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10.10.88 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 207

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Broderbund due in '89

US software giant Broderbund is planning to enter the European market in the new year.

The \$40 million firm is currently looking at two alternative ways to set about this task. One of its options is to sign a number of distribution and marketing deals with companies in each of the targeted European territories. The other is to set up its own European base, although the firm is keen to stress this would not necessarily be in England.

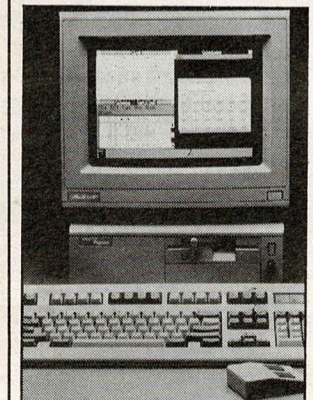
Broderbund's leisure publisher Dennis Friedman told *CTW*: "It is true we are looking towards the European market and we will be doing something about it next year. As for how and possibly with who, we don't know yet. It's too early to talk about the actual mechanics of it."

He also revealed that the firm is currently "talking to a number of European firms" but added that this did not rule out the possibility of Broderbund having its own European base. A decision will be made by the firm by the end of the year.

"We see the English market as more leisure orientated and it is definitely entertainment software we will be pushing," added Friedman.

INSIDE:

CHIPPING IN



The Americans are coming — and they're bringing their PCs with them. US firm Blue Chip is due to launch yet another PC range on the British market..... 8

BODY TALK

The BMF is forming a leisure wing in an attempt to satisfy an area of the market that has previously been little but critical and left out. *CTW* talks to all involved..... 10

SELLING IT LIKE IT IS

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Amstrad: City cool for now



SUGAR: £45 million chip investment

As ever, the City reacted coolly last week following Amstrad's announcement of yet another massive increase in sales and profits.

The posting of pre-tax profits up 18 per cent to £160.4 million and sales up 22 per cent to £625.4 million for the year ending in June were also once again above most analysts' predictions.

The City is resisting the temptation of getting excited by the figures due to the continuing memory chip shortage holding back computer sales since the new financial year began.

This is likely to be the case for a few more months yet, but analysts Phillips and Drew and Barclays de Zoete Wedd have both responded encouragingly to Amstrad's acquisition last week of a share in US

chip manufacturer Micron Technology.

The £45 million deal — giving Amstrad a nine per cent stake and its chairman Alan Sugar a place on the board — has been augmented by a long term chip supply deal with Samsung. Further deals with Texas Instruments, Toshiba and Hitachi are also in the balance.

"There is no good done by sitting around whimpering and hoping that the problem will come right. We had to be decisive and do something," commented Sugar in typically abrasive style.

City analyst Mark Measham of Phillips and Drew offered that although the underlying trend is growing confidence in Amstrad, there are still a number of immediate worries.

"The real issue is the future. We believe that the short-term

outlook for profits is not brilliant. The market is peaking, component costs are rising, consumer spending is slackening and marketing is becoming more expensive," Measham told *CTW*.

"But in the medium term Amstrad is looking increasingly like a sophisticated player. They're making some bloody sensible moves."

There is already some debate regarding whether first half 1989 figures can match those of last year — this is due to the chip problem not being likely to ease until February at the earliest and Amstrad's shift away from a leisure product seasonal upswing.

"The City will have to wait until the second half of the year to see its hopes for Amstrad growth fully materialise — until then it'll be quiet," commented Barclays de Zoete Wedd ana-

Continued on page two

Smiths ditches Spectrum

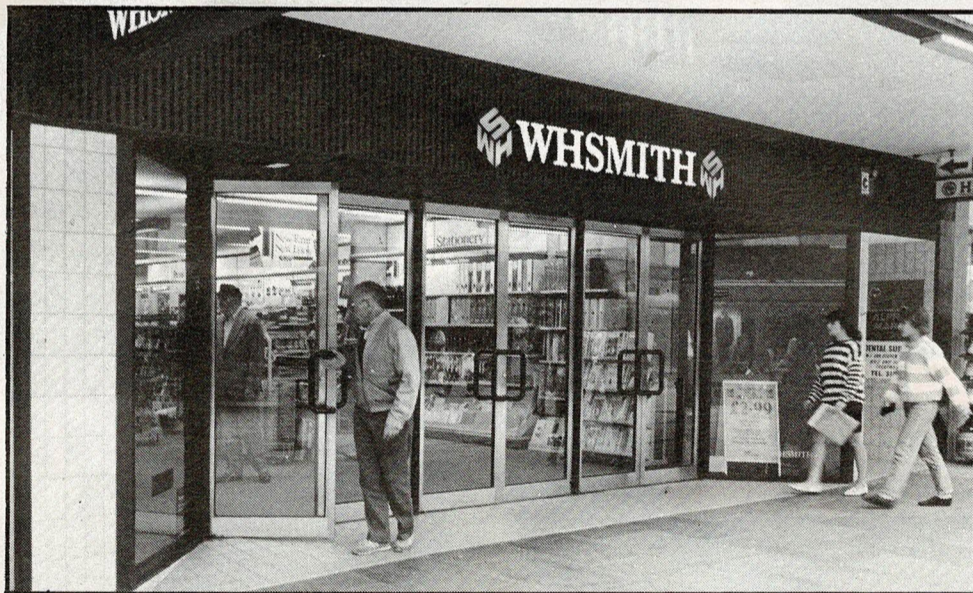
For the first time since the machine's launch in 1982 WH Smiths has decided not to stock the Spectrum for the Christmas season.

The retail chain has opted to stock only the Atari ST and Atari VCS 2600 console this year. Last year it took both the Spectrum +2 and +3, ST and Amstrad PCW range.

"Basically, the move is part of the rationalisation of hardware within our stores. We're really concentrating on software," commented Smiths' computer buyer Ian Laurie to *CTW*.

"Last year the Spectrum didn't do too bad, but the vol-

Continued on page two



SMITHS: No Spectrum this year

M-P freezes 8256 stock

As a result of Amstrad's redirection of German stock distributor Micro Peripherals has frozen sales of PCW 8256s.

The firm has been contacted by a number of dealers complaining that the machines being delivered are built to German specification. The main problem with this seems to be that the printer connection and expansion port are different to those on British machines.

One dealer commented: "We would prefer not to sell customers anything than to sell them German machines that cannot be expanded. In future

we'll be trying to sell another firm's product. If Amstrad are going to do this to us over and over again we'd rather deal with somebody else."

Amstrad claimed that the influx of non UK-specific machines was due to a short-term supply hiatus here coupled with a slight surplus in Germany. Other distributors are facing the same problem but so far none has joined Micro Peripherals in freezing stock.

M-P boss Gordon Mc-Do- well told *CTW*: "For the moment we have frozen our 8256 stock. We are taking a cautious line and waiting to establish what Amstrad wants us to do

and then we will act accordingly."

Amstrad's line on the whole affair is as clear as ever: "We haven't heard of anybody having problems. If a distributor has frozen it I wish they'd told us. I suppose by 1992 all this bloody nonsense will have come to an end."

At P&P Amstrad product manager Alan Taylor claimed that dealer reaction to the machines had been "mixed", but added that P&P would not hold back on stock unless "somebody tells me they definitely don't work."

Kenneth Abrahams at Hugh Symons told *CTW* that

stock would only be frozen as the result of an Amstrad directive. He also pointed out that his firm was making dealers aware of the situation before product was sold.

ZCL's boss Don Carter commented: "We are well aware of the differences and we are telling our customers. However there isn't an alternative to anyone who wishes to sell 8256s and I'd rather they did this than say 'right no more PCWs until 1989'."

He also claimed that the problem was solvable via "a little gizmo you put on the back that turns the female connectors back into male connectors."

Kelator adds Z88

Cambridge Computer has appointed Kelator as distributor for the Z88 in a bid to increase its share of the education market.

Kelator currently handles the Acorn range and has a well established educational dealer base. Indeed, Acorn currently accounts for the largest slice of Kelator's business and one sensitive area for the distributor is the risk of the deal offending such a major client.

However both Kelator and Cambridge are keen for the Z88 to be seen as a partner to Acorn's range rather than a

Continued on page two



GOODALL: New signing

A1 gains Atarisoft

Atari has appointed A1 as exclusive primary distributor for its entire range of entertainment software.

UK boss Bob Gleadow described the deal as a "packaging, marketing and distribution agreement". He indicated that the aim of the deal was not just to find an effective distribution pattern but also to bring Atari software into the spotlight.

A1 boss Roger Hulley also stressed the importance of

building brand identity. He described the objective of the deal as "establishing Atari as a major software label."

Gleadow told CTW: "We were looking for someone to do a job for us, Mr Hulley was positive about the software but critical of a few other aspects like packaging. We know we have a lot of good software, but we are aware that we have limited expertise regarding the marketing of it."

"Now we're going to be working very closely with A1 on the promotional aspects of

all Atari leisure software. We know they're a firm that will concentrate on us and raise the profile of our label."

The major pricepoints for 16-bit software will be £14.99 and £19.99. Regarding 8-bit pricepoints Gleadow offered: "We are going to be swallowing hard and coming down to £2.99 on a lot of games and hopefully we'll get a couple of big volume titles."

At A1 Hulley commented: "Atari know what they want and they know that A1 is the company that can give it to



GLEADOW: Games tied them, we're already working on a release schedule with them."

Amstrad

Continued from front page
lyst Paul Norris to CTW.

Most predictions for full year 1989 profits are still bullish however, ranging from £180-£200 million.

Amstrad is still arguing that in City terms it is remarkably undervalued. "For the second half of next year it'll be a case of hold on to your hats. As for the first half, well, we've never let them down yet," was the Amstrad reply to City deliberations.

Amstrad is particularly keen to point out that overseas income is set to increase rapidly this year. Sales va-

cums were caused last year by the setting up of wholly owned distributors in a number of territories - notably the US, Spain and Germany. The 1987 figure included some £63 million of German sales (12 per cent of group turnover), yet in the latest figures Germany provided probably less than a tenth of that.

Nearly 700,000 home computers were sold by Amstrad in the year, plus nearly 700,000 professional computers, 400,000 audio units, 450,000 videos and 250,000 printers.

Professional computers increased to over half of all group turnover via £338.5 million worth of sales. Home computers at last started to dip in importance with sales dropping from £160.6 million in the year ending June 1987 to £135.9 million in 1988 (21.7 per cent of turnover).

Smiths

Continued from front page

umes obviously weren't going to be that high this Christmas. We couldn't really justify taking it."

Smiths has had a deal of success selling the ST over the past year. This autumn it is concentrating on the £299 standalone version rather than Atari's £399 winter bundle. Laurie expects the chain to be adding a few free titles itself closer to Christmas - still keeping the price below £300.

The VCS console is being stocked due to its low price and subsequent gift purchase status.

"Obviously with the ST we've got a reputation as a stockist and people come here to buy them. The VCS is a completely different kettle of fish at a very attractive price," added Laurie.

Amstrad responded unhurt by the news. "I don't think we're unduly worried about it. What proportion of our Spectrum sales came from Smiths last year? I bet it wasn't very much."

Kelator

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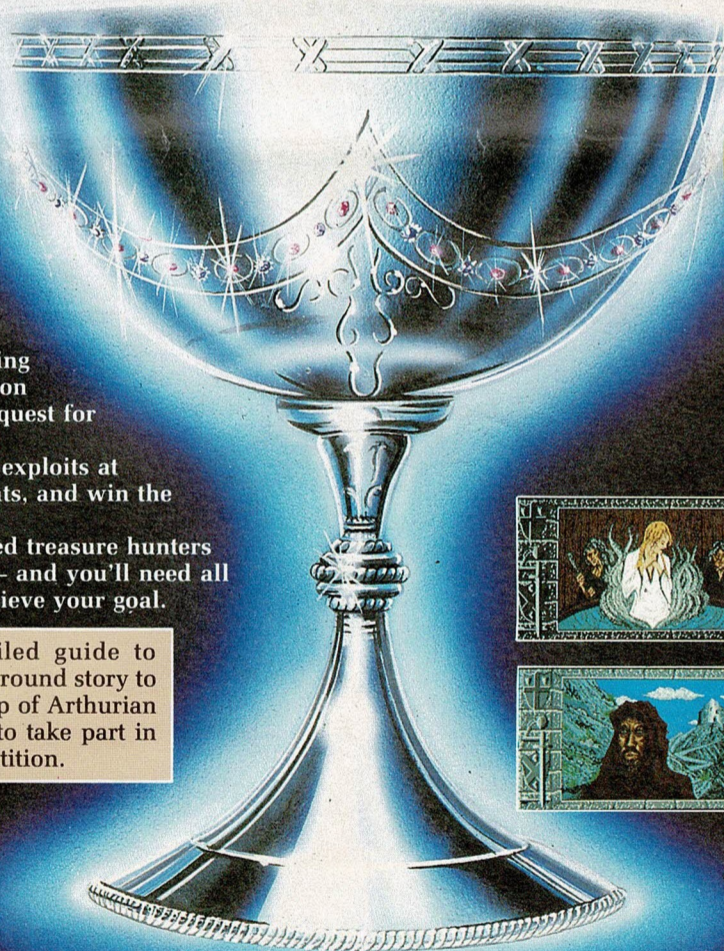
competitor. Cambridge's UK sales manager Paul Streeter commented: "I think our product can be sold effectively as a peripheral to the Acorn range and make real inroads into the education market."

