



# CTW

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## EMAP and Blenheim head for showdown

**Blenheim and EMAP Exhibitions were preparing for a head-to-head battle for show supremacy last week, both announcing plans for trade only events in September 1992.**

This year the firms have split the calendar between

them, Blenheim organising the European Computer Trade Show in April and EMAP readying itself for the Computer Entertainment Show, with consumer and trade halls, in early September.

Next year, however, a confrontation looks unavoidable.

Blenheim will continue

the spring ECTS but is planning a duplicate event for the autumn. EMAP will hold a consumer only show in late November or early December, with a trade only show in September.

Last week the two firms squared up for the first time, displaying the pre-fight confidence of a couple of heavyweights. They agreed that there can only be one winner and are insisting that there will be no merging or backing down.

Definite details have only been offered by Blenheim so far. Its autumn ECTS will take place from September 6th-8th at London's Business Design Centre.

The concept and venue are already popular through the success of the three year old April event and Blenheim knows that this is a strong card. In an attempt to gain an early lead, it is giving any firm that is booked into April 1992 one month to reserve the

same stand for September.

EMAP's plans are far more vague, but this is understandable as the build up to CES is reaching a peak.

Exhibitions director Neil Wood told CTW: "We could end up with just a good, common or garden trade show in an exhibition hall, but we're also looking at more expansive plans than that."

"We could hold something that would be more of a trade event than a show, get people together in a venue rather than an exhibition hall and then fly in top people from the industry as part of the package."

"In another market, for instance, we get everyone together on the SS Camberra and fly in delegates from all over the world."

"For next September we've got options on a few places, all on dry land, most in the UK but some in Europe. Timing depends on which venue we go with, but



CES: EMAP hopes to divide and conquer in '92

it'll be sometime in early or mid-September."

The consumer event later in the year looks likely to remain at Earls Court II and retain the Computer Entertainment Show tag, although Wood claimed it will become "more of a youth leisure show" with input from various other "ancillary"

markets.

He added: "We still fundamentally believe that a consumer show is needed but it does make absolute sense to split trade from public."

"The problem is that in September a lot of the product isn't ready yet, but in

Continued on back page



ECTS: Tried and tested and looking for more

## Leisuresoft drives to see Plus make its mark

Leisuresoft is set to relaunch its TecnoPlus range of peripherals and has added a PC CD ROM drive from Philips to lead the line-up.

The brand has been split in two for the relaunch on September 5th at the Computer Entertainment Show. TecnoPlus products will be leisure-orientated while the new TecnoPlus Professional line will aim for "a more mature market".

The first Professional launch is the Philips CM50 PC compatible CD drive. It was launched by the manufacturer last spring at £399 and aimed at the business market.

Now it will be exclusively available through Leisuresoft. The product itself will retain the Philips badge although the TecnoPlus logo will dominate the packaging.

Leisuresoft is not changing the price of the drive but it is bundling Software Toolworks' *World Atlas* and *Reference Library* plus a five title CD Games Pak. Together the three packages have a retail value of £300.

The drive should be available within the next few weeks. On the official relaunch date there will be a total of 44 products available under the TecnoPlus or TecnoPlus Professional brands.

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CM50: CD addition to new Plus range

## C64GS is dead — official

After less than a year, Commodore has officially killed off its C64GS games console.

The firm admitted to CTW last week that it has "learned a lesson" and will not be making any further attempts to compete in the burgeoning console market in the foreseeable future.

Launched in September at £99.99, the C64GS was seen as Commodore's answer to the success of Sega and Nintendo in the UK, with projected sales of at least 50,000 units during Christmas '90 and 100,000 in its first 12 months on the market.

In reality, however, the machine failed to spark much interest at either trade

or consumer level. The firm claims that overall UK sales were 15,000-17,000 units, with the total European figure being barely double that.

Commodore has now broken up all existing stocks of the C64GS, re-using the PCBs as standard C64 home computers. Indeed, the firm argues that this facility has meant that the money lost on the console project has been acceptable — comprising simply of discarded GS cases and, certainly by console standards, a fairly small marketing spend.

"The lesson that we've learned is that we should play to our strengths and not try to compete in markets where Nintendo and Sega

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## New deal ends DOA dealer anger

**Commodore has finally given in to intense trade pressure — revising the unpopular changes it introduced to its returns policy last month.**

With the intention of reducing its costly service bill, Commodore brought in a new system for DOA (Dead On Arrival) stock from July 1st.

Previously, when dealers received such stock they simply returned the machines, within 30 days, to their distributor and were sent replacements for the next day. But due to ap-

parent "abuse" of that system, it was changed — dealers being instructed to send all faulties back to CBM's national repair centre.

Those sending true DOA would have product replaced within a maximum of 14 days. To compensate for the extra cost involved, Commodore increased dealer margins by 0.5 per cent.

This policy, however, caused uproar in the independent retail sector, many feeling that they had been rather hard done by — particularly because of the need to stock more product to cover for faulties and the incursion of carrier charges.

Faced with a growing dissatisfaction with the policy, Commodore has now reverted to a returns policy very close to that which ran pre-July 1st — with the emphasis on increased responsibility all round.

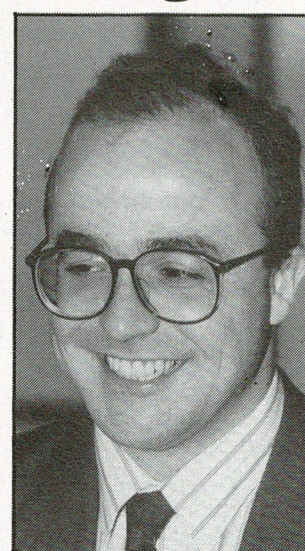
From today (August 5th), retailers can return DOA product, within 30 days, to their distributor for immediate replacement. Retailers will be required to de-bundle product being returned so that it is devoid of unnecessary weight and loseable or damageable items (sleeve, software, manuals etc.).

Distributors, meanwhile, will be directly responsible for the DOA they pass on to

Commodore, thus they will have to be extra careful in carriage, and also keep a close eye on any dealer trying to flout the system.

"This proves that we not only listen to the trade, but also act on what we hear. I believe this solution removes all of the perceived problems that we faced when we made the initial change," commented Commodore's UK sales national sales director Kelly Sumner.

"It was never our intention to compromise our customers' business and I would like to think that everyone can now relax and prepare for the autumn season."



SUMNER: Reacting to dealers



# Mindscape offers the real deal!

In an astonishing interview, Mindscape supremo Geoff Heath confirmed that despite assurances from 'unfriendly aliens', the real deals are only available from Mindscape.

"We are bringing the titles to the PC market that the people really want", scoffs Heath. Certainly Mindscape can be confident that their new releases "Martian Dreams", "Wing Commander 2" and "Megafortress" have captured the imagination of the market.

Not only are these titles the very best around, but they are supported by a battery

of showcards, posters, counter dispensers, window stickers, and 3-dimensional mobiles.

And to cap it all, Mindscape are running a fabulous in-box competition where the winner gets an all-expenses paid trip to Origin, the Mecca of games writing!

It has been recognised for some time that Mindscape is making all the running at the moment. People are no longer surprised that the people from the Scaynes Hill think tank are yet again coming up with the goods.

As if all this wasn't enough, guess who has just captured the distribution for the Ad Lib sound card? You guessed it - Mindscape!

## Industry stunned!

Key industry figures have been amazingly forthright with their reaction to MINDSCAPE INTERNATIONAL's key PC titles and their promotional activity planned for this summer.

Elizabeth Guernsey responded "These products are just tailor made for us". Bernadette Abbey was delighted to comment "What a promotion... they have even got the right sized box ... great!"

When given details on the promotion Pete Donnelly was also reported to have said "Blow me down ..... it's a gem of an ideal!"

Rumour also abounds from Europe that upon hearing of Mindscape's promotion Eve Guillotine actually cut short his honeymoon and was thought to have mumbled "I shall never marry again". Industry guru John Holdup also commented "I wouldn't be surprised if Italian customs stole the lot." From Germany Jurgen Goldilocks is believed to have said "Dieses Mal bestellen wir bestimmt punklicht!"

From within the city Peter Slayman was moved to say "I promise never to cancel any appointments with Mindscape ever again", whilst contact was fleetingly made with the Mattbip Sisters who commented "This promotion is so good we feel compelled to actually finish our PC conversions on schedule".

An emotional Birm Ingham bullishly said "We are so moved, that we intend to launch a new PC magazine". Ciaran Brenda, Sky TV Superstar commented through his agent "This is the promotion that all retailers have been waiting for".

Kelly Sumner was unavailable for comment, but we were fortunate enough to manage to obtain a brief comment from David Ike who said "I saw this coming a long time ago .... ever since I started playing Gods".

MINDSCAPE INTERNATIONAL are delighted at the response and look forward to continued success with their entire range of quality software.

More to follow.

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## Origin push the graphics and sound barriers back - yet again.

The UK launch of Martian Dreams and Wing Commander 2 confirms the technical advances made by the Origin design team.

Never before has so much spectacular colour and animation been offered in a series of games. Original heart-stirring musical scores underpin the extraordinary lengths that Origin have gone to, to bring breathtaking quality products to the market.

Role-playing somehow becomes an inadequate description. Its more like being there. And as Origin say in their corporate slogan - *We Create Worlds.*

Prophetic stuff!

# Megafortress - the ultimate war machine

Forget the run of the mill flight simulators that you're familiar with. Mindscape have done it again, blasting their way through the skies in a radically modified B-52H Stratofortress, with radar-absorbing fibersteel skin, an SST nose, and enough state of the art sensing apparatus and weapons systems to jam and blast its way into any place on earth.

Megafortress is in a class by itself. It's a huge, complex aircraft that demands attention to a dizzying array of tasks. Want to know what it's like to deliver 200 tons of mayhem and destruction into the blazing heart of the Iraqi war machine, all the time trying to keep your location a secret? This is

the reality of long-range strategic air assault today.

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Megafortress - the ultimate war machine!

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Available for Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, IBM PC and compatibles.

# MEGAFORTRESS



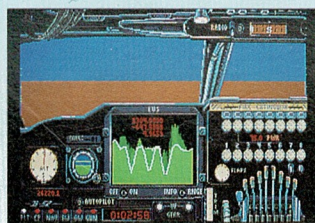
Electronic Countermeasures



Offensive Weapons Station

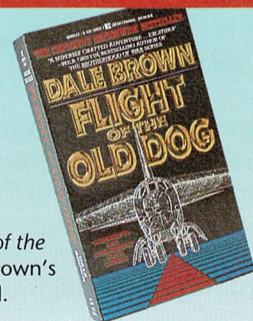


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# Court hits distributor for £20K over illegal VCS batch

**FAST was celebrating another victory in its fight against software piracy last week — as distributor Pick and Choose was fined nearly £20,000 for supplying counterfeit VCS 2600 cartridges.**

The Salford based firm was actually raided back in January 1990, when some 539 cartridges were seized — most of them being Activision titles.

On July 23rd, at Salford Magistrates Court, the firm faced 44 different charges related to selling counterfeit cartridge versions of computer programs on which copyright exists.

