found ourselves strangely alienated by the enclosed, Chinese environment.

"Made in Hong Kong" had suddenly gained a new meaning.



The final result from this machine's labours measures less than an inch

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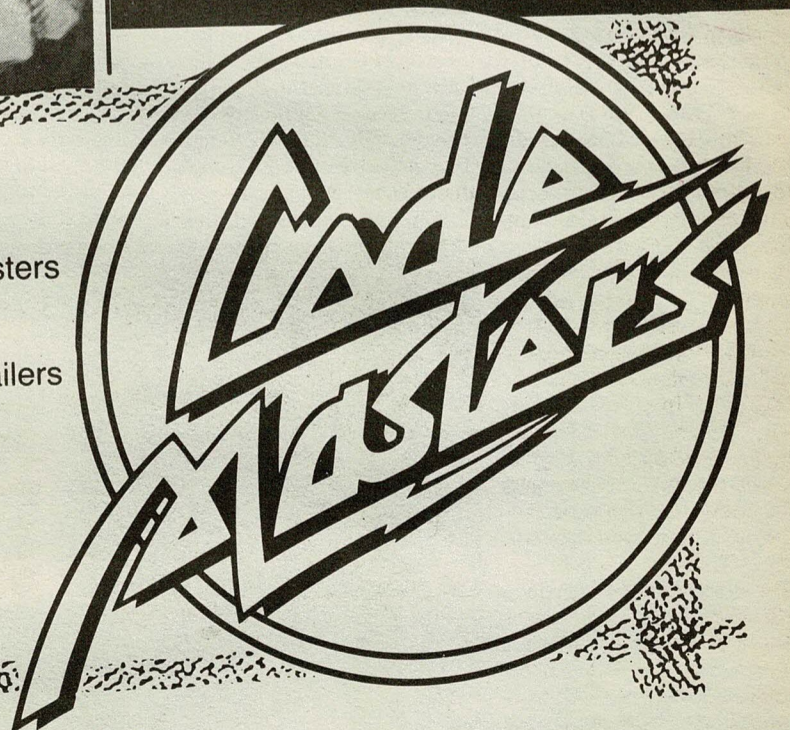
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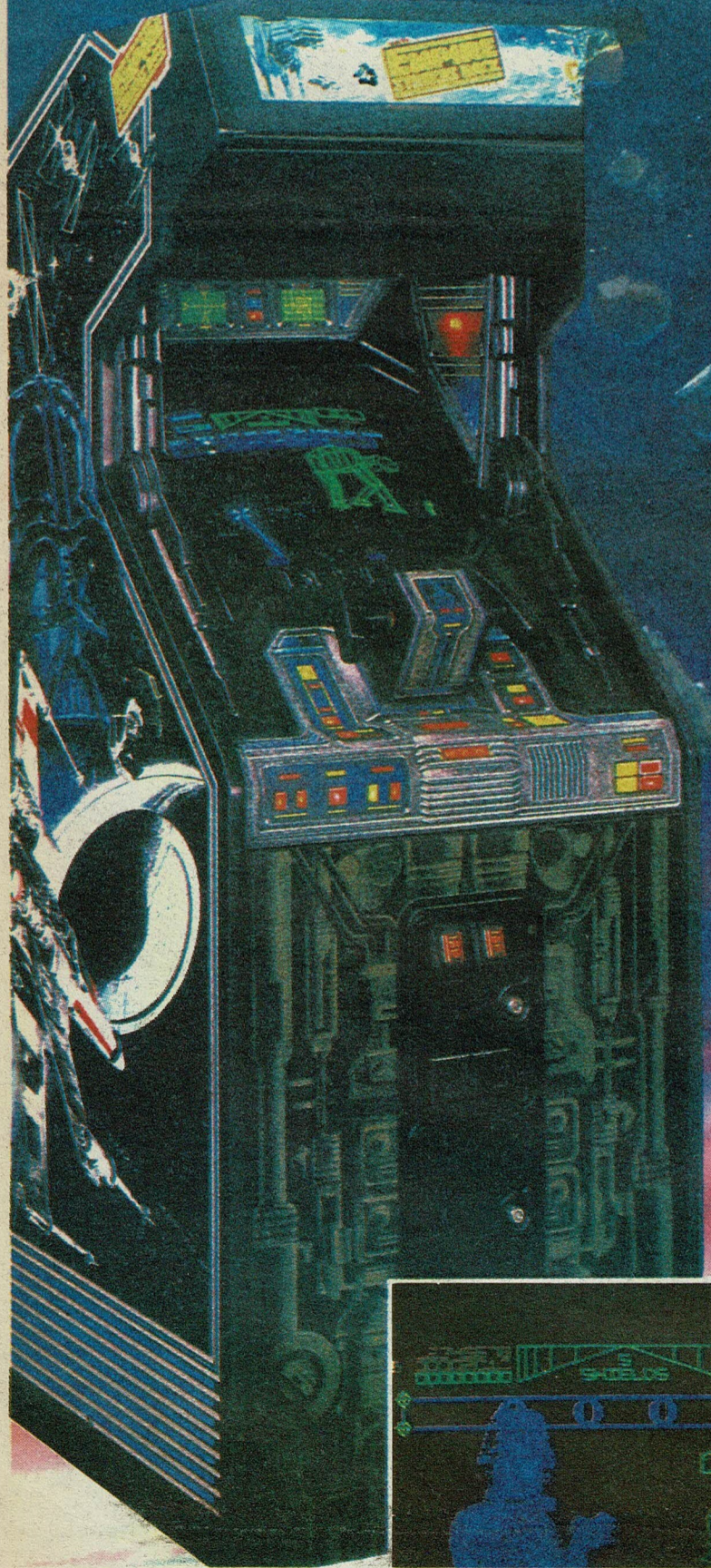
This game follows the non-stop action of the movie and is a direct conversion of the famous coin-op.

The player takes the role of Luke Skywalker, piloting a snow-speeder against the huge Imperial Walkers. Darth Vader controls his forces with deadly cunning, using his Probots to search and attack the Rebel Base.

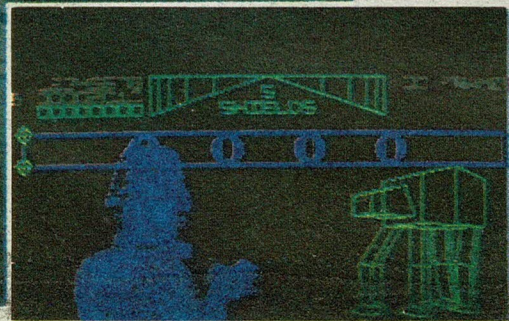
The action continues as the player becomes Han Solo in the Millennium Falcon, looking for safety in the galaxy whilst being attacked by Tie-Fighters and dodging asteroid storms.

