

Lombard
PC **rally**

Nov 8: Atari ST
Nov 15: Amiga
Nov 22: PC

See Page 8

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7.11.88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 211

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Genic sees profits fall

Mediagenic has blamed delays and Nintendo cartridge shortages for a drop in profits for the second quarter of fiscal year 1989 ending October 1st.

Although turnover increased by 14 per cent compared to the equivalent period in 1988 profits dropped from \$1.5 million to just \$0.2 million.



DAVIS: Profit droop

This gives the firm a turnover of \$26.4 million for this fiscal year's first six months with profits falling from \$2.0 million to \$0.6 million in that half year period.

The profit drop was not entirely unexpected having been

Continued on page two

CBM profits and appoints

Commodore appointed two more distributors last week, whilst announcing a near doubling in first quarter profits.

Akhter offshoot MSL and year-old operation Microbrokers have both been taken on to bolster CBM UK's business push.

The move swiftly follows the introduction of new configurations and lower prices across the manufacturer's range of 286 and 386 machines (CTW October 31st).

Commodore International's profits for the three months ending September 30th showed a 92 per cent increase — before an extraordinary item — to \$9.6 million. This compares to profits of \$5 million in the same period last year.

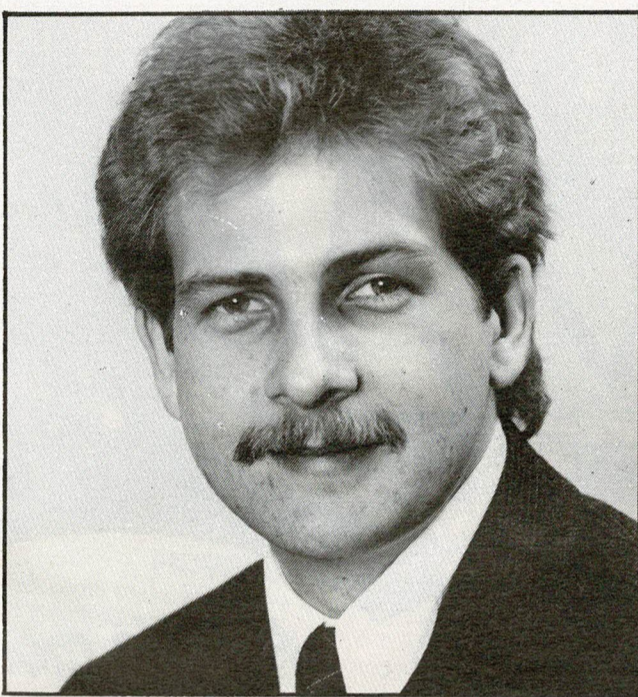
The extraordinary item had increased 1987's first quarter profits to \$6.3 million due to a tax loss carryforward. Sales rose 15 per cent during the period, from \$173.9 million last year to \$200.2 million in 1988.

The two new appointments bring the number of Commodore business distributors up to five, the others being Lightning, Addons and Micro Peripherals. The firm is also understood to be looking to add one more.

"We liked the aggressive professionalism of both companies," began Commodore's business division sales manager Andrew Cornish.

"Many distributors are turning to Commodore because they realise that they will not have the opportunity to grow with Amstrad as Am-

Continued on page two



CORNISH: Signing two more for business

Gold finds new labels

US Gold has signed a five year deal with US leisure publisher Lucasfilm Games — and is promising two more US tie-ups in the new year.

Lucasfilm — formerly an Activision stronghold — is one of the more prestigious US labels, and US Gold expects to be releasing up to six products a year.

Part of the deal is that Lucasfilm itself will have a higher profile in the UK, sharing equal or better billing to the US Gold name. This apparently was one of the major reasons behind the US firm's decision to split from Activision.

The first two major licences gained as a result of the tie-up are Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders and Battle-

Continued on page two

Gem wins Borland slice

Gem has become the first firm appointed since Borland's major distribution shake-up back in March.

Until last week the US firm had dealt exclusively through Frontline, Softsel and Software Limited in the UK. This was after terminating deals with Lightning, P&P and Altor (CTW March 21st).

Gem is pitching the deal as a notable feather in its business software cap. "To have a full portfolio of product in the part of the market we're in you have

to have Borland," commented Gem director Paul Donnelly to CTW.

"This was the one we really wanted and needed — it's the missing link, if you like."

Borland, however, is being very careful in its clarification of the Gem tie-up so as not to upset its other three distributors. It is pointing out that Gem has a vastly different dealer base to Frontline, Softsel and Software Limited. Also, Gem will not immediately be handling the £450 Paradox database

or the £199 Sprint word-processor.

"Gem has strong links in the lower end of the market. They'll be concentrating on things like the language products," offered Borland's UK boss Denis Moran to CTW.

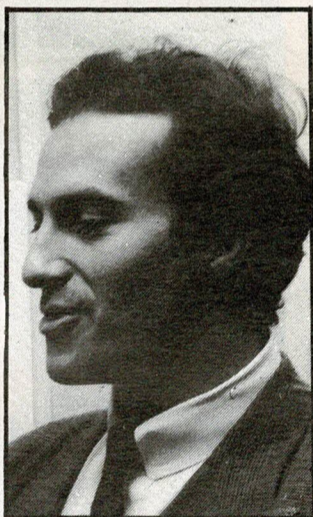
"Let's put it this way, the other three distributors have done a very good job — and yes, I want to play fair with each of them. With Gem we're taking our products into an area of the market where we're not strong enough."

Another major advantage

of the deal is that Borland can now get its products into Dixons — which only buys business software from Gem.

Donnelly added that whilst Borland has historically pitched its low-cost products into the full-price market, Gem is not preparing for a move up-market.

"This deal is recognition of the fact that the market is split between what you might call clonesoft and the top-end business packages. There's no doubt now that we're the biggest distributor in the low-end.



MORAN: Careful on Gem deal

INSIDE:

DESK TOP GRAFFITI

In the first of an irregular Dealer Stockwatch feature CTW sifts through the growing mound of DTP packages and sorts out the good the bad and the completely useless..... 12

FULL PRICE FALL OUT

CTW looks at a game's passage from full-price product to budget bargain bin and the boost in sales such a transition can give..... 17

SCHNEIDER COMMENTS

The latest PC range to hit the UK is from German firm Schneider, previously best known for falling out with Amstrad. CTW looks at its chances of success..... 18

BUDGET FEATURE SIMULATOR

In the second of a two-part look at the budget market, CTW looks at the current trends and discovers that any old rubbish will sell as long as it mentions BMX, Ninjas or simulators and preferably all three. Well, up to a point..... 22

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New trade show kicks into life

All sectors of the trade last week reacted enthusiastically to the launch of a new trade-only show.



BUSINESS DESIGN CENTRE: New trade show home

The European Computer Trade Show is being sponsored by *Computer Trade Weekly* and will be organised by Database Exhibitions. VNU trade publication *PC Dealer* has also indicated that it will be backing the show.

The three day event will be held at London's Business Design Centre from April 16-18 next year. The show is being pitched as an across the board-business to entertainment — trade show featuring all leading manufacturers, distributors, dealers and software houses.

A "functional setting" is being offered to exhibitors and visitors alike. If achieved, this will be far different from the carousel stands and crowded gangways of other non-trade events.

Several major industry figures have already reacted favourably to the show. "It's a most interesting concept — and one that must surely provide major benefits for the industry

as a whole," said Atari's UK boss Bob Gleadow.

Commodore's UK boss Steve Franklin commented: "I think it's a good idea. But, to be quite frank, if you are looking to get the big boys it will have to be weighted towards dealer attendance."

Lee Ginty, boss of leisure distributor Microdealer International added: "We want up to four stands if that's possible. We've always wanted a trade-only show and we're delighted that CTW and Database have got together to come up with the goods."

In all, there will be some 150 uniform stands made available priced at £2,300 each. All units will consist of a four by two metre meeting room and a three by two metre sales counter area.

The stands will be completely furnished, including telephone. Only major manufacturers will be offered space to erect feature stands.

In addition, there will be an

office service support centre set up to provide a full range of equipment. Exhibitors will also be able to take advantage of the Business Design Centre's wide selection of hospitality suites.

A major promotional campaign to attract key players from abroad is kicking off next week at Comdex in the US, this will then switch to Europe.

The European Computer Trade Show will also feature a series of industry seminars, carefully screen trade invitations and attempt to ban all advertising salespeople.

"We may be sponsoring the event and Database may be organising it, but this show is for the benefit of the industry as a whole. We invite all interested trade bodies to come and join us," commented CTW publisher Tom Stock.

Guy Hibbert, publisher of *PC Dealer*, added: "We're talking to the organisers at the moment about collaboration to support the business end."

Atari goes solo on chip project

Atari now looks set to launch its own chip manufacturing plant in around six months in an attempt to combat the worldwide D-ram shortage.

This would ultimately be a long-term remedy to the D-ram problem. In the shorter term, Atari was last week known to be tying up a separate deal which could alleviate current

difficulties almost immediately — although details at time of press were scant.

Atari's plant will certainly not be located in the US due to costs. A European location, however, has not been ruled out with Germany being among the front runners.

One of the reasons this has turned into a solo project for Atari is the reluctance of major US chip producers to enter the D-ram market, due to fears of

increased Japanese production creating a glut in the 1990s.

The Atari plant itself will take around two years to compete. It is expected to cost somewhere in the region of \$100-\$200 million to develop.

This independent stance from Atari contrast's with Amstrad's decision to co-invest in D-ram production with existing manufacturer Micron Technology in the US.

Atari UK, meanwhile, was keen to stress that the whole area is very much a US controlled operation. All the British arm would offer was that "the fulfilment of the project will have a strong beneficial effect on our business".

Gold labels

Continued from front page

hawk — 1942. These are being pitched as 'state-of-the-art' 16-bit products, and subsequently Gold will only be converting them down to C64 — claiming that neither the Spectrum or Amstrad CPC can cope with each game's code.

Gold boss Geoff Brown, however, doesn't consider the Lucasfilm move as a necessary 'beefing up' of its 16-bit strength. "We're quite happy with our position in the 16-bit market. If you look at the Gallup figures it shows that we're actually quite strong," he told CTW.

The deal includes rights to

computer game versions of forthcoming films such as *Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade* and any future *Star Wars* films.

Brown is promising that games such as *Indiana Jones* will appear across all major formats.

This is Gold's first new US label for some time. The signing of two more in the new year would further enable the firm to keep up its usual number of releases, obviously with an eye already on Autumn 1989.

"The main reason these other people are coming to us is because they're tired with the people they're already with. We've always been aggressive regarding the signing of new labels," added Brown.

CBM profits

Continued from front page

strad itself has grown. "Cornish told CTW the firm is also looking to appoint further distributors for sales into the public sector. It has already tied up deals with Kelator and 3SL and talks have begun with Eltec.

Microbrokers is something of an unknown quantity in the distribution field. It is part of the Osiris group — a specialist buying service for corporate clients.

Sales manager Geoff Caddick told CTW: "We're small, but we really are hungrier and through our parent company we already have hooks into people buying other PCs.

Commodore has been criticised in the past for its marketing and launches. We hope to get across that credibility gap. Really, there hasn't been any good news for the company since the PET."

Commodore's latest worldwide financial results mirror the recent turnaround for the firm. Full-year profits doubled in 1987 to nearly \$56 million.

The company once again attributed the increased profits to operating efficiencies and a shift in product mix toward higher priced product.

Genic fall

Continued from front page

predicted by Mediagenic president Bruce Davis back in August. Last week Davis was talking of "substantial numbers of delays" from the firm's numerous affiliates being at the heart of the fall.

Davis also pointed out the adverse affect the shortage of Nintendo cartridges has had on Mediagenic. For although there is great demand in the states for any Nintendo games the majority of cartridges that do become available go straight to Nintendo itself.

Mediagenic being just a third party publisher has to make do with any that are left to produce its titles on.

The Nintendo dominance has also meant that sales of Atari 2600 and 7800 games have been very slow and Davis also highlighted this as a contributing factor in the profit slump.

Mediagenic is now calling for a 1-for-10 reverse split of its \$40 million shares. This is a response to Mediagenic's poor performance so far on the US stock market — a fate shared by the majority of floated leisure publishers.

Davis commented: "We believe the reverse stock split will cause the quoted market price of the stock to be one that is more consistent with the current and longer term development of our business. In addition, the higher price will allow investors to trade our stock on margin and will encourage coverage of our company by financial analysts.

CTW DISTRIBUTION

Some readers may have been experiencing delays in receiving CTW on time over the past two weeks. The cause has been traced to a 'postal sacks labelling problem' at the Hemel Hempstead Post Office, and has now been resolved. Normal service resumes with this issue.

STARGLIDER 2

Wish!

A little more desirable than "FOUR CALLING BIRDS" don't you think?

VERMINATOR

CORRUPTION

Game of the year

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Profits and sales climb as Sage buys its way upmarket

After making its first ever acquisition, Sagesoft is preparing to announce a doubling of profits and 50 per cent increase in turnover for 1988.

The Newcastle based low-cost software specialist is expected to post sales totalling £5.25 million for the year ending September 30th - representing a 53 per cent increase on the previous year's £3.44 million.

Profits, meanwhile, are set to continue their historically high rate of growth with around £2 million due to be announced for 1988. That compares to £1.1 million in 1987.

Sagesoft has also recently completed the acquisition of

Bromsgrove based Sky Software for an undisclosed sum. Sky will spearhead Sage's long awaited thrust into more upmarket areas such as Unix and Xenix, as well as bolstering its existing efforts in the multi-user MSDOS market.

Sky has been in business since 1981 and produces the *Skybase 4* applications generator and *Skymaster 4* suite of accounting modules.

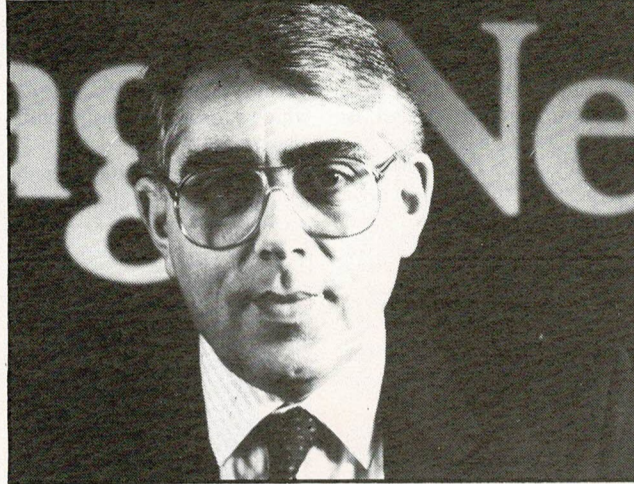
With its own turnover currently totalling around £700,000 and a massive increase expected, Sagesoft boss David Goldman claims that the group could be turning over £8 million "at least" by the end of 1989.

"Our financial figures are still to be officially confirmed but they look absolutely spot

on. Our Business Wise range is still our most substantial profit earner but we've had great growth in end user training and our stationery and supplies business," Goldman told *CTW*.

"The Sky deal means we can address the Pegasus and Multi-soft market. We've always intended to make an acquisition for our move into that market. Sage product is very, very easy to use and install and as such it has imposed limitations on the software."

Goldman admitted that Sky is currently only in a break-even situation regarding financial performance. He claims that the company has suffered from it "not properly adding the marketing".



GOLDMAN: Sales up, profits up, Sky bought

As a result, Sage is planning a vast injection into Sky's advertising and marketing budget to build the brand name. Sky products retail at around the £650 mark, but Sage is planning to make available software bridges that allow users of the Business-wise range to upgrade.

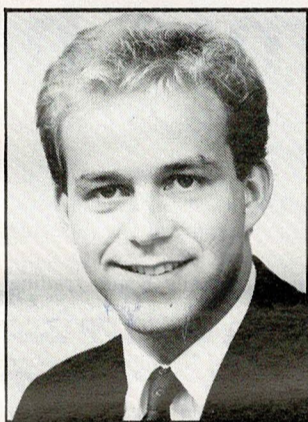
Sentinel switches to Perfect name

Sentinel Software has changed its name to WordPerfect United Kingdom in deference to the fact that the only product range it handles is *WordPerfect*.