At Kelator sales director Ian Goodall described the Z88 as "very much a complimentary product". He claimed that the signing was the culmination of an aggressive search for an additional Kelator product line.

He continued: "There is obviously a danger that any move that puts product into the education market could be seen as a threat to Acorn. There's no way though that I would consider the Z88 as a competitor to the Acorn range, in fact we see it doing particularly well in the domestic market as a pressie product."

He also claimed that there had been no qualms from Acorn at news of the deal and that there would be no adverse effect on the relationship between the two firms.

The Cambridge addition means that Kelator now has four accounts including Commodore and Zenith. Goodall added that it would not be looking for any more.



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Amstrad CPC/PCW/Spectrum Plus 3		●	£19.95
Commodore 64	●	●	£14.95
Spectrum	●		£14.95
Amstrad CPC	●		£14.95
*Atari XL/XE	●	●	£14.95
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*Apple II		●	£14.95
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*These formats and all tape versions are text only.



Screen shots from Atari ST version



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Schneider wait ends as Greyhound snaps up PCs

German hardware manufacturer Schneider has signed a UK distribution deal for its PC range with Greyhound.

The machine should be in the country "within the month" and will almost certainly come as a specially designed package targeted specifically at the British market. In Germany the PCs come with the *Microworks* software package, but Greyhound boss Philip Allott promised "an added incentive for British dealers".

For Greyhound the deal is the fulfillment of August's promise to enter the hardware market. Allott called the deal "very exciting" and claimed that Greyhound would prove to be very competitive.

"Obviously Schneider will ride on the back of our success

in software and we will ride on their back in the hardware market", he told *CTW*.

Regarding a prospective dealer base Allott enthused: "The sky's the limit as far as we're concerned. Practically every PC dealer in the land is a potential customer."

He was decidedly unperturbed by the fact that Greyhound is still largely inexperienced in the hardware market. "I think we'll do a better job than some of the larger more established distributors because of our commitment to the range."

Part of the agreement between the two firms is that Greyhound will not take another firm's hardware. For its part, Schneider has made an undertaking to sign no more than another three distributors in this country.

The one time Amstrad dis-

tributor for Germany was planning a UK launch for its range in September. It came perilously close to achieving that goal with a confusing near-deal with Micro Peripherals (*CTW* August 29th).

Indeed Schneider went as far as to announce the deal only to have the news somewhat embarrassingly denied by M-P. One factor involved would have been Amstrad not wishing its own distributors to take on competing Schneider product - Amstrad's German distribution deal with Schneider came to an end rather acrimoniously at the turn of the year.

Schneider's UK marketing liaison co-ordinator Cliff Preston was obviously surprised that news of the deal had broken and could only offer: "I will give details when I am in a better position to comment."



ALLOTT: First PC signing

Softsel promises end to UK staff shuffles

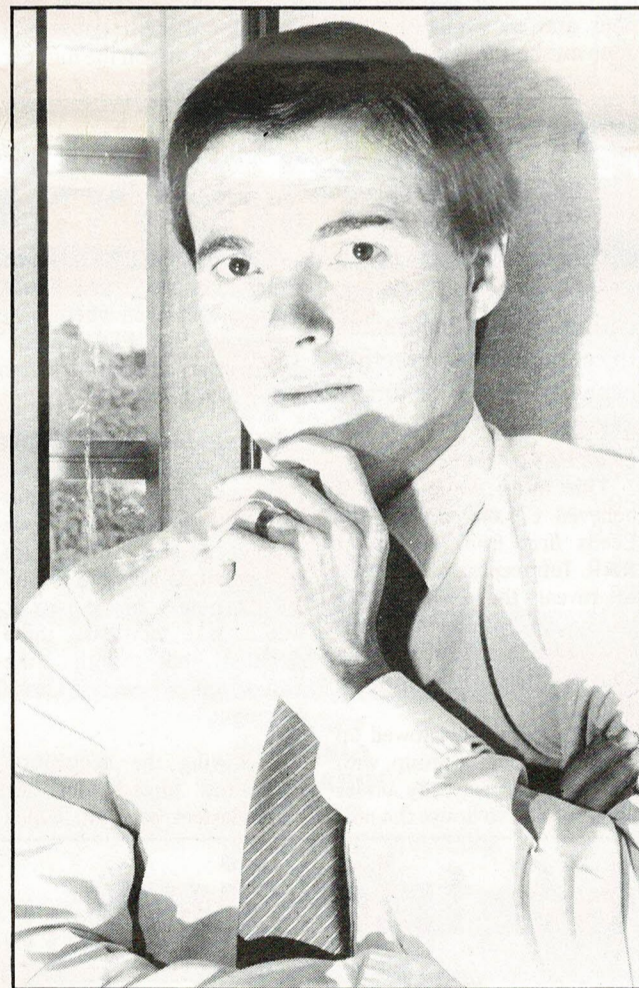
Nine months of staff shuffling and internal restructuring at Softsel seems to have come to an end with the formation of a UK board of directors.

The board is headed by managing director Steve Moore and includes Richard North (marketing director), Peter Back (operations director) and Andrew Graham (sales director), all three of whom were previously part of the firm's management team.

Also on the board is Softsel's new financial director Trevor Hunt, a former chief accountant for Datasolve. "We felt that it was the right time to demonstrate that Softsel UK is a serious professionally run company," Moore told *CTW*.

"The move also consolidates our period of rebuilding within Softsel and makes it clear both internally and externally who is responsible for what", he added.

Moore also commented that he hoped the move would make it clear that "there are other people involved in running the company other than myself."



HUNT: New man on new board

Exocet switches to CCS

Following the departure of its founder and boss Terry Jeffries, the Exocet label has now been taken over by war game specialist CCS.

Jeffries left the firm last month to join Mastertronic, where he will be handling software evaluation and key accounts. He set up Exocet at the start of the year with the plausible aim of "getting the firm well established in the UK in a reasonably short period of

time."

It has been suggested that Exocet and CCS were in fact already linked, with many industry watchers dropping heavy hints that relationships between the two firms and fellow software house CRL are far closer than they seem. All parties greeted such suggestions with bemusement with CCS boss Tricia Peters dismissing the whole affair as "industry gossip".

Peters continued: "Exocet will carry on the same way it

has since it was formed. There's no reason to change it, they're quite successful for a new company.

"We were attracted to them because they're very similar to us in so much as they're a pretty small company and they will be very familiar to us."

She will not be running the firm herself and is currently looking for a replacement for Terry Jeffries. At the moment Exocet seems to have a skeleton staff of one with all calls being passed on to CCS.

Atari enlarges for PC Show '89

In typically early fashion, Atari has announced its plans for next year's PC Show.

Also in keeping with tradition is the news that those plans mean the taking up of even more space - 40 per cent more, in fact.

The holder of the 1988 Biggest Stand award is planning to give more room for demonstration and general visitor involvement, plus there will be a presentation theatre.

"We're going to have a stand that goes right to the back of

the hall. We just didn't have enough space last time. We want to extend our relationships with third party exhibitors and have an even bigger presence," offered an Atari spokesman.

The firm is also currently in negotiation for a major site at next February's *Which Computer?* Show in Birmingham.

This will be the firm's first appearance at what is the major business show of the year. Atari is hoping to unveil its Pocket PC from DIP and production models of the Abaq transputer.

Amiga added as Express expands

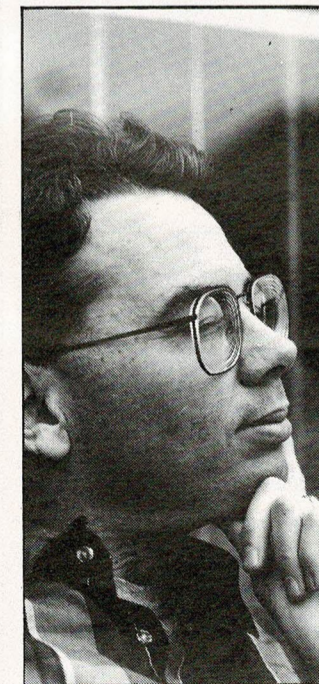
Budding computer chain Computer Express has added the Amiga to its product range.

The St. Albans based firm has just opened its second store in Manchester and hopes to have outlets in Birmingham and Hayes up and running by the end of the month.

Previously, Computer Express' sole leisure machine had been the Atari ST, with boss Jerry MacDougall being somewhat critical of the Amiga's reliability record.

"We've been told that the reliability is better than it was," began MacDougall to *CTW*. "We're enjoying a fairly good profit level on the Atari and it's generating a lot of traffic in the shops. We're hoping the Amiga will generate further traffic and knock-on purchases."

Computer Express currently turns over around £7 million. New stores are also being planned in Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow, Bristol and Kent. These should start



MACDOUGALL: Eager for Amiga coming on line sometime next spring.

MacDougall expects the two new stores in Hayes and Middlesex to each be contributing £80,000 worth of sales a month by January.

CTW

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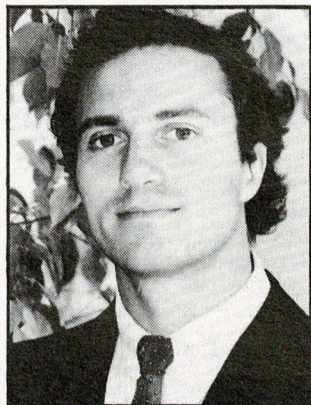


THALAMUS

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Borland discovers dealer affection

Following swingeing cuts to its sales and distribution operation, Borland is promising to build closer relationships with its dealer base.



MORAN: New deal for dealers

The UK subsidiary recently made eight staff redundant following the US parent company's instruction that 90 of its 650-strong worldwide work force should be laid off. But a UK dealer account manager is now being hunted, this being a first for the firm.

"We had a lot of administration and some excess of support here," began Borland's UK general manager Denis Moran to CTW.

"We're now looking to properly establish our links with dealers. There are people out there selling and supporting our products and we're going to support them. That's something we've never really done before."

Borland's UK operation will

now be focused largely on the marketing side, with no warehousing of product in the UK. Borland France will act as a distribution centre.

Moran is pitching the UK changes as a consolidation process. For example, rather than attempt to provide all its 35 products with equal back-up, the six major lines - which include *Quattro*, *Sidekick*, *Paradox* and *Sprint* - will get far more attention.

Moran is also unworried that dealers may react badly to the staff cuts and lose confidence in the company.

"The confidence in the company has actually grown in the last few weeks. People know that we are doing the right thing."

Elite ups Encore

Elite's budget label Encore is set to bring out selected titles at the increased price of £2.99.

This move comes after recommendations from distributors and retailers, and whilst Elite is expecting a downturn in volume, it is confident of an overall increase in sales revenue.

"The £1.99 price has given us a hell of a first presence" commented Elite's sales director Bernard Dugdale to CTW, "but the time was right to up the price".

This is not Elite's first foray into the £2.99 field, having entered the budget market unsuccessfully two and a half years ago. This was via the label £2.99 classics. But the venture was short-lived with Dugdale claiming that at that time the price was unacceptable.

All back-catalogue coin-op conversions will be pitched

at the new price while *Commando*, the ex-Christmas number one, will be the first £2.99 title.

Staying true to form, Encore will not be flooding the market with the higher priced titles, estimating an average of one game a month.

As yet, there are no plans to split the Encore label to accommodate the new pricing, although Dugdale admits "we have yet to resolve a way of distancing the two products". This will probably be achieved through different packaging and labelling.

Meantime, Elite has announced new packaging for all of its 16-bit titles as well as 8 and 16-bit compilations. All future releases will be published in softbox cartons with removable sleeves. This move towards standardisation comes after criticism from retailers and distributors demanding more uniformity.



ENCORE: Some due at £2.99

Palan shifts

Palan electronics has changed its name, but not that much.

It will now be known as Palan Distribution, its former moniker being Palan Electronics.