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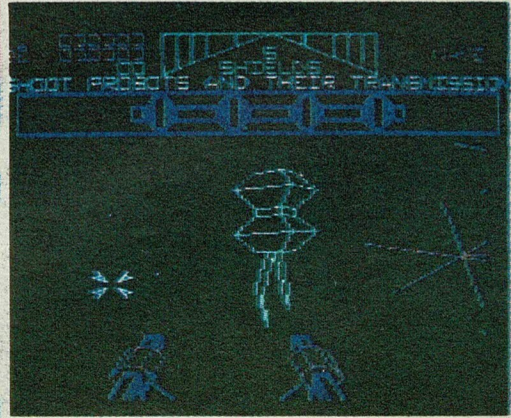
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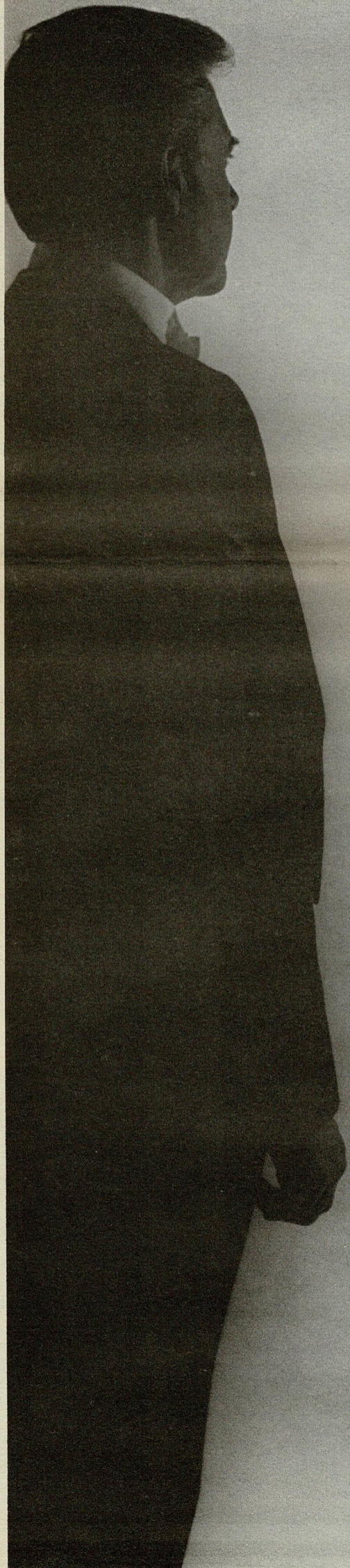
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PUTTING THE DRIVE IN AFTERMARKET SALES

Punters and dealers both are becoming increasingly familiar with the complex innards and workings of hardware. As such aftermarket sales of disk drives are increasing to those who want performance. PAUL LAVIN analyses the market and takes a look at Seagate which reckons on a boom. . .

Even if you have never sold a hard disk before, 1988 could be the year that you start. As part of the gradual demystification of the computer, its component parts are becoming accessible to everyone. Whether it's math coprocessors, memory or hard disks, upgrades are becoming a DIY endeavour.

As software became more sophisticated, users began to unbutton their PCs to add needed memory or change to a colour graphics card. Once they (and some dealers, too) became used to the sight of an undressed micro, fitting hard disks came within the realm of the end user or reseller.

Once almost all hard disks were sold almost entirely to OEMs; now aftermarket sales are increasing in importance to drive manufacturers. In the UK, Miniscribe, Seagate and Tandon are the aftermarket leaders. Miniscribe, has just opened a European headquarters in Newbury to service the

growing demand. It anticipates a tripling of distribution sales in the next three years. Seagate is looking at 25 per cent of their output to go down the aftermarket channel up from just 10 per cent a year ago.

Sales of hard disks are being driven by increased user demands on their micros. Where before a simple word processor or spreadsheet could easily fit on a single floppy, software houses are now publishing programs that come in ten disk sets. A hard disk went from being a high end option to a basic necessity.

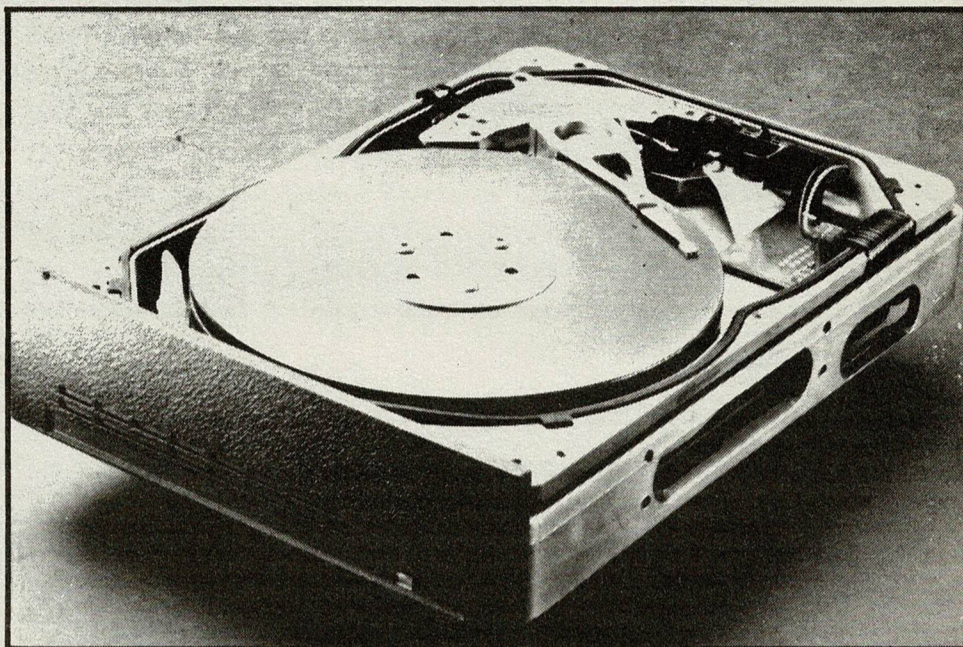
Faster chips like the 286 and 386 make nonsense of slow hard disks. Applications like file serving on networks and DTP that have to access large chunks of data quickly need high performance Winchester drives. Users are upgrading for performance.

Early hard disk machines came with 10 or even 5 mega-

byte hard drives. Now that OS/2 is (almost) here, and monster applications like the *Excel* spreadsheet and *Word-Perfect 5.0* are commonplace, the minimum size for hard disks has grown to 20 megabytes. Users are dumping their small capacity drives and turning to 30 and 40 megabyte units in droves. Over 50 per cent of the aftermarket drives fitted to Amstrad PCs are Miniscribe 30 Mbyte units, according to a Context dealer survey.