The firm has been trading as Sentinel since April 1985 when it was formed specifically to push WordPerfect's products in the UK. The change of name took effect from 1st November and according to marketing manager David Godwin was a "logical move".

He told *CTW*: "WordPerfect has become so big that we can't look after anyone else, in fact we've no intention of handling anyone else. Anyway we were the only affiliate of WordPerfect not falling in line with the corporate image."

Godwin was also keen to stress that despite what the name suggests the firm is still independent and not just WordPerfect's UK subsidiary. The only difference now is that when people approach us



GODWIN: Name change is an honour

they'll know we are the trusted British distributor for *WordPerfect*", he offered.

He claimed that the decision to change the name had been taken jointly with the US firm and added that it was "quite an honour to be made the UK base".

Meanwhile the firm with the new name is bullishly predicting a 400 per cent growth in turnover in the next two years. Turnover is currently around £3 million.

German sales upturn predicted by Ariola

German distributor Ariolasoft announced last week that it is expecting a 20 per cent increase in business over the next year.

The bullish forecast comes three months after the completion of Ariola's management buy-out from publishing combine Bertelsmann (*CTW* July 25th).

After protracted negotiations for the buy-out several UK publishers had expressed discontent with Ariola's performance. Boss Hans Krusche, however, now claims that business is very much back to normal with all its UK clients firmly committed to the distributor.

Ariolasoft has exclusive deals with Activision, Tele-

comsoft, Ocean, Gremlin, Grand Slam, Tynesoft and Mirrorsoft. The firm claims that all these publishers have recently signed new one or two-year contracts, or still have at least a year of longstanding agreements to run.

"We had a lot of problems with the changeover. It's not so easy changing the whole company over from A to B. We had a lot of work to do," Krusche told *CTW*.

He claims that turnover can be increased by at least a fifth without the addition of new labels, although new signings aren't being discounted totally.

"There is space for another company - maybe Electronic Arts or MicroProse - but it would be crazy to just increase the number of labels with any-

UK shines as Tandy unveils and reviews

To nobody's great surprise Tandy last week used the launch of its revamped range of PCs to look back on last year's much improved performance.

It appears that the main area of growth in the InterTan group has been Tandy UK. This is being hailed as the firm's "shining star", having experienced the best year ever on a British profit and loss statement. The UK division finished this year with 234 company owned stores and 206 dealer outlets.

The company is planning a £3.2 million spend in acquiring, building and refurbishing these existing stores, whilst looking to increase the number of outlets this year by over 50 in total (*CTW* October 31st). Tandy is also intending to acquire an alternative retail chain in order to boost growth.

After claiming a 221 per cent growth in Tandy computer sales over the last year, the company is launching five new machines in the UK with revised versions of the Tandy 1000 and 4000 lines, along with a

new Tandy 3000 and 5000 machine.

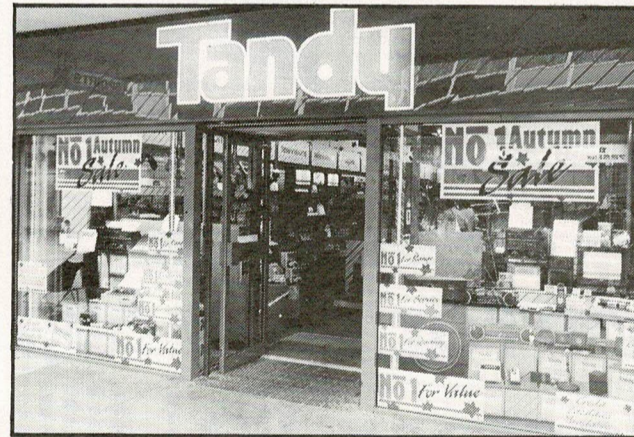
The 1000SX entry level model has been upgraded and renamed the 1000SL. New features include a power and run system with MS-DOS in ROM, expansion capacities and internal storage devices incorporating a further 5.25 inch or 3.5 inch disk drive. The machine is supplied with *Deskmate 3* and prices start from £695.

The 1000TL is a 286-based PC/XT and carries on from the 1000TX. The machine is claimed to operate at three times the speed of the IBM PS/2 and up to six times faster than the original PC/XT. Prices start from £895 for a floppy disk

monochrome system to £1,395 for a 20Mb CGA colour system.

The 3000NL is a 10MHz 286 machine and is capable of running under OS/2. The standard model comes with 512K RAM that can be upgraded to 640K. A variety of hard disk capacities will also be offered and the basic machine is priced at £1,545.

Tandy is offering two new products in the 386 area. The 4000 has been upgraded, and the new 4000LX operates at 20MHz and includes 1Mb of RAM as standard. The new top end machine, the 5000MC, offers the customer the choice of Microchannel architecture and prices begin at £4,445.



TANDY: Better performance in '88

Mindscape shrugs off share price plummet

Mindscape was last week making light of a dramatic drop in its US share price.

The company was floated last June with an initial price of nine dollars. That has now dropped to around three dollars.

The firm's president Roger Bouy told *CTW* that one of the main reasons for the fall had been a "late starting software market". He also revealed that in August he had told analysts

that September would be a "soft" month and that had subsequently caused the fluctuation.

He went on to claim that the price had now bottomed out and that the firm was expecting an upturn. "Sales have only just started really, but now things are starting to pick up for us," he offered.

Bouy also mentioned that major distributors had not committed to the firm as heavily as expected and that the

Nintendo market had "taken a larger share of software than anyone thought".

He continued: "We're obviously disappointed by the drop but we're not worried. We didn't walk into this with any dreams, we know markets can be very volatile for many reasons, none of which the company controls."

When the firm was floated on the stock market \$9 million was raised. It has been used to pay off bank debts.

CTW

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THALAMUS

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Lifetree boasts fruitful future

Lifetree was last week shrugging off its financial troubles and promising a profitable future.

Despite still being under administration the firm was claiming to be certain of survival and boasting two profitable months in September and October.

The firm's marketing manager Colin Bastable told CTW: "The idea of administration is for a company to shape up and get back on its feet and we've batted down the hatches and started to looked forward."

Although he was coy with details Bastable did claim that the firm was about to enter a "46 week rebuilding period" which will involve internal restructuring and a number of new accounts. He boasted that one of these was "a large corporate account" for *Totalword*.

Bastable went on to make the rather unusual claim that the administration period is proving "really useful" for the firm. "It's made everyone pull together and things have now started moving apace. Now we're in such a position that we can look to the future."

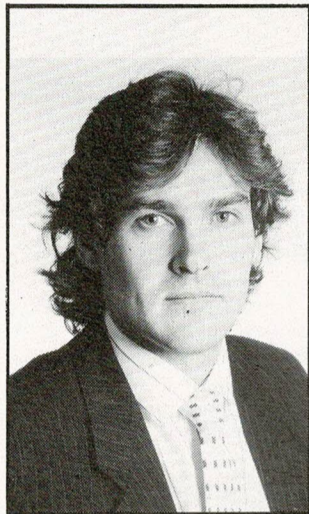
"The only question now is how long we'll be under the administrators, in that respect we're still very much at the mercy of the courts."

It is clear that the firm has received some help from its US parent but Bastable refused to say whether this amounted to just supportive words or something more tangible.

"We've obviously talked to them at length and they've been of great help. There's no way they want to continue without the European operation, they recognise what a good job we've done for them."

Lifetree's problems have been caused by two bad debts which it claimed amounted to around £500,000.

A creditors' meeting is set to take place on November 11th.



BASTABLE: Battling on

Creditors grant CRL time for EA pursuit

CRL was last week looking to the future with renewed confidence after being given the green light from its numerous creditors.

After going into administration this summer a creditors meeting was held on October 28th. Joint administrator Steve Ryman used this meeting to put his proposal for the firm's recovery to the assembled companies.

These proposals were unanimously accepted and CRL can now continue trading at least for the time being. The next moment of truth will come when a similar meeting is held in a few months' time, although boss Clement Chambers does not expect any problems.

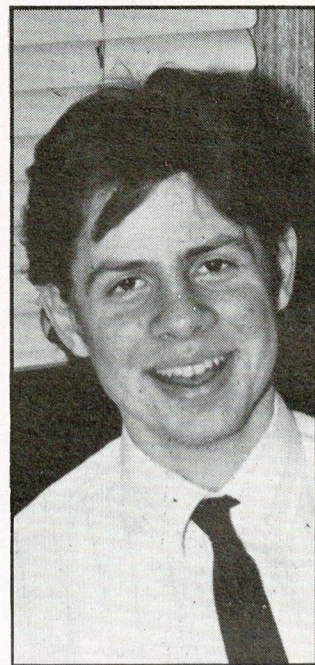
Chambers told CTW: "After

being given the all-clear life will now go on for us in our hunt for the elusive EA cheque. People were aware of the situation and it was obviously in everyone's interest that we were given a clean bill of health."

Despite these bullish comments, the firm's future is still very much dependent on a legal victory over EA. It is claiming a total of £204,000 in unpaid royalties from the US firm.

CRL currently owes a total of £404,000 to 150 creditors. Chambers, however, is known to be confident of success in the courts and is currently boasting a string of profitable months.

It is currently vaunting *Transputer*, *Purple Heart* and *I Ludicrous* as its big autumn titles.



CHAMBERS: New lease of life

Monthlies lose out after Elite rethink

Elite is switching the emphasis of its advertising campaign from the computer press to the nationals and pop and sport magazines.

It claims it will also be entering into a large number of "co-operative promotions" with both multiple and independent retailers. The move away from the traditional areas of advertising will not necessarily be a permanent one but apparently suits the firm's Christmas release schedule.

Joint boss Steve Wilcox told CTW: "The two key products this year for us are *Question of Sport* and *Mike Read's Pop Quiz* and we felt that with them we needed to reach a far wider

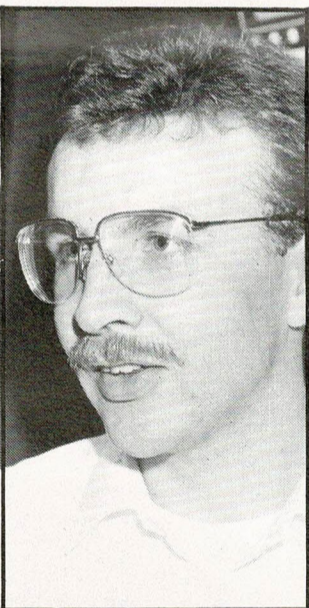
audience than that of something like *Crash*."

He added that Elite would still have some presence in the computer press with *Live and Let Die* being promoted through the usual channels. The advertising for that product, however, is being handled by Domark.

Wilcox claimed that in "absolute terms" the firm's ad spend is up on last year and makes up around 12 per cent of Elite's budget.

Wilcox also talked of a deal being done with the BBC to promote the *Question of Sport* game on the programme itself. No details have yet been finalised but apparently the idea has been agreed in principle and Wilcox was hopeful of the game being

mentioned in at least two of the shows in the new series.



WILCOX: Shifting ads

Euro giant looms on Mimic horizon

Mimic, the sister company to computer accessories firm Zone 4, is soon to be taken over by a huge European conglomerate in a bid to enter the cheap clone market.

Mimic has only been a registered company for six weeks, and the new un-named controlling firm is to pump in £2.2 million to assist the shift into hardware. Zone 4 will remain completely independent.

The mystery company will have a 51 per cent stake in Mimic, and it is claimed to already have a £5 billion turnover. This will be its first foray into the European computer market, although it is said to be known in the Far East.

Mimic refused to give the name of the company until "both parties are in a better position to comment", whilst intimating that several of its pro-

ducts are already household names.

In its brief existence Mimic has been selling branded disks, but according to sales director Graham Cook "the company has not really begun trading yet".

Cook is however forecasting a £17-£20 million turnover within the next three years, claiming that the buy-out will "bring in the finance to enable the company to reach the level of sales anticipated".

Mimic is currently looking in the Far East for PCs, it is also intended to import a range of printers, as well as other computer peripherals.

Cook is predicting that the company will be floated on the stock exchange within three years, claiming that "several major companies have already signed deals to guarantee the necessary turn-over. We intend to enter the government and education sectors".

The company is currently looking to sign up distributors: "We hope to tie deals with 4 or 5, this would be the ideal figure."



COOK: Mimic being swallowed

Handy Mirror signing looms

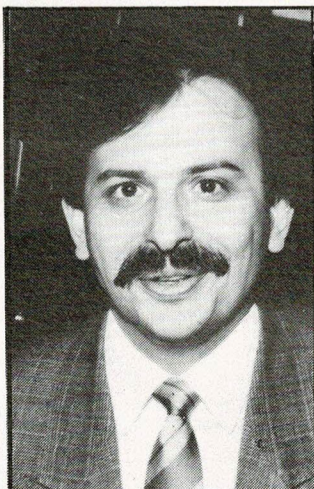
Mirrorsoft looks like it could become the first UK firm to get involved in the renewed US and Japanese craze for handheld games.

Discussions are currently underway with Atari Games/Tengen for the handheld rights to the much publicised Russian game *Tetris*.

Atari already has the rights to convert the game for the Nintendo, Sega and PC Engine in both the US and Japan.

"International interest in *Tetris* has been phenomenal, and these new discussions underline it's potential in all areas of the home entertain-

ment market," commented Mirrorsoft director Peter Bilotta.



BILOTTA: Handy game

Sky Slip sighs as first titles arrive

The recently launched Sky Slip games label has seven games ready to hit the Christmas market, but as yet no distributors.

Whilst Sky Slip has been talking to the likes of Gem, Leisuresoft, Centresoft, R&R and Microdealer, so far no distribution deals have been signed. Software manager John Hall believes however, that "a breakthrough is imminent".

"We sent out the games for review weeks ago, but they've taken their time reviewing the things. The distributors better get in touch and get their fingers out in time for the Xmas market," commented Hall.

The company was formed in January on the back of musi-

cal instrument manufacturer Rock City, whose holding company is Sky Slip Music. The leisure software division has spent the past 10 months generating and collating the games.

The company will be concentrating on arcade and adventure games with the first batch of releases including: *The Lost Legacy of Xim*, *Sabian Island*, *A Simple Case of Espionage*, *Solar Warrior*, *Big Screen Hero* and *Dusk Over Elfintin*.

One title, *Bounce* is already available on the ST and over the coming months the company plans to make greater inroads into the 16-bit market, whilst still releasing some 8-bit games.

Hall does not expect Sky Slip to release more than six titles a year.

Gremlin joins Network in new promo assault

New merchandising firm Network has announced two more of its proposed six clients.

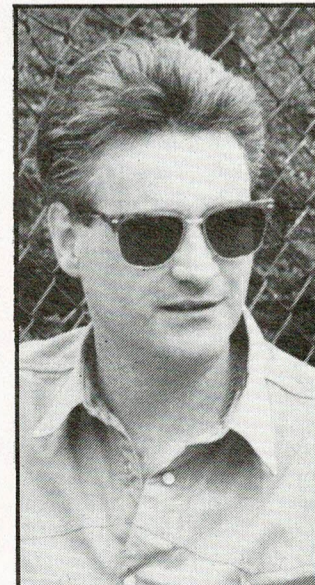
The latest editions are Gremlin and Target Games. They are added to CDS, Blue Ribbon and Big Apple.

Boss Mike Clark was "delighted" with the two deals and added that talks were underway with "a number of companies" in an effort to secure a sixth account.

He told CTW: "Both firms produce quality games that are going to have a very long shelf life and will continue selling long after many games have fizzled out."

At the time of going to press the ink was still drying on the contracts and the matter was too sensitive for Gremlin boss Ian Stewart to comment on. In-

deed he would not even confirm that the deal had in fact gone through.