Boss Lou Fine commented: "We just thought that

Electronics wasn't really a name that suited us because we're not really an Electronics firm anymore."

The change of name for the firm also coincides with a change of address for the company which will now reside in Walthamstow.

Micro ads improve

Continuing the recent improvement, computer firms have got off fairly lightly in the latest Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) case report.

This month only two firms have had cases upheld against them, Microlink and Cleveland-based retail outlet 2-bit Computers.

Microlink had had its knuckles rapped over an ad claiming that a modem could connect into a weather satellite facility, which was not available at the time the ad appeared. The ASA has requested that the reference to the satellite be deleted from future ads.

The 2-bit Computer ad was for an £80 C64 which did not include a transformer. This led to the ASA requesting that the ad be modified to make it clear that the power supply is not included.

Dell cuts machines

Dell has cut the prices on certain configurations of its 286 machines by up to £300.

The reductions are on the entry level System 200 and the System 220, and are said to be the result of reduced production costs following an increase in production levels.

It is claimed that production will double over the next few months, with Dell branching out into Germany and Canada, having recently established wholly-owned subsidiaries in both countries.

The price cuts apply to such configurations as the 40Mb VGA graphics System 200, which is down £100 to £1,999. The 90Mb version falls by £300 to £2,399.

Similar reductions are being offered on the System 220, with a £100 cut to £2,299 for the 40Mb version. The top-end 100Mb version falls £200 to £2,799.

Code Masters rues Sport Aid contract

Code Masters is regretting its much publicised association with Sport Aid to produce charity game *The Race Against Time*.

From the start the whole project has been dogged by problems. And the latest news that Sport Aid Limited is a massive £2 million in debt appears to be the final blow in an already fraught relationship.

Sport Aid Limited, the administrative wing of the charity, is at present seeking Government assistance to bail it out. And while Code Masters only deals with the charitable trust, it is angered by the lack of organisation and commitment Sport Aid as a whole has shown to the game.

Code Masters has been forced to admit defeat on its original pitch that the charity title would be the world's first million seller.

"With 20:20 hindsight it is extremely debatable whether we would have entered into a relationship with Sport Aid," Code Masters' operations manager Bruce Everiss told CTW.

"We entered into the arrangement with good intentions and all along we have done our best to try and make the game work. Unfortunately,



RACE AGAINST TIME: Poor performance

our best is not good enough". Sales of the game have so far been disappointing, with only one brief appearance in the Gallup charts, despite good reviews. "If *The Race Against Time* had not been a charity game it would have been a real success", claimed Everiss.

Code Masters could not give any figures on the number of games sold, with a lot out on

sale or return to such multiples as Woolworths and Boots. Everiss believes it will be some time before anyone will know how much money has been raised from the venture.

The C64 version of the game will be released next week, and Code Masters is still keeping its fingers crossed that the title will make some impression on the charts.

PDD intercepted

Interceptor has bought Precision Data Duplication (PDD), increasing the company's production capacity to a claimed quarter of a million cassettes a week.

This move comes after a believed £75,000 bid for the Leeds firm from distributor R&R. Interceptor has refused to reveal the cost of the purchase, claiming that the sole motive for the acquisition was the duplicator's equipment.

PDD will be swallowed up by the Interceptor group, with a new factory already under construction to house the new

machinery. "We have taken on PDD lock, stock and barrel, but it is still open whether we will use the PDD name" Interceptor director Julian Jones told CTW.

The decision to buy PDD appears somewhat hurried with Jones admitting "We put very little thought into it, we simply needed the extra equipment. If we were to buy the machinery brand new it would take at least three months but with the acquisition our capacity grew overnight."

Following the acquisition PDD has already lost its Codemasters account, which

has gone to Stanley Precision Data in Northampton. Jones seems unperturbed by this, commenting "We were not interested in PDD's accounts, company loyalty changes from month to month and there is no guarantee that customers will stay".

The PDD deal marks another step in Interceptor's expansion, having recently acquired a book production facility, a stereo audio cassette duplication system and a Trace disk duplication suite. It is claimed that the company is now worth in excess of £4.5 million, with Jones adding "Smaller companies watch out".

US trio sign up Database

Database has completed deals with three US firms: Antic Publishing, Unison World and Datasoft.

The Antic deal is for the export of the forthcoming ST version of *Mini Office*, plus *Starquake* and *STOS Game Creator* by offshoot label Mandarin.

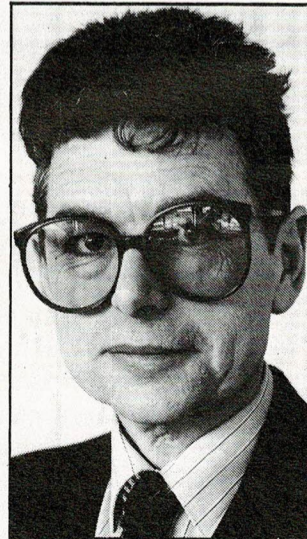
Antic is one of the few firms persevering wholeheartedly with the ST Stateside. The San Francisco firm runs its own magazine called *Start* and publishes software.

"The ST is really a dead-water in the US, so it's very dif-

icult to reach people. Using Antic is the very best way of getting sales over there. Distributors just don't take product," commented Database's Peter Holme.

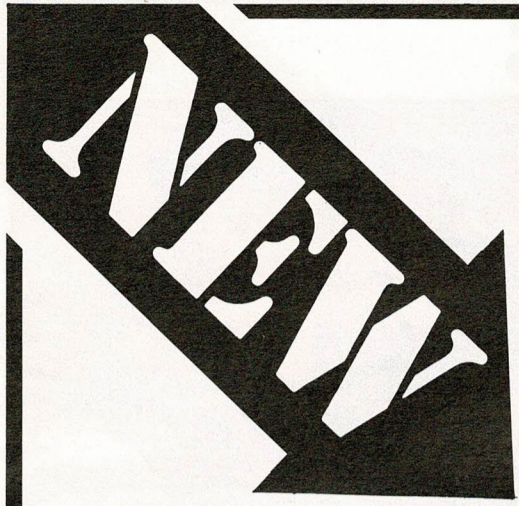
Unison has given Database the European rights to low-cost PC DTP package *News-master II*, which will be launched here at the end of the month.

The £69.95 package will be followed by a series of other DTP packages by Unison. It features 30 different fonts, 1-10 columns per page and four different page views.



HOLME: US deals abound

Finally, the Datasoft tie-up means that Level Nine's *Time and Magic* and *Lancelot* - both licenced to Mandarin before the two firms split in August - will be launched in the US in November.

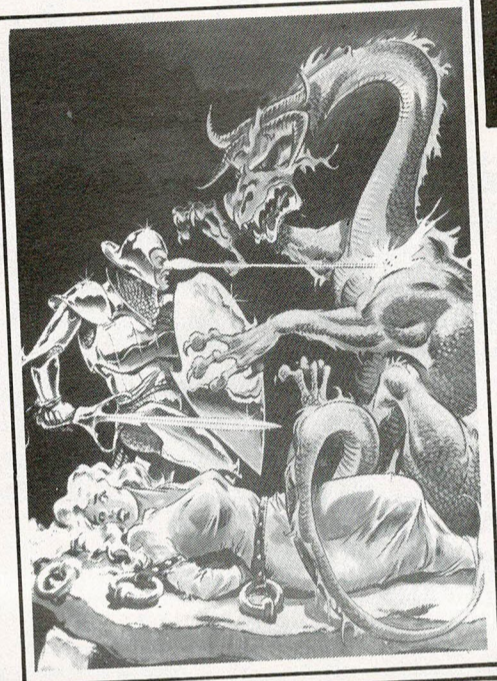


FOUR AMAZING C64 GAMES



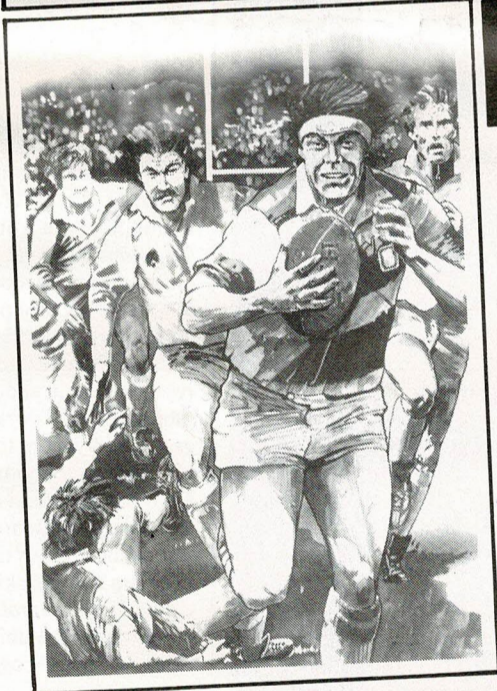
Pro Skateboard Simulator £1.99

Another famous Codemasters simulator. Two games in one. 3D skateboard park and overhead cross country. The customers are already buying lots of this.



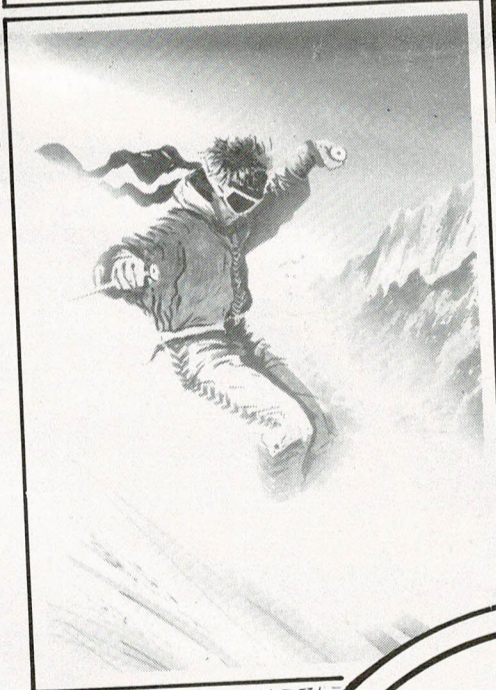
Super Dragon Slayer £4.99

Fight your way thru dungeons and magical wastelands to rescue the nymph maiden. Incredible animated dragons, magic potions and weapons to collect. Spells of flying, monster bashing. A cult in the making.



International Rugby Simulator £1.99

Simply amazing. This is a genuine realistic simulation of the full 15 man game. Beyond belief at only £1.99. Watch it sell.



Pro Ski Simulator £1.99

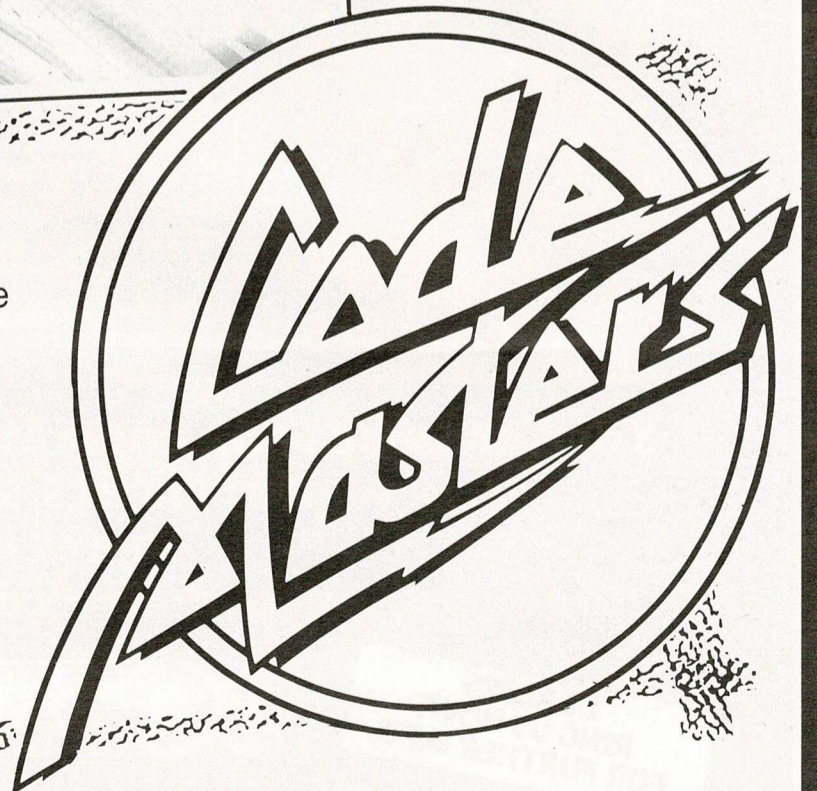
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SNIPPETS

It had to happen. Just moments after budget firm **Alternative** had burst many an eardrum noting its Gallup market share position everything changed. Last week's *CTW* noted with some interest that **Alternative** had finally dislodged the mighty **Mastertronic** from its number one spot in the total market chart (that's the one with all the **Mastertronic** exclusive stores in it). Its 16.7 per cent share compared to the **Tronics'** 10.5 looked as though it would hold for a while, but it didn't. For the

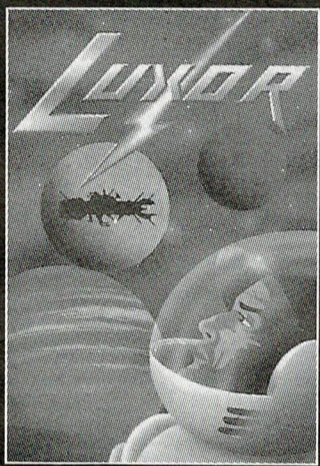
week ending September 17th the total market showed **Mastertronic** leading with 15.1 per cent followed by **Alternative's** 11.3. This one could run and run... Sticking with things **Alternative**, the budget pretender has just signed up another old full-price title - **Audiogenic's** *Graham Gooch's Cricket*. **Dennis Publishing's** *Your Sinclair* has lost its deputy editor **Ciaran Brennan**. The one time **Newsfield** startlet has decided to be a full-time freelancer...