Driving forces

Resellers also need to look at fitting hard drives for profitability. OEMs often charge a premium for their own hard disks but you can get around expensive, poor performing or smallish drives by buying in floppy machines and doing the upgrade yourself. The punter gets what he wants at a price he's willing to pay and you make more money.



MINISCRIBE 3085: Capable

In some cases, like Amstrad, hard drive machines are periodically unavailable. Doing the necessary yourself may be the only way you'll make the sale.

If you want to get a piece of the action, you will need to learn some buzz words. Selling a punter a hard disk is a little more complicated than shoving a box across the counter and stuffing the till. Essentially there are just three things to know about; data encoding, controllers and interfaces.

The capacity of a drive is dictated by the number of platters (hard disks) inside the casing and the way the data is stored. Right now MFM is the market leader but RLL is coming on fast. An RLL drive can store 50 or 100 per cent more data on a hard disk of given size than an MFM unit. This makes RLL a price / capacity bargain.

Controllers come on expansion cards and tell the hard drive what to do. The controllers are connected to the drives by interfaces. The most

common, least expensive and slowest interface is the ST506 also known as the 412 in some circles. ESDI (Enhanced Small Device Interface) is growing in popularity because its ten-fold performance margin over the ST506 matches the new generation of high performance boxes.

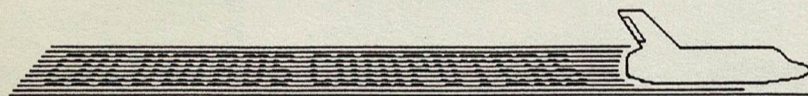
A third alternative interface is the SCSI, pronounced "scuzzy". SCSI allows drives to be daisy chained together, allowing end users to buy one controller / interface for up to

Continued on page 19

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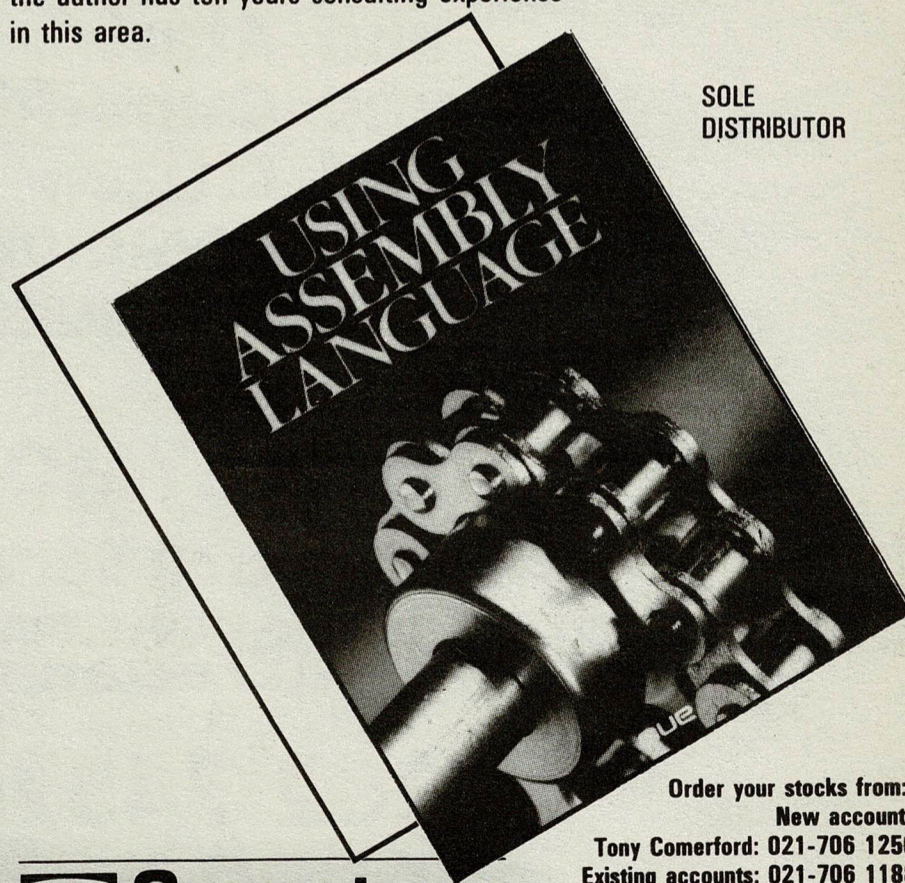
Telephone Steve Lockwood on

061 - 301 - 4320 or 061 - 370 - 2118 NOW!

Experience is showing that the high level languages simply cannot be used efficiently for all programming tasks, things like screen handling in Pascal leave much to be desired and even C cannot produce the speed of tightly coded assembler programming.

Que's new book is aimed at people who write at least one high level language already but are finding it restricting. It is a complete course in writing assembler, and the author has ten years consulting experience in this area.

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A NOTION ONCE AGAIN

Based in the economic backwaters of Ireland, Emerald Software claims to be the new force in software development. Lots of big ideas and promises are being bandied around concerning the terrible record of programmers. COLIN CAMPBELL visited the company which is determined not to become the little people of the software industry and asked how the plans can succeed where so many others have flopped. Pure genius? Well, there's more . . .



EMERALD: Is camaraderie enough to stem developing disasters?

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If there's one thing that completely sends software publishers berserk it's programmers slipping all important deadlines.

What with reviews and advertising tied up and the increasing fashion of simultaneous release schedules, bosses can be forgiven for tearing lumps of greying hair out and tearing strips off seemingly nonchalant programmers and development houses.

Programmers and developers will always emerge bleary eyed from their lairs and claim to be conscious of timing but all too often projects have been taken on which can't possibly be completed in time. And if they are there's something wrong with them.

Emerald Software is based far away from the marketing madcaps and it's citing a declaration of all things good and desirable about timing, quality and originality.

Snuggled in a Waterford labyrinth of electronic gadgetry are 23 terribly keen programmers doing their impenetrable things to beeping boxes and buzzing disk drives. They claim to be the bright young things of development who won't bust deadlines or submit rubbish and who won't take on projects which need to be rushed.

To make this stack up firm stresses that it has the financial support and backing to succeed. In short Emerald is partly owned by Software Communications (which publishes Martech) and partly owned by Emerald's managing director Mike Dixon.

Top o' th' marning

Emerald can afford to play around and turn down accounts because of a steady income from the Irish Government. Every time an employee is taken on the IDA (Irish Development Authority) injects some cash.