STEWART: No comment

38 SELLING DAYS TO CHRISTMAS

MASSIVE £2,700,000 AMSTRAD ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

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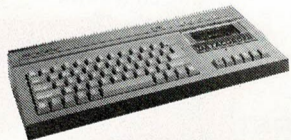
	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
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SINCLAIR SPECTRUM + 3			
AMSTRAD CPC HOME COMPUTERS ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE			

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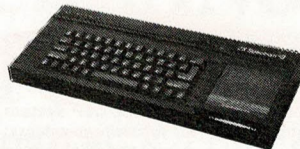
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AMSTRAD CPC HOME COMPUTERS ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE			

YOUTH AND MUSICAL PRESS

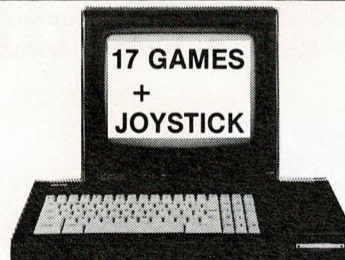
	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
SINCLAIR SPECTRUM + 2			
SINCLAIR SPECTRUM + 3			
AMSTRAD CPC HOME COMPUTERS ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE			



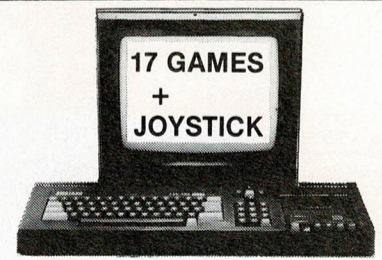
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+ 6 GAMES + JOYSTICK



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Byrne pours scorn on trade rumours

Telecomsoft boss Paula Byrne insisted last week that, despite the latest batch of trade rumours, there are no major changes planned for the way the BT-owned leisure stable operates.

The suggested possibilities range from a major shareholder within BT regarding

Telecomsoft as undesirable – and thus wanting it offloaded – to Byrne herself leading a management buy-out.

Byrne was quick to refute any suggestions of change on the way, noting that the industry tends to clutch at a new BT rumour every six months.

"I'm quite happy with the way this business is being run and the way that I'm left to basically get on with it. I see my

boss about once a month.

"People like to bring these ideas up every now and then and its always the same. I'm very happy with our performance," she told CTW.

Telecomsoft became part of BT's Dialcom division in the summer. Strangely, BT rumours have historically sprung from the perception that the firm was under-performing, whilst at this



BYRNE: No change moment in time Telecomsoft is claiming to be achieving its highest ever levels of business – particularly with 16-bit product.

Sales Curve talks Japanese in the UK

After the financial collapse of FIL, The Sales Curve is now looking for a major UK firm to share the rights to a string of Japanese licences.

The firm had originally been involved in a joint venture with the fallen French software giant. When crisis struck at FIL it had already sourced and developed nine Japanese titles.

Talks are now underway with a number of major UK

players. Boss Jane Cavanagh has not, however, ruled out the possibility of The Sales Curve taking sole responsibility for the licences.

She told CTW: "We've obviously reached the stage where FIL are no longer able to be involved and now we're interested in an association with a large UK firm and continuing the project."

The first products from the venture are due to appear on The Sales Curve's own label in the first quarter of 1989.



sbc Document Layout and Printing System (D.L.P.)

At last a fully integrated and compatible D.L.P. System for under £5000.00

sbc's new Document Layout and Printing System (D.L.P.) marks a significant breakthrough in high quality, low cost, full page D.L.P. systems. Until now systems of this sophistication and quality have only been available from such companies as Apple or Xerox, for up to three times the price.

The heart of the system is the sbc 286AT computer with a full 1Mb of RAM and a 40Mb hard disc for data storage. The display is provided by sbc's new 72 line A4 monitor which boasts the ability to refresh the screen at 70Hz producing crisp flicker-free text and graphics. Included with the monitor are software drivers covering over 250 of the most popular software packages available. The sbc Speedlaser, with its unique high speed data transfer capabilities delivers superb quality document printouts. The inclusion of the sbc 500W uninterruptable power supply protects the system from data loss following power failure or surges. To complete the system the provision of a microsoft compatible mouse eases text and graphics manipulation.

The price includes installation and a 12 month, on-site maintenance contract. Due to the system's wide range of applications – from wordprocessing through to sophisticated Desk Top Publishing – the choice of software, which includes up to two days training, is left until the precise needs of the user have been established.

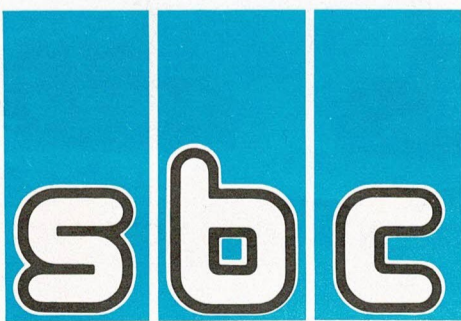
This true WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) system is ideally suited to the user who wishes to create high quality documents, graphics, complete price lists, technical brochures, market reports or simply ultra high quality letters.

£4995.00 (excl. VAT)

(Includes installation and 12 months on-site maintenance contract.)

The sbc range includes:

- sbc PC/XT compatibles from £599.00; sbc PC/AT compatibles from £1099.00**
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- sbc Apple compatible A4 full page monitors from £1399.00;**
- sbc A3 double page monitors from £1649.00; sbc dot matrix printers from £249.00;**
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<input type="checkbox"/> Monitors	<input type="checkbox"/> Dot matrix printers
<input type="checkbox"/> Uninterruptable power supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> sbc network systems.

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Gold gap covered

Following Charles Cecil's departure David Baxter has been promoted to software development manager at US Gold.

Baxter was previously product manager for Capcom Go and Rainbow Arts at the company. That role will now be absorbed within US Gold and a new man is not being sought.

Baxter told CTW: "I'm looking forward to the new role and I'm determined that a lot of changes will be made to the way the department is run and the way software is developed. It may make a few people unhappy but this department will be totally different in a couple of months."

Acorns land in Far East

The Acorn education reputation lives on even in the Far East, with a Singapore school opting for the Archimedes system.

The United World College has already installed 68 machines, having ordered a total of 305. The computers will be supplied through Olivetti's subsidiary based in Singapore.

The Archimedes will be used in a broad range of subjects including humanities, languages and computer studies. Two Acorn Econet networks are also being installed throughout the school, and every classroom and laboratory will eventually have a networked Archimedes system.

The school takes on many expatriate British families, and decided to opt for the Archimedes due to the ability to run PC and BBC software using emulators.



ARCHIMEDES: Into Far East

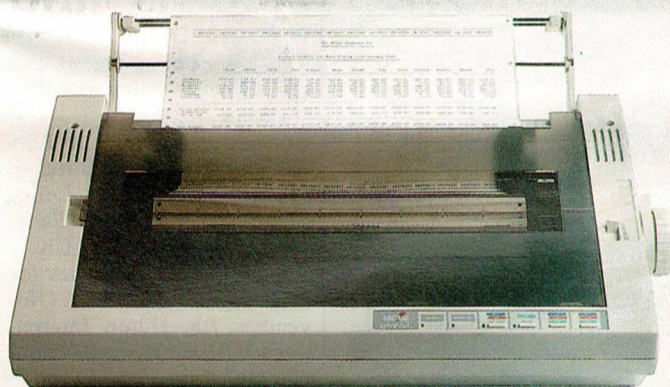
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comparable LQ1050 too.

We're also offering bigger, better margins on the Amstrad LQ3500di. Which produces letter



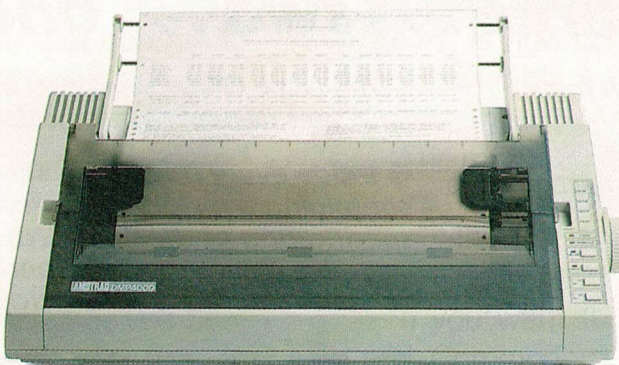
LQ3500di RRP £349 + VAT

quality output across an 8 inch carriage, making it the perfect width for A4 paper.

It too offers a 24 pin print head, and is fully Epson LQ and IBM Proprinter compatible.

But with an overall footprint of 17.5 inches by just 16 inches, it will fit on anyone's desk.

Moving on to 9 pin printers, Amstrad are offering opportunities for greater profits on the robust DMP 4000.



DMP4000 RRP £349 + VAT

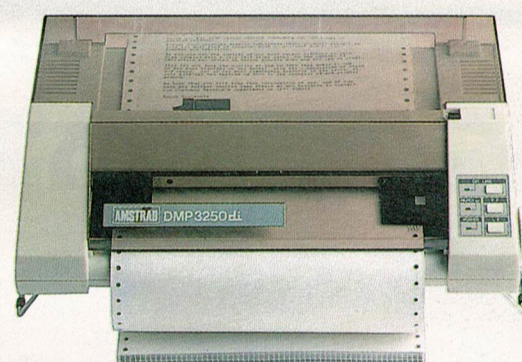
With a superwide 13.6 inch carriage, it should cope with your customers' widest balance sheets. And with its high speed draft mode at up to 200 cps, they won't be spending much time

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Its compact size makes an attractive proposition for the smaller workstation.



DMP3250di RRP £199 + VAT

And its RRP of just £199 + VAT could attract the smaller pocket into your store too.

So if you're interested in stocking Amstrad printers, just fill in the coupon.

But hurry, because these hefty margins are available for a limited period only.

Until then we're offering you a licence to print money.

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Croftward poaches for new CBM mags

CCI publisher Croftward has poached erstwhile US Gold man Jerry Howells to market two recently acquired US titles.

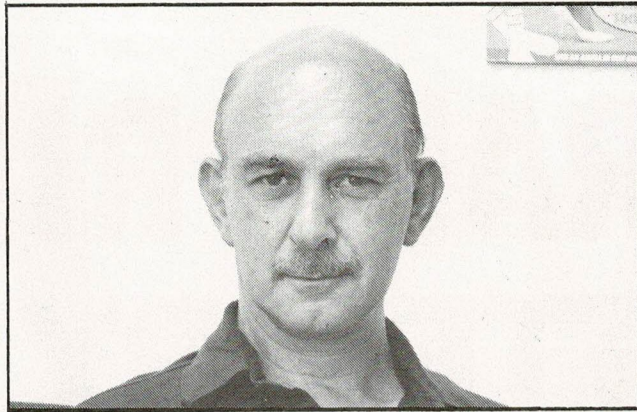
The former boss of US Gold's strategy games division, will be taking the newly created post of business development manager for the two US magazines, which are understood to have been originally founded by Commodore.

Howells will also be in-

involved in Croftward's other publications, CCI, Amiga User International and its two non-computer titles Rad - the skateboard magazine - and Fitness.

Croftward is not revealing the names of its latest acquisitions, although director, Antony Jacobson did disclose that both titles are leaders in the US CBM field and that "we will be bringing them over to the UK and taking our magazines to the US".

Both publications will be on display at the Commodore



JACOBSON: New man, new titles Show later this month, and Jacobson is looking to develop the established US trend of publishers selling original software through its readership. This news follows the re-

cent announcement that CCI had tied up a deal with International Periodical Distribution in the US to distribute 10,000 copies of the monthly to US dealers.

DI considers action on DI

To no-one's great surprise Digital Integration is considering legal action against newly formed budget firm Digital Inspiration.

The new firm was formed last month by David Lester and has a range of back-catalogue licences lined up for release through Zeppelin. Now though Digital Integration may be about to delay proceedings

due to worries over the similarities in the two names.

Integration director David Marshall told CTW that the matter was in the hands of the firm's solicitors who were "making sure of our legal ground".

He continued: "With the firm being known as DI as well as the similarity with Integration and Inspiration there is bound to be confusion, and we do try to avoid areas of confusion."

At Digital Inspiration Lester seemed unperturbed by the possible action: "There won't be any hassle. We operate in completely different areas and anyway we won't actually be publishing under Digital Inspiration, that's just the name of the holding company so we won't be changing it."

Frontline hits road

Following the success of its April roadshow, Frontline this week sets out on another mini-tour.

The four dates - running from this Monday November 7th to Thursday November 10th - include visits to Leeds, Birmingham, London and Swindon.

The roadshow is pitched as a means to strengthen links with Frontline's existing dealer base. Over 30 manufacturers will be exhibiting each day, some unveiling new products.

The exhibitors include ABC, Ashton-Tate, Borland, Computer Associates, Lotus, Micropro, Microsoft, Panasonic and WordPerfect UK.

The dates and venues for the roadshow are: Leeds (November 7th, Hilton International); Birmingham (November 8th, Botanical Gardens); London (November 9th, Park Lane Hotel) and Swindon (November 10th, Wiltshire Hotel).

Suitors sought

The contract house responsible for conversions of R-Type, Flying Shark and Rampage is currently offering three titles to prospective marketeers.

Neath based Designmaker - previously linked with Catalyst Coders - is also offering a remarkably down to earth appraisal of the games.

Designmaker is offering Maze Mania (C64 and Spectrum), Air-Strike (ST) and Hovercraft Pilot (C64) to anyone interested in signing a quick deal.

"We like to get the original games done before we sign a deal because otherwise we get less money," commented Designmaker boss Richard Knightly to CTW.

"These aren't chart number ones, but they're good bread and butter product."

Lombard



Rally



Atari ST, Amiga and PC £24.95



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This is the official simulation of a lifetime . . . will your skills measure up to the challenge?

● Inside every box: A detailed 16-page booklet containing a history of the rally and technical specification of the Cosworth, 15 maps to help you plot out your course, and a colourful sticker to commemorate your participation in the rally.

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Super Dragon Slayer

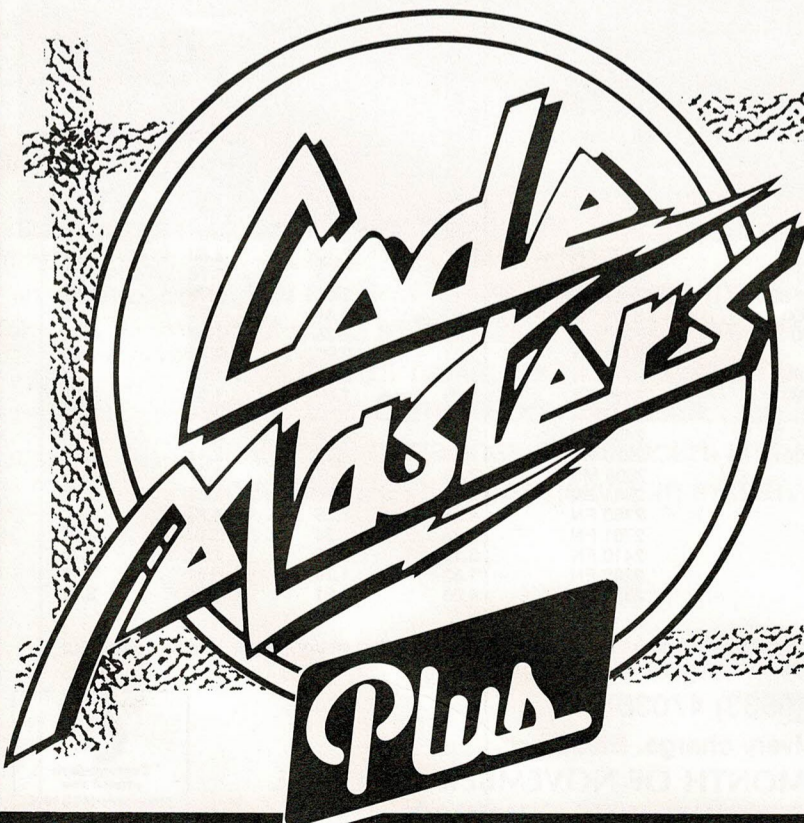


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SNIPPETS

The accusations of too much product being held back for too long continue. Bob Clark, owner of Amiga and ST specialist **Video City** in Stevenage claims that his sales have decreased already as a result. "There's definitely been a shortage of titles out and we all know what's going to happen. In the next few weeks so much will come out that we won't know where to look or where to turn, and good stuff will suffer. Our sales are down 70 per cent in the last six weeks compared to last year." Publishers should note, there are only seven weeks until Christmas...

The **Code Masters** hype goes on with the entire team dressing up in football gear to

prepare for the launch of its first full price product - a football compilation. The game consists of four original titles including *Street Soccer*, *11-a-side League*, *5-a-side Indoor* and *Soccer Skills*, and will be released on all formats. Look forward to seeing the picture in every monthly...