The firm was fined £19,600 and also ordered to pay £931 costs — with the cartridges being deemed to have a street value of £16,500.

"We're very pleased to have completed another successful prosecution," remarked FAST's chief executive Bob Hay to CTW. "But it's worrying to see that cartridges can be copied."

Hay added that Pick and Choose had pleaded guilty to the charges brought against it and, thus, it cannot appeal over the court decision. It has apparently indicated, however, that it will



**HAY: Another successful prosecution**

be pleading against the severity of the sentence.

• Meanwhile, in conjunction with the Business Software Alliance, FAST recently swooped on the offices of *The Yorkshire Evening Post* — confiscating copied software.

Since then, an amicable agreement has been reached with *TYEP*, which has promised to pay damages and

costs for the products involved. More importantly, parent company Westminster Press — which owns the *Financial Times* — has promised a crackdown on software piracy throughout all its divisions.

• Lastly, FAST's case against a firm called Stolen Computers, based in Dyfed, has been adjourned until September.

# New PCWs loom for autumn

**Amstrad will launch updated versions of its stalwart PCW word processing machines at the Business Computing show on September 17th.**



**PCW: Plus two, minus two**

The Earls Court event will see the unveiling of a new entry level machine called the 9256, plus the 9512 Plus — signalling the end of the line for the ageing 8256 and 8512 machines.

The move has been expected for some time, though Amstrad itself is refusing to give any official confirmation.

As expected, the new machines will boast a 3.5 inch drive, as opposed to the three inch drives currently in use, and re-styled casing. Bundled printers will also be upgraded.

According to a report in *New Computer Express*, the CP/M operating system will be retained, as will the bundled *LocoScript*. Despite some speculation in the trade that the Locomotive software will be in-built, it is understood that the cheaper option of loading from disk has been preferred.

The switch to 3.5 inch drives is a wise one considering the short supply of their three inch predecessors, as is the phasing out of the 8000 machines — which most would agree are in need of a facelift to bolster sales.

Amstrad is likely to introduce the 9512 Plus at £399, which is the current official price of the 9512. The 9256 will obviously come in lower than this, possibly at £299.

# EMAP breaks chain link silence

**EMAP has confirmed that electrical retail giant Dixons is to sponsor this autumn's Computer Entertainment Show.**

The deal, predicted by CTW last month, has only just been signed and it is still not clear exactly what role Dixons will play in the promotion of the event.

There will certainly be some in-store promotion by the chain and buying director Alan Dickinson has indicated that CES will feature in forthcoming advertising campaigns. He added that it was the first time he could remember Dixons getting in-

involved in such sponsorship activities.

As a result of the deal, EMAP has announced that "the show is now to be branded 'Dixons and EMAP present the European Computer Entertainment Show 1991'". Catchy isn't it?

EMAP Images managing director, Terry Pratt offered: "Dixons are our natural partners for this event. They have unrivalled status in the marketplace as the leading home computer and console retailer. Their professional approach in helping to grow our industry makes them ideally placed to realise the opportunities presented by co-sponsorship."

For Dixons, group commercial director Rupert Gavin offered: "A consumer electronics show, focused mainly on home computers and video games, has an important role to play in the market. By providing the opportunity for all key suppliers to show the latest innovative products under one roof, we believe we are helping develop this market to its maximum potential."

Dixons is the largest retailer of computer hardware in the country and a firm that no manufacturer would wish to upset.

EMAP confidently expects to announce the signing of a number of big name exhibitors very shortly.

# Micro Mart aims for week spot

**Bargain hunter's computer mag, Micro Mart, has decided to go weekly, but insists it is not putting itself up as a rival to Future's New Computer Express.**

It is currently a fortnightly title but plans to make the switch on its 150th issue in September. It consists mainly of advertising (much of it free) and is described by its own publishing company, Micro Mart UK Limited, as "a means of dumping vast quantities of redundant stock".

The title concentrates almost exclusively on the business market and has no plans to change its policy.

Micro Mart UK director Stuart Summerville commented to CTW: "Going weekly has been planned for about five years. We're now fully established and with a healthy amount of advertising we're in a position to go ahead."

"Publishing a fortnightly



**MICRO MART: Moment of weakness approaches**

does cause confusion, with readers and retailers. People are used to weeklies or monthlies, but not bi-weeklies.

"We are, of course, aware of *Express*, and although they are moving more and more into the business

market and they do have a shopper section, we definitely feel that we're in different markets."

*Micro Mart* has no current ABC figure but Summerville claims that it is selling around 36,000 copies.

# Russians bite into big Macs

**Apple is planning a move into the Soviet computer market — with Russian language versions of the Mac.**

The US firm currently lags some way behind rivals such as IBM when it comes to East European business, but has just signed a one year contract with Moscow-based Intermicro to set up dealerships.

First Russian Macs, using Apple's own operating systems, will go on sale in October. A major advertising campaign will kick off in September, aimed largely at the rapidly expanding Soviet publishing industry.

Apple officials have stated that the standard model Mac Classic will retail at \$951, plus \$92 for a Russian language keyboard. The firm plans to charge foreign currency because of the inconvertibility of the rouble.

# Future adds on Plus factor to rising ABCs

**Future Publishing has announced the remainder of its ABC figures for the Jan-June '91 period, revealing two more rises.**

The two new figures are both in the business division. *PC Plus* has gone up 27 per cent from 71,064 to 90,603 while *8,000 Plus* climbed nine per cent from 25,008 to 27,186.

The only other magazine in the business division is *PC Answers* which does not yet qualify for an ABC figure. *Mac Publishing* did complete a quartet but was closed down earlier in the year.

A week earlier Future announced the ABC figures for its leisure titles, all of which showed a rise, ranging from a leap of 42 per cent and an extra 33,924 readers on *Amiga Format* to an extra 10 readers and a growth of 0.05



**8000 PLUS: Plus 2,178**

per cent on weekly title *New Computer Express*.

Discussing the complete bag of results, managing director Chris Anderson commented: "Future's strategy in magazines has always been to create high quality publications with a mission to be the top title within their individual, highly-targeted market sectors."

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## Leisuresoft's sales split confirms Amiga dominance

Leisuresoft has reached its financial year end and has come up with an interesting breakdown of the current state of its business.

For the moment it is keeping quiet about the exact size of its turnover, although with the addition of extra hardware ranges during the year substantial growth is expected.

It has, however, disclosed how its business is split into varying sectors. The figures cover the twelve month period ending July 31st and are made up by records of every single sale made by Leisuresoft during the year.

They refer to volume not value so, while Amstrad software may have a higher figure than Commodore hardware, it obviously would not contribute a higher percentage of revenue.

The strength of the Amiga

is confirmed and then some by the distributor, with software sales for the machine accounting for an impressive 25 per cent of the total.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is that, at least according to Leisuresoft's figures, PC software is now outselling ST software. The cartridge software figure is also higher than the ST's but it is made up from a number of formats including machines from Sega, Commodore, Amstrad and Atari itself.

In the 8-bit market, the C64 predictably leads the way with the Spectrum and Amstrad both picking up little more than crumbs.

The figures for Commodore hardware and consoles will undoubtedly grow in the next twelve months as markets continue to blossom and Leisuresoft itself continues to look more and more convincing in its new role as a major hardware distributor.

### LEISURESOF BUSINESS SPLIT

Product line	% of total sales volume
Amiga software	25.29
Cartridge software	12.45
PC software	10.91
ST software	9.36
C64 software	8.16
Joysticks	6.90
Consoles	6.48
Spectrum software	5.23
Amstrad software	4.70
Techno Plus range	4.56
Commodore hardware	3.48
Other peripherals	1.42
Sundry minor lines	1.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## Trojan software plan fires into first phase

Trojan has begun the promised programme of software support for the Amiga and ST versions of its Phazer lightgun.

At the time of launch,



ROEBACH: Trigger happy

there were just the two games in the light gun bundle to be played with the Phazer. Last week *The Enforcer* and *Alien* were added to the list.

In three weeks *Firestar* will be launched and there are plans for two more titles nearer Christmas. All are from Trojan itself and all are priced at £9.99.

Trojan's Peter Roebach told CTW: "They shouldn't be confused with budget games, they're top quality. We just want them to qualify as impulse purchases."

"It is very important for retailers and consumers to understand that this isn't a flash-in-the-pan product. It's something different, it's going to be around for a while and it's going to be very well supported."

Although the only titles with definite release dates are the Trojan products, it is understood that Ocean and US Gold are also working on games to work with the gun.

## Apple still to fall into Dixons hands

Dixons is continuing its discussions with Apple, but has warned that there are still a few obstacles to negotiate before it can start stocking.

Buying director Alan Dickinson told CTW that he was keen to take the Apple Classic and LC machines, "but only when the terms

and conditions are absolutely right".

He added: "We have to see if Apple is able to adapt to dealing with large High Street retailers rather than through specialist stores."

"We've watched the growth of the Classic and it has been impressive. This could be a good opportunity, but only if everything is sorted out properly."

## Construction Kit builds £1m total

Domark proudly announced last week that sales of its 3D Construction Kit have reached £1 million at retail.

Only launched in June, the product was seen as something of a departure from the firm's traditional games business both in terms of the product's style and pricepoint. But sales so far on ST (£39.99), Amiga and PC (both £49.99) have apparently proven impressive.

"This is the best possible news we could have received," bubbled Domark publisher Matthew Tims. "Incentive have done a wonderful job with the program and we spent a lot of

time and thought coming up with an interesting and innovative package. It had to be eye-catching and informative and it appears to have worked."

Sales are expected to be further boosted by the launch of the C64 version, which should be shipping around now.

Meanwhile, Domark has also pre-announced the availability of *Rugby - The World Cup* in late September. Release is being timed to coincide with the Rugby World Cup competition which takes place in October, and claims about its quality have already begun.

"*Rugby - The World Cup* is to rugby what *Kick Off* is to football," said the firm timidly.