"The Irish Government don't have any shares, they just offer funding. It's very sweet," offered a clearly animated David Martin (Software Communication's boss).

Ireland also offers a ten per cent corporate tax for computer companies as opposed to 35 per cent in the UK. The reason why Ireland is so keen to attract computer companies is that it intends becoming Europe's electronics bastion.

The country is struggling to make ends meet and previous attempts to attract heavyweight industry has failed. This is mainly because the Irish Sea is about the most expensive stretch of water in the world making shipping costs unbearable. Computers

and electrical goods can be airfreighted and so, if the terms are good, computer companies can find a crock of gold in Ireland.

Nevertheless, it's the likes of IBM and Wang which are being wooed. The Irish had an unpleasant experience with Atari when it closed down a plant after receiving money for jobs. Thus, the games industry was tarnished.

"It took a lot of talk and persuasion because they needed to be convinced that games is a serious business," explains Dixon. "Their first reaction wasn't favourable because they'd been burnt by Atari in the cartridge days."

Ireland is a sad case in that it has the youngest population in Europe (two thirds of the population are under 25). It also possesses an enviable degree of well educated people particularly in the sciences. Many are unemployed. Emerald's pitch is that they are offering people a chance to work in their elected fields without having to rove to the US, Germany, England or Japan.

Colleges and universities in Dublin and Limerick are churning out high volumes of computer literates who would, on the whole, rather not go galavanting around the world in search of work. However, the chances in Ire-

land are still few and far between.

Indeed the members of Emerald appear to be well pleased with their lot. Unlike their UK programming cousins they don't seem to be in a world of their own and the familiar glazed eyes aren't apparent.

To be sure

Dixon and Martin have devised various strict lines of operation in order to back up their hopeful claims. Programmers are urged not to work until all hours of the night and projects are split into a number of deadlines rather than just one biggy.

The two bosses are obviously pleased with the atmosphere and camaraderie in the building. As with many young companies there is a heads down attitude. Dixon continually refers to them as "a great lot", "terrific bunch" and likes to commend their "loyalty".

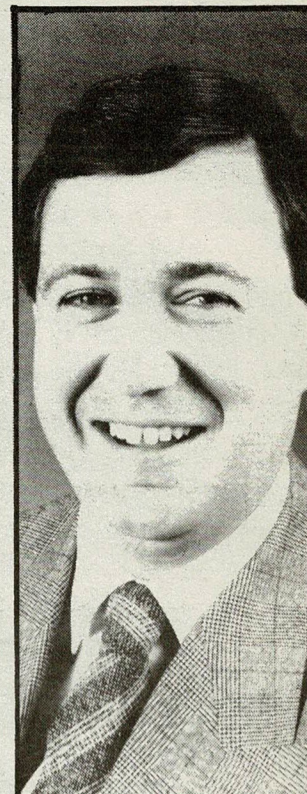
There's no reason to be cynical about such faith. Emerald is currently working with Datasoft, US Gold, Grand Slam and Martech. They have entrusted not insignificant products to Emerald.

"We've got Ireland's elite. They all aspire to come to Emerald," claims Dixon. It's not really surprising. These

are all young people who would much prefer a small games operation rather than an infinitely huge multi-national corporation.

"Our programmers haven't got bad habits such as some in the UK. We've moulded a new company and they are responding favourably," said Martin. Dixon added: "We've had a good opportunity because we've got experience. We're aware of the pitfalls. We've got a blank sheet, funding, presence and brains. These programmers are easier to handle than their UK counterparts."

A most unpleasant aspect of the programming world is now piracy. Fingers



DIXON: High hopes

have been pointed vaguely at this sector for getting games out before their releases. Some titles will turn up in Sweden before the UK launch.

It's a difficult subject to level at a programming house because it questions honesty and integrity. "Everybody here is pro Emerald. They want to show the world what they can do," said Dixon. Emerald has undertaken the legal requirements of issuing 'secrets' documents to all employees and coding is deposited in bank vaults for security and to avoid damage through fire.

Emerald is going blue blowing it's own trumpet and patting itself on the back for setting up in such an apparently advantageous and pleasant place as the South of Ireland. So why isn't everybody following suit?

Martin explains. "The IDA doesn't want companies fighting for the same people. It's not to their advantage because no new jobs are being created. It was hard enough to convince the IDA after the Atari business."

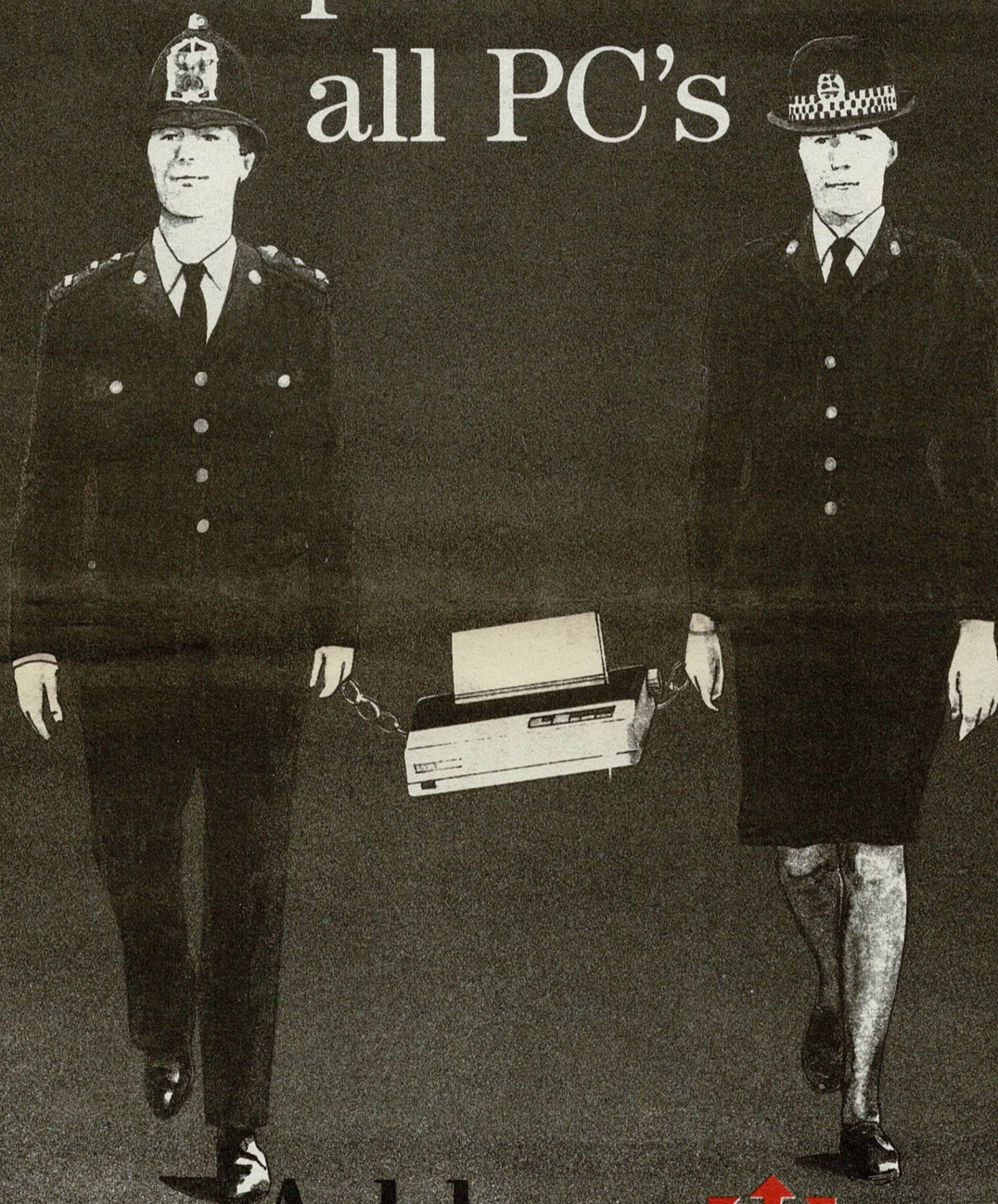
Nevertheless, if there is such a pool of talent in Ireland there should be more people available than 23. And with all the incentives on offer it appears likely that someone else will try persuading the IDA. In the meantime Emerald is building itself up for expansion and keeping a tentative eye open for new premises. Dixon reckons the number of programmers will be up to 40 by the end of the year.