ABC-busting monthly **C&VG** informs readers of its current issue that there is yet another machine currently vaunting the merits of *Afterburner* and suchlike in Japan. The **Sharp 68000X** comes some four years after the less than modestly successful **Sharp MZ80K**. What **C&VG** doesn't tell its adoring public is that to get their clammy hands on *Afterburner* Sharp-style they'll

have to fork out £1,500 - that's after the trip to Japan, of course...

In a rather idiosyncratic attempt to widen its dealer base Acorn software specialist **Minerva** is setting off on a trip to Australia and New Zealand. The 'education roadshow' will feature seminars and demonstrations of Minerva's range. "A lot of Australian dealers have started coming through and buying our products," claims Minerva's joint managing director Nova Fisher...

Apologies time. In last week's **CTW** it was reported that **Alternative's** £2.99 label would be publishing **Database's Mini-Office 2**. This was actually meant to be **Mini-Office 1...**

The second **Festival de la Micro**, the French computer show dedicated to the leisure market, took place in Paris recently. **Atari** was present, which was particularly brave considering the average age of the 25,000 visitors was under 16...

Hailed as an essential purchase for all PC owners who like to indulge in the odd game is the **Konix PC joystick** now available in the UK. Similar to the **Speed King** in its ergonomic design, the joystick is capable of 360 degree movement and is priced at £19.95...

It's celebration time at the **Commodore** fan club, **ICPUG**. The group is toasting its tenth birthday, being formed back in the summer of '78 by a group of PET enthusiasts. The club has since diversified to all Commodore equipment and now boasts a membership of 4,000. **ICPUG** will be making an appearance at the **Commodore Show** later this month...

An archaeological dig returning from the North Yorkshire moorland will be using a **Commodore Amiga** to analyse its findings. A database is being used to plot every inch of the site, and every find is being logged for position, depth and size. Can **Acorn's** PR team beat this obscure computer link?...

A new **Barcode Generator** designed and developed by the archetypal computer wizzkid was unveiled at the West Midlands **AppleCentre** last week. The 18-year-old



Atari braves the French youth

former YTS trainee, **Steve Watson**, developed the program using an **Apple Macintosh**...

Music specialist EMR is launching a recording system called **Studio 24 Plus** at this month's **Micro User Show**.

The midi and internal sound controller is priced at £99. **EMR** is also launching the first scoring program for the **Archimedes**. The package is called **Professional Music Typesetter** and costs £499...

Microlink has lost its sales and marketing manager, **Mike Hayes**, who has joined **Gollner Publishing** as **Ad Manager** on **ST World** and **ST Action**. The 31-year-old **Billy Connolly**-lookalike commented somewhat predictably on his new appointment: "I am delighted to be moving to a company with a big future..."

A new graphics tablet driver for the **Amiga** has been launched by **Cherry**. The digitiser driver lets users

make use of the **Amiga's** graphics without trade-offs in performance. The package is priced at £550 and comes with an **A3-size** graphics tablet...

Amstrad is installing a 24-hour bulletin board in its group service department at **Brentwood**. The system goes under the name **Customer Services 0277 231276** and will provide support on all **Amstrad** computer products as well as carrying public domain software for uploading and downloading...

According to the market research firm **Gallup**, **BT's Elite** is living up to pre-release expectations by becoming the thirs **ST** title this year to top the open market charts (week ending October 15th). This follows on the success of **Out Run** and **Virus**, and places 6 16-bit titles in the top 50...



Codemasters line up for full-price assault

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3M
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Sony
3 1/2 DS 135 tpi
Precision by Xidex
3M
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Verbatim
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3 1/2 DS 2 MB
3M
Dysan
Verbatim
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3" CF2
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PRICE PER BOX

	5 box	10 box	25 box	50 box	100 box
5 1/4 DD 48 tpi					
Precision by Xidex	4.90	4.50	4.20	3.90	3.70
3M	6.10	5.88	5.67	5.46	5.25
Dysan	7.25	7.00	6.75	6.50	6.25
Verbatim	6.52	6.30	6.07	5.85	5.62
Sony	6.38	6.16	5.94	5.72	5.50
5 1/4 DD 96 tpi					
Precision by Xidex	5.10	4.80	4.50	4.10	3.90
3M	11.89	11.48	11.07	10.66	10.25
Dysan	9.57	9.24	8.91	8.58	8.25
Verbatim	9.42	9.10	8.78	8.45	8.13
Sony	9.13	8.82	8.50	8.19	7.87
5 1/4 DS 1.6 M					
Precision by Xidex	8.70	8.40	8.10	7.80	7.50
3M	12.47	12.04	11.61	11.18	10.75
Dysan	10.15	9.80	9.45	9.10	8.75
Verbatim	11.60	11.20	10.80	10.40	9.99
Sony	12.18	11.76	11.34	10.92	10.50
3 1/2 SS 135 tpi					
3M	9.28	8.96	8.64	8.32	8.00
Verbatim	11.60	11.20	10.80	10.40	9.99
Sony	8.70	8.40	8.10	7.80	7.50
3 1/2 DS 135 tpi					
Precision by Xidex	10.73	10.36	9.99	9.62	9.25
3M	12.32	11.90	11.47	11.05	10.63
Dysan	13.05	12.60	12.15	11.70	11.25
Verbatim	11.60	11.20	10.80	10.40	9.99
Sony	11.89	11.48	11.07	10.66	9.90
3 1/2 DS 2 MB					
3M	36.25	35.00	33.70	32.50	31.25
Dysan	34.00	32.90	31.70	30.50	29.30
Verbatim	29.00	28.00	27.00	25.50	24.00
Sony	34.80	33.60	32.40	31.20	29.90
3" CF2					
Amsoft CF2	17.90	17.20	16.80	16.40	15.90

The products in each table may be added together to take advantage of quantity discounts. For instance, if you ordered 10 boxes of 3M 5 1/4 DD, 10 boxes of Sony 3 1/2 DD and 5 boxes of Amsoft CF2's, all three products will be priced at the 25 box rate.

BULK	100	250	500	1000	5000
5 1/4 DD 48 tpi	0.28	0.25	0.23	0.21	0.20
5 1/4 DD 96 tpi	0.35	0.32	0.30	0.28	0.26
5 1/4 DD 1.6 MB	0.83	0.80	0.77	0.74	0.71
3 1/2 SS 135 tpi	0.61	0.59	0.57	0.55	0.52
3 1/2 DS 135 tpi	0.69	0.67	0.65	0.63	P.O.A.

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DTP OR NOT DTP — GOOD SALES IS THE QUESTION

The DTP market may finally be opening up, but how does a dealer make sure he doesn't commit himself to the wrong buzzword-packed package? GRAEME KIDD sifts through the best packages from the corporate sale to the 8-bit hobbyist offerings . . .

A few years ago, cynics put it around that Desktop Publishing — DTP to the jargon merchants — was little more than a marketing exercise to increase the sale of computers. DTP, they argued, was just souped-up wordprocessing, and about as much use as a chocolate teapot to the professional publisher or typesetter.

They were wrong. Nowadays, the smarter publishing companies use DTP rather than typesetters and paste-up people to produce magazines, brochures, newspapers and books.

Admittedly, DTP equipment can get expensive at the high end of the market if you intend to equip an entire company with machines and software. But the investment pays off very quickly and not just in financial terms — the level of control over the finished page increases dramatically once your staff have mastered the software.

Whilst there are still plenty of publishing companies out there waiting to be sold comprehensive and expensive DTP systems, the market is specialised and firmly in the hands of the Power Dealers. Yet DTP awareness is starting to percolate down from the high-end users, and many businesses whose primary activity is far removed from publishing are beginning to ask whether they could save money or increase efficiency by using DTP equipment.

Home and hobbyist users, too, have been looking towards

low-cost DTP packages to get the best out of their dot-matrix printer and micro, and there is a large market out there, just waiting to be tapped.

To run the top-end DTP packages, like *Ventura*, *Aldus Pagemaker* or *Quark Xpress*, you need a powerful and expensive computer — either a Macintosh (preferably a Mac II) or a beefy RAM-rich PC with a large hard drive and fast processor. A laser printer, with 300 Dots Per Inch resolution and Postscript, is vital to produce proofs, or finished pages if the budget or volume of work doesn't justify spending £20,000-odd on a phototypesetter. (If you really need super-high resolution typesetting and can't afford a photosetter, a host of bureaus will take files containing finished pages and output them on their 1200 dpi equipment for round £5.00 an A4 page.)

Look and feel

It all sounds frighteningly expensive, but a powerful system can be set up for under £10,000. Get the customer to take a look at how much is currently being spent on typesetting and paste-up work, and the cost of going DTP might suddenly become a good deal less frightening.

There's a tidy profit to be made selling packages like *Quark* or *Aldus Pagemaker*, particularly if you can provide the customer with the hardware too. But the chances are you'll need to do a fair bit of groundwork in order to learn about what you are selling —

maybe a couple of hundred pounds spent on a training course would be a worthwhile investment. And don't forget, there's some serious discounting going on — although some people still manage to sell the odd copy of *Ventura* for £900, most customers are likely to collect as much advice as they can from their friendly local dealer and then send off £400 to a mail-order outfit for their software.

The mid and low-range user is probably the best sector of the market for the independent retailer to target. For PCs, STs and Amigas there is a manageable amount of software for the non-specialist dealer to get familiar with, most of it available at two price points: around £250-£300 and £100 or less. These are the sort of prices that small businesses or affluent home users can easily justify, and prices that don't allow for too much discounting. And of course there are very few 8-bit packages around, although there's a definite limit as to what can be achieved on the DTP front using a trusty Spectrum. There's also the possibility of hardware sales — mice, hand-held scanners, dot matrix and even laser printers as well as computers.

The PC is best blessed with software, with *Fleet Street Editor*, *Timeworks DTP*, *GEM DTP* and *Finesse* vying with one another for mid-market domination.

Mirrorsoft's *Fleet Street Editor* is probably the most familiar name, on account of



FINESSE: Spearheading the AMS DTP push

its presence in the 8-bit hobbyist market, and the latest version, with *Bitstream Fontware* and HP Laserjet compatibility moves it towards a 'professional' system on the PC. *Timeworks DTP*, from Electric Distribution, is a very polished and powerful package that follows the *Ventura* approach very competently, allowing the user to produce professional results with relative ease.

A 'junior' version of *Timeworks*, *Timeworks Lite*, allows the novice user to get to grips with the potential of DTP for around £60 rather than the full £130 cost of its big brother. A sound selling point for the *Timeworks* duet is that files created on *Lite* can be moved into the full-race version without pain, and Electric

Distribution is offering a bargain upgrade path to *Lite* owners. *GEM DTP* is another powerful and competent package that shouldn't prove difficult to sell to owners of Amstrad PCs who have sampled and enjoyed the GEM operating system.

Cash 'n' carry

Perhaps the most impressive PC package is the one containing *Finesse* — the most impressive on your shelves, at any rate. AMS' DTP Solution pack lives in a large, carry-away cardboard box which can contain *Finesse*; *Finesse* and the AMS mouse; or *Finesse*, the mouse and a hand-held scanner.

For around £500, the new DTP convert can walk out of the shop with a large box that

conveys the impression of value-for-money and contains everything needed to create pages incorporating scanned-in images. *Timeworks Lite*, with its built-in upgrade path is the more elegant program, and may well see your customer returning for the excellent *Timeworks DTP*.

The Atari ST owner may look towards the official Atari package, which includes the Atari laser printer and a bundled version of *Fleet Street*, this time *Fleet Street Publisher* — a nice profitable sale if you can make it.

Electric Distribution also offers an ST version of its excellent *Timeworks*, but there are no plans for an ST *Lite* version at present, while Silica Distribution offers *Publishing*

