CTW

**4-7-88** BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY **ISSUE 193**

US Gold changes

US Gold is shortly set to announce a significant change to its trading terms.

Full details were presented to the leading distributors last week. As yet, nothing is being released officially until Gold has had a chance to explain the full implications to dealers.

In part, the new agreement features a change to distributors' first and second day ordering, resulting in a five per cent differential for the earlier order. Distributors were still pondering the ramifications of the proposals when contacted by *CTW* last week, and none was in a position to say whether or not the
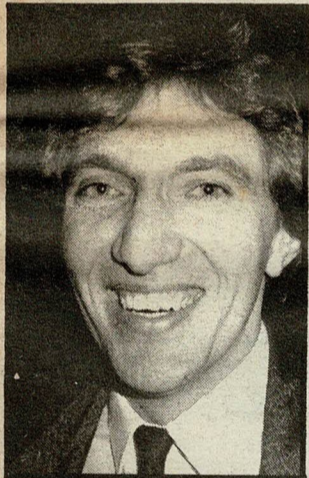
CHANEY: Changes due

INSIDE:

ST INDEX
ST World's Ian Tindale weighs up the advantages of Atari's machine in the business environment. He argues that PC buyers have a lack of imagination, or are subscribing to old fashioned ideas. But is the ST a serious contender? **8**

BUSINESS UNUSUAL
All sectors of the trade pitch in with *their* views as to the importance of the ST as a business machine. Publishers, distributors and Atari all have their say. *CTW* listens in ... **10**

MOANSOFT
Some have been complaining about the state of clonesoft, but most are finding pessimistic market research a little hard to swallow. Despite all the waffle, the likes of Amstrad and Sagesoft are still making a killing. *CTW* asks the dealers for some streetwise opinions **12**

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT
The final part in a series on direct selling. Here the pitfalls are examined along with some useful tips for anyone contemplating going it alone **14**

Hart breaks CBM link

Commodore's operations director and its nearest to a company veteran Tom Hart resigned last week to join Unisys.

His departure has prompted a high level shuffling at the firm which results in managing director Steve Franklin now adding sales responsibility to his overall brief. Hart is being replaced by the erstwhile sales chief Jim Housego.

Commenting on his leaving after ten years with the firm, Hart stressed that it was all entirely amicable. Essentially, his pitch is that he was approached by Unisys at a time when Commodore had regained much of its strength and that his departure will thus cause less disruption than it would have done two years ago.

"I'm leaving under the very best possible circumstances

HART-STOPPER: Leaving Commodore

and everyone's made it clear that I'd be welcomed back at any time. It's all very emotional leaving a company after ten years, and it may seem strange to be going at a time when there are a lot of exciting things happening at Com-

modore. But there's a lot of momentum at the firm now and it's really in a position for major growth. I think that I've left a sufficient number of good things in place," he said.

For much of the last year since Franklin joined in June 1987, Hart has been in charge of warranty and service, technical support, warehousing/ physical distribution and the newly-implemented quality control system.

He previously headed up the overall sales division, and that switch prompted continuing speculation that he was not happy at the firm.

"That's not true at all. The move was made with my support, just as the decision to leave Commodore was mine. But I'd then had three years as a salesman and you can see from the position I've taken at Unisys (operations director for indirect channels) that I'm not really a salesman."

Unlike many other erstwhile

UK landing planned by Mindscape

In the wake of its UK stock market flotation at the end of last month Mindscape has announced its intention to set up in the UK.
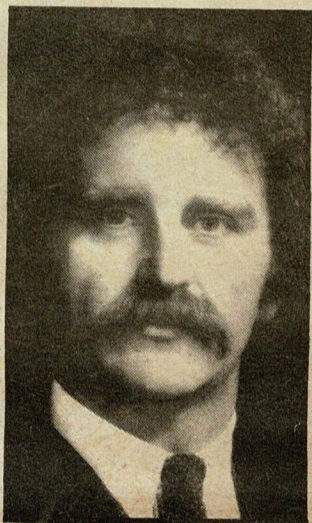
BUOY: UK launch

Money raised from the flotation is funding the next phase of Mindscape's activities, the major thrust of which will be a London office opened in October. Initial products will be displayed at the PC Show in September.