Martin himself has first hand experience of programmers screwing up. Martech pulled out of a contract with Andromeda for the C64 version of Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix after delays and claims that it was being developed on "antiquated equipment". Martech itself has had to finish the project.

But for all the assurances that things will be done on time it's worth remembering that something always goes wrong with coding. Bugs are continually showing up and if the situation is better now than previously, it's only marginal.

Publishers hoping for the day when this will all be a thing of the past would be better advised to ask the little people where the end of the rainbow is . . .

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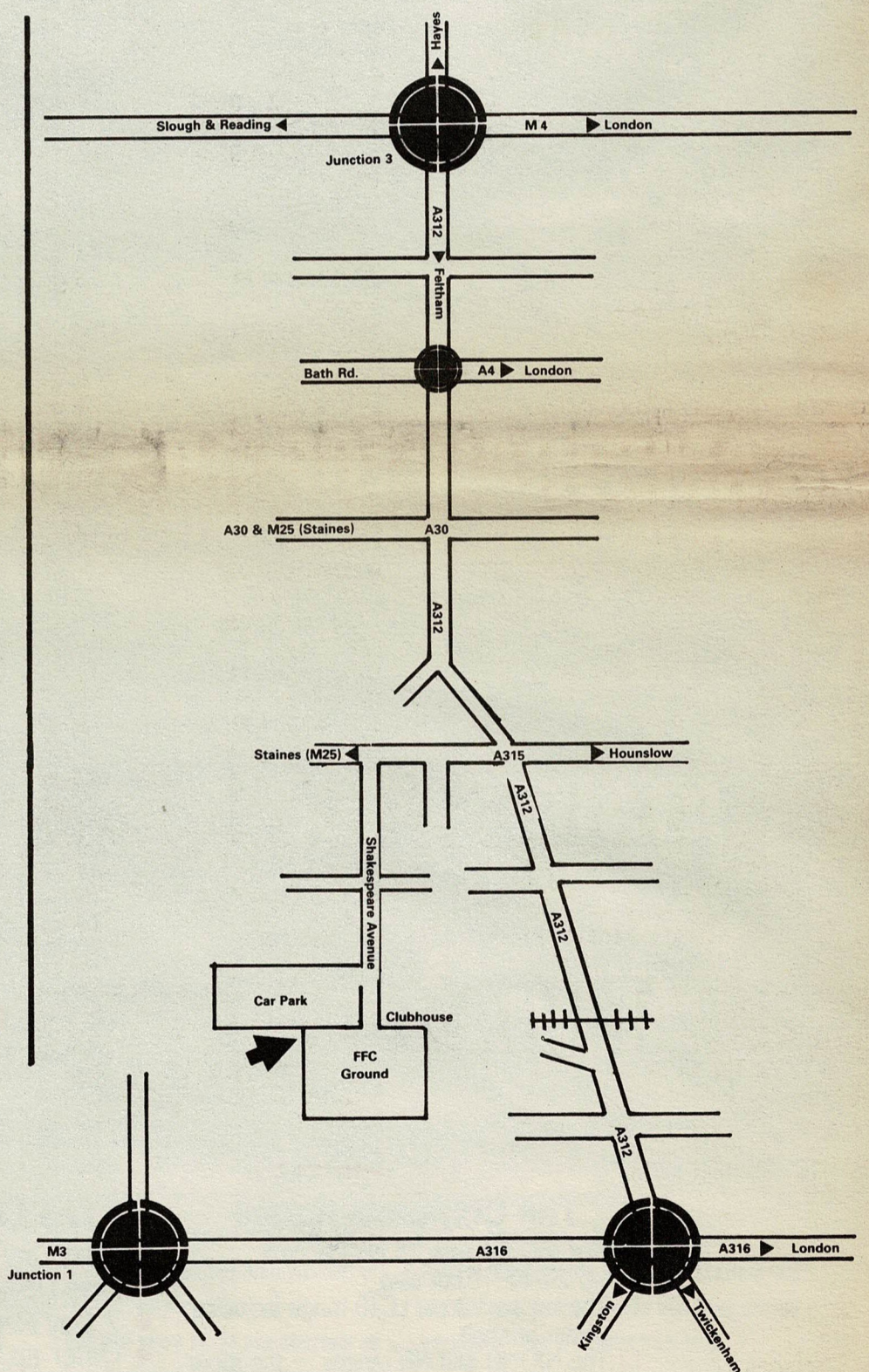
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Grandslam thanks CTW for its support with this special announcement; all players and Umbro - the official England team outfitters.