Continued on page 27

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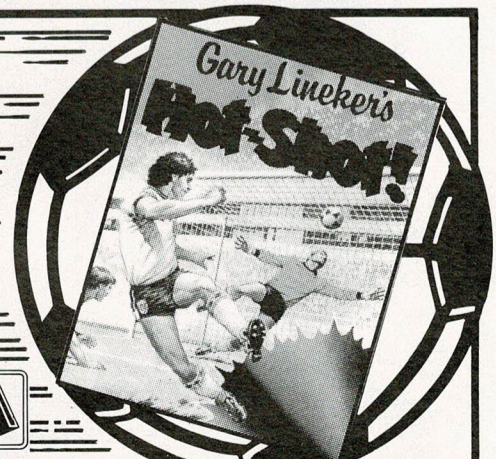
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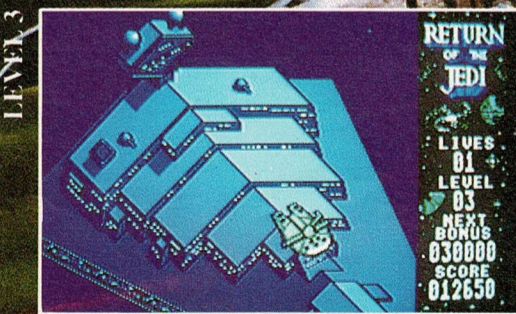
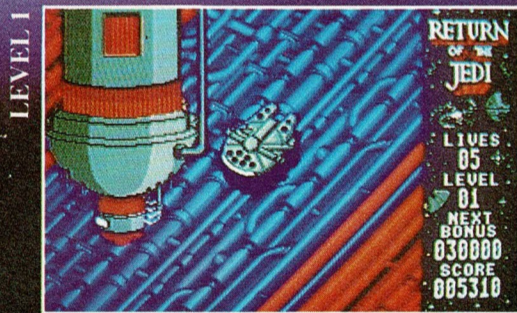
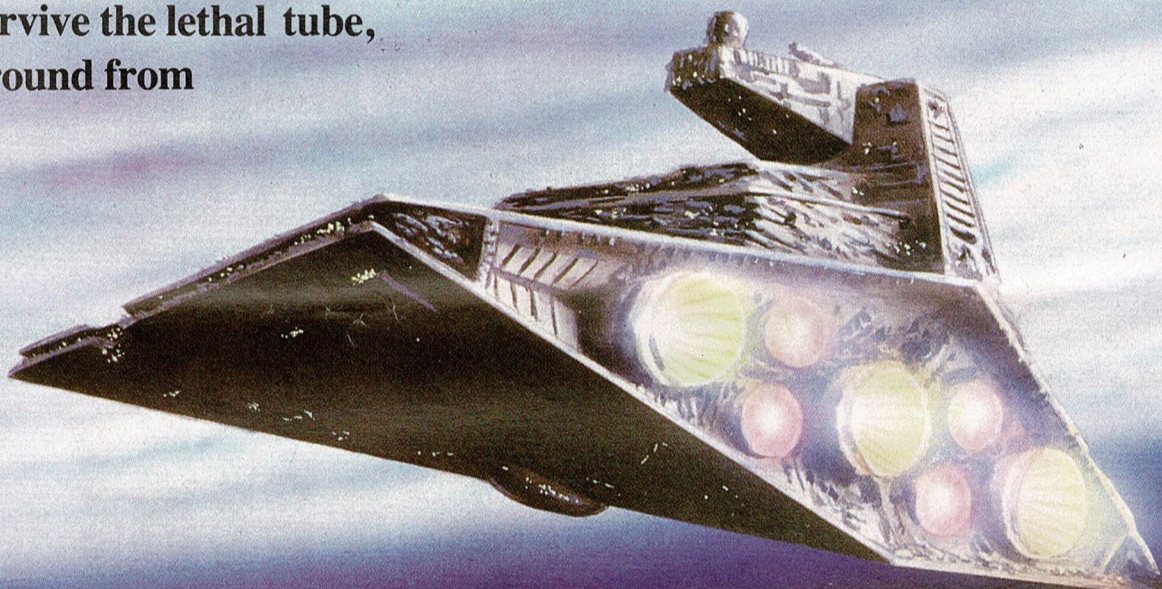
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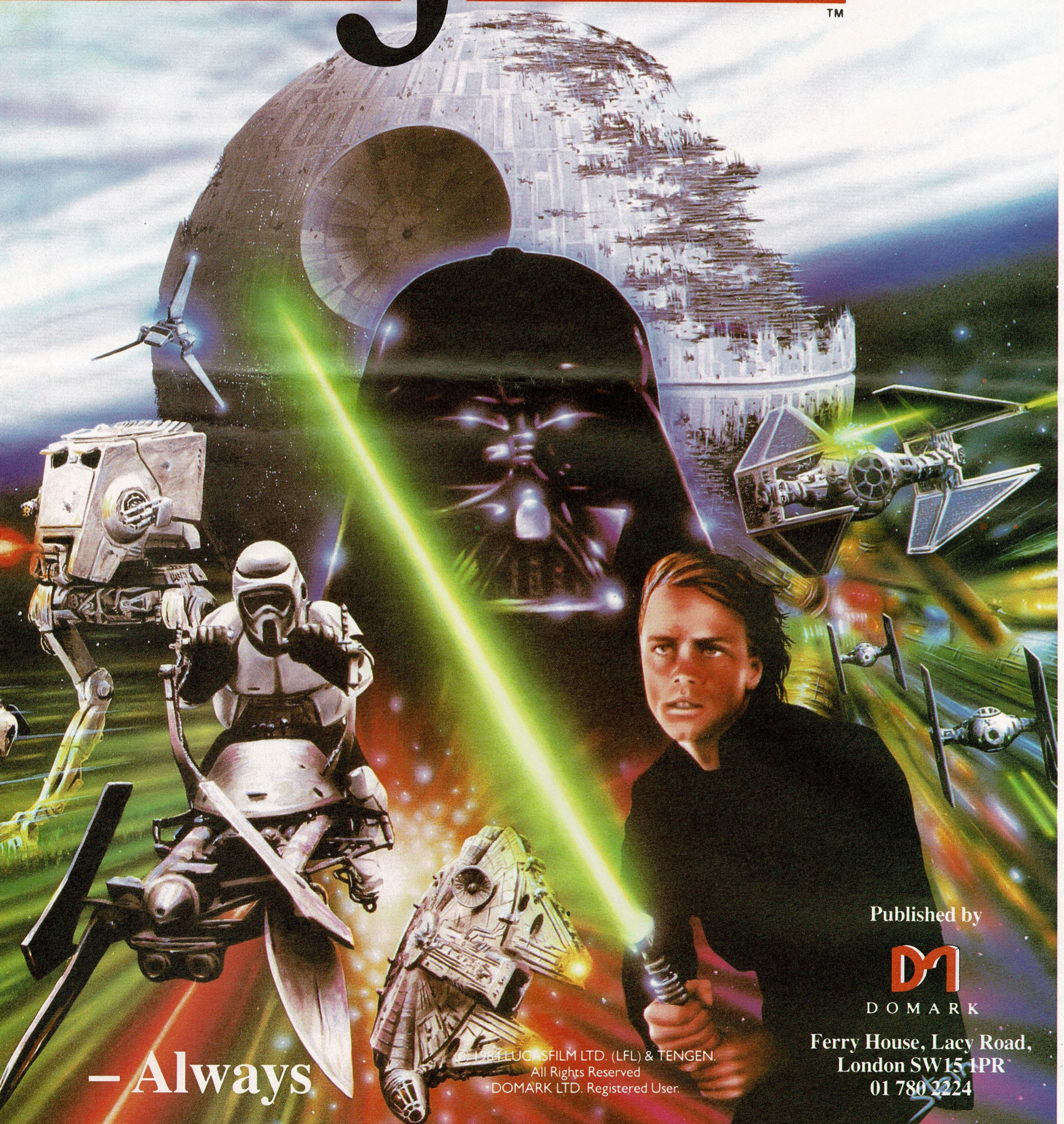
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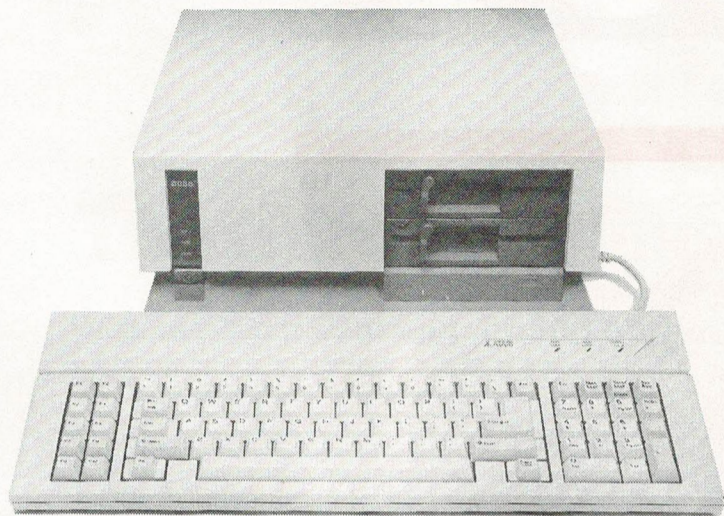
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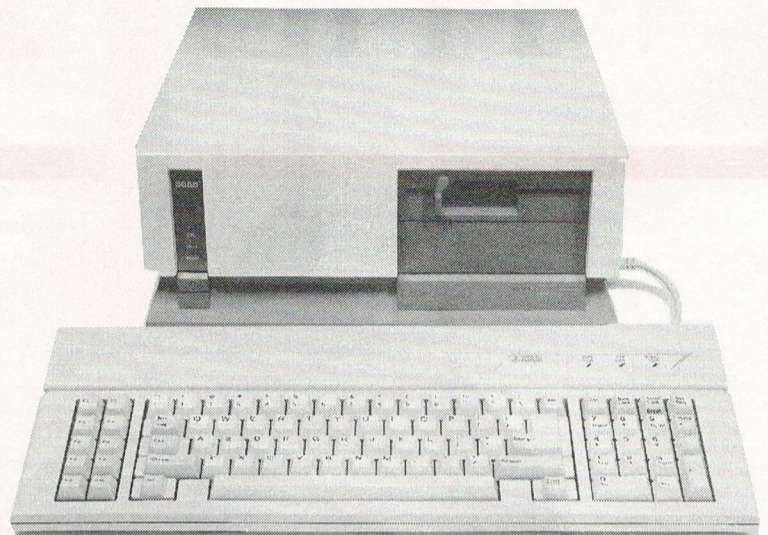


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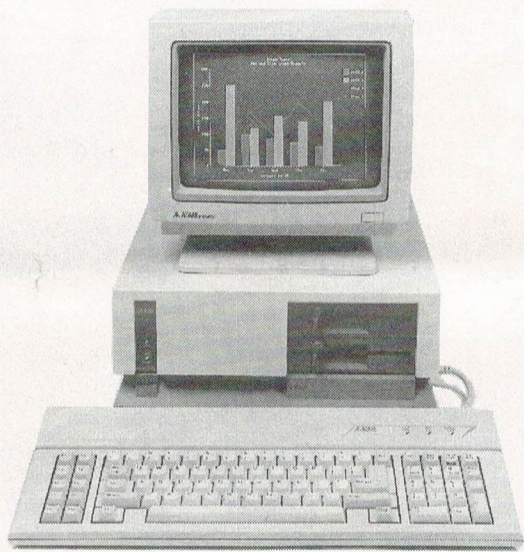
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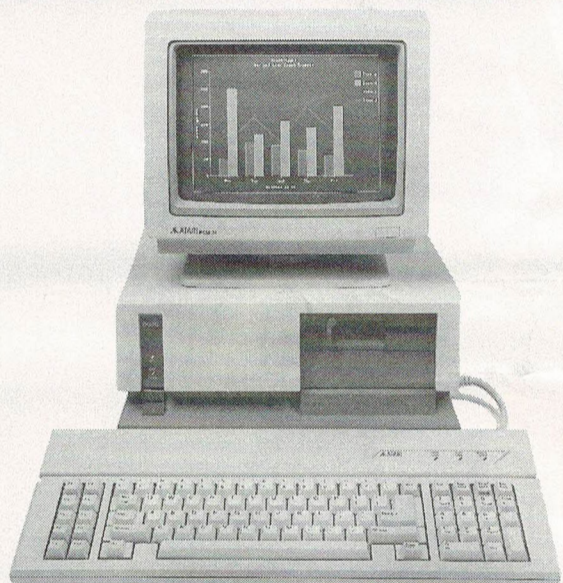
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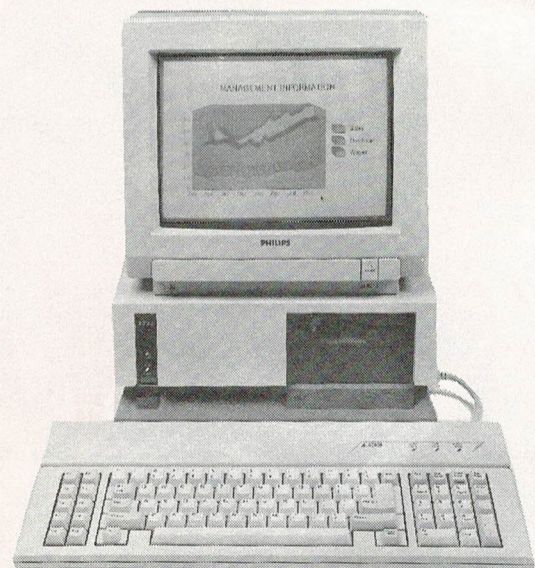
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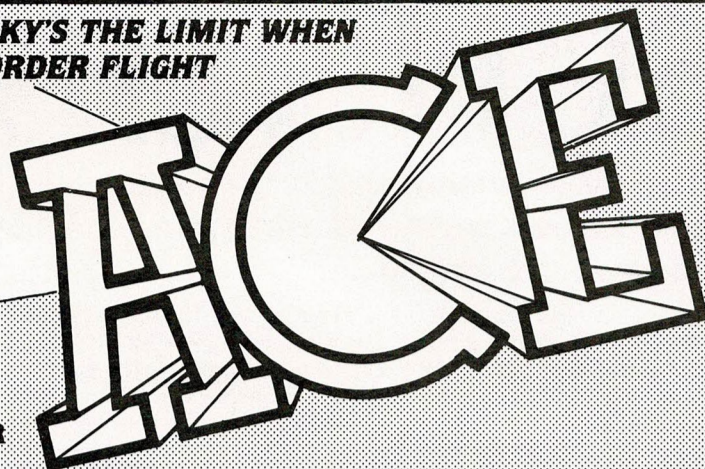
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MONEY FOR OLD ROPE?

Everyone has just about got used to the full-price release/budget re-release merry-go-round. But how do these deals get tied up and where does a firm start if it wants to ferret out some golden oldies? As the big full-price titles start arriving on shelves DAVID LESTER looks at how they will arrive in the budget bins next year . . .

Since the early days of budget software, the attitude of full-price publishers has changed immeasurably.

From the initial scorn poured upon the new fledgling sector, derived from fear that their own higher margin products would inevitably suffer, the mainstream publishers have had a complete change of heart. This has largely been induced by the success of the cheapo sector, and by the ability for both to co-exist quite happily.

Then came the discovery that not only might the budget sector not destroy full-price games, but it might also give it a new lease of life.

streams from it. Money for nothing, or very nearly.

Since this discovery, the market for back-catalogue titles has hotted up considerably. The demand for the right titles is admirably demonstrated by titles such as *International Karate*, *Football Manager*, *The Boss* (renamed *Soccer Boss*) and more recently *Popeye*.

While all these titles had been fairly popular at full price, they had hardly set the world on fire. *Football Manager* had been selling fairly well for many years, but sales were beginning to tail off – until the price was dropped to £2.99, whereupon the game shot back to the top of the charts. It has

Even more spectacular was *The Boss*; a very average (to be kind) football management game, written entirely in 1983 standard BASIC. Alternative renamed it, repackaged and repriced it – and scored a major hit! The dramatically successful budget label released loads of titles last year, and yet despite all that, *Soccer Boss* was its second best selling title of the year – quite something.

Alternative then created mega-hits out of *Trap Door* and *Popeye*, two ex-Piranha titles, both of which had failed to make it really big in the full-price market.

These are just a few of the myriad possible examples – Mastertronic's first ever releases were re-releases of full-price games, and it has followed these up ever since (for some time with a separate label just for new releases: Ricochet) while Firebird has also gained significant market share out of re-releasing back-catalogue games.

Because of the phenomenal success of quite a few of these re-releases, full-price houses have been wising up to the extra potential some of their old games might have. Hence signing up back-catalogue rights is becoming far harder.

To start with, many of the possible games have already been re-released, leaving fewer pickings to choose from. Then it must be said that the budget market has been getting more competitive recently, with the advent of several significant new players, and the metamorphosis of some old ones into more lively units. The days when the market was almost entirely dominated by the three largest budget labels have passed.

For the budgeteers the first step is obviously to target the

games to bid for, and then make contact with the full-price publisher responsible.

At this stage, the chances are high that someone else will have got there first – if your analysis reveals the game as a strong title other people are likely to have reached the same conclusion. A lot then depends upon the stage of other negotiations have reached – whether a deal's been signed, and if not, whether the original publishers are open to new offers.

The sad part of this is that even if you are efficient enough to have got there before your rivals, most full-price houses will actually then approach other budget labels themselves, for rival offers. One company even circularised all the budget houses with details of its back-catalogue, inviting offers.

Take the cash

Most of the full-price houses are looking for the same things, not surprisingly – cash up front, and guarantees of sales. This of course makes it hard for the smaller budget labels to get much of a look-in for new titles. Most of them will probably not be able to match guaranteed sales of advances offered by their larger competitors, hence perpetuating the size differential.

However it was refreshing to find that some publishers are more discerning than this. Some liked smaller publishers because of the extra prominence their titles got within the label, and others like new labels, because of the extra publicity which flows from the newcomer to all the consumer press – featuring their products.

Probably the most important single factor, though, is

simplicity and completeness. Publishers wanted to do "job lot" deals with a budget label for all of their old titles, rather than hawking them round for the best deal on a title by title basis – and here again, larger labels have a much better chance to win the contract, having more capital to fund such deals.

Some full-price houses clearly had allegiances they wanted to stick to, either from contacts with a particular house, or contracts tying them to particular routes – or even just not wanting to upset another firm by giving back-catalogue titles to a competitor.

One of the biggest problems

why almost all the back-catalogue deals which have been tied up concern titles released by companies still in existence.

Other rights have gone along the "I liked the game so much I bought the company" route – acquisitions of full-price houses have been useful for providing Mastertronic and Prism with some excellent budget material, and even liquidations such as CSD provided a rich feeding ground for several budget houses.

With some of the older or rarer games, actually getting hold of a working copy can be a bit of a headache for some of the publishers!

And getting the author's



Elite's oldies kicked into life...

Full-price publishers were quite clearly making profits out of their operations, even when games had very short shelf lives. Imagine their delight when they realised that they could, after a respectable delay of course, re-release the same games at a budget price point, and generate some remarkably handsome revenue

hovered around the top end of the charts almost ever since, now ousted by its full-price successor.

Prism accompanied this budget success with the re-release of *International Karate*, by its Endurance Games subsidiary, which similarly had a useful reign at the top of the charts.



...as Gold gives re-releasing an encore

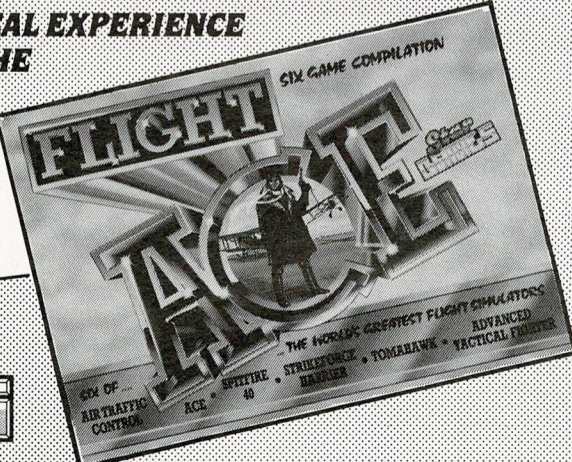
for the budget label trying to track down rights to specific games can be actually finding the right owner. Many of the top-selling titles of a few years ago would still make good budget games, and have yet to be re-released. But tracing the companies, which have long since been laid to rest, is no easy task – which is probably

agreement is sometimes only half the battle for the budget label – there could be quite complex legal situations to wade through. Otherwise sales and marketing or distribution deals which governed the programs at full-price might not have been sorted out (witness Ariolasoft's various

Continued on page 26

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SCHNEIDER ÜBER ALLES

After a seven month wait, some announcements, some non-announcements, and much talk about a supposed feud with one time business partner Amstrad the Schneider PCs are here. KELLY BESWICK visited Turkheim, Bavaria for the German machines' UK launch....