CONSTRUCTION KIT: In the millionaires club

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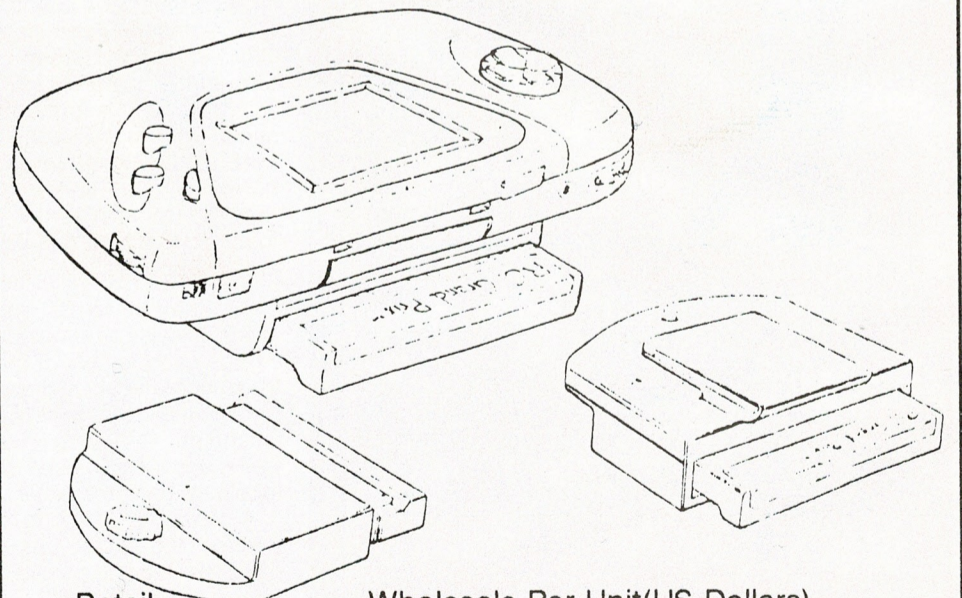
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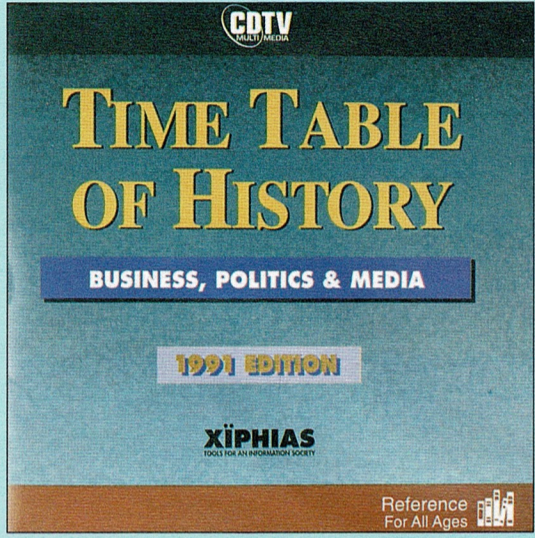


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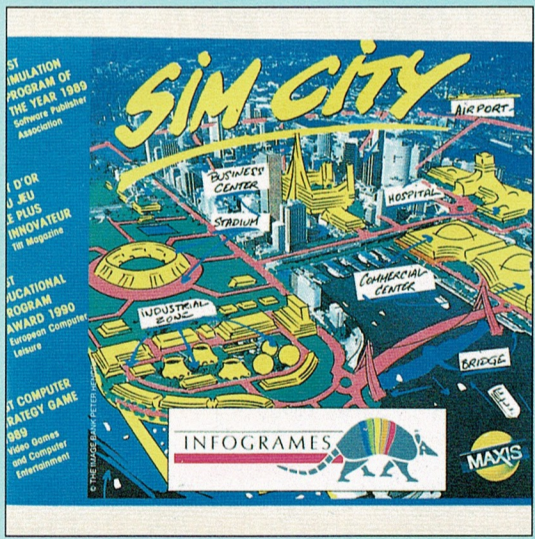


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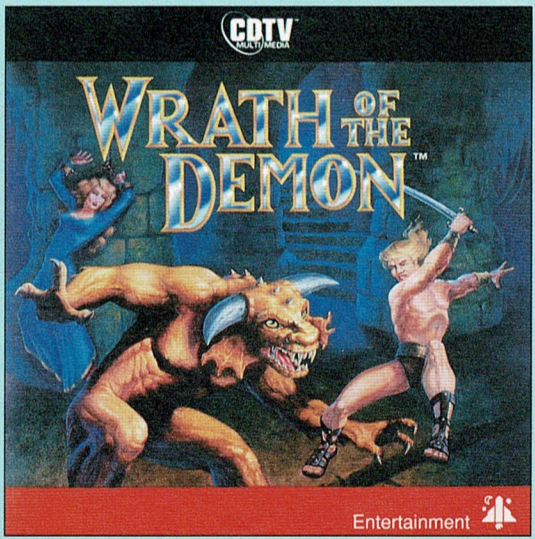
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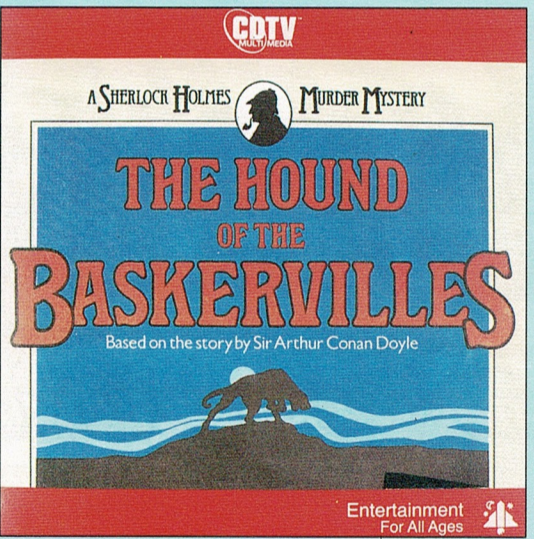
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## Amstrad laps it up

Amstrad has followed up another good performance in the laptop PC market share table with new models and new price cuts.

Romtec figures for May show Amstrad in equal top spot with Compaq — the firm boasting an impressive 33 per cent of the market.

From the beginning of this month, prices have been reduced on two of the firm's existing ALT machines. The ALT-286 drops £300 to £1,299, whilst the ALT-386SX with 40Mb drive comes down

by the same amount, from £1,999 to £1,699.

Being introduced is an ALT-386SX, with 2Mb of RAM as standard and an 80Mb hard disk drive, for £1,999. At the same time, the upgraded ALT-286 — with hard disk capacity up from 20Mb to 40Mb — will go on sale at £1,599.

"We believe the new fuller range offers unparalleled value for money at each price point, and shows that we are determined to hold our lead in this crucial marketplace," commented Amstrad's group director of sales and marketing Malcolm Miller.



ALT 286: Price dropping, share rising

## ECTS steers towards '92

Sixteen key players within the games industry have joined forces to form a steering committee for next year's European Computer Trade Show.

Show organiser Blenheim Online came up with the idea of the committee in order to make sure that the successful trade event evolves the way the market wants it to.

The committee members represent all the key industry components — including software publishing, distribution, magazines and the ELSPA trade body.

They are: Dean Barrett (Ocean), Sean Brennan (Mirrorsoft), Colin Stokes (Mindscape), Kelly Sumner (Commodore), David Knox (Electronic Arts), Dominic Wheatley (Domark), Mark Gale (System 3), David Palmer (Hi-Tec), Greg Ingham (Future), Ash Taylor (Leisuresoft), Richard Steele (Centresoft), Chris Payne (Europress Software), Roger Bennett (ELSPA), Robert Stallibrass (Active), Tony Adams (Impact) and Tom Stock (CTW).

"Obviously the industry sees this very much as its own event and is keen to make sure — as we are — that although it's the established number one show, we don't become complacent," commented Blenheim's group exhibition manager Keith Pitman.

## Mag sets out new strategy

Independent games mag *Strategy Plus* has doubled its print run and is planning a national press advertising campaign.

The publication was launched in September last year and has apparently found a comfortable niche in the ever crowded consumer computer magazines market. It caters for older users who prefer simulation and strategy titles to arcade-style games.

From a print run of 25,000

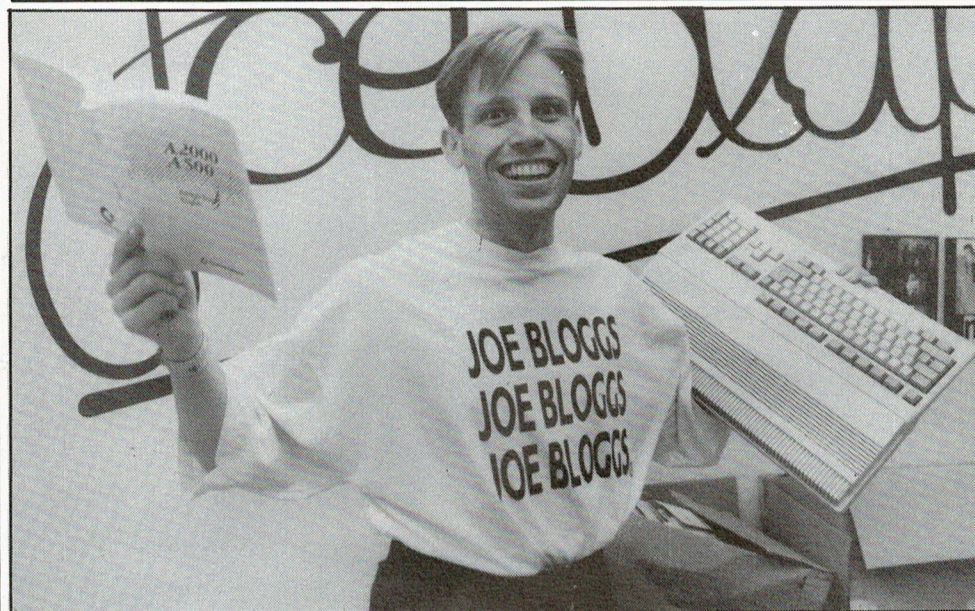
copies, sales of *Strategy Plus* are apparently running at around 18,000. The September issue, however, will have a 50,000 print run and publisher Brian Walker expects sales to hit 25,000-30,000. It will also have eight more pages and boast full colour throughout.

To complement this push, ads will be running in *The Guardian* and selected PC business titles.

"Since launch we have maintained our consistency — we clearly do not appeal to 12 year olds," offered Walker.



STRATEGY PLUS: Doubling up



Commodore last week made a convincing claim to have put an end to the increasingly naff celebrity tie-in series. It started with Gazza and followed a star studded path through to Philip Schofield. Everyone thought that the downward spiral would end with any old Joe Bloggs and Commodore has proved them right. The chap in question is actually the marketing manager of highly naff Manchester clothing company, Joe Bloggs, which has received an Amiga 500 to give to charity. If anyone else has any pictures of their product with any has-beens, never-wases or never-will-bes, keep them to your bloody self.

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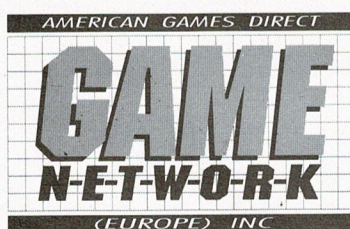
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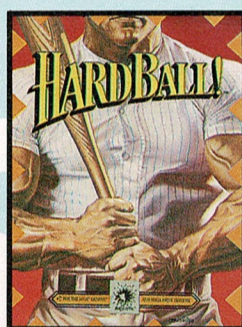
# High Calibre Ballistics.

Hardball! and Star Control, runaway successes since their release, are leaving Mega Drive owners shell shocked, retail outlet shelves empty, and distributors crying out for more. BUT THAT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING. Ballistic, the all - new independent label for quality console products is launching two more massive games for the Mega Drive...