The Illinois based publisher has not been touting its products in Europe for at least a year now, fuelling industry suggestions that an independent operation would be forthcoming.

In the past Mindscape has been represented by agent Barry Freidman. Publishers handling its products include US Gold (*Superstar Table Tennis*), Advance (*Indoor Sports*),

Epson lines up TV splash

Epson is planning a £2 million TV ad campaign this autumn to bolster its PC sales.

The news follows latest research from Romtec which shows that its XT sales have been improving sharply. In this sector it was the fifth largest shipper of machines — not including direct sales — during April.

Epson's last TV campaign was in autumn 1986 and featured science personality Heinz Wolff variously talking up products and eating an ice-cream. It cost around £1 million. There are few details as yet on Epson's 1988 pitch, although it seems unlikely that Wolff will be used again.

UK corporate communications manager Edward Huggins told *CTW* that the ads will feature both printers and

PCs with a concentration on the latter. "They will demonstrate Epson as a brand range, proving that we're not just a printer provider."

Epson is currently shifting 3-4,000 PCs a month and, according to Romtec, it has a five per cent share of the XT market. Until fairly recently this has been nearer two per cent.

"It's been a long slog but we've got good products. You

will see IBM's share eroding more and Amstrad's growth stabilising. We're ultimately trying to take 10 per cent of the market."

Epson confirmed price increases ranging from £100-200 (*CTW June 13th*) across its full range at last week's *PC User* show. These were to compensate for "substantial performance improvements" with each model running up to 75 per cent faster.

PC User '88: few thrills

Having come dressed for a wake, the firms that *did* appear at last week's *PC User* Show emerged confident of its worth.

It was far from buzzing and even further from January's *Which?* Show, but several major exhibitors were giving strong verbal support after just the first morning.

This was much to the dismay of the hoardes of journalists who had turned up hoping to witness *User's* slow lingering death. Organiser EMAP Exhibitions even had the cheek to announce that the number of first day visitors had risen.

The show will be boosted next year by a sponsorship deal with the *Daily Telegraph*. It is not clear if any money was paid by the paper, but commitments on publicity for both sides have been pledged.

"I don't know where all the criticism has come from. It's all a bit pathetic considering that the show's doing well. Bookings are up on last year already," commented EMAP's Anne Roberds to *CTW*.

The major disappointment of the show was that there was no major launch by any exhibitor. Critics also cited that the firms that had turned up were only having a good show because there were few competitors fighting for attention.

Borland's stand received particular interest, with the unveiling of *Sprint* and *Paradox OS/2*, along with many well attended theatre presentations.

PC User '88: The show goes on

Disk drought 'nonsense'

DB Enterprises boss Barry Krite has fulminated against notions that there is a shortage of 3.5 inch disks (*CTW 27th June*).

He says that various distributors' talk of a shortage of bulk disks is "nonsense" claiming to have stocks which he can't sell.

"I bought 20,000 unmarked Fuji disks because I was told that there was a shortage," he said. "But I can't sell them. People want to pay next to nothing for disks."

Talk has been bandied around the industry that bulk prices are rising rapidly due to the boom in demand for unbranded 3.5 inch disks. One distributor claimed to be absorbing price increases of

Nintendo shrugs at rivals' doubts

Nintendo is stressing that its still slow start in the UK is more due to its long term strategy than to any doubts about its assault on the British market.

In recent weeks, tongues have been wagging that Nintendo appears to be holding off in its sales and marketing plans in this country. Sources cite a desire to concentrate on its hugely lucrative US business — at a time of apparent shortages and the increasing strength of rivals Atari and Sega — as the reason.

Not so according to a bullish Nintendo UK boss Bruce Lowry. He detailed at great length to CTW last week the firm's sales and marketing plans for the coming six months. At the heart of these is a £2 million at rate card 30 and 60 second TV ad campaign running from the middle of September until December. Beyond that are plans to advertise software on TV in 1989.