Workstation manufacturer **Sun Microsystems** is planning to enter the personal computer market sometime next year. Its machines will be high-end IBM-compatibles. Following on from its recent bragging that the Z88 is perfectly suited for the classroom, **Cambridge Computer** has tied a trial deal with **Bedwell School** in **Stevenage**. A class of 27 pupils will all be using one of the A4-sized machines for the next year to test their effect on productivity and writing skills...



Z88: Making lines a doddle

YOU'VE SEEN THE REST NOW BUY THE BEST!

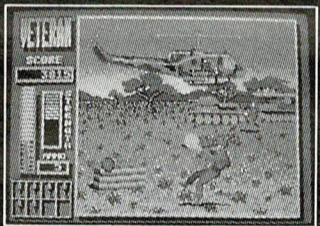
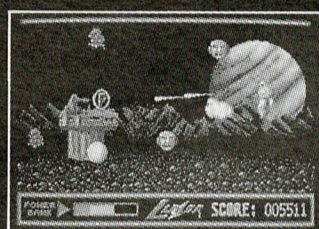


LUXOR

The evil Okira clan of space pirates have kidnapped your beloved princess Diora, and are now holding the Empire to ransom...

You must search three planets to find your princess, and each one will be heavily guarded with highly trained Okira warriors. Find the planet that Diora is being held on, destroy the pirates, and a fairy will grant you a single wish.

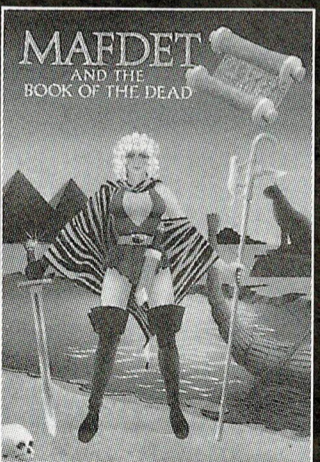
Love and magic will help you win the day - you must not fail in this mission. Collect power points to recharge your guns and life-support systems as you battle through the planets.



VETERAN

The war is nearly over. Your side seems to have lost everything. But there is just one last chance to save the day...

You must battle your way through 3 deadly missions, knocking out the enemy positions, until you reach the enemy's Headquarters. Blow up tanks, gun emplacements, and shoot down the hordes of enemy soldiers. Your supplies are limited, so you must pick up spare rocket launchers and ammunition for your gun, left behind by fleeing soldiers.



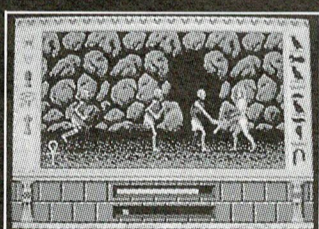
MAFDET

AND THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

The story starts in ancient Egypt. The evil god, Seth, has stolen The Book of the Dead and hidden it deep in the underworld.

You are Mafdet, the cat Goddess of Revenge, who has been summoned by Isis (the Goddess of Earth) to retrieve the book and return it to the Egyptian people.

Collect amulets which will help you along your way; change between cat and human to help you pass some obstacles; sword-fight your way through mazes and dungeons; above all - FIND THE BOOK.



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Tacmar, a division of **Rexon**, has joined the ever increasing band of renegades supporting the **Extended Industry Standard Architecture**. "EISA will preserve the investment our customers have already made in our products," commented **Tecmar** president, **Whitney G. Lyn**... **Commodore** is set to enter the world of soap, but not the *Dallas, Dynasty* variety. With far less kudos, **Lever Brothers** has installed a computerised production system to monitor soap production. More than 20 **Commodore Amigas** are being used to carry out this exciting task...

Compaq is pumping £2 million into advertising over the next few months, with a massive press and poster campaign. A huge 96-sheet poster has already been erected at **Heathrow** airport as well as 270 sites in major towns. Press advertising will concentrate on the computer and technical press...

The first PC A-level maths course has been released by **LCL**. It is called *Mega Maths* and includes such goodies as permutations, combinations, integral Calculus and that old favourite, **Binomial Theorem**. It should prove a big Christmas winner...

Gasmen now come fully armed with **Casio** personal computers to check on the supply of gas. The computers replace the old slide rules and tables and can work out the gas flow, pressure loss and pipe size in seconds...

Lego has launched a new software package to help 7-11 year olds develop their problem solving skills. It is called *Lego Control Logo* and combines those ubiquitous bricks with the **Logo** language...

Distributor **SDL** has changed its payment terms. Rather than dealers having to pay their bills on the 7th of the following month every purchase now comes with a full 30 days grace. "The old method was a bit inflexible for people ordering at the end of the month. This solves all problems," commented marketing controller **John Arundel**...

A record breaking feat has ironically left computer recruitment agency, **Masterfind** completely broke. **Microlink** recently transmitted 1,000 telexes simultaneously for the said company, the largest amount ever in this country. Unfortunately **Masterfind** was unable to foot the bill and has since gone bust. There's a lesson to be learnt there somewhere...



YOU'VE HEARD IT FROM US



You must be aware we've been making quite a bit of noise in the business lately. It's because we know there's never been a better time to bang home the Commodore message...on national posters, in magazines, newspapers and at exhibitions. We are investing heavily in initiatives for

the business and education markets. On the 1st September, we launched our massive £6 million advertising campaign. And we've set up a new pricing system to ensure our computers stay really competitive in the run up to Christmas. But that's only half the story.


Commodore

FULL OF WESTERN PROMISE

Yet another clone range has winged its way into the UK market. This time, though, it has come from the US rather than the Far East and the manufacturer Blue Chip is placing untold importance on building a dealer network. Midwich Thame is helping it do that and KELLY BESWICK spoke to both firms to get full details on the masterplan . . .

Amstrad bashing has always been an incredibly popular sport, this is despite the fact that historically very few contenders have ever come away with much more than a bronze medal.

The latest firm to enter what has always been a somewhat over-subscribed event is Blue Chip from the US. And considering that it is virtually unheard of here in the UK, with an entry level machine at £599 excluding monitor, one immediately wonders if it can do anything else but fail miserably to ruffle the brows at Amstrad Towers.

With a turnover of around £50 million in the US and claimed sales figures of 150,000 units, the Blue Chip range of PC's cannot, of course, be written off that easily.

In the past the company has gone for mass market distribution, steering away from specialist stores. In America the beleaguered Federated chain of stores and Toys R Us have been prime stockists. But for its entry into the UK market Blue Chip, in association with Norfolk based printer distributor Midwich Thame, is going for a different approach.

The Dealer's PC

The PC Popular, as it is modestly called, is to be pitched as "the dealer's PC". Distributor Midwich Thame

will be relying heavily on its existing dealer network, but is obviously looking to expand this considerably.

Midwich at first appears a strange choice of distributor, being better known as a supplier of Brother printers, as well as Fitjitsu, NEC and Star. Over 60 per cent of its business is printers, while the remainder is made up of drives, monitors, memory boards and terminals. This is Midwich's first foray into the computer market and product manager Jon Widdick is keen to build a close relationship with those convinced by Blue Chip's range.

"Pitching it as the dealer's PC shows our commitment to the dealer. We will definitely not take business away from dealers' customers by selling direct to the end user.

"We intend to develop a system that will amply profit all parties in the chain, and we are convinced that attractive dealer margins are crucial to the machines success."

These margins do on the surface seem good, starting at 25 per cent rising to 27.5 for orders over 25 and 30 per cent for over 50. Drawing on this, all initial advertising will be directed at the dealer rather than the end-user with a claimed £60,000 being spent between now and Christmas.

Clearly Midwich is trying to create dealer awareness before the end-user has any brand awareness. The argument is that gaining good distribution and dealer support is more important than spending cash on solely end-user brand awareness.

Centre incentive

Midwich plans to establish a number of Blue Chip business centres. "It sounds more professional," offers Widdick. To qualify for this accolade a dealer simply has to take two machines for demonstration purposes. In return the dealer will receive local advertising aids and sales leads, while those who achieve the highest sales will become gold Blue Chip Centres - presumably gaining further benefits.

So, what's so special about this latest PC, especially considering that its price is above much of the competition? Its main claim to fame is the fact that it is 100 per cent IBM PC/XT compatible, and to substantiate this Blue Chip is offering a full refund guarantee if any IBM software doesn't run. In the US, it is claimed there has only ever been one challenge to the claim - which later transpired to be the result of bootleg software.

Korea opportunities

Obviously anxious not to be tarred with the "cheap

clones brush", Blue Chip is emphasising the fact that its computers are US and not Tiawanese imports. Ironically, they are in fact manufactured by Hyundai Electronics in Korea. Hyundai started supplying Blue Chip in May 1986 and the latter is now a part owner of Blue Chip.

The PC Popular 8088 is being pitched as a good first computer as a result of its expandability. It does in fact have six expansion slots as well as 512K of RAM, a 360K floppy disk drive, a Centronics printer port and a communications port. It operates on both 4.77 and 8 MHZ, with a second disk drive, graphics boards and monitors all optional. With the basic model being £599 without monitor, this quickly rises

to £1,149 for the Pop-30-CGA 286 which has all the optional extras as standard.

The 286 is also set to hit the British market, being shipped to England before the US. "The FCC registration process in America is incredibly protracted and with the product being already developed we wanted to start selling," explained Blue Chip boss John Rossi. This top-end model has 640K of RAM, operating on 8 and 12.5 MHZ. It comes with a 1.2 Mb floppy drive and one serial and one parallel port. The basic 286 enters the market at £1,099 rising to a hefty £1,879 for the top of the range 40E model, which includes a 40Mb hard disk, a 1.2Mb floppy and EGA monitor. A portable version of the 286 is also available. Weighing 19lbs and having 1Mb of RAM, it is priced at £1,895.

Midwich Thame looks set to have its work cut out if Blue Chip is to muscle in with a machine that, while claiming to be better built and presented than many of its competitors, is still relatively unknown in this country and rather pricey. With a present network of 750 regular dealers, Widdick claims good feedback so far. Some 30 orders were already taken before anyone had seen the machine.

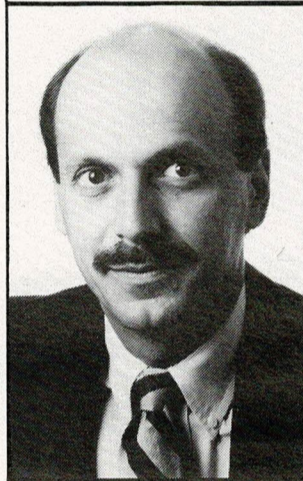
"Obviously major dealers want to evaluate the product,

before leaping in, but we are confident of shifting 15,000 units between now and Christmas".

Parental back-up

Being a subsidiary of Memec, Midwich will have the back-up of its parent company with regard to PR and advertising. Oxfordshire based Memec only trades via its subsidiaries, with 9 in the UK dealing primarily in electronic components distribution. With a turn-over of £60 million last year Memec has recently branched out into Hong Kong, as well as the US and West Germany. Such a large back-up must surely be comforting to Blue Chip.

Rossi appears happy with the set-up. The one time Commodore European sales manager does not envisage any difficulties succeeding in the UK market. "The US is a tough market and we've been successful. We do realise the stiff competition but once we have built the product brand name the PCs will take off". He claims that the PCs are being sold through more than 1,000 outlets in the US. But as other US companies have discovered to their cost, the UK market is very different. The PC is still not generally accepted as a home consumer product, and the day when PCs are popped into the shopping trolley willy nilly is still a long way off.