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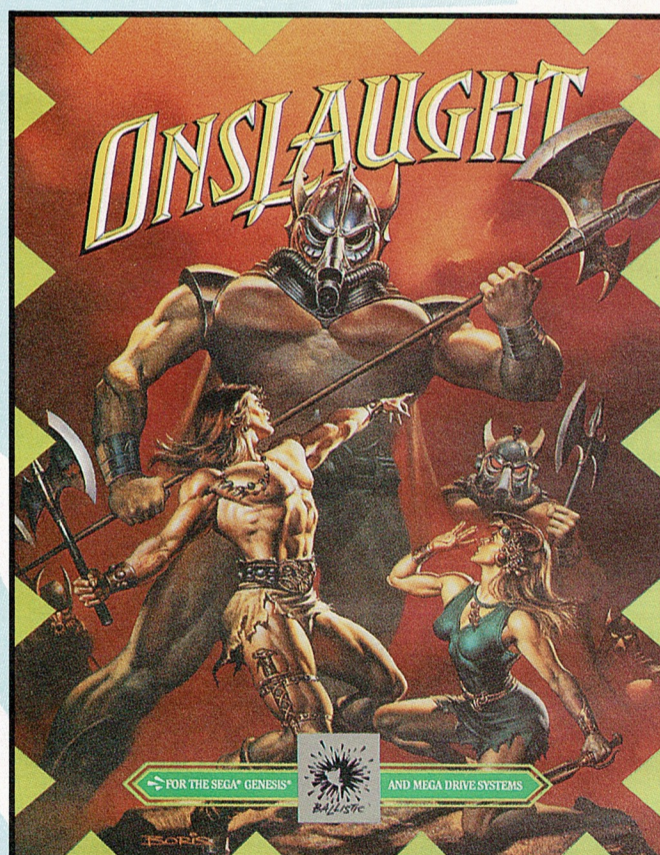
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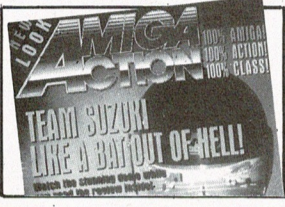
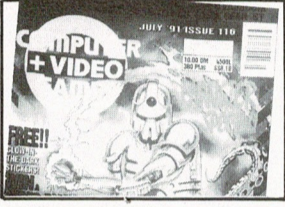
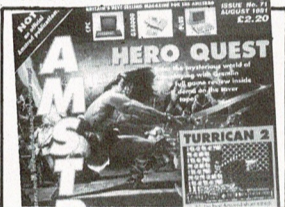




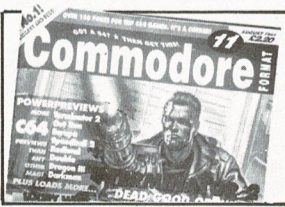
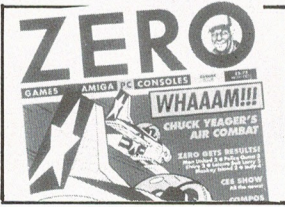
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SPOTLIGHT

# WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

KELLY BESWICK skips around nine leading consumer magazine editors to get their views on the current state of the games market. What are the real corkers of 1991? What's been the biggest disappointment? What good stuff's on the way? And, in their opinion, what game should exist that doesn't already...

EDITOR/MAGAZINE	TOP THREE GAMES THIS YEAR	THREE HOT TIPS	BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT	THE IDEAL GAME	THOUGHTS
<b>STEVE WHITE</b> <b>Amiga Action</b> 	<i>Lemmings</i> (Amiga — Psygnosis) <i>Armageddon</i> (Amiga — Psygnosis) <i>Super Cars II</i> (Amiga — Gremlin)	<i>Flight of the Intruder</i> (Amiga — Mirrorsoft) <i>Godfather</i> (Amiga — US Gold) <i>Reach For the Skies</i> (Amiga — Mirrorsoft)	<i>Tangram</i> (Amiga — Thalion) "It was so easy, boring and repetitive. A real bummer."	"I'd really like to see Lucasfilms do some <i>Star Wars</i> games for the Amiga."	"They're a bit poor at the moment. There seems to be loads of war games and puzzle games, which don't really thrill me. A small amount of people obviously enjoy them, but I don't think that justifies the number of these sort of games being released."
<b>TIM BOON</b> <b>C&amp;VG</b> 	<i>Sonic The Hedgehog</i> (Megadrive — Sega) <i>John Madden's Football</i> (Megadrive — EA) <i>Super Mario World</i> (Super Famicom — Nintendo)	<i>Super R Type</i> (Super Famicom — Irem) <i>Super Ghouls and Ghosts</i> (Super Famicom — Capcom) <i>Ice Hockey</i> (Megadrive — EA)	<i>Navy Seals</i> (Ocean) "It was truly dreadful. Hopefully, it will sink back where it belongs."	"A rule the world game where you get to play a real megalomaniac. It would start off in a bedsit in Tooting and contain a bit of shoot 'em up and arcade action. There'd also be a <i>Kick Off</i> sub-game."	"There seems to be fewer and fewer genuinely innovative ideas coming through on the home computer formats. A lot of developers are putting their time and money into consoles and to a large degree, the computer games are just bread and butter titles. Obviously there are exceptions, but most new ideas are on cartridge."
<b>ROD LAWTON</b> <b>Amstrad Action</b> 	<i>Switch Blade</i> (CPC cartridge — Gremlin) <i>Turrican II</i> (CPC tape/disk — Rainbow Arts) <i>Robocop II</i> (CPC cartridge — Ocean)	<i>3D Construction Kit</i> (CPC — Domark) <i>Final Fight</i> (CPC - US Gold) <i>Alien Storm</i> (CPC — US Gold)	<i>Tin Tin on the Moon</i> (cartridge) from Infogrames "I thought it would be really good on cartridge, but, in fact, it was rubbish."	"A decent cross between a role playing and arcade game. <i>Heroquest</i> came pretty close, but the arcade element wasn't up to scratch."	"On 16-bit quality is generally high, but on 8-bit it's a really mixed bag. There's some really duff full-price stuff coming out, yet alongside that, are some really good products. The programmers are still finding new ideas, which is reassuring."
<b>DAMIAN NOONAN</b> <b>Amiga Format</b> 	<i>Lemmings</i> (Amiga — Psygnosis) <i>The Secret of Monkey Island</i> (Amiga — US Gold) <i>PGA Tour Golf</i> (Amiga — EA)	<i>The Secret of Monkey Island II</i> (Amiga — US Gold) <i>First Samurai</i> (Amiga — Mirrorsoft) "The new one from Assembly Line, which is top secret."	<i>Champions of the Raj</i> (Mirrorsoft) "Let's just say it was a deep shame."	"A really good motorbike simulator. A lot of people have tried, but nothing has really captured the feel of actually riding a bike."	"I think they're really getting better lately, and there's a heck of a lot of good stuff around. It's just a shame that some people still put product out that isn't adequate. I wish they'd confess to themselves when something is not up to scratch."
<b>CIARAN BRENNAN</b> <b>The One (ST and Amiga)</b> 	<i>Lemmings</i> (Amiga/ST — Psygnosis) <i>F15 Strike Eagle II</i> (Amiga/ST — MicroProse) <i>The Secret of Monkey Island</i> (Amiga and ST — U.S. Gold)	<i>Populous II</i> (Amiga/ST — EA) <i>Graham Gooch's World Class Cricket</i> (Amiga/ST — Audiogenic) <i>AMOS Compiler</i> (Amiga — Europress Software)	<i>Tetris</i> (Amiga and ST) re-released through Infogrames. "It was shit. A ghastly, unplayable, travesty of an injustice of a miscarried abortion."	" <i>Arsenal FC — The Computer Game</i> . The arcade part of the game would be to score and concede as few goals as possible — and the strategy would be to single-handedly destroy the game of football in England as we know it."	"I think the disk based software industry had better take a long hard look at itself. It's fiddling whilst Rome is burning."
<b>JIM DOUGLAS</b> <b>ACE</b> 	<i>Super Mario World</i> (Super Famicom — Nintendo) <i>Lemmings</i> (Amiga — Psygnosis) <i>4D Sports Boxing</i> (PC — Mindscape)	<i>Robocop 3</i> (Amiga — Ocean) <i>Heimdall</i> (Amiga CD — Core) <i>Prince of Persia</i> (Gameboy — Virgin US)	<i>Champions of the Raj</i> (Amiga — Mirrorsoft) "It really was a poor effort."	"I'd like to see <i>Persian Gulf Inferno</i> crossed with <i>Impossible Mission</i> ."	"They are getting better quality-wise. The flirtation with lovely graphics and no game play seems to have passed. There's now some great looking games that are fun to play."
<b>RICHARD MONTEIRO</b> <b>Raze</b> 	<i>Sonic The Hedgehog</i> (Megadrive — Sega) <i>Lemmings</i> (Amiga — Psygnosis) <i>Bomber Man</i> (PC Engine — Hudsonsoft)	<i>Pro Soccer</i> (Super Famicom — Nintendo) <i>Super Mario Bros 3</i> (NES — Nintendo) <i>Bomber Man II</i> (NES — Hudsonsoft)	<i>Dick Tracy</i> (all formats) from Entertainment International "It was a good licence, but the game just didn't live up to expectations. In fact, it was considerably worse."	" <i>Nine and a Half Weeks</i> ."	"As far as console stuff goes, it's generally of a very high standard and a lot more playable than most 16-bit games. Consoles are pure entertainment and the games reflect that."
<b>STEVE JARRETT</b> <b>Commodore Format</b> 	<i>Exile</i> (C64) <i>Turrican II</i> (C64 — Rainbow Arts) <i>Supremacy</i> (C64 — Virgin Games)	<i>Super R Type</i> (Super Famicom — Irem) <i>Turbo Charge</i> (C64 — System 3) <i>Battle Command</i> (C64 — Ocean)	<i>Dick Tracy</i> (C64) from Entertainment International. "It only scored 11 per cent when we reviewed it. The film wasn't brilliant either."	"I'd like to see somebody really use the C64 cartridge to its full abilities, something really snazzy, like <i>Supremacy</i> with all the animation and more gameplay."	"It's reaching new heights and plummeting new depths. We're the only industry that can get away with releasing a product that isn't finished. I think that a watchdog body should be set up to check on quality. If I was to buy a car with no engine, I'd take it back, but with software, people get away with it."
<b>DAVID WILSON</b> <b>Zero</b> 	<i>Prince of Persia</i> (Amiga — Domark) <i>Chuck Yeager's Air Combat</i> (PC — EA) <i>Sonic The Hedgehog</i> (Megadrive — Sega)	<i>Powermonger</i> data disks (Amiga — EA) <i>Battle Toads</i> (NES — Trade West) <i>Godfather</i> (Amiga — US Gold)	<i>Castles</i> (Domark) "It is a good game, but having seen the idea I thought it promised a lot more and it could have gone a lot further. But, I do have a selective memory, and <i>Castles</i> is just the most recent."	"Loads and loads and loads of little people. I haven't got a Ken Dodd fetish, I mean something like <i>North and South</i> , but a lot more strategy and arcadey and loads of little people."	"It's always hard to generalise, like in most spheres of operation. A year and a half ago the industry was turning out a large percentage of games that looked brilliant but lacked gameplay. There were some exceptions, like <i>Bullfrog</i> . I now think the standard of gameplay is on the rise and I do feel quite optimistic."



29 July 1991



Dear Customer,

### Commodore 0-30 Day Returns

I am pleased to be able to confirm to you that as of 5 August 1991 we will be introducing a new system allowing ZCL to accept for exchange Commodore Product supplied by ZCL and found to be faulty up to 30 days from invoice date, subject to the product being complete and in pristine condition.