In affect, he was arguing that it was something approaching wishful thinking on the part of rivals to imagine that the firm would be unable to deliver on its plans for a large slice of the UK business.

"We have no intention of slowing down or cutting back. The TV ads are in place and ready to run, retailers are being added daily to our list, five new games are due next month, 30 publishers have committed to writing for our format, we're investing heavily in in-store promotional plans and we're in the process of hiring around 20 to 30 merchandisers. We're ahead on all our plans," Lowry said.

The five new titles are Legend of Zelda, Mike Tyson's Punch Out, Metroids, Pro-Wrestling and R.C. (Radio-Controlled) Pro-Am — the latter being produced by Rare, the Ultimate offshoot. They are priced at £20 or £25.

Taking a stand at September's PC Show is one option not being pursued.

"We are a little late in trying to get the sort of presence that would be appropriate for a $1 billion sales firm that took 20,000 square feet at the Chicago CES. But we'll be looking at doing some shows in conjunction with retailers."

Lowry said that his target is to have 6-700 outlets by the end of this year. An announcement about one large multiple — "not necessarily Dixons" — is due shortly.

The push into the independents is being backed with point of sale material said to be costing the firm "£500-750 and sometimes even more".

Unlike Mastertronic with the rival Sega console, Nintendo will not be selling through the mail order catalogues. "We've pulled out because we found in the States that it was not a good way to sell our products. Catalogues can't do our machine justice: they need to be demo'd."

As for shortages of both machines and cartridges, Lowry said that they were nowhere near as bad as some would like to imagine. "As a result of such suggestions, there's possibly been some panic buying, making it slightly worse than it really is. But it's true that there will be some shortages on some titles.

"As for the chips, if anyone's going to get them, with our vast orders it'll be us. We're not that concerned."

Further afield, there is the already much-touted Nintendo II. Lowry said that not only would it definitely not be appearing in the UK this year, but that it was "three years away".

Duo push networks

Two firms last week announced new plans for the burgeoning low cost network market — one with a price cut and another with a new product.

Ironically, the cut has come from Corvus, the firm behind Amstrad's £399 networking systems AMSNOS. Amstrad had predicted that its entry into the networking arena would find traditional firms cutting prices.

Corvus' Omninet/1 Starter Kit has been reduced to £999 for a four station network. Additional workstations can be tabbed on for £99. The firm has taken a typically Amstraddian line in calling the system "the ideal solution for entry level users".

The Spectrum Group launched itself last week into this market with a £675 three user system. SBC Net-2 can run MS-DOS with 64 nodes and five printers per network. Extra slave cards retail at £195.

The firm is expected to be pitching Net-2 at established SBC machine dealers as well as those wanting only a networking system.

General manager Steve Cole commented: "This represents an area which the market is going to. More people are buying machines for networks than six months or a year ago." He said that Net-2 would be pitched at "middle sized businesses" amongst others.

US Gold

new terms would be acceptable.

A guarded Tim Chaney — Gold's operations director — claimed: "We're doing this for the good of the industry. The basic objective is to make sure that everybody — and I mean everybody — makes more money."
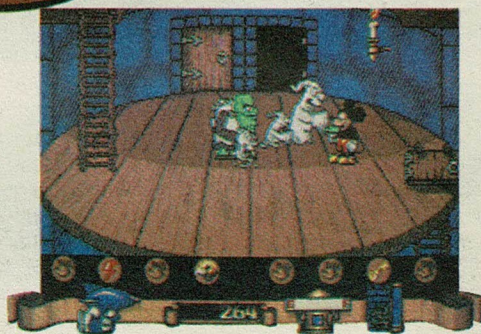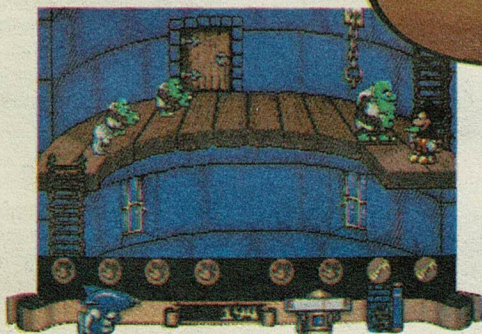
One option definitely ruled out by Chaney is the possibility of Gold going direct through Centresoft alone. "Personally, I'm completely against that. It would be a sad day if we ever did, but there's no chance of us ever doing that."