Schneider certainly has its work cut out over the next few months. The latest contender for the low cost clone crown has stepped forward to make its attack in the UK.

But it's doubtful whether the Brentwood beastie boys are quaking in their Doc Martins, they obviously already have a pretty good idea of what Schneider is all about, being Amstrad's erstwhile German distributor.

This image of Schneider clashing head-on with its ex-ally is going to be tough to shake off, and even if the claims that it is not looking for a showdown with Amstrad are true the two companies are inextricably linked. Obviously Schneider is keen to play down the past, and is strongly emphasising that the split was mutual and there is no axe to grind. It doesn't normally pay to hold grudges with Amstrad – after all, Amstrad's bigger

then everyone else.

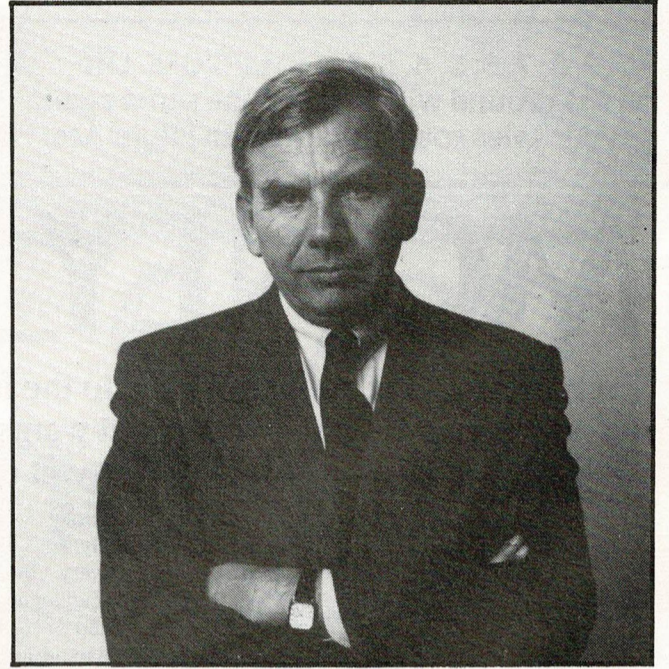
Schneider announced plans to launch its low cost PC range into the UK in March, soon after Amstrad launched itself in Germany at the Hanover Messe. Pundits have claimed that this was a knee jerk reaction from Schneider, although the company argues that it had been discussing the possibility of developing its own range several months prior to Amstrad's announcement.

Regardless of the timing, it's going to be an uphill struggle and one which the company is well aware of. It has already suffered a few hiccups trying to establish a distribution network. There was embarrassment all round with its confusing near-deal with Micro Peripherals, with Schneider announcing the deal only to have it denied by M-P.

Schneider is still adamant that a deal was signed and has made tentative suggestions that M-P, as an Amstrad distributor, was leaned on rather heavily by Amstrad and forced to back out. Schneider decided not to pursue the matter but it certainly doesn't add to the claims of good will between the two companies.

So far the company has appointed two distributors, Greyhound and Akhter offshoot MSL – neither can be said to be one of the high profile UK PC distributors. For Greyhound it is its first foray into the hardware market, and whilst Schneider is claiming that the company will be all the hungrier for it, it hardly adds impact to the new range.

"Many dealers are fed up with it being a one horse race, and have been trying different equipment. We have spent the last month looking at PCs and



SCHNEIDER: More care, more detail

latched onto Schneider because we liked the quality and pricing. We think they have a very good chance of breaking into the UK market," offered Greyhound boss Philip Allot. Part of the agreement between the two firms is that Greyhound will not take another firm's hardware.

Schneider appointed MSL as its second UK distributor. The Harlow based firm was formed by Akhter in July as a distribution-only operation. MSL is established in the busi-

ness market more than Greyhound, and group sales director Alan Tillbrook seems rather more reserved in his assessment of the new product, showing concern regarding supply, with Schneider's home market consuming the product.

Schneider has made an undertaking to sign no more than another two distributors in this country. "We don't need the likes of 16 distributors, how many families have 16

Continued on page 20



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Commodore

SCHNEIDER ÜBER ALLES

Continued from page 18

kids? We think it is going to be easier to assist a small group of distributors who are loyal to the product," commented Schneider's UK marketing liaison co-ordinator Cliff Preston.

Breaking the chain

It was initially thought that the company would be looking to place its PCs in the large retail chains that already take the Schneider brown goods range of TVs and hi-fi equipment. But it would appear that Dixons and Currys will not be stocking the PCs with Preston adding "Stanley Kalms is a big mate of Mr Sugar".

Schneider has now repositioned its stance and is claiming not to be looking to the high street giants as "our distributors are in contact with dealers who will put the product in there", but just where does not seem clear yet.

At the moment the UK is being fronted by Preston. Schneider already has a Northampton based UK subsidiary - which currently markets its brown goods - but in a strange move the UK managing director David Riche has not been given the job of launching the PCs. Overseeing the UK operation will be Fred Koster, general manager of Schneider's computer division. At present there are no plans to appoint a UK boss, but the number of staff will be stepped up in the coming months. These staff will be located in the existing Northampton offices.

So how does a German company formed on the back of

brown goods, and chiefly known in the UK as an ex-Amstrad badger, intend to make its mark in this competitive market? Made in Turkeim, Germany seems to be the key pitch in an obvious bid to play up the *Vorsprung durch Technik* bit. Such boasts may be a very good sales aid for cars, but do users really care where their computers originate from?

In the words of Bernhard Schneider, the company's founder: "Our range is not comparable with cheap importers from the East. We had to go our own way from Amstrad, but we have no complaints. We felt that we needed more care on products and greater detail on quality and design."

Altered Image

Schneider is, however, aware of the problems of image and brand awareness. "Starting from scratch will be difficult, but we have the chance to start small and grow. I do not believe that the Amstrad market share in the UK is written in stone. We are not out for a head to head battle, but will be promoting a quality product made in Germany."

The company intends to spend £300,000 between now and Christmas drumming home the Schneider name in the UK. Most of the advertising will be in the trade and computer press, although there are suggestions of a TV campaign through linking up with distributors and dealers.

Schneider is not making any long term decisions with regards to promoting the range. Advertising will be in ratio to

revenue and after the initial promotion the company plans to "attune the program to suit the developing demand and promote in that direction".

The Schneider range begins with the entry level Euro PC, which comprises an integral 3.5 inch disk drive, 512K of RAM and supports CGA and Hercules graphics. It costs £399 with a monochrome monitor, and is capable of expansion. The machine is compact with the whole computer being situated in the keyboard. The Euro PC is being targeted at the beginner, home-user and the small businessman, and comes bundled with *Microsoft Works*. The Euro PC was launched in Germany in June, and Schneider claims that 25,000 units have been sold to date.

The tower AT clone is being pitched as the star machine for Europe and comes in six different models with prices starting at £799. The 286 machine certainly sets new trends as far as design, with the processor unit stacked against the side of the computer, giving the appearance of "books in a bookcase".

The machine comes equipped with 512Kb or 1Mb RAM, a 3.5 inch disk drive and, depending on the model, either a second 3.5 inch disk drive or a 20Mb hard disk. The Tower model has an expansion capacity for a 5.25 inch floppy disk drive or a 40Mb tape streamer.

Schneider hopes to make inroads into education, public and government sectors with the Tower AT, and also has its long-term sights on the corporate market with the future de-

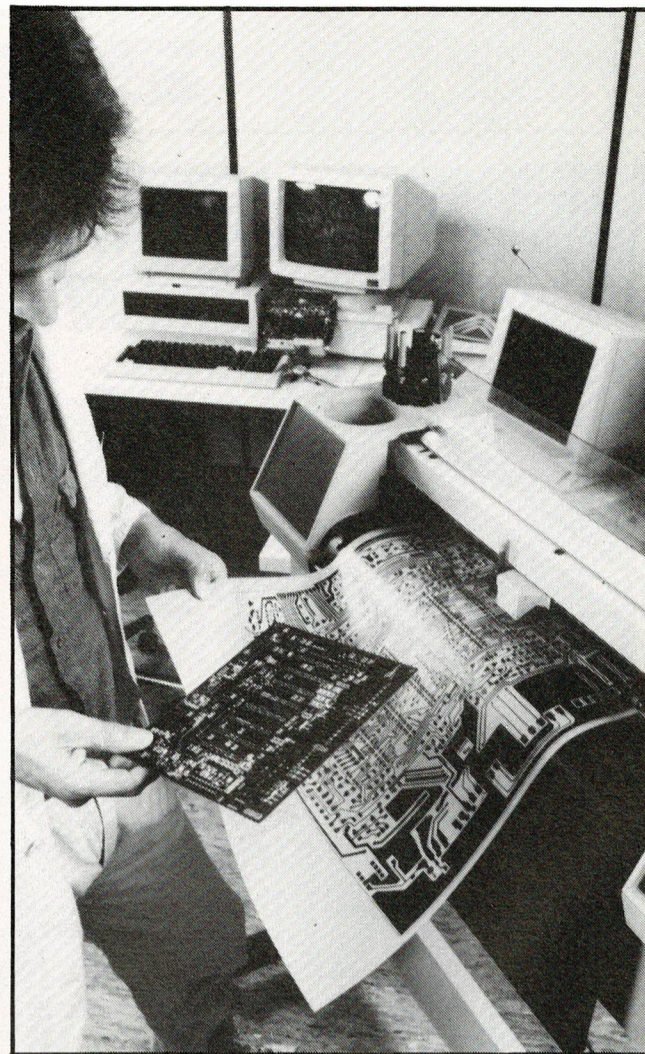
velopment of a networking system. Whilst the Euro PC is available immediately the Tower model will start to be shipped to the UK in three weeks time.

To complete the range Schneider is also offering a Portable AT priced at £1,999. Yet the company is playing down the significance of this product, as contrary to the Schneider pitch, the portable is actually a badged product from the Far East. Whilst called a portable, the machine is in fact mains powered and comes with 640K RAM and a 3.5 inch floppy disk drive and 20Mb hard disk. Schneider also has a badged fax up its sleeve, but no date has been fixed for its UK entry, as the company still has to seek BABT approval

No singing, no dancing

The company is looking to make a low key entry into the UK and is not forecasting sales. "Many gentlemen in the computer business are forecasting huge sales figures and they end up putting themselves under heavy pressure to reach these. We are not the sort of company who always makes a big razzmatazz, we will be quite happy if we reach the same turnover in 1988 as we reached last year," claims Koster. Yet following the split from Amstrad and the switch over to computer manufacturing, Schneider did suffer a 10 per cent drop in turnover for the first half of 1987.

It is clearly difficult to evaluate the company's present position in the German market, let alone its potential in the



The Schneider manufacturing circuit begins...

UK. All sales figures are linked up with the Amstrad range of PCs, and its claim to have been number one in the West German PC market for 1987 now rings rather hollow. All in all the Schneider "threat" is an unpredictable one.

Despite the denials, the split from Amstrad looks to have been acrimonious. Schneider is not into outright Amstrad bashing, but is obviously pitch-

ing for a healthy share of the UK market, having had its own backyard so recently invaded.

But as a relatively unknown brand in this country, it would seem like it's putting a lot of faith on the 'made in Germany' tag. Couple this with its low-key approach and one doubts if big AI is losing much sleep over this latest contender.

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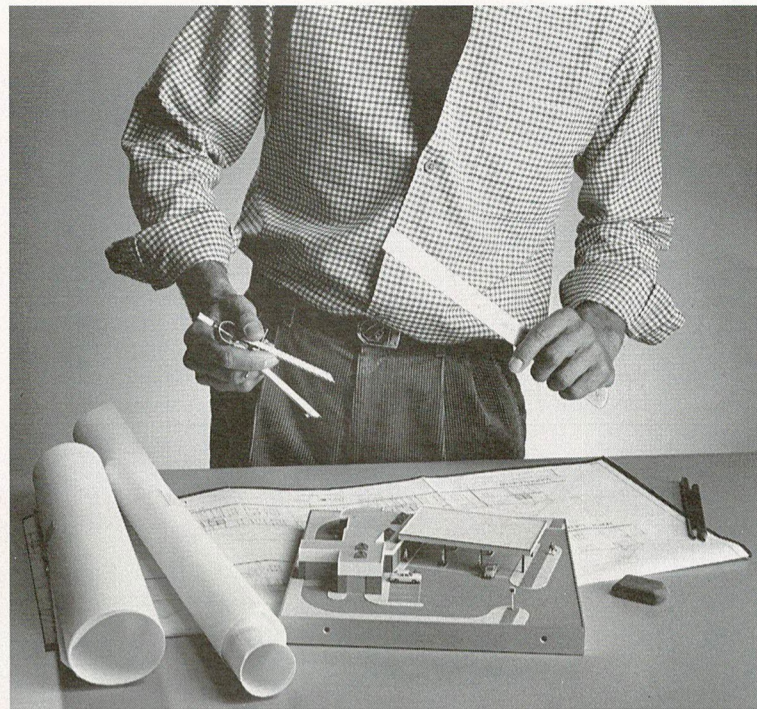
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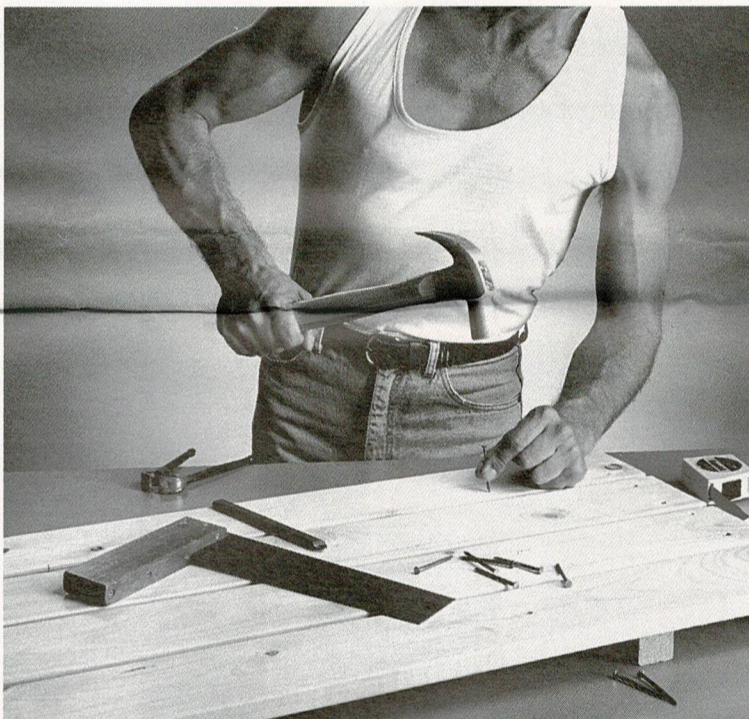
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THE DEDICATED FOLLOWERS OF POCKET MONEY FASHION

Whilst one half of budget sales seems to be made up of ex-full-price titles, the other is becoming decidedly street cred. Well, at least that's the intention. But isn't the *Ninja* and *Simulator* thing getting a little much? And are kids being conned by the sexy packaging? **CHRISTINA BENT** reports...

Publishers are tearing their hair out to come up with computer budget software titles. Titles that include "in" words with the kids, and yet that still relate to the game.

If you take a glance at the charts you'll see that a vast number of the titles include intriguing words like *Simulator*, *Combat* or *Ninja*. Tagged on the end of other chains of letters such as *BMX* and *Beach*

Buggy; these games often prove to be the bigger hits.

Even newly formed contract house Digital Inspiration isn't prepared to fight the successful trend. The budget firm's first releases include the

typically budget-sounding titles *Ninja Space Troopers*, *Scooba Warriors* and *Combat Droid Simulator*.