SPECTRUM TOP 20

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1	1	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
2	6	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
3	7	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	7.95
4	3	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
5	10	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
6	5	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
7	4	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
8	8	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
9	2	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	19	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
11	9	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
12	16	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
13	23	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
14	14	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
15	25	BIONIC COMMANDO	GO!	8.99
16	RE	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
17	18	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
18	17	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
19	13	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
20	27	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99

C64 TOP 20

1	10	BIONIC COMMANDO	GO	9.99
2	3	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
3	6	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
4	22	PAC-LAND	QUICKSILVA	9.99
5	7	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
6	5	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
7	1	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
8	9	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
9	NE	NIGHT RACER	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
10	19	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
11	14	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
12	2	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
13	17	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
14	35	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
15	11	BRUCE LEE	AMERICANA	2.99
16	38	SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER	REACT	1.99
17	27	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99
18	4	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
19	12	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	9.95
20	24	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99

AMSTRAD TOP 10

1	NE	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
2	5	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
3	1	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
4	6	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
5	2	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	4	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
7	RE	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
8	RE	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
9	11	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99
10	RE	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

1	7	DUNGEON MASTER	MIRRORSOFT	24.99
2	3	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.99
3	4	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	14.95
4	1	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	19.95
5	2	GAUNTLET 2	US GOLD	19.99

AMIGA TOP 5

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3	2	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	19.99
4	NE	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	19.95
5	NE	BLACK LAMP	FIREBIRD	19.95

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

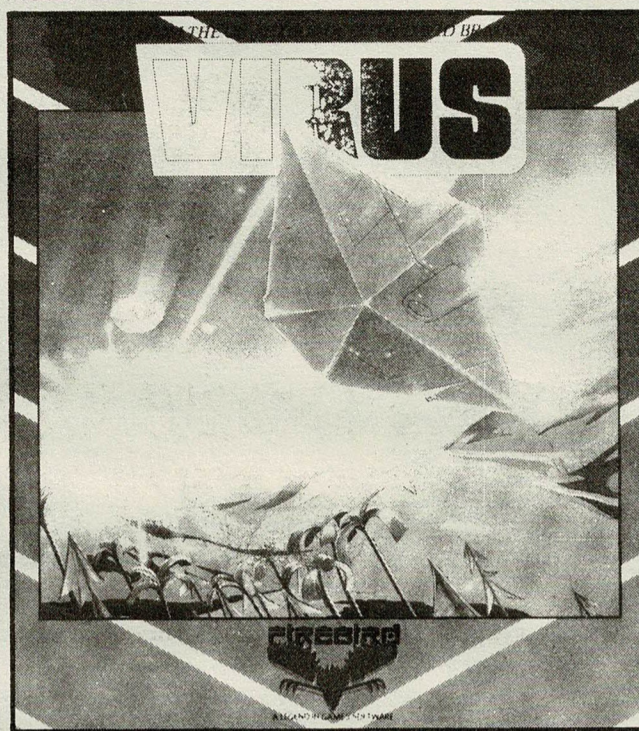
Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
SPECTRUM	44.8	45.5	45.6	48.6	25.7	31.7	20.0	27.0
COMMODORE 64	27.4	21.7	21.9	21.5	26.5	22.5	23.5	24.5
AMSTRAD	19.1	17.3	18.1	16.3	16.6	17.1	18.8	17.6
ATARI ST	3.5	4.9	4.4	3.2	6.8	8.2	7.0	6.5
COMMODORE 16	2.6	2.6	2.1	2.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	4.3
AMIGA	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.0	3.8	3.2	3.0	2.3
BBC	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.1	2.9	3.1	3.1	4.0
ELECTRON	0.9	1.3	1.3	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.7	3.1
ATARI	0.9	0.6	1.9	1.2	1.9	1.3	3.6	2.9

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
80	70	106	133

Soft options

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



▲ **ACCOLADE: Mini-Putt** (SpAm - £8.96 - £14.95) A crazy golf game complete with as many variations as the firm could possibly fit in. Accolade is of course handled by Electronic Arts.

▲ **CCS: Desert Rats** (PC - £19.95) Those much respected war people with another conversion of another battle. This time it's the North African campaign.

▲ **CODE MASTERS: Super Hero** (SpAm - £1.99) Nobody will be entirely surprised to learn that the Coders reckon this to be as good as any full price product this year. It's so nice of them to offer such splendid games to the kiddies for pocket money.

▲ **ENTERTAINMENT INTERNATIONAL: Fire and Forget** (AgST - £24.99) US Gold is screaming blue murder about this claiming that it's a direct rip off of *Road Blasters*. Gold says that the copyright laws in the UK are too weak for it to take action but it is understood that Atari Games is considering legal moves in the US.

Distributions are taking *Fire and Forget* at their peril since Gold is cutting margins of *Road Blaster* to those who do.

▲ **FIREBIRD: Intensity** (Sp64 - £7.95 - £12.95) From the author of *Uridium* and *Paranoid* this is erm, pretty much the same as *Uridium* and *Paranoid*.



▲ **GREMLIN Night Raider** (64AgPC - £9.99 - £14.99) Promising aircraft carrier cum fighter plane game from US Gold's side kick. It might be overshadowed by Gremlin's biggy *Mickey Mouse* but should find its way into the charts nonetheless.

▲ **LLAMASOFT: Trip-A-Tron** (ST - £34.95) Lights and patterns to accompany sound electronic scatchings from the likes of Bauhaus, Pink Floyd, Kraftwerk and New Order.

▲ **LOGOTRON: Sargon III** (PCAg - £24.95) Paraded as the most sophisticated chess game ever to appear from the US, *Sargon III* is claimed to have taken 21 man years to develop. The game won a major magazine chess tournament and will be backed by full page advertising here and there. An unusual step by all accounts.

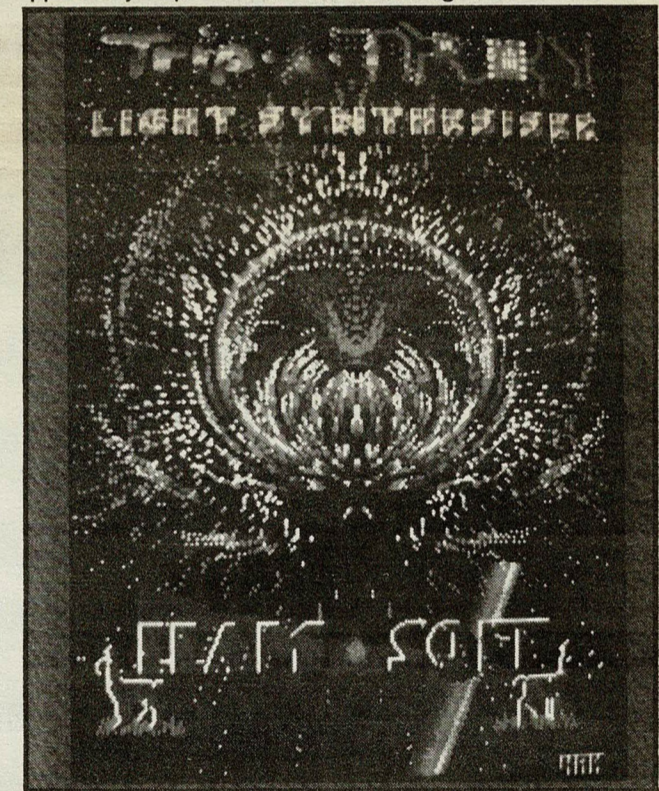
▲ **LOGOTRON: Starray** (Ag - £24.95) Logotron's Herbert Wright has been wandering around the industry for some months now proselytising on how absolutely amazing this offering is. Judging by the reaction by German reviewers (where the game originates) this shoot 'em up may go far and Wright may be right.