ROSSI: Dealer-specific pitch

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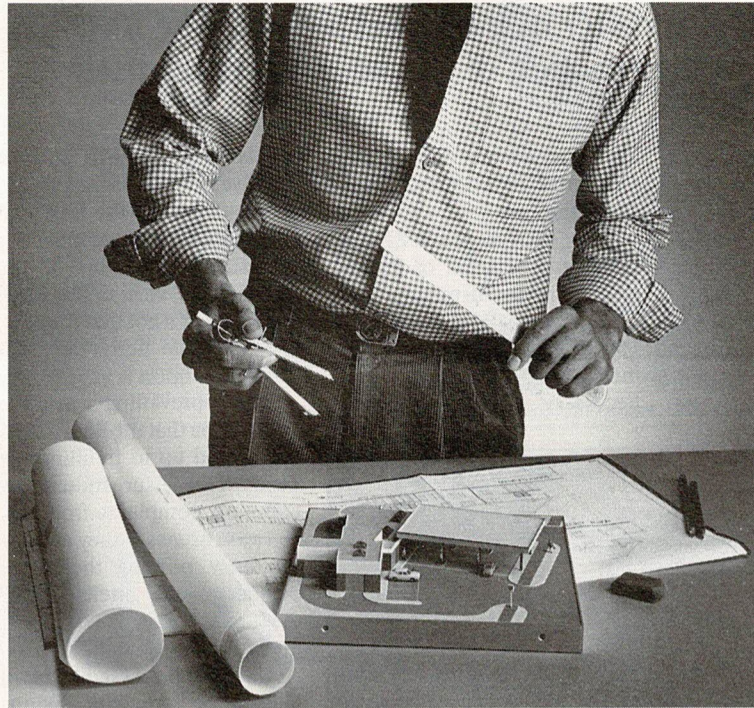
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BUILDING A BETTER BODY

More than two years after its inaugural meeting the BMF has decided it is time for a leisure wing. DAVE ROBERTS finds out why and gauges the reaction of the leisure market itself . . .

The BMF and the leisure industry have never been that close. It's not that they don't get on, they've just never had that much to do with each other.

The reason for the distance in the relationship is buried in blame and counter-blame. Both parties playing the

aggrieved partner with incessant cries of how misunderstood they are.

Now, though, the BMF has extended the hand of friendship with the formation of a leisure wing. BMF chairman David Fraser describes the move as "important and necessary". The leisure indus-

try is yet to make such a positive pronouncement.

But of course the less than rapturous reaction to the move is just an extension of the games firms' view of the BMF in general. It's not that they dislike the trade body, they just don't look upon it as relevant.

The prevailing attitude seems to be that the BMF is just not geared up to fulfilling the needs of the leisure industry. A common complaint from the software bosses is they are just too busy running their own businesses to attend BMF meetings. And if you can't meet them don't join them.

US Gold boss Geoff Brown talks of the body with obvious disinterest: "I can't really say much about something we don't have anything to do with. It's like asking me to comment on Queens Park Rangers, I mean they're a football team and that's all as far as I'm concerned."

Body work

At the BMF Fraser is not exactly surprised by such views. They are the arguments he has been facing since day one. He agrees entirely that the leisure industry is under represented on the BMF but disagrees dramatically as to where the blame lies.

"We really do try to get more

people involved as we would like the split between business and leisure to be around 50/50 but you can't force it down people's throats. We've found that not enough leisure people have been willing to get involved, instead they would rather have a pot shot from outside."

Currently the BMF is a long way from achieving that 50/50 split. It has 70 members, only around 10 of whom are in the leisure market. Fraser couldn't actually name the games firms involved, which disgruntled leisure firms would point to as a barometer of the interest taken in them by the BMF. That may be a little harsh considering the apathy with which many firms view the BMF, nevertheless at Electronic Arts Mark Lewis is convinced enough to claim that "in general the entertainment industry has not benefitted".

Cascade's Nigel Stevens expresses a similar if slightly more charitable view: "The people in the BMF are more experienced in business and less orientated towards leisure so their actions reflect that."

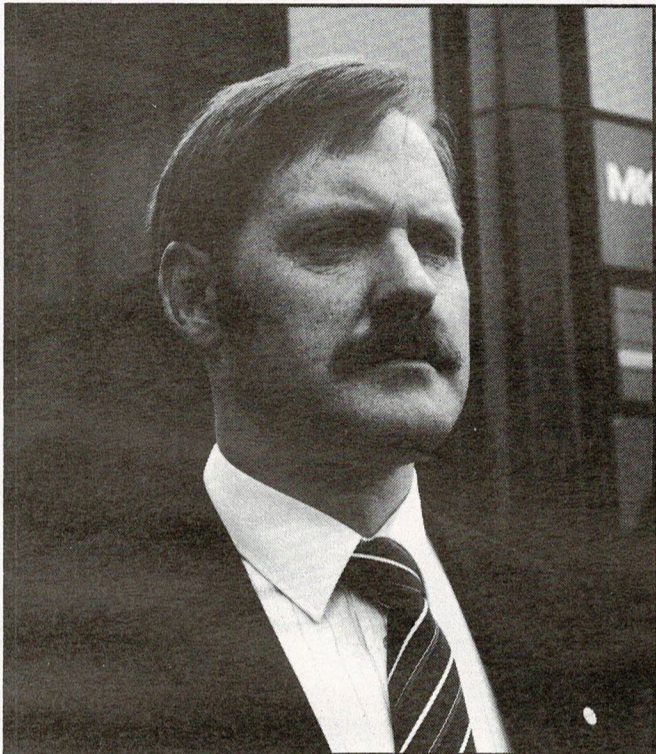
Though the question remains, why is the BMF more attractive to the business sector than the leisure market? Fraser has an idea: "The busi-

ness side of the market has taken a far more long term view than the leisure people who quite frankly don't seem to have sorted themselves out yet.

"It's ten years old and it's just not structured at all. If the British micro industry doesn't get itself organised, and soon, then the government will come

along and lay the rules down for it."

The idea of the infant industry having its wrist slapped by the government must be abhorrent to firms' bosses and could be one of the most effective driving forces behind forcing them all to at least appear to be behind a united trade



FRASER: Optimistic, but unsupported



BROWN: Pleased, but non-committal

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For now though that goal still looks a long way off with even Alternative and R & R boss Roger Hulley, a man undeniably keen to see a more united industry, conceding that "apart from one or two things the BMF hasn't done anything tangibly good for the leisure market."

On a wing and a prayer

So enter the all new, purpose built leisure wing. It will be headed by Chris Craib the head of the Palace group. He's certainly a well respected name in the leisure field, the only doubt being if a man of that standing will have enough time for a small section of a pretty small federation.

Whether or not a big name at the top will be enough to drop the leisure market's cynical guard remains to be seen. For the moment enthusiasm may be ruled out but final judgement is still reserved.

Again Brown's view reflects the industry's mood. He sees the move as a step in the right direction but is far from convinced that this is the start of something big. "The concept is fine, we'll just have to wait and see what the execution is like."

Quite what the wing will have to do to convince these people is not clear as many of them still see the BMF as so far off their agenda that they see little reason to discuss it. Hulley, at least, does have a few pointers.

"The BMF must realise that people's time in the leisure industry is very tight and targeted accordingly. It's no good expecting the leisure firms to change, the BMF must come to them, maybe try and coincide their meetings with established industry events like the computer arena."

Another important factor for Hulley is the involvement of some of the "major players" to lend the whole operation some much needed weight and respect.

Unfortunately the prevalent attitude among these "major players" is "after you" with none of them wanting to be seen to be involved in an organisation that may yet turn out to be strictly second division.

This does however clash somewhat embarrassingly with the much touted claim among the leisure market that it should be considered an established part of the entertainment industry. For all the other fields of entertainment have respected, prestigious and well run trade bodies. One cannot imagine the BPI resorting to recruitment drives.

Forever young

An over-used excuse for this disparity is the immaturity of the industry, and yet most leisure firms are eager to tell how much more mature and sensible the market is. Stevens at Cascade states that it is "time for us to come of age and have our own voice". Laudible stuff, but the body that is trying to provide that voice is hardly made to feel welcome let alone important.

One encouraging note for the BMF however is that it does seem to have made enough inroads into the industry's consciousness to be considered worth hanging on to - at least for now. "I think it

would be a retrograde step to split from the BMF now that it's partly established", offers Stevens.

A crumb of comfort for Fraser, but maybe not enough for a man trying to create a truly united organisation. His view of the future is not of a strong leisure wing as part of a powerful trade body, but of a truly united organisation that represents the industry as a whole.

He sees the leisure wing as just a temporary stepping stone on the path to that desperately distant goal. Almost a way of getting the leisure firms to join the BMF without realising it.

"Hopefully the leisure com-

munity will become actively involved in their own group and then begin to integrate more into the body as a whole, then hopefully they will lose this persecution complex they seem to have and we'll be left with just one trade body."

Although most of the games firms do not go along with this Fraser does find unlikely support from Lewis at EA. "It would be great to see all these separate factions rolled into one powerful body. The Lotuses and the Ashton Tates of this world do have separate problems, but basically we're all part of the micro industry."

The majority view though is that a separate leisure wing is a very necessary attempt to

make up for past neglect. And even that may be too little too late.

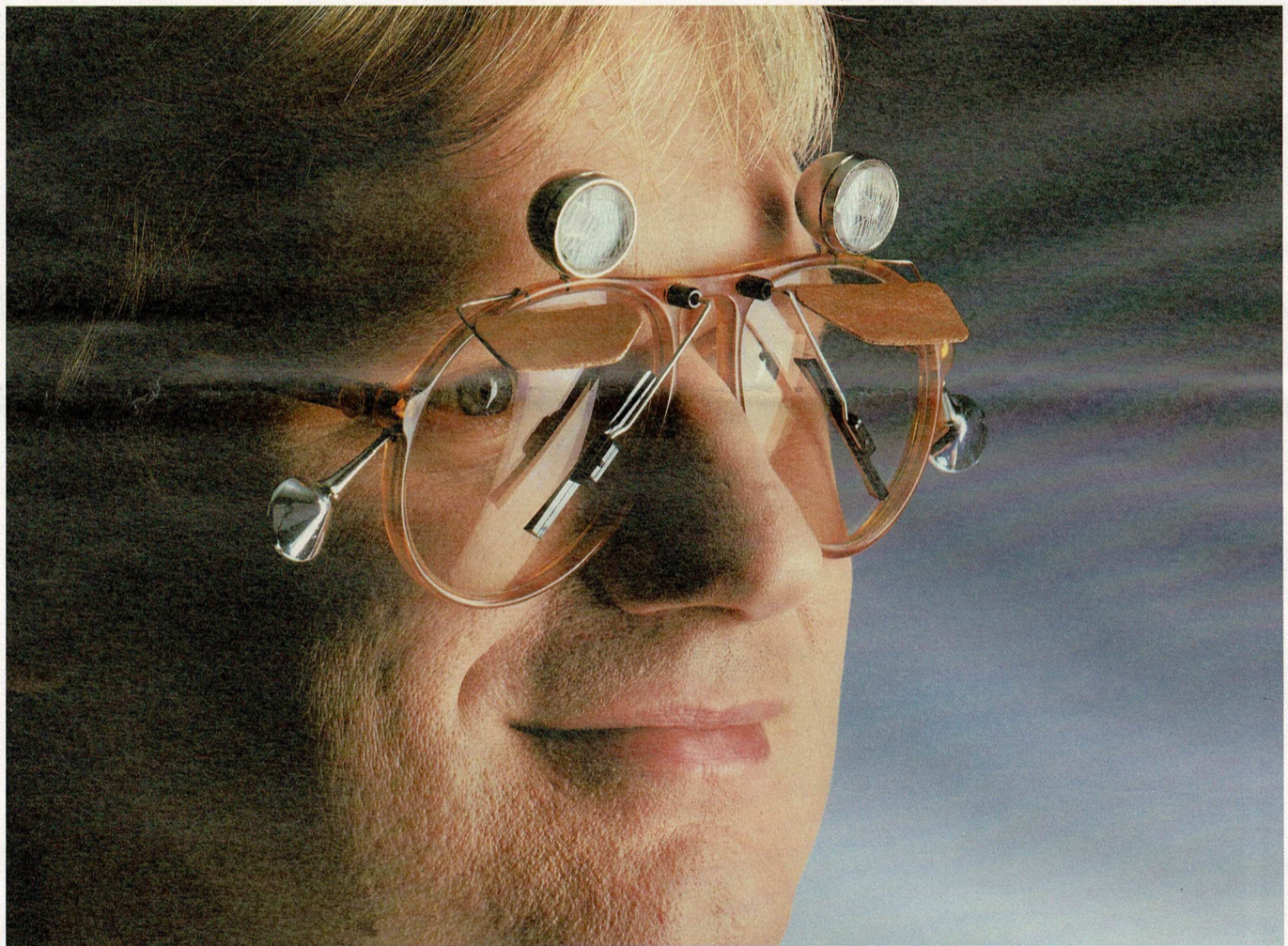
However, on the whole Fraser's seemingly incessant optimism is the most refreshing attitude of the whole affair and may yet prove to be the most infectious. But for his rosy goal of the ideal trade body to even appear possible one thing that must change immediately is the 'them and us' terms that the BMF and the leisure sector use when discussing each other.