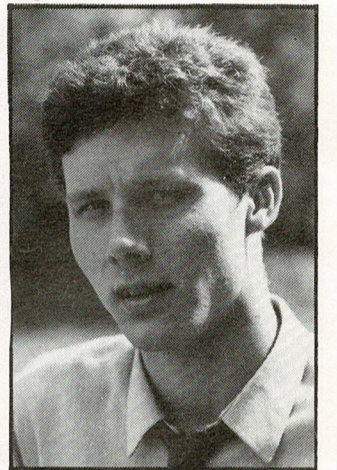
Digital's boss David Lester knows that these titles can be made or broken by name

alone. "We've looked very closely at what's selling on the budget scene and we're trying to write what we perceive as the budget format."

At Code Masters Richard Darling commented, "Any

publisher has to produce what kids want to see, but titles are only valid if they reflect the game, otherwise there's no point.

"We call a game 'Simulator' because it reflects on the game, for example *BMX Simulator* is about BMX racing - like in real life. It makes it playable. We also concentrate on the subject of the game when picking titles."



JONES: "Our programmes get fan mail"

Players' boss Richard Jones had a similar line, "You can't call something a simulator if it's not. We call ours 'Construction Sets'. Publishers can't just call it something it's not - I don't believe many do that anyway. Publishers sell what the kids are into, they produce what people want."

However, Players did actually have massive success with its *Joe Blade* game. And notice the lack of 'Simulator' in that one. This game sold because it was good, the name was relevant, and the kids liked it.

It is apparent that publishers are unconcerned by the ever increasing nonsense titles. Instead, they stick rigidly to their motto: 'Give 'em what they want'. It doesn't much matter if it sounds ridiculous, so long as the kids can relate to it. The point is, *Ninja Scooter Space Troopers from Mars* isn't ridiculous to the vast bulk of budget buyers.

It's true, the games with titles that conjure up 'street level' imagery do seem to top the charts more often. And that is of course what it's all about. If kids can relate to something, more often than not they'll latch on to it. And if that means a publisher sells more product, then so be it.

But then there's always the argument that good packaging and a good name will sell anything, Darling revealed his growing concern on the matter: "I'm quite concerned about this, it's like some 'simulator' titles, you get the pics done and the name and the product sells - it's sad it can happen."

"A lot of companies are taking advantage of game buyers. The kids don't look before they buy. At Code Masters, we look at things in a more long-term way. We want to build up a brand Code Masters, and not have names exceeding games."

Telecomsoft boss Paula
Continued on page 27

REPTON INFINITY

FILMSTRIP
The Character Designer

REPTON 3
Skulls & Safes & Spirits

LANDSCAPE
The Screen Designer

REPTON 4
Can You Photocopy the Ghost?

BLUEPRINT
The Game Creator

ROBBO
Exterminate the Space-Fish!

FILELINK
The Co-ordinator

TRAKKER
Chased by a Jagga

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(The screen pictures show the BBC Micro version of the game.)



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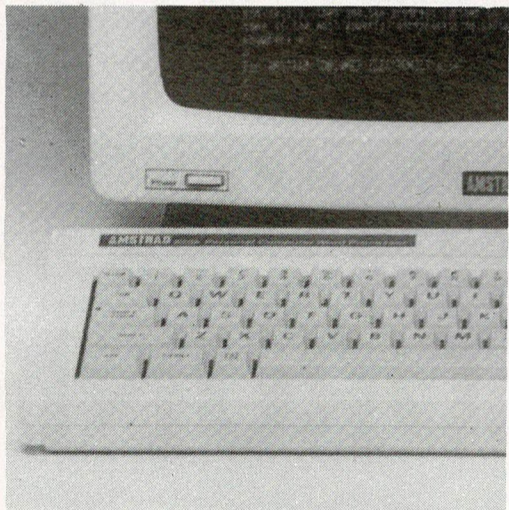
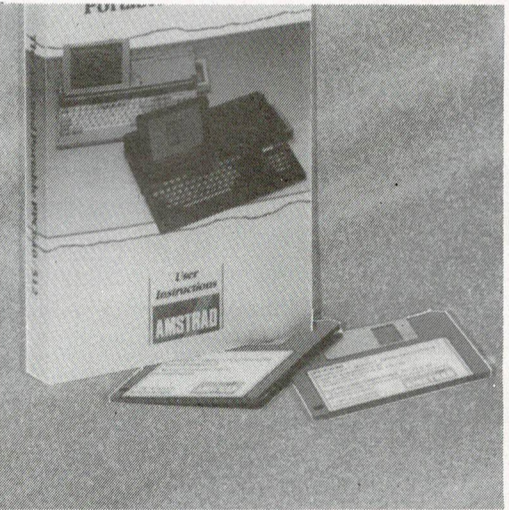
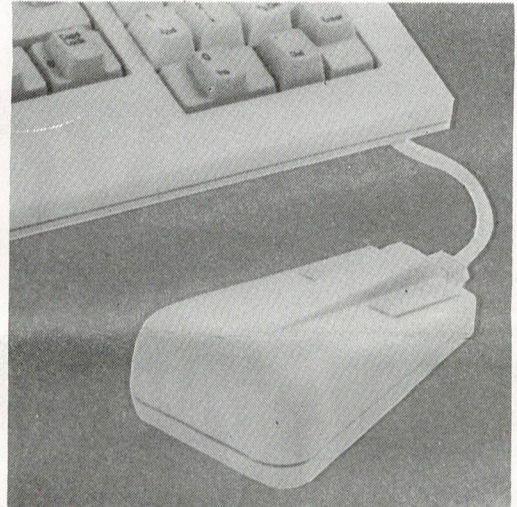
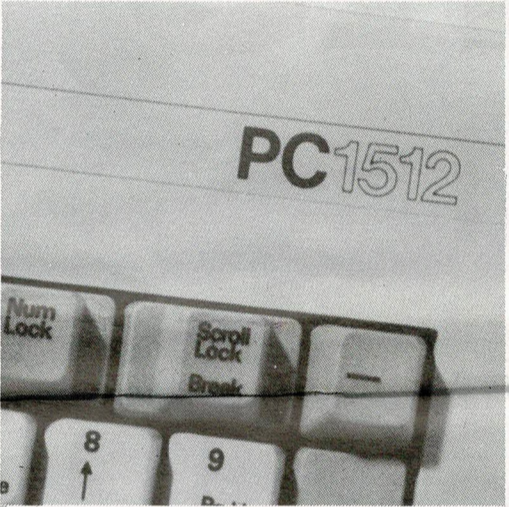
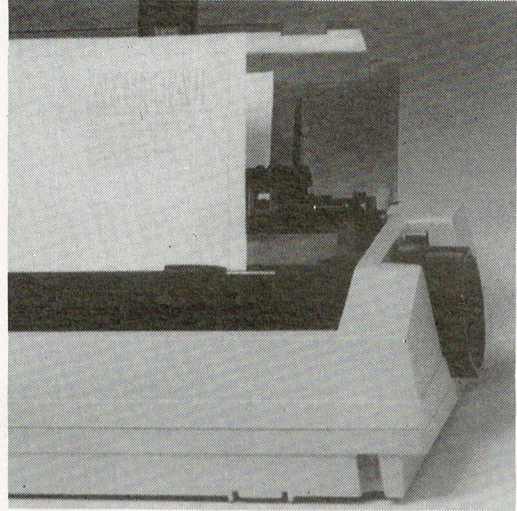
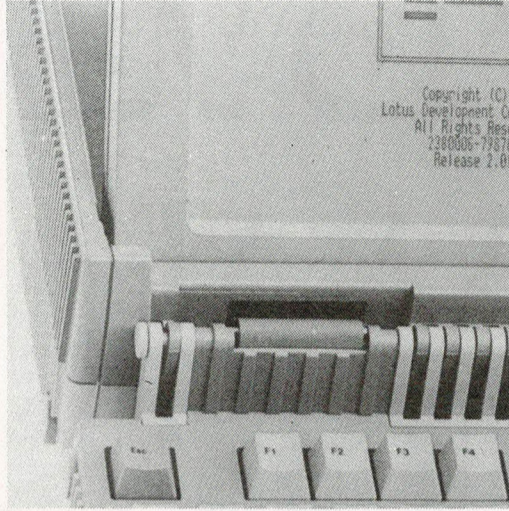
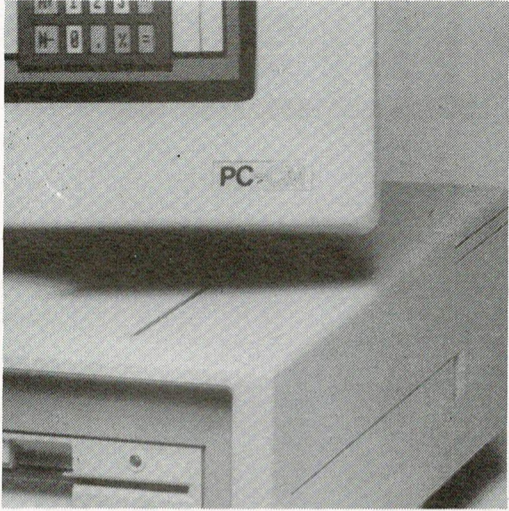


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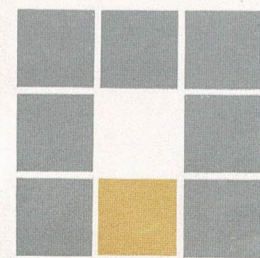
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SPECTRUM TOP 20

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2	NE	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.99
3	3	ON THE BENCH	CULT	1.99
4	2	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
5	12	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
6	19	FIRST PAST THE POST	CULT	1.99
7	14	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
8	6	DALEY THOMPSON	OCEAN	9.95
9	13	ACE	CASCADE	2.99
10	35	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
11	4	FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
12	10	ACE OF ACES	KIXX	2.99
13	11	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
14	RE	SUPREME CHALLENGE	BEAU JOLLY	12.95
15	26	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
16	NE	LEADERBOARD PAR 3	ACCESS-US GOLD	14.99
17	5	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
18	RE	ROAD BLASTERS	US GOLD	8.99
19	16	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	1.99
20	9	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99

C64 TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	2.95
2	1	BARBARIAN 2	PALACE	9.95
3	3	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	2.99
4	23	END ZONE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
5	7	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
6	10	PRO SKATEBOARD SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
7	2	DALEY THOMPSON	OCEAN	9.95
8	39	RED STORM RISING	MICROPROSE	4.95
9	11	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	1.99
10	37	SUPREME CHALLENGE	BEAU JOLLY	2.95
11	24	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
12	6	HAWKEYE	THALAMUS	9.99
13	14	SALAMANDER	IMAGINE	8.95
14	36	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
15	27	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
16	5	PRO SKATEBOARD SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
17	13	TRACK SUIT MANAGER	GOLIATH	9.95
18	4	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.95
19	38	SKOOLDAZE	ALTERNATIVE	4.99
20	9	ACE OF ACES	KIXX	2.99

AMSTRAD TOP 10

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	2	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	1.99
2	1	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
3	10	ACE OF ACES	KIXX	2.99
4	8	ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
5	7	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
6	3	DALEY THOMPSON	OCEAN	9.95
7	11	KIX START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
8	NE	LAST NINJA 2	SYSTEM 3	12.95
9	5	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	9	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	ELITE	FIREBIRD	24.95
2	1	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.95
4	2	STOS GAME CREATOR	MANDARIN	29.95
3	6	LEADERBOARD BIRDIE	ACCESS-US GOLD	19.99
5	5	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95

AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	1	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.95
2	4	ROCKET RANGER	MIRRORSOFT	29.99
3	3	BATTLE CHESS	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
4	RE	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95
5	3	INTERCEPTOR	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95

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	40.4	44.0	43.7	42.8	29.3	30.0	31.0	27.9
COMMODORE 64	26.3	24.4	24.3	23.7	24.2	24.9	24.1	24.6
AMSTRAD	17.5	18.1	17.7	18.0	18.0	19.1	18.8	17.8
ATARI ST	5.4	4.4	4.6	4.8	8.4	8.2	7.5	7.2
AMIGA	3.9	3.4	3.0	1.9	5.1	5.0	3.9	4.0
ATARI	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.5	3.1	2.2	2.0	3.9
COMMODORE 16	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.5	2.0	2.3	2.9	2.6
BBC	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.8	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.0
ELECTRON	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.3	1.8	1.6	1.9	2.9

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
87	100	77	134

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.

△ **INFOGRAMS:** *Action Service* (STPC-£19.95) Another commando simulation, this time set in a soldier school for new recruits. All the fun of savage dogs, deadly explosives, obstacles, traps and practically any other horrible thing you can think of.

△ **AUDIOGENIC:** *Helter Skelter* (ST-£14.95) A cutesy little number, with nothing whatsoever to do with slides and coconut mats. Basically a bouncy ball game with the sole objective of squashing a selection of little monsters. It doesn't sound desperately original, but for £15 it doesn't sound desperately bad either.

△ **AUDIOGENIC:** *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* (64-£9.99-£12.99) There seems to be a new computer football game on the market every week. The main difference with this one is the name Emlyn Hughes. A spruced up version of the ancient *International Soccer* perhaps? Surely not.

△ **MIRRORSOFT:** *Defender of the Crown* (PC-£34.99) PC owners finally get the chance to experience the wonders of this big Cinemaware hit.

△ **DOMARK:** *Return of the Jedi* (STAg64AmSp-£9.95-£19.95) The third and final part of the *Star Wars* trilogy, faithfully reconstructed from the coin-op version as only the Domark duo know how. It probably won't do as well as the enormous *Star Wars* but should do better than *Empire Strikes Back*.

△ **MICROPROSE:** *Autoduel* (PC-£24.95) Based on the supposedly famous board game *Car Wars*, and set in the well-driven freeways of the future. Sounds like a standard road blaster with the right of way going to the biggest guns.

△ **MARTECH:** *Hell Fire Attack* (STAg64AmSp-£8.99-£19.99) A helicopter flight simulator with lots of missiles, guns and other bits and pieces.

△ **ACCOLADE:** *Fastbrake* (64-£9.95-£14.95) A straight forward

basketball simulation with no monsters or guns and it's not even in space. What is the industry coming to?

△ **ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Newromancer* (64-£14.95) From the creators of *Bard's Tale*, Interplay has come up with this latest role playing adventure based on the sci-fi books by William Gibson. Never heard of him? Such Philistines.

△ **GREMLIN:** *Flight Ace* (SpAm64-£5.99-£14.99) Flight compilation time with a host of goodies including: *Ace*, *Air Traffic Control*, *Strikeforce Harrier*, *Tomahawk*, *Spitfire 40* and *Advanced Tactical Fighter*. Looks good and should sell buckets.

△ **ARCANA:** *No Excuses* (STAg-£19.95) An Arcana entry is something of a rarity, and this latest release is a series of psychological tests devised by the fictional Russian Professor, Boris Perestroika. To stop boredom setting in a few deadly superaliens have been thrown in.

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.

THEY LAUGHED WHEN I SAID I BOUGHT MY SOFTWARE FROM AUDIOGENIC... ...BUT WHEN I SAT DOWN TO PLAY!

Instantly I became the centre of attention. People who would normally cross over when they saw me walking down the street suddenly claimed to be old friends. *Everybody wanted to play my new Audiogenic game!*

I'm a football fanatic. I probably own every football game ever released, from Commodore's *International Soccer* to *Match Day 2* and *Football Manager 2*.

But none of the games I could find did exactly what I wanted. Some were too slow; some had too little control over the gameplay; others had either too much or too little strategy. I began to think I would never find the perfect game.

Then a friend told me about *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* from Audiogenic. I played one game and was hooked, instantly. The graphics were so fast, the controls so powerful, and the animation so realistic that I suddenly realised how much I had been missing. It even had league and cup competitions, individual player skills and fitness levels.

At only £9.95 it was the bargain of a lifetime. I rushed out to my local computer shop, and in no time at all I was playing in the Cup Final!

★ ★ ★

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SPEAKEASY

Apathy rules OK

I read with interest the letter in CTW Oct 17th from Clive Warner of Digital Matrix regarding the scourge of the leisure software industry – hackers.

We are continually being told that this industry has matured and although some companies' recent antics seem to indicate the opposite this would, on the whole, appear to be true. Yet which other industry turns a blind eye to such blatant infringement of copyright and breaking of the law as ours?

I have been in contact with many of the hackers and cracking crews, which on the Amiga alone number into the hundreds, and the problem is much worse than many realise.