The past 6 weeks have been difficult with a seemingly uncaring Commodore and impotent distributor base appearing to ignore the pleas of their Independent Dealers. I assure you that was not the case.

Over the past 6 weeks we have met with Jeff Hitchman, the Managing Director of FMG and both Kelly Sumner and Steve Franklin of Commodore working towards a solution to your problem whilst safeguarding Commodore's position. At all times we were confident that a solution could be found but were bound by the need for total confidentiality until a new system could be agreed. In fact, on Commodore's part, the past 3 days have been almost totally devoted to a renegotiation of their FMG agreement.

This afternoon Kelly Sumner has been able to confirm to us that the new system is acceptable and we, for our part, have put our name to it. This afternoon we have spoken to NASCR reinforcing the conversation held with Kelly Sumner earlier today.

The problems of the past are now behind us and I am confident our new system will prove to be trouble free and effective.

As Commodore's partner for the past 8 years and the only solus Commodore Distributor I am pleased that we were able to play some part in resolving the problem.

During the next few days, I shall be forwarding an information pack to all of our customers showing how the new system will work.

If, in the meantime, you require any additional information, my Customer Care Department has been fully briefed, please do not hesitate to contact them.

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# THE FROG THAT BECAME A PRINCE

Considering the incredible success of *Populous*, it's no great surprise that Bullfrog has quickly become one of the best known — and sought after — developers in the UK. CHRISTINA ERSKINE examines how a firm that made its games debut with a poor Firebird game became the outfit everyone wanted to steal from EA...

Few of the leisure industry's brand names sell titles on their own, which is probably why big-name licences are fought over quite so ferociously. But of those that do, there are the Bitmaps (but then, it can only be a matter of time before Eric and the boys release *Fog on the Thames*), and in an altogether quieter manner, down in respectable Guildford, there is Bullfrog.

Bullfrog's reputation was signed, sealed and delivered when it produced *Populous* for Electronic Arts last year. Since then, it has worked hard to live up to that, a process not made easier by the fact that the Bullfrog employees are hardly production-line programmers.

Each project spends at least a year in development. They enlist local schoolchildren to drop in on Saturdays and playtest the games to death (for 1,000 hours in the case of *Populous*); even after release they look back wistfully at improvements that could have been made, hence the forthcoming releases of *Populous II* and a new scenario disk for *Powermonger*.

Still, the *World War I* disk for *Powermonger* should be released this month, *Populous II* will be ready in the autumn and there are at least three more projects in the making for release next year. Meanwhile, the *Populous* bandwagon continues to roll. Now available worldwide on 15 different formats, its enormous success on the Megadrive has given Bullfrog movie star status in Japan — and made them pretty famous in the US, too.

## Molyneux kids on the block

The route to *Populous* was a curious one. Five years ago, the Bullfrog partners Peter Molyneux and Les Edgar were writing professional software for the Amiga.

"We wanted to do games really, but there was some rumour that Commodore wasn't sending machines out to game developers. We were writing a database, called *Acquisition*, which stored pictures and sounds as well as text, says Molyneux.

Under the monicker Taurus, they saw early versions of *Acquisition* earning product awards at the US

Comdex show. "There we rather foolishly said it would be available in a few weeks. Ahem — 18 months later we finished it. By that time the Amiga was a games machine, the marketplace had changed completely, so we started up Bullfrog Productions and were able to get going on games."

The first Bullfrog product was the Amiga version of *Enlightenment* for Firebird ('It wasn't very good, I'm afraid'). Then there was *Fusion*, then *Populous* — both of which were also offered to Firebird, but rejected. Electronic Arts stepped in as publisher, and *Populous* took off.

The Bullfrog story hasn't all been fame, fortune, sweetness and light. Rumours about the state of Bullfrog's relationship with its publisher, Electronic Arts, have been rumbling through the industry for the last year.

Indeed at one point they were widely expected to join up with the Rhythm King/Bitmap venture, *Renegade*.

"I met Eric Matthews at the ECTS awards ceremony last year, and we got to know each other, and so we were talking to them while they were setting up *Renegade*.

But really we want to develop, we don't want to be publishers."

To this end, Bullfrog is on the point of signing a new contract with Electronic Arts, after some considerable renegotiation. Things appear to be sorted between the two after what Molyneux describes as "a nasty time".

Of the titles currently in the works, *Bob* takes a *Populous*-style isometric viewpoint but casts the player as a wheeler dealer in the big city; *Creation* puts you in charge of genetically engineering life forms in order to create a stabilised world, while *Populous II* puts more stress on the natural and unnatural 'events' you can use to create havoc in your kingdoms.

## Sim kind of wonderful

By far the most interesting thing about *Populous II*, however, is a feature which arose out of a meeting between Molyneux and Maxis — the team behind *Sim City* and *Sim Earth* — that demonstrates Bullfrog's concern for originality and depth in a game. Joking about how the two outfits appeared to have come up with superficially similar evolutionary games at the same time, it was suggested that they ought to take the connection further.

Consequently, *Populous II* will include a feature which enables the user to save the *Populous* environment and

load it into *Sim City* (and forthcoming sequels). You can then play *Sim City* with a *Populous*-generated world. This should also work the other way round: load a *Sim City*-city into *Populous II*. It's a fascinating idea, and surely the first time this has been done with games from two totally separate developers and publishers.

## Bullfrog is on the point of signing a new contract with Electronic Arts, after some considerable renegotiation.

Bullfrog currently concerns itself only with the Amiga, ST and PC versions of its titles — other formats are handled by third party developers. Molyneux is currently considering whether to begin writing directly for the consoles. Like just about everyone else in the industry, Molyneux is concerned that something akin to a death sentence appears to be hanging over the Amiga and ST at the moment.

"By next year, we'll be developing games actually on the PC. If you'd said to me three years ago that the PC would be the major games machine in the US and significant over here I'd have said you were mad, but if you look at the specs of PCs now — all those colours, the speed, and so on — it makes them ideal to source material on. And over there they're so cheap now."

While enthusiastic about the PC, and consoles — particularly Nintendo's Super Famicom — Molyneux is distinctly more sceptical about compact disc as a future data storage medium.

"Wonderful to have all that huge space. There are big hassles with ordinary disks in that you're coming to the end of a game, and find you've only got 3K of disk space left. But really I feel that CD at the moment is an intermediary stage; there'll be something else along in five years time.

"We're planning games around historical scenarios which would be ideal for CD-I, but to be honest, I can't see us doing a specialist CD-I game. For one thing, I worked out the other day that to do it justice, it would take our graphic artist 52 years to generate enough graphics to fill the disk."

One thing he doesn't want to do in the process, however, is expand Bullfrog much. "There are eight people employed here and it's about the right size. We could make more money if we were bigger, but you couldn't guarantee the quality would remain high."

That quality is evinced by the determined quest for original gameplay and depth within a game — "I want to develop the idea that the player is not the whole game, but taking part in an environment which continues to go on".

All that playtesting doesn't exactly hurt either.

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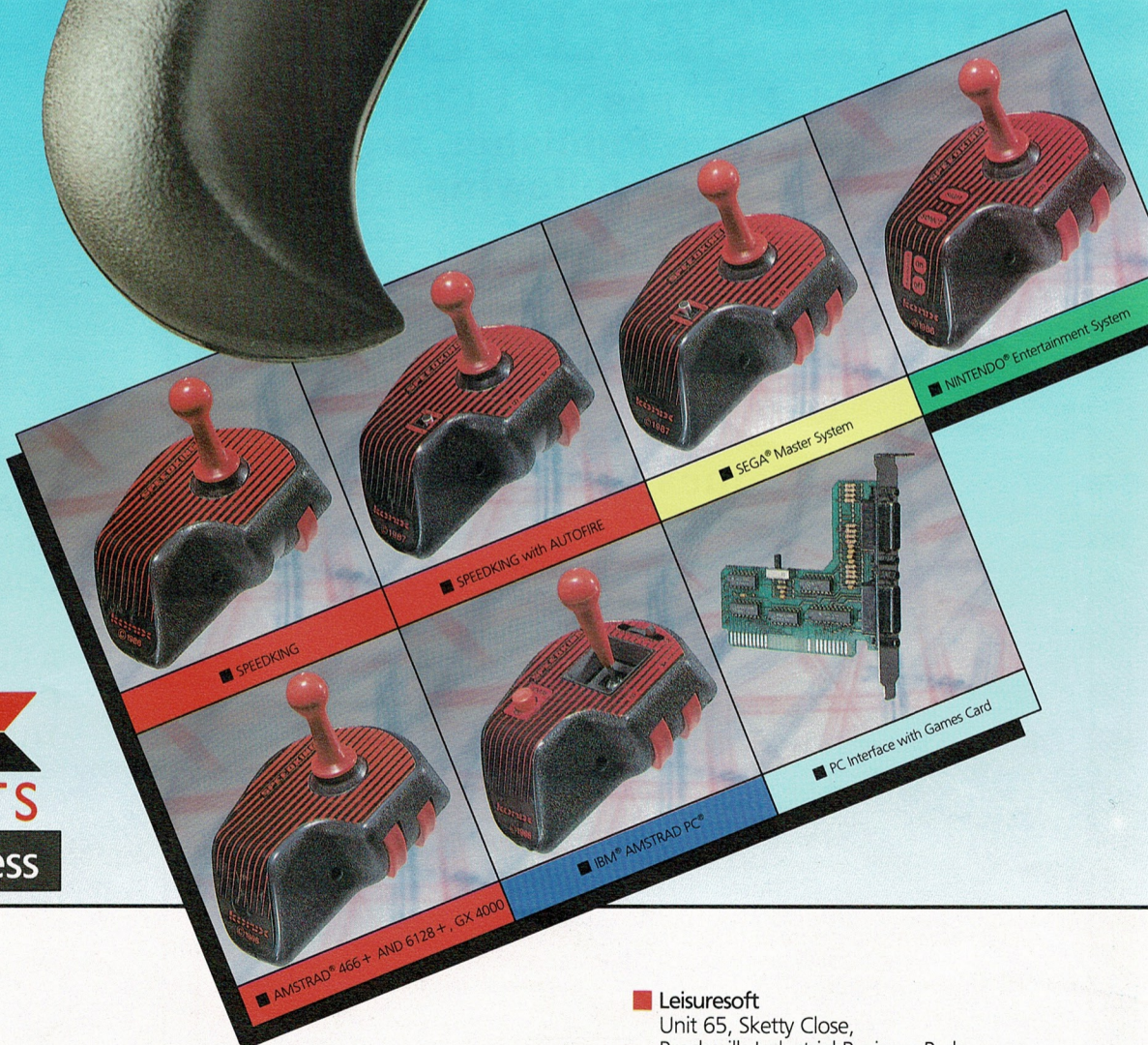
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**SPEAKER'S CORNER**

# A VIRGIN'S VIEW

Last week Nick Alexander, the new boss of Sega Europe, gave us his side of the big buyout. This week the man who sold off Virgin Mastertronic — Virgin Communications chairman **ROBERT DEVEREUX** — explains his motives and feelings...