They sometimes talk like qurelling schoolboys rather than mature partners and that sort of attitude will have to be eradicated if they are ever to live happily ever after.



STEVENS: Unconvinced, but understanding

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PROGRESSING FROM THE COMFORT ZONE

A year ago Mediagenic (formerly Activision) announced proudly that it had "arrived at the comfort zone" — debts had become profit at last and unsuccessful but meaningful releases had been replaced by charting licences. As of last week Mediagenic completely re-shuffled its trade distribution methods with Microdealer acting as sole distributor. **STUART DINSEY** unravels the intricacies and then finds a few more . . .

Honestly, it's easy — it's actually very, very simple indeed." After a 90 minute explanation Mediagenic's UK boss Rod Cousens at last feels he can relax and sneak a look

out of his office window at the busy Hampstead street below. What he has been explaining so meticulously is the firm's wide-reaching changes to its distribution policy, changes that went into effect at the

beginning of last week. They are not simple. The easiest way to describe what Mediagenic has done is to call it going direct. But how can a firm go direct and still be selling to Microdealer,

Centresoft, TBD, possibly Leisuresoft and probably RM? Electronic Arts — a US rival which after a year has been here in the UK only a sixth as long as Mediagenic — went direct in '87 by setting up its

own distribution facilities. Apart from the odd special agreement to keep multiples happy, its policy remains nice and simple — it does everything itself. Mediagenic has come to a similar conclusion that the

historical 'software house to distributors to retailers' method is unsatisfactory. But its solution is very, very different.

What is considered unsatisfactory is distributors all buying product and subsequently undercutting each other to win retail accounts. Cousens finds this distressing as it means far less importance is placed on service, product information and promotion.

"What we won't subscribe to or get involved with in any way, shape or form is the madness that has existed and been created by distributors in the past."

He has obviously been convinced for some time that changes were needed — so animated is he by this issue that he falls momentarily out of the corporatespeak he has become so famous for.

Cousens' answer has been to set up a new distribution network which still utilises the existing framework of supply specialists, but runs under different rules.

Big is beautiful

Mediagenic has appointed Microdealer International as its sole distributor. Retailers who want to get hold of Activision branded leisure software will largely be expected to buy from here — and that buying price will depend on volume commitments.

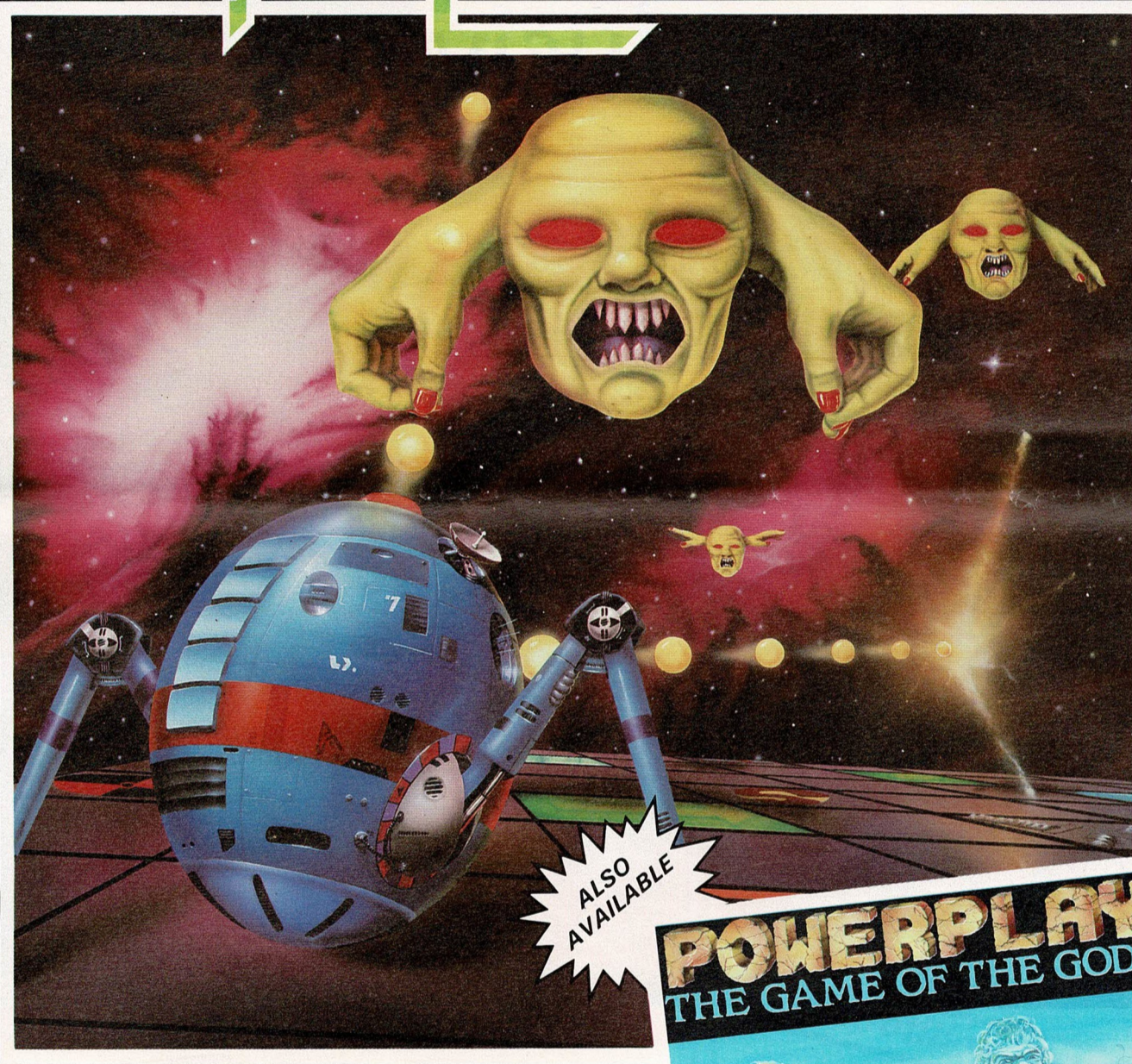
But there are other channels too. Major multiple accounts will continue to be supplied in the usual manner, Boots via Centresoft, Smiths via TBD etc.

It would seem that these chain accounts are simply too important to risk messing things around. Boots, for example, is the single most powerful retail outlet in the UK and it simply will not buy its product from anyone but Centresoft. If you don't supply Centresoft you don't get in Boots, simple as that.

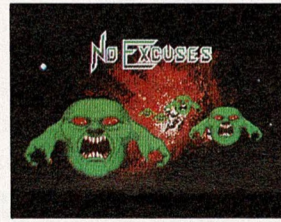
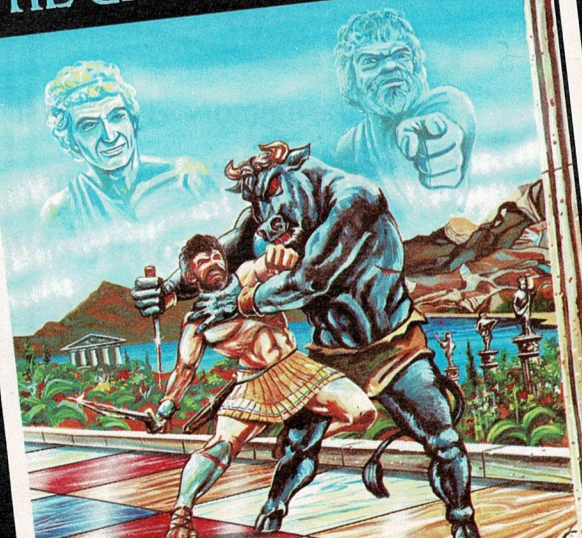
But also, Cousens is ready to do business with a number of firms that he labels wholesalers rather than distributors. In effect, these are the distributors that are big enough to warrant direct dealing — that again means Centresoft plus independents specialist Leisuresoft.

The wholesalers will buy from Mediagenic and be able to sell their products on to their retailers. Cousens is being sensible. He knows that Microdealer will obviously be offering the cheapest prices because of its primary distributor status, but he also knows that there are dealers out there who will only buy from their favourite distributor (be it Centresoft, Leisuresoft or whoever) — so why run the risk of actually reducing the amount of shops that put Activision games on their

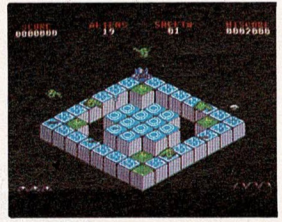
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shelves?
The question all retailers will be asking is does all this shuffling around mean buying Activision product becomes more expensive, i.e. margins have been reduced?

The answer appears to be both yes and no, but Cousens unsurprisingly is sticking to no.

He claims that the average discount a retailer achieves on a £10 game is 37.5 per cent, and that nobody's margins will fall below this figure under the new system.

But what about the dealers who have been used to buying product cheaper as a result of the distributors' margin wars. They will surely see it all as nothing but a simple cut in

potential profit?
If that is so then it is up to the retailer to make sure his ship is as successful as possible, since the more product he buys the cheaper he will get it. It's yet another example of the Thatcherite "you must succeed to succeed" policy filtering through UK society - yes, right down to computer game retailing. A big city store in Birmingham, say, will be able to buy at cheaper prices than a small outlet in Woking.

Loyal supporters

The system works exactly the same for distributors. Microdealer is obviously getting the cream, but any other distributor willing to

make hefty product orders will be given wholesaler status and be supplied product.

"In distribution terms, 80 per cent of the market is held in four key accounts. Is it therefore a recommended practice that those four should only enjoy the same benefits as the remaining six?"

"Anyone who is willing to make the commitment will be supplied product. But this is certainly not a title by title basis. I'm not particularly sympathetic to any wholesaler who offers large orders on hit product like *Afterburner*. I want people who'll support the whole product line."

Software houses are starting to talk about their products as if they were £5,000 workstations that require manuals, maintenance contracts, hotline support and dealer training seminars.

The emergence of firms like USD, Bullet, Active and latterly CDS' Network has been indicative of publishers' desire to "create relationships" with dealers and bombard them with promo help. Mirroring US Gold's Phase Two of its own retail sales shuffle, Mediagenic's new proposal goes further than just posters and rep calls.

Dealer benefits include "merchandising, contacts, product information, in-store promotion, co-operative marketing and an invitation to offer feedback which will assist us to help them increase trade". Notwithstanding the fact that at least three of these benefits seem to be exactly the same thing re-worded, it is a strong pitch: become a specialist on a firm's products and you can

answer every consumer's query; answer every consumer's query and you gain their confidence and their loyalty; gain the consumer's confidence and you've got their cash.

"Product information and support through retail is a growth area, and if we're producing software we have a responsibility to support it.

"We also believe we have a responsibility to the retailer to bring them closer to us to make it easier for them to become more familiar with us and easier for them to support us."

There are similarities in what Mediagenic is doing to what US Gold did when it cut dealer margins and followed them up with a list of added extras and the "investing in the market" pitch.

But Cousens is hoping to be able to wriggle out of any brewing storm by pointing out that it is not Mediagenic that has set the trade prices. "Microdealer will dictate the terms and they will work with their retailers to offer our product line with a number of added benefits which haven't been offered in the past."

Road to rueing

Cousens is adamant that what it is doing is not so strange, and certainly not as innovative as it might initially appear. He claims that the main distributor, second tier wholesaler and base price varying compared to order size system is already used in many other more mature markets such as the record industry.

He also believes that Mediagenic will certainly not

be the first to follow such a route - taking into account the fact that Gold has already put into effect the 'higher orders better prices' policy.

What would appear to be happening is that software houses are looking to change the habits of those retailers that have grown to depend on 24-hour delivery from their distributor - so they only ever buy a couple of titles at a time. That's great for the dealers but not so good for the publishers.

The Mediagenics and US Golds will always want shops to take as much product as possible, but they now realise that there's no point just stuffing them up and losing untold goodwill if they don't

sell. That's where the 'order more pay less' incentives come in.