Woolies eyes 16-bit boom

Woolworths is experimenting with chart orientated 16-bit games and is set to make a decision shortly concerning its Christmas stocking plans.

Grade One and Grade Two outlets amounting to around 90 are taking on titles such as *Out Run, Xenon* and *Carrier Command*. Whilst good news for the software publishers this will hardly be welcomed by independent retailers.

In the past 16-bit games have been mostly the domain of the indies. High street multiples have been customarily cautious in jumping on the 68000 bandwagon. For them to be taking fair volumes of £20 product indicates recognition of this sector's growth and a strong desire to get involved.

According to the latest figures from Gallup the Amiga and ST have reached their highest ever market share level by volume with 2.5 per cent and 5.0 per cent respectively. Also, 16-bit games such as *Out Run* and *Captain Blood* have been making impressive showings in all format charts of late. By value, Gallup assesses the 16-bit market to be worth 25 per cent of the total market.

Mastertronic — which acts as an advisor/distributor to Woolworths — is stressing that this is only an experiment. Director Geoff Heath told *CTW* that it was something of a trial run calling it "early days yet". Some 200 Woolworths stores stock computer games at present.

Woolworths is known to be less than happy about its market share. Its slice of the video market is some 15 per cent higher than is the case with
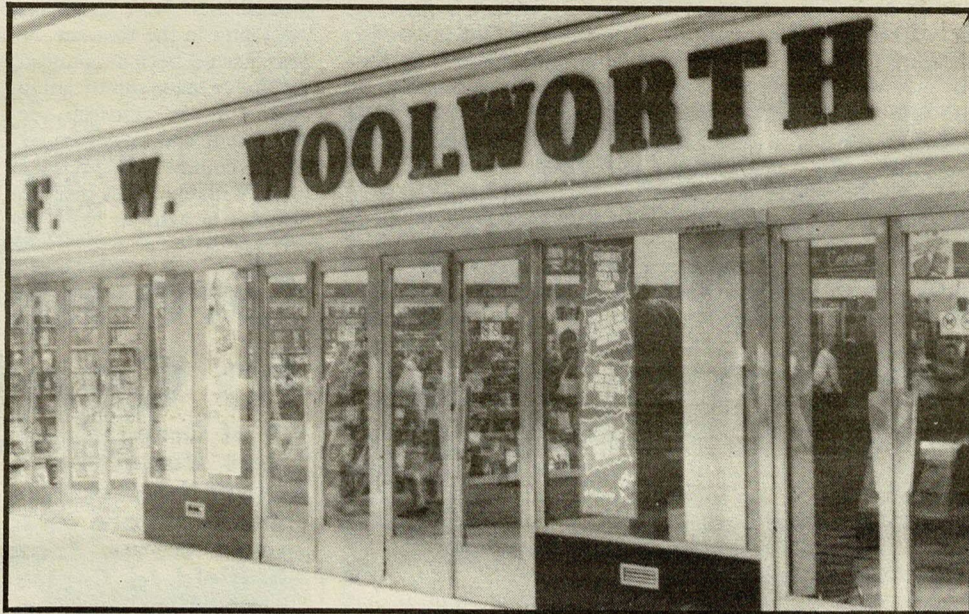
WOOLWORTHS: Tagging on to 16-bit software. A move into 16-bit clearly pumps up the value aspect.

Computer buyer Peter Smith told *CTW* recently: "I want to turn us into a major force in software. A three to four per cent share isn't good enough. We're considering all offers."