The hackers have regular copy parties organised, where all of the latest cracks are distributed. *Interceptor*, for instance, was cracked, so that no code wheel was needed, and was being copied within 2 days of release.

This is certainly not the worst of it either, as *Interceptor* was not released in another country before its release here. Many games are and these too are cracked, and copied, and over here in a matter of days. Well before their UK release. This, though, is still not the

most worrying.

What now seems to be happening with increasing frequency, is that games written over here are 'escaping' from programmers and magazine reviewers etc, to once again be copied before release.

There have been suggestions that some software houses are themselves putting the games out prior to release, to gauge reaction. Indeed some companies' software does seem to be circulated more often than others.

The whole thing really starts to hit home when, having bought in the latest game, let's say *Space Harrier* on the ST, a group of ST owners come in and ask what you have new for their machine. When you show them *Space Harrier* they simply laugh and proceed to tell you how long they've all had copies of it. This can only lead to shops buying in less of that company's future releases, in fear of being stuck with games that everyone already has.

Apparently, the idea of dongles is a non-starter too, *Ruby View/Term* being just one example of an Amiga program which is widely available, having been cracked to remove the need for the dongle. The

only possibility here is to put a portion of the code itself on ROM, as a dongle. But surely, for companies who seem to be after every penny they can get, this would prove simply too costly?

It's not as if the hackers themselves were difficult to catch, on most Amiga cracks they'll put an intro with a contact address for swapping, and often even a phone number and name. Such is the confidence they have that the software companies cannot be bothered to enforce the copyright.

The problem is growing, software protection is flimsy at best and attitudes amongst those within the industry who are not pirating themselves are apathetic.

Perhaps it's time the leisure software industry stopped its squabbling and actually tackled the problem that affects us all.

Rob Massey
Capricorn Computers
Solihull

West Midlands

— *Strange isn't it that the person who responds to Clive Warner's letter is a dealer? Sure, dealers lose out because of piracy but so do the publishers, in fact presumably more so.*

It says something about publishers' apathy that it is nine times out of ten dealers who bring the problems of piracy back into the limelight.

games.

Cascade and Martech have also launched their own labels, although thus far it must be said that both appear to be "one-hit wonders" – the only successes being *Ace*, and *Sam Fox's Strip Poker* so far. Of course, this performance could change quite easily – but until it does, the two labels remain something of an oddity in the budget arena.

The potentially most powerful of these new labels, created to be an outlet for the parent's back catalogue, has to be US Gold's new baby, *Kixx*. Although the label seems to have little identity of its own, this hardly matters when you have access to titles such as *Gauntlet* and *OutRun*.

Firebird has recently tied up deals with Palace, Mirrorsoft

If we can all shout loud enough we'll deafen 'em

With reference to the letters published in your issue of 24th October 1988 I would like to draw your attention to the following:-

1. In your comments no mention has been made of the fact that a National Association of Retailers exists south of the border. We do have an association which was formed during September this year and we are at present organising meetings. We are in contact with the Scottish Micro Federation and between us we hope to put across to the powers that be that we have put up with certain industry problems for too long and would like to see the industry put in order.

2. On the question of Amstrad support we find that through the activities of Amstrad we are gaining members who are, at the very least, disillusioned with Amstrad products and support.

We have asked members to send in their comments re the lack of parts situation and, although it is too early to quantify the replies, we have received several disturbing examples.

I myself have had a DMP4000 printer off line for

three months and still no sign of parts. I have previously had a three month wait for PCW9512 parts. As regards the PPC, I had quite a difficult time obtaining this one item I eventually received three time obtaining a replacement screen and after numerous phone calls chasing this one item I eventually received three was assured that it was impossible for duplications to occur.

Allsorts of Abergavenny has been waiting for a Print-head for an LQ3500 Printer for six months and to date has received nothing.

Finally, it appears that Amstrad – through its 5 day Warranty period and lack of parts – has caused a large number of dealers to look for alternative product to sell and if things carry on as at present there will be very few dealers stocking their products.

I trust the above is of interest to your good selves and look forward to continuing communication with you in the future.

Vic Purnell
National Association of Computer Retailers
Ebbw Vale

— *All power to the southern retailers' association and many apologies for not giving a mention last time around. There's little doubt that retailers can benefit by grouping together and let's hope that this letter might nudge a few other dealers into joining.*

The Amstrad spare parts hunt goes on unabated, and by the correspondence we've had the manufacturer certainly seems to be in need of sorting its problem out – fast.

As for the notion that if it doesn't change 'very few' dealers will be stocking Amstrad product, well, that's possibly a bit naive. There's no point stocking something else if the product doesn't sell – spare parts or no spare parts. Also, many dealers prefer stocking a range that sells itself rather than requires rather more effort from behind the counter (and possibly local advertising).

Sure, if the spare parts problem continues it will have an adverse effect on Amstrad's dealer base. But make that result fewer Amstrad dealers not very few.

MONEY FOR OLD ROPE

Continued from page 17

associated labels), and games might be the subject of continuing legal contests.

Some full-price labels have been very slow to allow their old games out onto budget for reasons of perception and image. One south London-based firm announced in an interview that its titles would never appear on a budget label, even though, it turned out later, the same company had already signed a deal with a budget label for its back-catalogue! And other houses have rejected any possibility of their titles coming out on budget for "ages" yet – and only two weeks later CTW or some other efficient organ carries the news

of their being signed to a competitor budget label.

The ripe stuff

Of the majors which have been reticent to re-release product, many clearly have just been waiting until the time was ripe for them to go it alone in the budget field. Elite is probably the most successful of these, with its fairly new Encore label doing extremely well, to judge by Gallup charts – and this performance has been entirely based on ex-full price titles. Hewson have similarly gone it alone, and have also tied up rights to various other games, notably Gargoyle's popular arcade

and Digital Integration for some of their old games, which leaves very few top games still available – with two very obvious exceptions: Ocean and Activision. Of the other potential titles, most are either not yet old enough, in the eyes of the full-price publisher, or (for the very rare few) are still selling well at full price – so why drop the price?

Activision has hived off some of its old games before, but since then many more games have entered its pool of "potentials" for budget. Ocean has yet to re-release any of its games, and has had the market speculating for years over its plans. Many believe that it will follow US Gold's recent moves, and launch an Ocean back-catalogue label; if so, it would inevitably have a huge

impact on the budget scene, as Kixx could.

The very small budget labels which cannot attract rights to the best games could ultimately be squeezed out of the market. Punters have been shown to buy ex-full-price games in large quantities in preference to most original titles – and who can blame them, when they are in all probability getting better value for money, except for the rare original budget games of full price quality.

Teenage Kixx

Compilations could yet upset the applecart. These have reached such proliferation now that the number of active games buyers who have not bought a game at full-price or on a compilation must be small(ish!).

Full-price houses have been very quick to exploit the compilation scene to the full, often releasing one title on several different compilations, each of which can be expected to sell in large quantities. But this does not seem to be hindering Kixx's success yet, and its first releases have been compiled almost to death!

All the full-price publishers contacted were fed up with the way the larger budget labels tended to mess them around. After signing the deal, titles had been left for a year or more unreleased, and when releases happened as often as not no royalty statements or payments ever arrived. This is where the smaller label, with less bureaucracy and more dependence upon the full-price software house, can gain an advantage – provided, of course, that it does in fact prove better.

Surprisingly, perhaps, most full-price houses seemed extremely realistic about sales levels. It seemed that most budget houses offered very similar terms for the back

catalogue rights, the main difference being the size of the initial advance – where Telecomsoft's Silverbird seemed to win hands down, by repute.

Where the cashflow provided from the re-releases is not paramount, many of the publishers I spoke to were quite willing to accept a higher royalty rate in preference to the highest initial advance.

Most deals were done on an advance against royalty basis, although one budget label in particular is known to prefer buying titles outright, often for little more than a few hundred pounds!

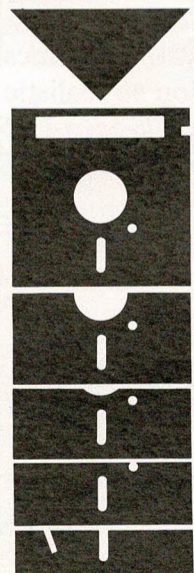
As with everything, though, negotiating for back-catalogue games rights is a case of compromise, realism and personalities.

There is no point in outbidding other labels if that means offering more than you can be confident of recovering, as recent charts imply that brand loyalty counts for less and less in the budget market – thus loss leading is a waste. Meanwhile good contacts can often secure deals at favourable rates.

The next few months look like being awash with some excellent budget re-releases, after which the market will almost certainly calm down. For, Ocean and Activision excepted, the number of good titles left to re-publish will have fallen considerably – and ultimately, it will just be a case of churning out titles which are x months old, and as the number of full-price labels producing 8-bit games declines over the next two years, so will the potential for re-releases.

Meanwhile, the winner looks certain to be everyone, with many bargains to be had in the run up to Christmas – great news for the consumer, meaning great news for retailers – and of course for the producers.

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FOLLOWERS OF FASHION

Continued from page 22

Byrne was convinced that kids wouldn't buy a game just because it had an appealing title at least, not more than once. "If they did and were disappointed by the game," Byrne offered, "they wouldn't use the same strategy again, I think it happens more with one-offs, because if that did happen, then the kids wouldn't buy like that again."

But what have kids got to go on when selecting that title from the shelf? It seems not a great deal. There's the title, the packaging, and the screenshots and reviews on the back.

And no publisher is going to put poor screenshots, and bad reviews on the back of his game. It all hangs on the title and the packaging.

"Anyway," added Jones, "at £1.99 it's disposable product." And that's what the publishers have realised. Reports reveal that kids nowadays get an average of about £5 pocket money per week. Two pounds isn't going to be missed, and probably not cursed when spent unwisely.

The question is are the games themselves actually any good, or are the kids just drawn in by the title? Jones revealed, "We had a game called *Paddles Up*, which was named by the author, and we changed it to *Riding the Rapids*, I mean,

no-on was going to buy a game called *Paddles Up*, were they?"

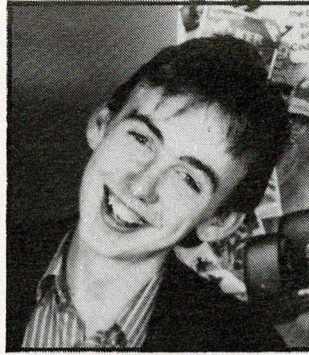
Byrne commented, "Before we launched Silverbird our titles didn't mean anything. We wanted to have something that told you a bit about the game and that the kids could relate to. Before the titles just didn't relate to the kids' interests."

"We had a Silver Club when the Silverbird label first came out. It helped us to find out what the kids wanted, because before it had been a case of giving them what we thought they wanted, rather than what they really wanted."

Byrne freely admitted that Telecomsoft's simulator and combat titles had sold better than for example, *Thingy* and *the Doodahs*, probably due to

their names, but added, "They all have the same programming team and are of the same quality."

She believes that the games brought out before Firebird Silver and Gold became Silverbird didn't actually sell as well



DARLING: The much simulated simulator

because the kids couldn't relate to them. And can you blame them? When called upon to do so Byrne couldn't even recall one of the older anonymous titles.

Jones isn't entirely convinced that sales are title based, or at least, not with Players product. He thinks it's more to do with his loyal following. "It's like with our team of programmers. They incorporate themselves in their games as characters, and the kids send them fan mail. They're really into it."

"They also remember the author: *Joe Blade II* spent 37 weeks at number one, and then the author released a game called *Thing*. The screenshots weren't good and it was in stan-

dard Players packaging, yet it was successful. Personally, if I were a kid buying, I'd choose *Shanghai Surprise* over *Thing*."

"Kids follow our label," continued Jones, "We feel that if we tried to rip our punters off they wouldn't buy any more of our games. It's like with records, if a group doesn't produce good records, you don't buy them. Kids remember publishers."

And so, where's it all going to end? The publishers themselves don't see the names as a problem (more of a good sales technique), and the kids certainly don't.

And what's more if the tactic works, why change it? - not that anyone was going to anyway...

DTP OR NOT DTP

Continued from page 12

Partner. Look out for *Pagestream*, essentially a version of *Publishing Partner Professional*, and coming soon from Atari will be *Calamus*, as yet an unknown quantity.

Four main packages are available on the Amiga front - *Professional Page* from HB Marketing at the £250 mark and *Page Setter*, its little brother for under £80; *City Desk* from Precision at £100, and *Shakespeare* which handles colour rather cleverly, from Cloudhall at £150. With Amiga DTP software the choice facing the customer is remarkably straightforward - the more you pay, the more power you buy.

The 8-bit machine best-equipped with DTP software has to be the PCW 8000 - there's *Fleet Street*, of course, and *AMS Stop Press* as well as *The Desktop Publisher* from Database, and *International Newsdesk* from Electric Studio. For serious use, within the limitations of the PCW, it's a toss-up between *Fleet Street* and *Stop Press*, with *Desktop Publisher* weighing in as a budget package ideal for school newsletters and the like. *International Newsdesk* is graphically powerful, but can be hard work to master when it comes to making pages.

There are, of course, DTP-like programs available for the Commodore and Spectrum (including *Stop Press* for the C64) but they fall firmly into the hobbyist end of the market. CPC owners who have a disk drive can choose between *Stop Press* (good) and *Fleet Street* (bad) when experimenting with the DTP capabilities of their machine.

A profitable market for DTP software exists out there, and if you are totally unfamiliar with the application it would be well worth studying a collection of reviews from the consumer magazines to brief yourself.

This article only scratches the surface when it comes to examining the relative capabilities of the products mentioned, and should only be used as an overview of what's available.

A few evenings spent in front of a screen preparing a price list or leaflet on *Timeworks Lite* or whatever would give you the hands-on experience to talk to customers knowledgeably, and who knows? You could become a convert yourself and save on typesetting bills as well as make sales.


Archimedes Games

£14.95 each

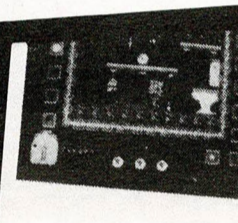


ORION

Skillfully manipulate Orion, the latest air to air combat interceptor, to defend your planet against the tide of marauding aliens. Shoot them down before its too late! Score points by saving your men before they are changed into mutants - otherwise they will turn against you. Contains Baiters, Pods which explode into Swarms and waves of Bombers. Orion is a fast and furious scrolling 'shoot em up' game based on the all time arcade classic.

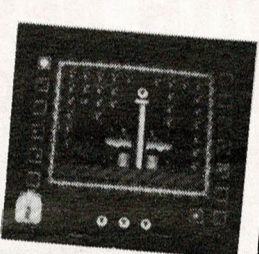


NEW



HOVERBOD

Hoverbod is a traditional maze adventure in the style of the classic Manic Miner, yet it is of stupendous proportions. Hoverbod, the yellow spherical droid, has been banished from the planet Zingle and goes in search of some stolen treasure. The player must guide him through the perils which befall him and help him puzzle his way through the eight different levels to the final quest level. But beware ... the Ibbles and Squibbles start to materialise !!!!



NEW



FREDDY'S FOLLY

An enchanting game using animated graphics. Just watch the little men load the canon and pull it along. Notice the celebration when they win! Colourful fun for all the family. Sir Freddy is sneaky and envious of your castle so plans to bomb it with a fleet of balloons. You built a battlement to shoot down Sir Freddy in his balloon. Sir Freddy then hired several Gun ships to shoot your canon crew. Defend your castle and shoot down the balloons and the invading ships.



NEW



MINOTAUR

The Minotaur maze game is aimed at a market for children or adults who want a game where quick shoot-out reactions are not necessary. Theseus walks around the Labyrinth, collecting items to assist in the search of the ill fated men which have been provided as food for the Minotaur. The ultimate aim is then to kill the Minotaur and lead the men out of the Labyrinth to safety. The maze size is fully definable by the User. Games may be saved and reloaded for use at a later time.




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Missile Control is a classic arcade game written for the Archimedes to make full use of the advanced graphics and sound, while remaining faithful to the original concepts of the game. The Player is in control of the missile launches and must do the utmost to protect the cities from the incoming missiles. On each subsequent attack further planes, satellites or 'smart' missiles attack the target cities.



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