"We are committed to this market and we want to be here in another five years time offering our products to the trade. The only way we can do that is by good housekeeping and balancing of books.

"Ultimately, we all have to arrive at levels where there is a good opportunity for profit."

The big publishers' expenditure on countless consumers ads, PR agencies, product development and licences is beginning to bite.



That's why pretty soon everyone could be thinking of different ways to achieve better results.



COUSENS: Getting closer to the retailer - or just confusing him?



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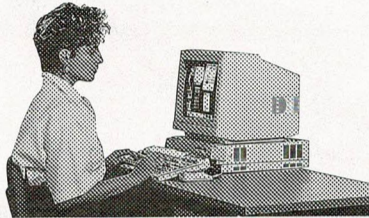
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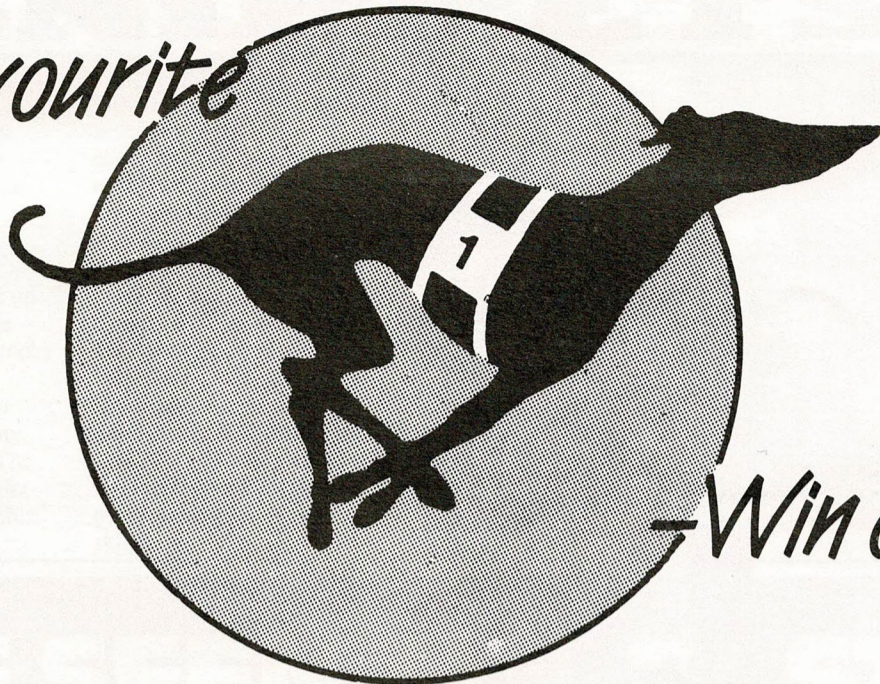
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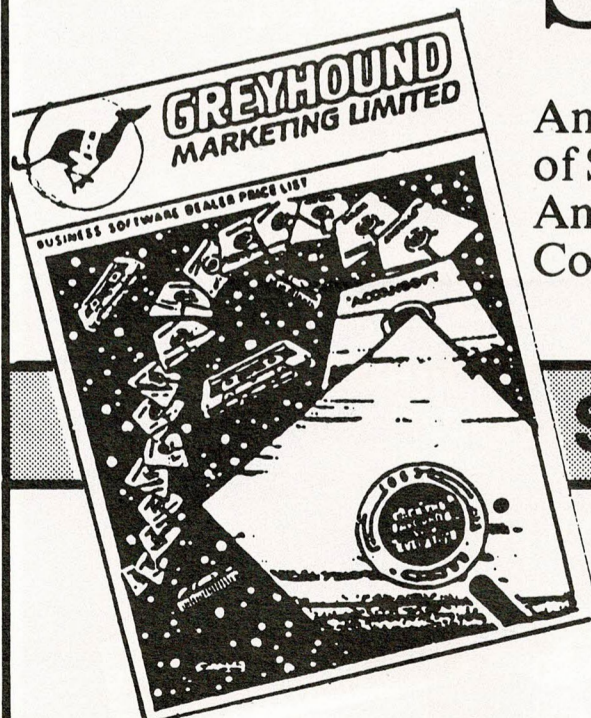
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3	NE	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYER	9.95
4	1	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
5	13	TRACK SUIT MANAGER	GOLIATH	9.95
6	15	PETER BEARDSLEY'S FOOTBALL	GRAND SLAM	8.95
7	6	ROAD BLASTERS	US GOLD	8.99
8	5	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	14	ACE	CASCADE	2.99
10	4	ON THE BENCH	CULT	1.99
11	9	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
12	18	FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
13	22	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
14	28	BATTLE ALLEY	RACK-IT	2.99
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17	20	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
18	11	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	1.99
19	33	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBORD	1.99
20	35	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99

C64 TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	BARBARIAN 2	PALACE	9.95
2	2	TRACK SUIT MANAGER	GOLIATH	9.95
3	4	DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPI CHAL	OCEAN	9.95
4	14	BATTLESHIPS	ENCORE	2.99
5	13	PETER BEARDSLEY'S FOOTBALL	GRAND SLAM	9.95
6	NE	1943	US GOLD	9.95
7	5	HAWKEYE	THALAMUS	9.95
8	6	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
9	30	ROAD BLASTERS	US GOLD	9.95
10	7	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.95
11	1	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.99
12	25	SCHOOLDAZE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
13	3	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.99
14	22	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
15	26	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
16	15	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	1.99
17	NE	JO BLADE 2	PLAYERS	1.99
18	20	ACE	CASCADE	2.95
19	38	STREET GANG	PLAYERS	2.99
20	19	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99

AMSTRAD TOP 10

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	2	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	1.95
2	1	GAUNTLET	KIXX	2.95
3	10	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99
4	3	AIR WOLF	ENCORE	1.99
5	5	DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPIC	OCEAN	9.95
6	28	STUNT BIKE SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
7	6	ATV SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.95
8	4	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
9	RE	ROCKY HORROR SHOW	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	14	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.99
2	2	STOS GAME CREATOR	MANDARIN	29.95
3	2	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95
4	1	SUPER HANG ON	ELECTRIC DREAMS	19.95
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AMIGA TOP 5

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP £
1	NE	STAR GLIDER 2	RAINBIRD	24.95
2	2	VIRUS	FIREBIRD	19.95
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SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

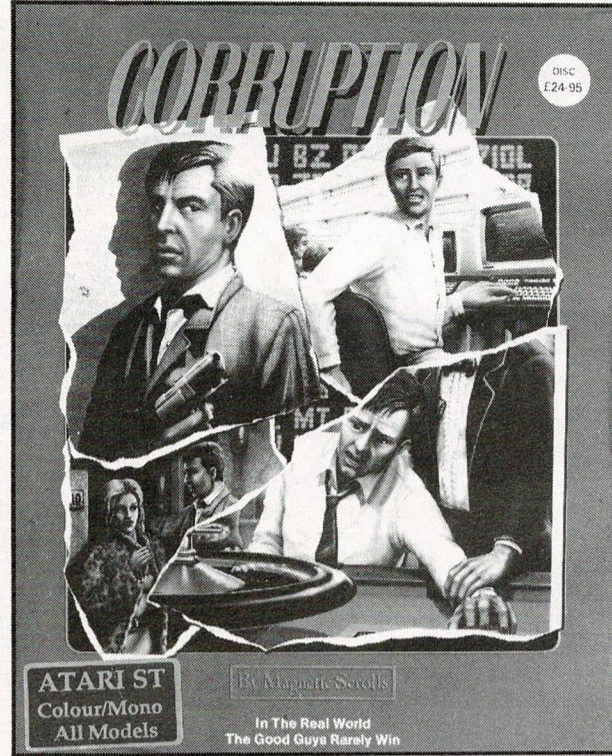
Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	43.7	43.2	45.9	44.8	31.0	29.7	31.9	28.7
COMMODORE 64	24.3	22.9	22.4	23.4	24.1	24.7	23.7	26.5
AMSTRAD	17.7	18.9	19.3	19.1	18.8	17.9	17.7	18.6
ATARI ST	4.6	4.0	2.5	3.5	7.5	7.7	6.4	6.8
AMIGA	3.0	3.8	2.1	2.0	3.9	5.3	3.4	3.8
COMMODORE 16	1.7	1.2	2.3	2.6	2.9	2.4	3.6	3.3
ATARI	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.9	2.0	1.6	2.5	1.9
BBC	0.8	1.2	1.3	1.3	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.9
ELECTRON	1.0	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.2

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
77	60	102	96

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.



— £9.95-£19.95) For fear of not living up to its name, *New Beginning* takes its mixed bag of tricks into space — shifting away from the original board game. This seems to be the latest trend, revamping an old idea by setting it in some unknown galaxy and hoping that the change of venue gives it a new spark of life. Clearly a variation on the same theme, hardly a new beginning more like the same old hat. Δ

MARTECH: *Shoot Out* (SpAm64 — £8.99-£14.99) *Circus, Circus* (Sp — £8.99-£14.99) As the name suggests, *Shoot Out* is good ol' fashion rootin' and a tootin' shoot-em-up, pure and simple. *Circus, Circus* takes simulations a stage further than usual, this time into the unlikely arena of the Big Top. Δ

OCEAN: *Typhoon* (Sp64 £7.95-£14.95) *FiveStar* (ST — £24.95) A Konami coin-op conversion with not a lot to make it stand out that much from all the other flight combat simulations. The usual bunch of mechanoid invaders are hell bent on total domination of the Earth, only to be stopped by an F-14 armour-laden helicopter. Ocean is also releasing a compilation pack for the ST featuring its own *Wizball*, *Barbarian* from Palace Software, *Crazy Cars* from Titus, and two Activision games: *Rampage* and *Enduro Racer*. Δ

CODEMASTERS: *Ski Simulator* and *Skateboard Simulator* (64 — £1.99) Already a best seller on the other 8-bit formats, *Ski Simulator* offers 3D two player down hill racing in the best Codemasters tradition. *Skateboard Simulator* carries on in traditional style. Spectrum and Amstrad versions are strangely due to follow the 64 release rather than appear eight months beforehand — as is the norm with most coders releases.

Δ **CASCADE:** *Ace 2088* (64SpSTAg — £9.95-£19.95) Another "ultimate" Flight Combat simulation this time taking the *Ace* theme into the realms of space, but will its success be as meteorical as its predecessors? Δ

GAMEBUSTERS: *Traz* and *Ace 2* (64SpAm — £2.99) A budget boost to the popular *Ace 2*, which is also appearing in the latest Beau-Jolly compilation. Also offered is the addictive *Breakout* clone *Traz*, with a construction kit thrown in for good measure. Δ

MIRRORSOFT: *Fox's Fights Back* (64Sp — £8.99-£12.99) A psychopathic fox running riot with a machine gun doesn't sound the likeliest of games, but then again neither did *Psycho Pigs*. The game's based on a deranged Basil Brush if the furry chap at the PC Show was anything to go by. It's about time those sick hunters got a taste of their own medicine. Δ

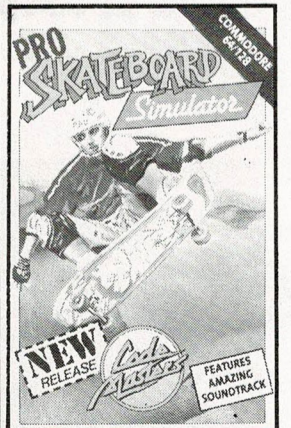
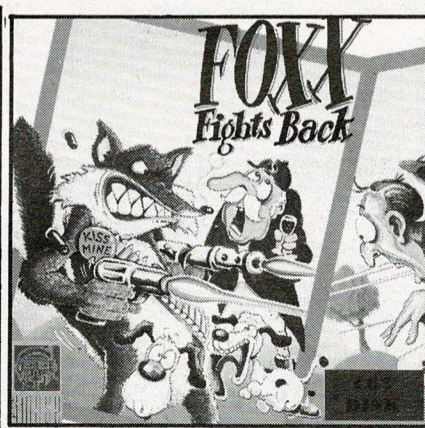
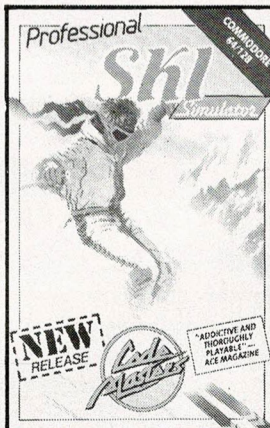
MASTERTRONIC: *Megaplay Vol 1* (64AmSp — £9.99) *Scruples* (PC — £14.99) An interesting development from Mastertronic, bundling six

of their biggies onto a compilation called *Megaplay Vol 1* and pricing it at £9.99. It's bound to make its mark in what will be, strangely enough, the full-price charts. The value pack includes *Agent II*, *Zub*, *Raterscan*, *Curse of Sherwood*, *180* and *Destructo*. *Scruples* is based on the popular board game of the same name which also recently become a trite Sunday night TV quiz. A success? Yes, no or depends. Δ

RAINBIRD: *Corruption* (64Am — £19.95-£24.95) A yuppy style Stock Exchange adventure which won the prestigious Game of the Year award at the recent PC Show? The game involves Dodgy dealings in a shark-like world of back stabbing and nose biting — sounds a bit like the computer industry. Δ

FIREBIRD: *Elite* (ST — £24.95) Believed to be the biggest game of all time, although *Football Manager* fans would argue the toss. It should look good on the ST. Δ

DOMARK: *New Beginning* — Trival *Pursuit II* (STSpAm64Ag



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.