It is also believed that Woolworths was considering taking the full 16-bit range of one US company although details are not being released.

French mag takes tilt at fortnightly

France's biggest selling leisure monthly *Tilt* is to go fortnightly in September.

The move is being made in response to rivals' cut-price advertising rates and growing emphasis on 16-bit.

Latest audit figures from the French ABC equivalent OJD (Office de Justification de la Diffusion) give *Tilt* a monthly circulation of 83,600 for 1987. This is an increase

of some 17,000 copies on 1986, but over the last six months three competitors have arrived: *Game Arcade, Micro News,* and *Generation 4.*

The rival mags currently have circulations anywhere between 10-20,000. Ad rates, however, are lower than the customarily high French levels. A full page in *Generation 4* costs 3-5,000F compared to 15,000 in *Tilt.*

Generation 4 is a solely 16-bit publication whereas *Tilt* covers all leisure machines.

The fortnightly move is seen as a means to hang on to its Amiga, PC and ST owners.

"It is a rule that when you make a change like this the circulation stabilises. The main point is that we'll be so fast that our competitors won't be able to follow us," commented *Tilt* editor Jean-Michel Blottiere to *CTW.*

Tilt is owned by Les Editions Mundiales — the third largest publishing house in France. Its cover price is 20F, but this is likely to shift to 22F as a result of the switch.
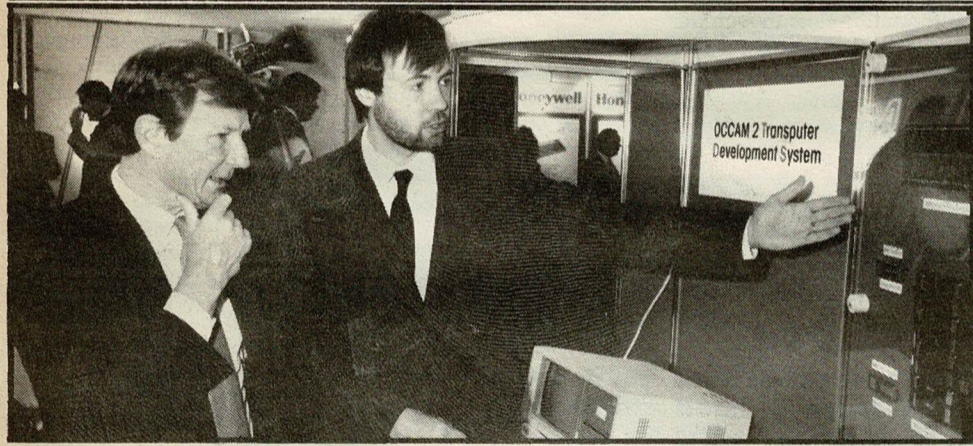
Labour's Trade and Industry spokesman Bryan Gould (left) last week opened the *PC User* Show at Olympia, London. Not unexpectedly, he then attacked the Government's current backing of the UK computer industry. Firms' access to funds and the disregarding of gloomy reports were both criticised. "The late 1980s will come to be regarded in Britain as years dominated by short-sighted complacency," he said.

Citizen leads race for Amstrad tender

More details are slowly emerging about the new Amstrad MS-DOS running games machine — which was first revealed in last week's *CTW.*

It is known that Amstrad has been seeking tenders for 3.5 inch disk drives for the

new computer. Currently, the front-runner appears to be Citizen, via its OFM division. The Amstrad account is said to be for some 10,000 units a month initially. This indicates that the computer — when it eventually appears early in the autumn — is destined to be sold only into the UK market for the time being.

Which? ramp up starts

WHICH? '88: Which? '89 will be 30 per cent bigger

In the week of the *PC User* Show, the *Which Computer?* Show ramp-up for next February is already beginning.

Show organiser Cahners Exhibitions is banging the drum by pointing out that the next *Which?* will be 30 per cent larger than this year's event, occupying three halls of the Birmingham NEC. It is being claimed that some 450 exhibitors will be there, with

an expected 60,000 visitors, making it "at least three times bigger than its closest UK rival".