Virgin's core business is publishing. We would define ourselves as entertainment publishers.

Our business is developing, acquiring and then marketing and selling intellectual copyrights. It's not true of absolutely all our businesses but it is essentially the basis on which the company was founded and where our experience and talents lie.

What happened at Virgin Mastertronic was that, as a result of the Sega deal, the distribution side of the business became disproportionately large and we felt that we would like to concentrate more of our resources on the publishing side.

Sega originally approached us with the idea of a joint venture which we were quite interested in.

Our original thought, however, was to make the relationship closer just by extending the contract. During discussions it became apparent that Sega really did want to be at least involved in the management of their European business and that a joint venture would actually be unacceptable.

We also took the view that in the interests of what was Virgin Mastertronic, it made sense for Sega to be involved and, because we couldn't

see a way to managing a joint venture, they then suggested that they buy the company outright.

It's the best thing for Sega's business and it suited our publishing aspirations.

We'd actually already begun to strip the publishing business out of Virgin Mastertronic, this deal enables us to take that process to its logical conclusion.

I think the people that are making the move over to Sega will now feel very comfortable because it gives them the security of knowing that five, seven, ten years from now, they'll still be managing the distribution of Sega's products, while we concentrate on the business that we believe is the heart of Virgin.

As the deal has gone through, we've also worked out a very close relationship with Sega, we're going to be a major publisher on all formats. So the relationship will continue, only we'll be supplying products to them this time.

In terms of size, before the deal, Virgin Mastertronic was just over a £100 million company. The publishing side was doing about £20 million with distribution contributing about £85 million.

The deal includes all the

Mastertronic subsidiaries, that's France, Germany, Spain and Austria. I assume that they will eventually also pull all the European countries that we didn't already handle into Virgin Mastertronic.

We were going to be taking over the other EEC countries within the next twelve months anyway and what I suspect, although I don't know for certain, is that that would now be part of their plans.

It would obviously be a plus for the management because it means that they would have total control of Europe with no holes.

### Gamblers synonymous

The risk factor that people have mentioned as a possible reason behind the sale was not really a factor for us.

For a start risk is not a concept that worries us, it's common to all of our businesses all of the time. To a certain extent you might even say that Virgin thrives on risks.

Also, we had the business running so well, so smoothly, that the working capital requirement had probably peaked, other than short term, seasonal fluctuations.

For instance at Christmas the expenditure will definite-

ly rise again but that investment is going into debtors of a very high quality nature, people like Woolworths, Boots and Toys R Us so it isn't a problem.

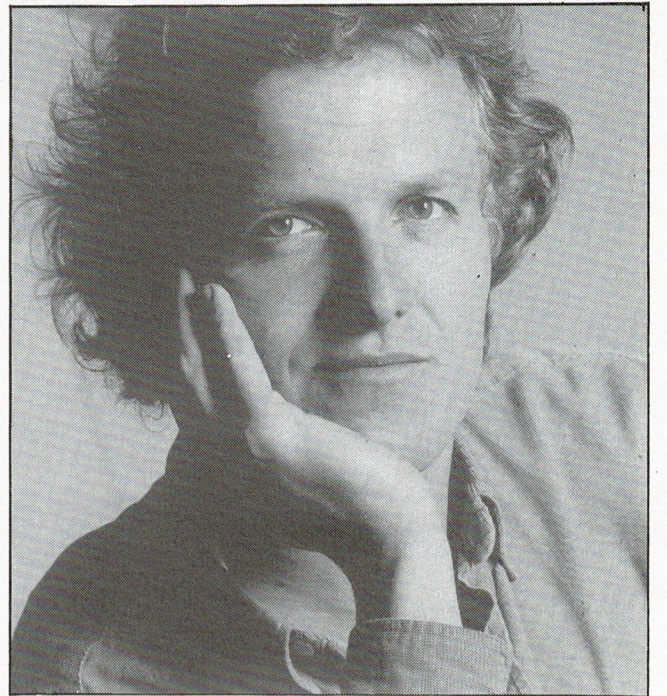
It is true that the market is getting more competitive, the business is getting bigger and the bigger you are, the further you have to fall and the harder you hit the ground.

It was, therefore, of some concern to us to be completely reliant on Sega. It is becoming too big a business not to be in complete control.

It's not that I think the market is about to collapse around our ears, far from it. We're going to be devoting pretty substantial financial resources to publishing Sega software and we wouldn't be doing that if we didn't have great faith in the market.

I've certainly got great faith in Sega's ability to continue to replace product lines because I think that what they've proved, among many other things, is that they're bloody good product developers.

It is also important to remember that Virgin is not temperamentally a seller of businesses at all. This is probably only really the second time we've ever sold a business, the first time being Virgin Vision and I'd be



DEVEREUX: The man who sold the whirl

foolish not to say that there's always a pang when you part with a business that you spend three and a half years developing and nurturing.

But what more than compensates for that feeling is the ability it gives us to concentrate on publishing which, ultimately, for us is a much more exciting business and hopefully a more remunerative one.

Our plans for publishing now are to continue to be an aggressive publisher on floppy disk because although it's a very mature market and it's not really growing, it's still a good market to be in.

We're also going to be considerably expanding our involvement in cartridge publishing.

We haven't got a special

deal with Sega. We've got the best deal available to publishers but with a couple of unique things added.

We'll be among the first CD-ROM publishers in Europe, the States and Japan. We'll also be the first non-Japanese Megadrive and Gamegear publisher in Japan, which means we'll be starting a Japanese publishing operation.

Initially we'll only have a very small office because we'll do a sales and distribution deal with Sega and we'll probably just have a marketing and management office — a sort of one man and a dog operation, although I wouldn't have thought product will start shipping until the end of '92.

Robert Devereux was interviewed by Stuart Dinsey

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U.S. Gold, Europe's No.1 Computer Leisure Software Publisher, urgently wishes to fill the following posts:-

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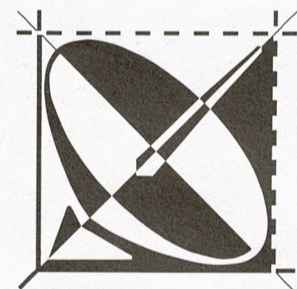
### Games Testers

To test/evaluate computer games on all common computers and cartridge machines. Applicant must have a good background knowledge of computer and cartridge software and must be able to work individually or as part of a team. Applicant would be willing to travel and work overtime at short notice. Attractive salary and excellent overtime opportunities. Ideal candidate age: 17+

### Helpline Operator

To operate and set up telephone helplines to provide general information and help to the public. A basic knowledge of computers/software/gameplaying is required along with an excellent telephone manner and lots of patience. The applicant should preferably have a driving license and must be willing to deal with a variety of customer queries. Attractive salary and overtime opportunities. Ideal candidate age: 20+

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# A LETTER FROM AMERICA



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**INFORMATION RELEASE**

Miss Patricia Tordoff,  
 Managing Director,  
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 United Kingdom.

**RE: United Kingdom Sole Distributorship.**

Pat,

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Your further orders for the M501-S Expansion and 8-UP Boards have been air freighted so once again thanks for your support and well done to all the team at ZCL.

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Joan Ward  
 President.

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# ELSPA CHARTALK

Compiled by Gallup  
on behalf of ELSPA

WEEK ENDING July 27th 1991

## MARKET SHARE BY PUBLISHER LABEL (VALUE)

PRICE CATEGORY	PUBLISHER LABEL	% UNIT SALES			
		THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	2 WKS AGO	3 WKS AGO
ALL PRICES	SEGA 8-BIT	16.7	19.9	17.0	20.7
	NINTENDO	8.8	10.9	8.7	8.4
	CODE MASTERS	6.9	5.0	6.7	5.2
	HIT SQUAD	6.4	5.9	6.1	6.3
	U.S. GOLD	6.2	6.9	6.3	6.5
	ELECTRONIC ARTS	4.7	4.1	3.3	4.1
	GREMLIN GRAPHICS	3.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
	KRISALIS	3.5	2.8	4.7	—
	KIXX	3.4	2.4	2.8	2.2
	OCEAN	3.3	4.6	4.3	4.1
	MIRRORSOFT	2.8	2.1	2.2	2.7
	VIRGIN	2.7	1.9	2.3	2.9
	PSYGNOSIS	2.6	2.1	2.1	1.9
	MIRROR IMAGE	2.3	1.8	2.0	2.8
	MICROPROSE	1.7	2.0	2.7	3.6
	MASTERTRONIC	1.6	—	1.0	1.1
	D & H GAMES	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.4
	ALTERNATIVE	1.1	1.0	1.0	—
	ANCO	1.1	1.7	1.4	1.6
	DOMARK	1.0	2.2	1.7	1.9
EUROPRESS S/WARE	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	
ATARI	1.0	1.1	—	—	
MINDSCAPE	1.0	1.3	1.0	—	
HITEC SOFTWARE	—	—	—	1.0	
ACTIVISION	—	1.6	—	—	
DIGITAL INTEGRATION	—	—	1.3	—	

NB. Shares shown thus '—' are below the published cut-off point of 1.0 per cent.

## TOP 30 BY INDIVIDUAL MACHINE FORMAT

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	MC	PUBLISHER LABEL
1	1	1	MAN. UNITED EUROPE	AG	KRISALIS
2	5	5	MAN. UNITED EUROPE	CO	KRISALIS
3	14	14	MAN. UNITED EUROPE	SP	KRISALIS
4	4	4	PGAGOLF TOUR	AG	ELECTRONIC ARTS
5	16	16	EYE OF THE BEHOLDER	AG	U.S. GOLD
6	8	8	HEROQUEST	CO	GREMLIN
7	6	6	MONKEY ISLAND	AG	U.S. GOLD
8	2	2	F15 STRIKE EAGLE 2	AG	MICROPROSE
9	39	39	DIZZY COLLECTION	SP	CODE MASTERS
10	15	15	HEROQUEST	SP	GREMLIN
11	7	7	LEMMINGS	AG	PSYGNOSIS
12	25	25	ARMOUR-GEDDON	AG	PSYGNOSIS
13	19	19	TEEN MUT HEROTURTLES	SP	MIRRORSOFT
14	18	18	DIZZY COLLECTION	CO	CODE MASTERS
15	—	—	SUPREMACY	CO	VIRGIN
16	—	—	MULTIPLAYERSOC. MAN.	CO	D&H GAMES
17	33	33	MAN. UNITED EUROPE	ST	KRISALIS
18	—	—	CREATURES	CO	THALAMUS
19	3	3	FLAMES OF FREEDOM	ST	RAINBIRD
20	9	9	SWITCH BLADE 2	AG	GREMLIN
21	—	—	GODS	AG	RENEGADE
22	—	—	HEROQUEST	AG	GREMLIN
23	12	12	SUPERCARS 2	AG	GREMLIN
24	30	30	BIG BOX	CO	BEAU JOLLY
25	—	—	GODS	ST	RENEGADE
26	—	—	INTERCEPTOR	AG	ELECTRONIC ARTS
27	—	—	DIZZY COLLECTION	AM	CODE MASTERS
28	—	—	F16 COMBAT PILOT	SP	DIGITAL INT.
29	—	—	HEROQUEST	ST	GREMLIN
30	—	—	RAILROAD TYCOON	AG	MICROPROSE

KEY: AG — Commodore Amiga; AM — Amstrad; CO — Commodore C64; SP — Spectrum

All Gallup software charts are the copyright of ELSPA from April 1st 1990. The charts published weekly in CTW are extracts from 'CHARTALK' which is compiled in report form both weekly and monthly by Gallup on behalf of ELSPA. There are 22 charts in 'CHARTALK' covering all formats, pricepoints and with market share statistics. 'CHARTALK' is available from the general secretary at ELSPA on 0836 830642/831223 — or write to him at Arden Mill, North Littleton, near Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 5QP.