LIVING APART TOGETHER

Spanish label Dinamic was one of the handful of new names to appear at last month's PC Show. After having hits via Ocean in the past it's now using sizeable cheques and an Electronic Arts deal to build its own identity in the UK. CHRISTINA BENT reports . . .

If there's one thing that sends shivers down distributors' and magazine publishers' spines it's the sight of an unheard of foreign games label spending money all over the place as part of the UK launch.

But, in truth, Spanish firm Microdigital Soft (MDS) and its main games thrust Dinamic isn't unheard of. Anyone remember *Army Moves* and *Game Over?* – or to a lesser extent *Basket Master* or *Freddy Hardest?* All did okay here in the UK – yes, despite the fact that they came from unfashionable Espana.

Also, we're not talking the usual kind of third division games house from Europe here. Dinamic is one of six smaller enterprises run by MDS – the others being spread of programming houses and specialist labels – and MDS isn't that small. Its turnover is around £4.5 million in all with 1987 profits of £650,000. That last figure should be enough to pay for any embarrassingly over optimistic forays into foreign markets like the UK.

What makes Dinamic unheard of is the fact that previously its products have been released and marketed in the UK by a smattering of UK firms, and from March 1987 everything was handled exclusively by Ocean.

But things are different now, thus explaining the recent ad splashes and PC Show launch.

Cutting loose

Pablo Ruiz, president of the MDS group and managing director of Dinamic, explained in his quaint broken English exactly why he decided it was time for a break: "We wanted to manufacture to the world, Ocean couldn't. We had a change of philosophy – and had to look out for ourselves. Ocean tried to discourage us and said we were going the wrong way . . ."

Michel Angstadt, international manager for the company, explained in his slightly more coherent American English: "In 1988 the outlook towards the international marketplace changed substantially – looking back at the first three

years it was decided that a direct penetration into foreign markets must be undertaken.

"Therefore, after the expiration of the contract with Ocean in March of this year, Dinamic faced the challenge of producing and publishing directly, releasing finished product in Europe through a distributor sharing the same philosophy as Dinamic.

"After a 'thorough' analysis of the possible European distributors, MDS signed a distribution deal with Electronic Arts. This was due to a similarity in company philosophies and especially to the direct sales force strategy applied by the US firm.

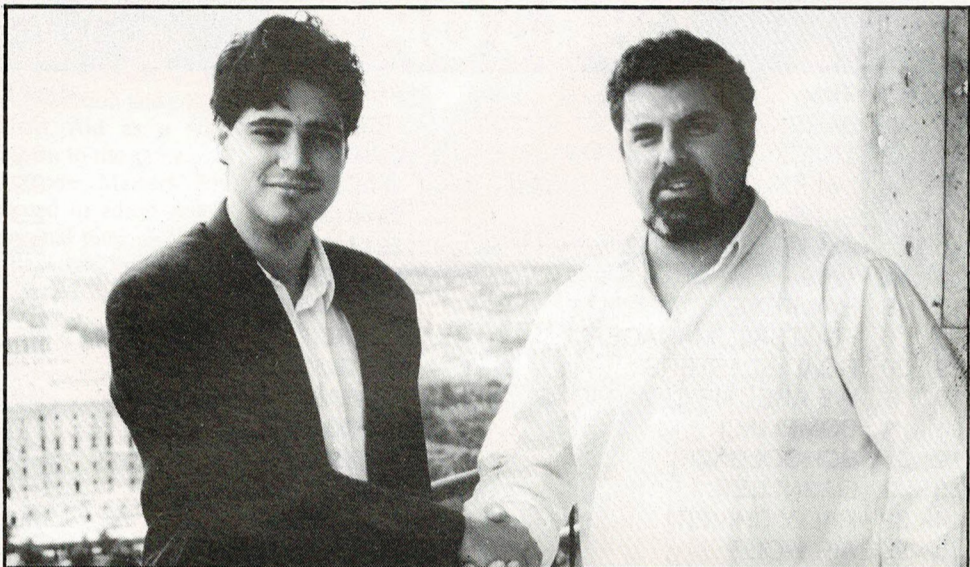
"Previously Ocean had manufactured, marketed, promoted, and publicised our product, and we had merely developed the product and originated the artwork. Nowadays we are more directly involved in our product. We do the manufacturing and the marketing, and we are happy to be controlling our product more."

Dinamic must surely be concerned that the split from Ocean could mean that the product will no longer sell. Some would argue that it was the Ocean name and not the product that initially attracted the little computerheads to the package in the first place. Of course, if the product wasn't at least partly up to scratch it would have bombed – Ocean name or not.

Angstadt took it upon himself to predict Dinamic's UK fate via EA. "In the best weeks we'll dominate 2.6 per cent of the Gallup charts. We'll only be releasing about five products a year, and we don't really know our next step. We think Dinamic's name will be established for its good product. We believe we'll go up in the industry."

Spot the difference

So, why did Dinamic choose to share its potential suc-



Dinamic's managing director Pablo Ruiz (left) signing the deal with EA's Mark Lewis last month

cess with EA? To call EA notorious for deals which don't work out is possibly a touch harsh, but the US giant has certainly had its reputation knocked by the acrimonious split with CRL, the turmoil caused by Nexus going bust, the quiescence of Martech and the current row back home with Bethesda Softworks.

Apparently unnerved by its chequered history, Angstadt feels that Electronic Arts has changed: "We feel that we've come at the right time. EA has made all its big mistakes already as far as we're concerned, and we're prepared to give them another chance. EA has pretty much matured in this market from what we can tell." Perhaps EA is indeed a rare leopard and has changed its spots – or perhaps it has been the fault of the particular labels concerned? It takes two to tango.

On why Dinamic and EA fitted together Ruiz preferred to keep things simple: "We think ahead, and EA thinks big. We have the same outlook." Angstadt offered a more in depth explanation: "Dinamic are strong on the Spectrum 8-bit market, whilst EA regular dealers, Widdick

64 8-bit market. So you see we can help each other out, especially since the Commodore 64 is not very strong in Spain. We now release titles on the ST and Amiga, in fact our next few releases are to be on the Amiga."

As a rule European product marketed as European product doesn't exactly sell like the last loaf of bread on sale on Christmas Eve. In fact, generally in the past it just hasn't sold.

Dinamic is not worried by this concept. It feels that it is manufacturing British style games and that it has the same aims as British companies. Ruiz added: "Our games sell well in the States for the same reason." Dinamic doesn't believe in trying to create a stark split between Europe and UK, and is trying to find a happy medium.

The first Dinamic game released through EA will be *Game Over 2*. This will be simultaneously launched on all major formats – even MSX. Ruiz is convinced it will receive the same success as the titles published under Ocean. He comments: "People know our games by now – they buy them for the game, not the name . . ."

Big spenders

Dinamic has managed to find an impressive sum of money with which to launch in the UK. This is something of a testament to its success in Spain. It's spend at the Personal Computer Show alone was £20,000. In addition Dinamic has a £25,000 annual adspend, which Angstadt admits will no doubt be stretched a further £4-5,000 due to convincing ad sales persons.

Dinamic believes it will ride high above its competitors – or at least with them – now that it is personally involved in its product from production to sale to the end user.

So, what exactly are these chaps after? Ruiz offered that he would not consider Dinamic successful until it had at least five hits behind it. Considering that *Game Over 2* is Dinamic's only release of 1988, it must be assumed that Ruiz is not looking at being a success until at least next year.

More importantly, Ruiz desperately wants his company to be the first Spanish company to hit the big time in the UK. Ruiz commented: "We want to make good things in Spain that the whole world will want."

So, presumably, does EA.

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SPEAKEASY

Going spare at Amstrad

We enclose herewith a copy of a letter sent to Amstrad plc, the contents of which you will note.

We should be pleased if this letter can be included in one of your publications together with the footnote that should any other dealers be experiencing similar problems would they contact the undersigned who will collectively pass on

such information to the National Association of Computer Retailers.

Yours faithfully
Richard Israel
The Dukes Group

Letter to Amstrad

Your current policy with regard to faulty goods, as we understand it, is that you ac-

cept a five day responsibility only for replacements, thereafter the responsibility only for replacements, thereafter the responsibility for repair work passes to the dealer.

Whilst this condition of trading is an inequitable one we do try to live with it. However, since after five days the good name of your company and ours relies completely on

us to be able to carry out the repairs within a reasonable time limit we find that to be told that spares are not available and will not be available for six to eight weeks or even longer is not an acceptable situation.

Because of the long delay in the availability of spares we have tried also unsuccessfully to gain a replacement unit

by ringing Shoeburyness, Brentford and ADL – all to no avail and very frustrating and costly.

Barbara Gibson of ADL was not very co-operative and implied that six to eight weeks is not long to wait – try telling that to our customers who have committed their business affairs into "The Computer Age".

In order to try and maintain our credibility with our customer base which includes Ford, the Rexel Group and Orion Electric – we have had no alternative but to place the

matter in the hands of the Office of Fair Trading to determine what is considered fair as a waiting period for spares or alternatively a replacement unit.

We have forwarded to them for consideration your guarantee card and terms of dealership. Our approach to you in this matter has the full backing of the National Association of Computer Retailers who are very keen to see this type of bad situation improved upon.

In essence we have only got our customers interest at heart and indeed these are the people who have made Amstrad what it is today.

Yours faithfully,
Richard Israel

– For all its boorishness Amstrad surely doesn't believe that a six to eight week wait for spare parts is acceptable? The trouble is, as it's proved many times before, one of the things the Brentwood beasties really can't stand is retailers daring to ask for help – and why shouldn't they, it is Amstrad product they're selling after all.

Whether a combined chorus of dealers and an input from the OFT can change anything is doubtful. If Amstrad's got the parts it's got the parts and if it hasn't is hasn't. But it's the fact that staff are reacting flippantly to retailers' problems that's the real disgrace.

Thoughts of a European

It was good to see your illustrious paper giving space to the question of 1992 and what it means to us all (CTW October 3rd).

I have felt for some time that this important matter would be overlooked by many in our market place. The creation of a common European market, with no barriers means that you will be able to sell any product to any of the member states without tariff.

This is an important opportunity, and one that must be planned for. Clearly it is not just a question of less trading hassle for us, but also less hassle for the French, the Germans, the Scandinavians *et al.* This has obvious repercussions for the UK.

I enjoyed Nick's piece, and agree that Europe is of course important now. However, I do feel that the job the DTI is doing, and the help it is giving to a vast number of small businesses in the run up to 1992 is of great help and a great deal more comprehensible than he suggests.

By the way, we had a simply marvellous PC Show. Look forward to seeing everyone at this year's In Din.

Completely brilliant wishes to all.

Yours sincerely
Mark Strachan
Joint Managing Director
Domark

– A simply marvellous letter. It sure warms the cockles to know that even someone who has become known as half of an industry double act called The Twits is giving 1992 serious thought. And thanks for the column inches.

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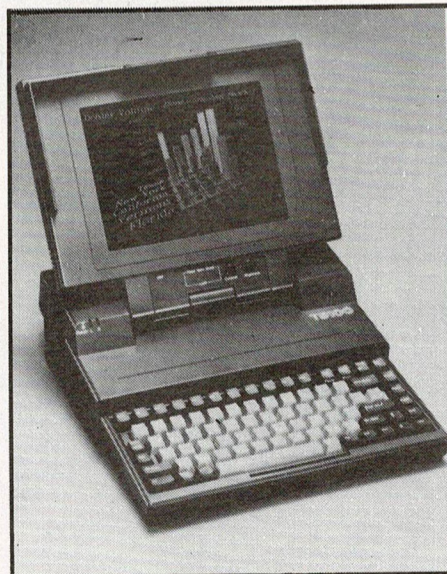
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