▲ **LORICIELS: Eddie Edwards' Super Ski** (STAMPC - £9.99 - £24.99) Why Edwards became popular for being awful is beyond logical explanation. Loricel has promptly leaped onto the bandwagon (which has

▲ **GAMEBUSTERS: Hades Nebula** (64 - £2.99) Predictable budget shoot 'em up from Cascade's newly formed budget label. The blurb says it's "surprisingly" addictive, which doesn't say much for first impressions.

▲ **GREMLIN Night Raider** (64AgPC - £9.99 - £14.99) Promising aircraft carrier cum fighter plane game from US Gold's side kick. It might be overshadowed by Gremlin's biggy *Mickey Mouse* but should find its way into the charts nonetheless.

▲ **LLAMASOFT: Trip-A-Tron** (ST - £34.95) Lights and patterns to accompany sound electronic scatchings from the likes of Bauhaus, Pink Floyd, Kraftwerk and New Order.



▲ **THE POWER HOUSE: Test Match** (Am - £1.99) This CRL re-release is amongst an avalanche of launches from the budget underdogs including *Formula One*, *Star Fortress* and *Battle Ball*. It's a good job this one isn't endorsed by the England Cricket team or it would be sure to flop.

▲ **US GOLD: Road Blasters** (SpAm64STAg) The other side of the *Fire and Forget* argument (see above). The game itself is a coin-op from Atari Games featuring a heavily weaponed car blasting all sorts.

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 = Atari VCS 2600 console; MSX = very unlikely.

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SPEAKEASY

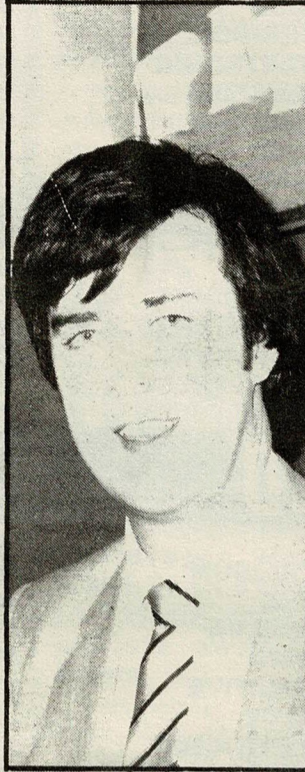
William, it was really nothing

Well, it's a shame the local post office went back to work, or I might never have been forced to waste my time reading the drivel you placed against my outstanding letter to your once-noble organ (CTW July 4th). I'm afraid, old son, it's you who have the wrong end of this stick, because it is precisely the confusion in terminology that you suffer from that my letter sets out to clarify.

I expect that you will now feel obliged to waste acres of newsprint in the attempt to try and provide some credible substance for your misguided definitions to further mislead your already confused reader.

Yours etc
William Poel
Paperback Software UK
Brentwood
Essex

PS Will you be able to print this without taking your usual last snide swipe at a defenceless correspondent, in a pathetic attempt to prove to your mum and aunty that your intellect is at least equivalent to the dimensions



POEL: Paperback writer

of a small planet? I doubt it. PPS I want paying for helping fill your pages during these quiet times. PPPS Who's Graeme Kidd?

SPEAKEASY

More SOR points

I run the computing department of a bookshop in Bristol, stocking a wide range of computer-related books, and also games and business software for a variety of machines.

After reading John Barker's letter regarding Sale or Return terms on software (CTW June 20th), I thought it might interest readers of CTW that the book publishing trade already relies on Sale or Return as a normal part of book-selling. Any publisher who does not give SOR terms is virtually ostracized by booksellers, who will often refuse to stock their titles. The book trade, including the publishers, seem quite happy with this system, and is showing no signs of falling apart at the seams because of it.

I agree with Mr Barker that it would be a good thing for the software trade in general if SOR became standard practice; however, I still remember the great Creative Sparks Crash from last year. When they went bust, we were left with a substantial amount of dead stock which we have only recently got rid of. One of the reasons given for the crash was that they were offering SOR terms.

There is also the question

of what the publishers or distributors would do with all the returned product; book publishers simply return them to stock, to sell to someone else later, but this is probably not on for software unless you can do a deal with Amstrad or Atari to bundle the oldies with some hardware.

This highlights the essential difference between the two markets: a book which does not sell now is quite likely to sell later, since bnooks do not tend to go out of date. At the risk of stating the obvious, if a piece of software does not sell quickly, there is always something new and better coming along in a week or two which will replace it, and then it will never sell. CSD must have gotten stuck with a lot of dead stuff themselves!

Despite the advantages to the retailer which SOR terms on software would provide, this sort of reasoning inside the software houses and distributors should make sure that the idea never gets off the ground.

Yours sincerely
Paul Taylor
Manager,
Computer Bookshop
Park Street Bristol

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Another chapter

As you are aware Corvus has recently announced that it is taking advantage of the Chapter 11 facility available to it under US Law (CTW July 11th). For your fuller understanding and to enable you to respond to any questions, the following notes should be of assistance.

1. Chapter 11 is a facility which, under US law, may be used by companies which have definite economic strengths to reorganise their affairs and overcome economic difficulties.
2. This facility is commonly used and, in recent years, such companies as Con-

tinental Airlines and Texaco have taken advantage of Chapter 11. In fact during the course of 1985 over 20,000 companies took advantage of Chapter 11.

3. It is important that you know that during the financial year 1987/88 Corvus reversed its previously unprofitable situation and will declare a profit when the accounts for the year ended 30th May 1988 are published.
4. The assets of Corvus currently exceed its liabilities by almost 2 million dollars.

Why therefore has Corvus taken advantage of Chapter 11?

As you know, with the introduction of Omninet/4 and the significant enhancement of PC/NOS Corvus is in a position to make a significant impact on the entry level local area network market.