### R-TYPE II (£25.99) HUNTER (£29.99)

Activision  
ST and Amiga

Activision UK's unfortunate demise in this country appears to have had little effect on the quality of kit which new landlord The Disc Company is putting out. The aforementioned games are nicely pitched to specific gamers, and dealers should suffer few problems shifting packages.

Take *R-Type II*, ostensibly the follow-up to the enormously successful original, but, remarkably, almost exactly the same game all over again. This of course is to everyone's advantage, because the secret of a good sequel is not to make a sequel at all, but to stick to the formula which worked in the first place.

Thus we are presented with different bad guys, and brighter colours, but there's been precious little that will upset notoriously traditionalist buyers or indeed games reviewers. *Zero*, *Amiga Format*, and *Amiga Power* all lavished 88 per cent and there was much huffing and puffing about the quality of the arcade conversion in all sectors of the press.

Reviewers aside, it's plain and obvious that in profile terms *R-Type II* can hardly be surpassed, and the 'kill all aliens' brigade will be suitably satisfied.

A more subtle but just as impressive piece of software has to be *Hunter*, a 'huge' three-dimensional journey which is bound to appeal to your friend and mine the 'cerebral' gamer. This has been welcomed by the press here and on the continent, although most seem to have been surprised that the game should be good. Thus magazine covers have not been kind to *Hunter*, and therefore consumer awareness is not what it might be. All reviewers were hovering around the 90 per cent mark, so selling *Hunter* won't be too much of a problem if you can find some consumers who are into 3D-ness.

Mind you, the disappointing performance of US Gold's *Cybercon III* (despite grovelling reviews all over the place)

seems to suggest that all this exploration and interaction stuff is losing its appeal

### SINBAD (£9.99) CONFLICT EUROPE (£9.99)

Mirror Image  
ST and Amiga

Anyone with sufficient resilience to keep an eye on the 16-bit budget scene can hardly fail to be impressed with Mirrorsoft's release policy, which seems to have delivered nothing but winners. Every month we're presented with two games which, without fail, are kicking around in the charts almost immediately.

I can't help feeling that the Nintendo-like policy of only releasing high profile games amongst gamers who've all too often been presented with the most trite rubbish imaginable. *Sinbad* and *Conflict Europe* are certainly not in the same league as *Xenon II* and *Defender of the Crown*, but 'on-the-shelf' promo boxes highlighting the new games will pull them through.

*Conflict Europe* is a standard war game much beloved of lovers of, well, standard wargames. As for *Sinbad*, well it's one of those Cinemaware 'interactive movies' which, implausibly, always scores well with a mixture of limited gameplay, tasty graphics and delicious packaging.

High perceived value is most certainly the key here, especially when you compare these games with certain re-releases of desperately poor games by publishers who've sacrificed brand loyalty for quick returns. When these sorry attempts poke their heads into the high echelons of the of the charts (for short periods) one can't help feeling that the consumer isn't as smart as we pretend.

### Nice move Ocean

Only a fool would deny that *The Simpsons* is anything short of a gift from heaven. It promises guaranteed high sales, super-high profile, and it's actually rather a good game to boot.

I can imagine, therefore, that some dealers would find the game's appearance in Commodore's *Cartoon Capers* pack something of a problem, especially given that the

'street' release date is quite a few weeks away.

But those nauseous creeps who would crack this baby and have it sold extensively all over the country have a problem. Since the game is only being sold with new Amigas, it only needs to work with new Amigas (or at least those which are under a year or so old). So, vicious privateers who would deny us the easy money of a *Simpsons* game have their work cut out for them.

I can't imagine that Ocean would not have taken this precaution, but it's worth considering the rage you'd feel if some brat boasts that he's managed to get hold of a pirated copy well before the release date. Okay, so some sad git will find a way around Ocean's pragmatic approach to a tricky problem, but in terms of damage limitation, it's hard not to feel quite smug...

### THE EXECUTIONER (£25.99)

Hawk/Impressions  
Amiga

It's always worth making shelf-space for the small independent publishers of whom Impressions must count as one of the most influential. Programming team Hawk, something of an unknown entity, has been signed up with this *Thrust* style arcade adventure. In fact, the *Thrust* tag is proving to be a bit of a pain since this is really rather more than just your bog-standard shoot-'em-up.

There've been previews aplenty in various magazines, but no hard-core reviews. Ad-spend is likely to be minimalistic and, as for Point-Of-Sale, well, forget it. Even so, there are demos available through distributors. If you can be bothered to boot up games like this for your customers' delectation, you could be in for some welcome dividends. It's a nastily addictive little number which should make some headway in the charts.

Bear in mind that the ridiculously small Team 17 is currently sitting astride 16-bit charts with a plain old fashioned martial arts affair, proving the old adage that size isn't everything.

Colin Campbell is deputy editor for *Future Publishing's Amiga Power* consumer monthly.

## CALLING ALL PR TYPES

What with release dates slipping around in their usually insane fashion it becomes kind of tough to align coverage with those all-important shipping dates.

So, if you've a definite release date on any full-price, budget or whatever else kit, give me a buzz, and I'll supply the usual column inches. A week or so either side of the CTW cover date will suit thee and me, so just call Colin Campbell on 0225 442244 for a mention.

All product, however, should be sent both to me at Bath (Future's address) and to CTW at the BTC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage Herts. SG1 2DX.



THE INDEPENDENT

# DOA UNTO OTHERS...

There really was only one topic that STUART GARRETT could talk about this week, Commodore's new DOA policy. But instead of ranting he points out a glimmer of hope shining at the very top of Commodore's UK management team and, as it turns out, he may well have been right...

People who write weekly columns contend with two Ds — a deadline and a delay.

Deadlines are unavoidable. They're when columns must be finished and passed to the editor.

Delays are inevitable. They're the interval between the deadline and the column appearing in print.

Deadlines and delays are linked. This column's deadline produces a delay of around a week between the time it's written and the time you read it. That's why up to the minute news is something that most columns don't have.

It's especially true in our industry. If a week in politics is a long time, a week in the computer business is an eternity, in which a lot can happen.

Which brings us to Commodore UK and their new and now notorious returns policy. In spite of denials, Commodore may be feeling increasingly beleaguered up there on The Switchback in Maidenhead.

I can't honestly remember a major industry row raging on for quite as long as the fury, disillusionment, sorrow and sadness produced by CBM's unilateral policy

change.

Nor can I remember so many valid and logical points raised in reasonable rebuttal of Commodore's directives. And it's there we find the glimmer of light which may possibly be at the end of the tunnel.

So, for the moment let's forget the unfortunate Kelly Sumner who has been at the forefront of the announcements so far. His calculator is a demonstrable dud.

The real hope lies with Commodore UK boss, Steve Franklin.

Though he must have approved the policy change at least, and probably played a major role in putting it together, Franklin has a key strength which other computer supremos could copy.

For all his colourful command of salty Anglo Saxon, Steve Franklin does listen. Even more important, he'll change his mind if he becomes convinced a proposed plan is fatally flawed.

Shouts, screams and ultimata will leave Steve Franklin monumentally unmoved or even invoke an effect opposite to that desired. Reasoned and logical argument, on the other hand, has been known to produce

changes.

Which, of course, is probably why Steve Franklin is where he is.

Among all the fuss and fury hurled at Commodore, there has been a lot of reasoned and logical argument laid on the line. Franklin will have read it or heard it and will certainly have considered it.

That's why I think there might be changes in the current Commodore policy. Indeed, with the week's delay between writing this and you reading it, they may already have happened.

I hope so for the good of Commodore, its products, its people and all its honest dealers.

And if changes are made, don't forget where you saw the prediction.

## A load of old testimonials

Virgin Mastertronic has been sending out dealer mail-shots for months now, using quotes from a column I wrote last February.

That's why I now understand how a theatre critic feels when he spots a poster praising a play with a quote over his name which somehow misses his original meaning.

For instance a theatre marquee might proclaim: "Awesome. Don't miss it — Peter Plonk, *Evening Star*." The puzzled Plonk peers at this, doesn't remember writing any such thing and hurries to check his original copy.

His full text reads: "This play is so dreadful it's awesome and if you're searching for total boredom, don't miss it."

But what's the connection with Virgin Mastertronic? Last February I got very irritable in this column with one of the UK's biggest software distributors.

There were various reasons but one was the apparent non-availability for weeks or even months of titles which otherwise would sell steadily.

I singled out Virgin Mastertronic's Infocom adventures, described my frustration at being unable to get all of them across the various formats and blamed the distributor.

Within hours of the column appearing, such is CTW's penetration power, I got a series of agonised calls from ascending layers of the distributor's management.

"It's not our fault," they grittily rasped. "It's the Virgin



FRANKLIN: A beacon of hope in Commodore's d(o)arkest hour

Mastertronic lot. Either they don't have stock at all or they do but don't deliver." And apparently this was true.

It didn't, however, stop Virgin Mastertronic from having the brass neck to lift bits of our column for use in UK dealer mail shots.

"Buy any six Infocom titles and get another one free!" trumpeted Branson's boys over selected quotes from me suggesting instant availability of everything.

Not content with that, they've recently done it all again, still with my quotes and still with stock availability that even the most generous would describe as pathetic.

So now here's a stricture for Virgin Mastertronic — there's copyright on this column's content and without permission you're precluded from using any of it to sell your products.

But we've no wish to seem mean, so here's a free quote for Virgin Mastertronic. It is welcome to attribute and use it in full for publicity at any time.

"Short-sightedness gets a whole new meaning when Virgin Mastertronic promotes popular products they can't, don't or won't supply and take no trouble to get."

Now, let's see how many dealer mail shots that appears in shall we?



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Week 135

# The Release Schedule

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FIRST LETTERS	7.99	AUGUST 8	...RAINBOW EDUCATION
FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER	30.99	OUT NOW	...SPEC. HOLOBYTE
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**SPEAKEASY**

**The last post... well, hopefully**

I involve myself reluctantly with the storm which brews. I laugh at Commodore's advertising on page 5 of July 22nd's CTW — "Commodore looks forward to meeting suppliers and customers". Pull the other one.