In addition Corvus has recently signed significant OEM deals and has others in various stages of completion.

In order to have significant success in both these areas, Corvus has to conserve cash and at the same time reorganise itself to manage the opportunities as effectively as possible.

Under Chapter 11, Corvus has this ability, along with the opportunity to evaluate additional funding opportunities.

Whilst in Chapter 11, Cor-

vus will continue to operate normally and its relationship with its customers can only be enhanced rather than diminished.

The trading activities of Corvus (UK) Ltd., as a company incorporated in the United Kingdom, are in no way affected.

Please be assured of our continuing support and, should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the management team in Henley.

Yours sincerely,
Tony Gibbon
 Managing Director
 Corvus Systems (UK)
 Henley
 Oxon

Look in the mirror

With regard to Ian Tindale's article on the Atari ST (CTW July 4th), I feel I must challenge his last sentence ("... no decent page-making software seems to have surfaced for the ST - yet!")

Mirrorsoft's *Fleet Street Publisher* is the most advanced page make up software available for the ST, a fact confirmed by Atari's adoption of the program for inclusion in their DTP kit. *Fleet Street Publisher* is now capable of driving a Linotron 202 professional typesetting machine,

and in fact this combination was used to typeset the most recent Maxwell Communication Corporation Annual Report and Accounts.

Several typesetting firms are showing an interest in introducing the ST with *Fleet Street Publisher* as a friendly front-end, and one can only assume that they regard the software as 'decent page-making software'!

Yours sincerely
Pat Bitton
 Marketing director
 Mirrorsoft
 London EC4

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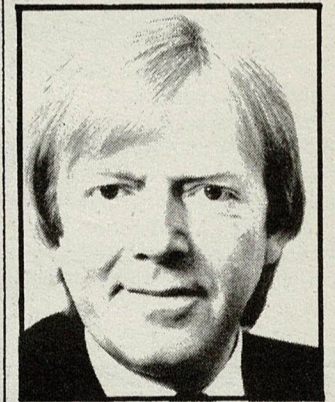
Continued from page 13
 seven drives. SCSI controller are faster, too, and will probably reach the popularity of the ST506 eventually.

Trying lizards

Compatibility is required. You won't see any smiles if you combine an RL drive with a ST506 interface, meant for a MFM drive. The whole job of getting the right bits lined up is being made much easier by embedded controllers and interfaces that are all part of the drive itself. It's just plug in and go.

Go straight to the low level format program, that is. Before a hard disk is ready for installing *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*, the disk must be prepped with both a low level formatter and the usual DOS format software. Depending on the size of the disk, it takes only 15 minutes or so.

You can make some costly mistakes with hard disks. Although they are more rugged than they used to be, drop one on a concrete floor and you've said goodbye to a couple of hundred quid. When installed, Winchester are even more susceptible to bumps and vibration. Never more a running machine that contains a winnie.



BESWARICK: Reliability first

Head parking programs are now available to move the bits and bobs inside to a safe position before you pack up the box for deliver. The static charge that you build up shuffling across the carpet can fry the electronics on drives and controllers. Handle them with the same care you give memory boards or graphics adapters.

When it comes to selecting a drive, Tony Beswarick, distribution sales manager for Miniscribe says "Reliability comes first, second and third. No matter how good the price is, nobody wants an unreliable hard disk."

"Bargains" can be anything but. If you stick to one of the major suppliers, it's a matter of sorting out who is going to give you the best margin and support.

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Gold: more flak

Continued from front page

backside and complain but this time I am," began Roy Stoker, the boss of Barrow-based Master Micro. "It's a rip off right the way down the line. They say that they'll be using the extra profit for more advertising. But sod the advertising: I can do my own."

"And I don't believe that they'll put all the extra money into advertising: I don't believe in fairies."

"If they want to stop the discounting, they should reduce their prices. That way everyone would still be happy and the customers would gain."

At Softly Softly in Milton Keynes, Caroline Picking offered: "It absolutely stinks. They've got to remember that these days only one in ten of their titles is any good and that's all we'll be taking now. If we let US Gold get away with it then we could all have very big problems since the others will just follow."

On the prospect of the money being reinvested to fund growth for all, she said: "Reinvest my arse. I just don't believe it. It's 99 per cent greed and one per cent trying to get away with it."

Retailer anger is also being directed at the distributors for "capitulating" to the Gold terms.

Though it is always the case in such matters that it is only those with complaints who bother to make contact, the apparent level of disquiet is nonetheless presumably of concern to Gold. From dealer reaction offered to - not sought by - CTW, it is clear that at the very least the firm has made a fundamental mistake in the manner and timing of its new policy.

Commodore back on the box

Continued from front page

the machine's capabilities.

Amstrad, as always, is choosing not to release any details concerning advertising plans, arguing that it would like to surprise rivals. As the industry's biggest spender on the small screen it is likely that both Commodore and Atari will be keeping a close eye on any figures cited. For the moment the industry is rife with predictions - some a trifle fantastic.

Mirror shows Image

Continued from front page:

losed that Mirrorsoft has clinched a back catalogue budget deal with Telecomsoft, although Bilotta himself was reluctant to comment.

In effect, Mirrorsoft appears to have been marking time in preparation for the new label. It claims to be fully aware of the general perception of it as a sleeping giant, and Imageworks thus signals an attempt to break from its past. Also, with the increasing importance of its DTP and small business packages published as Mirrorsoft, there was a need to separate out its games activities.

Amstrad ties Computacenter

Amstrad has made a specific foray into the corporate market with the appointment of Computacenter as its twelfth business distributor.

Traditionally, Computacenter has been involved in microcomputer systems and its identity lies in the corporate sector. The appointment comes at a time when talk of Amstrad high end machines is at its most audible.

Computacenter appears to have been attracted by Am-

strad's autumn business line up of AT, 386 and PS/2 machines as well as its existing PC line up. The 14 strong Computacenter retail chain will take Amstrad product but since that is geared toward the very high end of the market they will, in all probability, be next generation Amstrad micros.

Malcolm Miller, Amstrad's group sales and marketing director offered: "They have an enviable reputation in the corporate sales market and our product range is moving deeper into that sector." He added: "Their customer base and top class dealer network

will help us to maintain growth in this area."

Computacenter's marketing director Richard Knowles acknowledged that Amstrad's appearance in the corporate market would make it an attractive option. "The first range of Amstrad machines, whilst well priced, didn't fit into this market," he told CTW.

"You read about these autumn launches in the press. We need to be allied with solid manufacturers with good products and if Amstrad comes up into the corporate market then we'll sell the machines."



CORPORATE SHIFT: Miller with Computacenter's chairman Peter Ogden

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