Last year, I supplied Commodore kit. Now that we have a separate retail section, I thankfully no longer have to get involved. I supply commercial systems instead, which have their own problems, but none as pathetic as those created by Commodore. However, I might remind readers of a gentleman named Sugar. Mr Sugar, as you will undoubtedly recall, was almost singlehandedly responsible for the wreckage of the prospects of virtually all small computer retailers looking to involve themselves with commercial systems. Does no one remember that before the sensible resellers rejected Amstrad product as unfit for the purposes which might be expected of it, the dealer not only had to pay for the return of faulty parts to Amstrad — but *actually had to carry out the repair!*

Let us be thankful that Mr Sugar's company remains profitable, for were it otherwise, he may be sitting on the board at Commodore. Then where would all you Commodore retailers be? Poking around on Amiga motherboards with soldering irons, no doubt, trying to wrest Fat Angus and his relatives from respective places on dead machines.

The problem is much, much, more fundamental than anybody has yet appreciated. The problem is that *retailing* capital equipment is inefficient. End-users are often introduced to a product by a retailer, but the costs of retailer are so high that margins must be maintained if the standards of service that are expected by the average citizen are to be delivered.

The UK market is price led. As a result, a consumer will purchase a product from the trader apparently offering the "best deal", which frequently means that the firm which invested the money in providing a retail outlet loses to the mail-order company.

Could our (highly underpaid) legal department reply to the letter (CTW July 22nd 1991) from Mr John Dollery from Computerbase. Mr Dollery expressed the opinion that Commodore's highly paid lawyers would confirm that Mr Dollery was "entitled to receive new product when ordering from a supplier. That is common English law, a basic right of any retailer, and enforceable in court".

Mr Dollery has a very sensible and reasonable opinion, but we think that (as so frequently happens) the law is not what a sensible person would expect. Our opinion is that a retailer is not (*unless the contract of sale says otherwise*) entitled to new product. However the retailer is entitled to expect that the product supplied is (*unless the contract of sale says otherwise*) of saleable quality. This is unlikely to imply that the product (1) works, and (2) is in such condition

The retail outlet cannot charge a customer for simply looking at a product, and cannot recover its costs. This is not appreciated by Joe Bloggs. Chain stores, of course, have appreciably higher margins than sole traders.

A shop is a free advertisement for a manufacturer and their products. The solution is for manufacturers to carry out research into the part played by resellers, retail or otherwise, in persuading a customer to part with his or her money, irrespective of whether that firm actually realises the sale. If the result shows a firm to work to the benefit of the manufacturer, they should be paid a fee. If they do not, the firm should consider moving into another market. Unfortunately, such research is prohibitively expensive and difficult. The net result could be retailers competing for a share of advertising money as well as well as a share of the market — increased cost on the one hand, but improved merchandising of the product on the other.

In the mean-time, the aftermath of Thatcherism, particularly the Tebbit "on our bike" attitude continues to result in lack of management ability in small firms. Traders underestimate their costs, and bludgeon each other to bankruptcy. The multiples, meanwhile, just spend more on advertising, and get their money back in increased margins from frightened manufacturers seeing their dealer bases rapidly going out of business.

My advice to Commodore? Have you compared your new warranty policy to that of Atari? My advice to annoyed retailers? Don't write to CTW or the NASCR — write to your regional sales manager at SDL or Bonsai. You are *their* customers, and *they* are Commodore's.

What do you suppose might happen if Tony Deane or Loretta Cohen told Commodore where to put their products? A damned sight more than anything Clive Bishop could cause, I can tell you.

**Darren Reynolds  
Comtech Blackburn**

that the retailer's customers are reasonably likely to buy it.

Purely as nosey bystanders (we have never had anything to do with Commodore), it sounds like Commodore are doing nobody any good. Just because our own legal department, who eat crushed glass (raw) for breakfast, can crucify people in court, it doesn't mean that this is always good business sense. It does us no good to screw someone out of hundreds of pounds now, if the long-term result is to lose a customer worth thousands of pounds.

Incidentally, our legal department are always pleased to express an opinion (free, and worth every penny) on any topical matter which your readers submit to you.

**Yours sincerely  
John W. Baggs  
Foreshore Software  
Southampton**

This is an open letter to Mr. Kelly Sumner, Commodore Business Machines: Dear Kelly,

As you know, I have given Commodore whole hearted support right from the day the VIC 20 was introduced. I even supported you to the hilt in the dark days of the C16 when the fortunes of Commodore were rock bottom. Our shop has given Commodore whole hearted backing even though half the machines actually lose us money.

Your new policy on DOA is nothing but catastrophic. It penalises us for your incompetence in producing defect free goods. From today our shop will not stock any of the Commodore products until this arrogant policy is withdrawn.

Mr. Sumner, please remember if you call time for us the countdown has started for you as well.

**Yours sincerely,  
Anil Gupta  
Anco Marketing  
Dartford**

*p.s. I feel very strongly about this subject. Our shop is really suffering. FMG have four of our machines and the repair takes a long time. I feel we are being asked to finance Commodore and our customers are getting very, very unpleasant to us.*

**Who could ever forget?**

You asked (CTW, July 15th) for any other licensed personalities to add to your list. Here are a few that come to mind:

**Sport**  
Alex Higgins Amsoft  
Greg Norman Gremlin  
Glen Hoddle Amsoft  
Bobby Charlton Stack (?) \*1  
Eric Bristow Argus/Quicksilva

**Showbiz**  
The Beatles Number9 Software  
Roland Rat Ocean  
Max Headroom Argus  
Benny Hill DK'Tronics  
Dr Who Micro Power

**Why?**  
Eddie Kidd Martech

**Public Figures**  
Sir Clive Sinclair Scorpio, also Micromega  
Princess Diana Bad Taste Software \*2  
Denis Thatcher Gilsoft \*3

**Or Do They?**  
Sherlock Holmes Melbourne House, also  
Don Juan Datasoft  
Frankenstein Oric(?)  
Bride of Frankenstein CRL  
King Arthur Ariolasoft  
King Arthur Level 9 \*4

The following don't strictly count either, but you did ask for embarrassing examples:

JCB diggers Acornsoft  
Wimpy Hamburgers Ocean  
V Ocean  
The Archers Mosaic  
Tubular Bells CRL \*5  
Transatlantic Balloon Challenge Virgin \*6

- \*1. BBC game circa 1984-85
- \*2. Not exactly a licence: a highly unfunny number called, I think, *Di's Baby*.
- \*3. Thinly-disguised spoof called *Denis Through the Drinking Glass*. At least I think it was supposed to be Denis Thatcher.
- \*4. Also Hill McGibbon, and Lancelot and the Holy Grail have also been in games.
- \*5. Particularly pointless CRL release.
- \*6. Surely a Richard Branson licence by any other name.

**Christina Erskine  
Finchley  
London**

Here's some titles missing from 'Names That Thrilled The Games World' (CTW, July 15th):

Greg Norman Gremlin  
Alex Ferguson Krisalis  
Janghahir Khan Krisalis  
Bodo Illgner Empire  
Emilio Butrageno Gremlin  
John Elway Virgin  
John Lowe Gremlin  
Tommy Lasorda Sega  
Sherlock Holmes NEC  
King Arthur Sierra On-Line  
Bronski Beat CRL  
James Bond Domark  
William Tell All Saints Development  
Jeanne d'Arc Rainbow Arts  
Buffalo Bill Tynesoft

That's it for the moment  
**Cheers  
Manfred Kleimann  
Aktueller Software Markt (ASM)  
Eschwege  
Germany**

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**EMAP/Blenheim**

*Continued from front page*

November or December most of the crucial trade deals have already been signed."

Blenheim's exhibitions director John Murray commented to CTW: "Back in April we had no thought of doing an autumn event but a significant number of people said to us that what they really wanted was a trade show in September and they wanted us to run it."

"People don't seem to want a consumer show, and anyway, there's no reason why a trade show can't raise the profile of the industry by attracting widespread press coverage."

"Next year people will have to look at the history of the two firms, the concept of the shows, whether or not promises will be delivered and whether or not the organisation will be professional."

"Then, let the market decide."

"I also think that as far as this year goes, if EMAP is changing its plans in '92, then it raises a lot of question marks. It means that they are running a show in September that they don't believe in."

Wood retorted: "I wouldn't lie and say it's been the easiest ride we've ever had but we're certainly not saying it's not going to work."

"I know it's going to work, we just think we can make it work better next year."

**Tecnoplus**

*Continued from front page*

Only two will be in the Professional bracket (the other being a sound card about which no details are yet being offered), but Leisuresoft is promising that the range will be quickly expanded.

Tecnoplus product manager Dave Askew told CTW: "The range has been going for two years now and it's got to the stage where we need to move it into the next league."

"The idea is to create separate markets between the more mature PC user and the whizzier, ST and Amiga games players."

"The idea is also to make Tecnoplus be seen as a separate division within Leisuresoft. We believe that we'll be the leading player in the peripherals market."

**C64GS dead**

*Continued from front page*

are much stronger," explained Commodore's UK boss Steve Franklin.

"It has shown that Commodore is looked upon as a little more upmarket home entertainment company than a console manufacturer."

Franklin believes that the C64GS was ultimately doomed to failure because it "hasn't got a dictatorial attitude about software". He argues that because Commodore didn't control its own software it had to "live or die on the sale of hardware" and, thus, simply could not afford to bring the machine down to a price-point such as £49.99, where it might have stood a chance.

Commodore does believe, however, that the C64GS worked in its favour because of the efforts that began last autumn in convincing publishers to write C64 games on cartridge.

**Video body aims for rental accord**

**The Video Trade Association announced last week that it is hoping to set up an authorised console software rental system for video dealers.**

It told CTW last week that it is well aware that an increasing number of video stores are turning to software rental — particularly on Nintendo and Sega machines.

Following discussions with games trade body ELSPA, it is now also aware that the trend is causing a

deal of concern amongst UK games retailers, who feel that rental might be damaging to their business.

Also, renting is illegal without the permission of the software publisher, and Nintendo and Sega themselves have both stated publicly that they are not willing to give that permission. No legal action is understood to have been taken as yet, but the whole issue is reaching a critical stage.

VTA chairman Derek Mann hopes that a solution can be found to the current problems, with agreed

guidelines being introduced for rental stores.

"Our experience is that the growth of a rental market does not harm the sales market. Indeed, with video it was rental that increased sales — people got to like what they were renting and then bought it. I believe that there is a similar argument to be had on games," he remarked.

Mann believes that console publishers will find it difficult to uphold their rental copyright retrospectively on games already published.

He does accept, however, that new games could carry

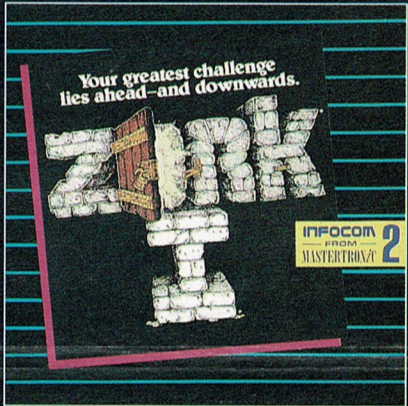
a notice that rental is prohibited — but, even then, policing those who ignore the warning will be difficult.

Thus, Mann wants to discuss with ELSPA, Nintendo and Sega the possibility of a system where some rental outlets may be allowed to rent — possibly with them paying a higher price for the software.

"This is obviously a grey area that needs to be sorted out and regularised. We need to sit down calmly and agree a structure in the best interests of all retailers and manufacturers."



MANN: Peace maker



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