Elsewhere in the exhibitions world, the PC Show organiser Montbuild has secured a deal with the BBC TV series *Tomorrow's World* for an Innovations Challenge. The prize for "most imaginative and innovative use of technology, programming techniques or design in a new personal computing product" will be presented on the first day of the show on September 14th.

Firms track Ubi

French publisher Ubi Soft claims to have no fewer than 10 UK firms currently enquiring about its latest batch of products.

JS Gold, Mirrorsoft and Electronic Arts are three of the firms apparently interested in seven new titles being pitched as "international" releases.

The deal is expected to be signed within the next couple of months with Ubi Soft launching in the UK at the PC Show in September.

The firm had a couple of products released in the UK last summer via a short-term deal with Elite. These products only appeared on Amstrad CPC disk.

"We used to develop a lot on the Amstrad but it was not a good market at all for export," commented Ubi Soft president Yves Guillemot to *CTW.*

The new products — *Iron Lord, Skate Ball, Vampire, Final Command, Puffy's Saga, Bat* and *Fer et Flamme* — are being produced for ST, Amiga, C64, PC and CPC. Two will appear on the Spec-

trum.

Guillemot is confident that the right deal can make Ubi Soft a successful UK label despite the market's historical dislike of continental product. "We're talking to people and seeing who is able to put the most stress on our products. We consider the most important thing to be quality of product and on top of that, marketing."

Ubi Soft signed a deal with US giant Epyx in April worth £1 million in initial orders.

The seven titles will retail at around $50 and appear on four formats each.

Mirrorsoft forages further upmarket

Whilst being as vague as possible, Mirrorsoft last week hinted that it is set to go further upmarket on business software.

Four new packages are currently being considered for autumn launch. They will come in at a minimum pricepoint of £150, the majority being some way above this figure.

Fleet Street Editor on the PC still hasn't got an ETA despite hard prompting from most of the trade. At last week's *PC*

User Show sales manager Charles Francis revealed, however, that when it does arrive it will be carrying a cost at least twice as much as *Publisher* on the ST — which sells at £125. It will also be a very different program, pitched hard at Ventura's established DTP ground.

"It'll be at a pricepoint that will appeal to upmarket dealers. Our corporate strategy dictates that products go upmarket, but we're not going to chop products. We've still got editor on the BBC," Francis told *CTW.*

NEXT WEEK:

TUBULAR SELLS
Television advertising is enormously effective and as such incredibly expensive. It's been the policy of only a few computer related firms to try a hand. Amstrad of course is one. There's also been Epson and Atari, and Commodore will be pushing the Amiga this Christmas. *CTW* charts the TV times and the problems of selling via the tube ....

BOSOM PALS?
Software publisher Thalamus is tied closely to magazine publisher Newsfield. *CTW* studies the relationship and the industry's perception of it

THE FRENCH MARKETEERS
Paris based software house Ubi Soft is still sounding out the UK market for the best deal. For now, ten companies are said to be in the running to take Ubi Soft products. The firm has recently struck a £1 million deal with Epyx for the US market. *CTW* visited a Brittany chateau to hear the latest.

Delays blamed for MicroPro $1.7m loss

MicroPro has blamed a net loss of $1,726,000 for the third quarter ended May 31st on the delayed release of *WordStar Professional 5*.

Revenues for the period amounted to just over $10 million compared with $11,393,000 for the corresponding period in 1987. Profits then were $2,125,000. For the nine month period MicroPro has turned in a loss of $4 million on revenues of $30,376,000. The company reported a profit of $2,125,000 on sales of just over $29 million in the first nine months of the prior year.

It is being claimed by MicroPro that the backlog of orders for the new *WordStar* amount approximately to $1,800,000 — just over the loss for the period. The word processing package was to be launched in May but "improvements" have delayed it until later in the summer. No price has yet been announced.

"We've made significant investments in research, development and customer service," commented president Leon Williams. "It's these investments which have resulted in current operating losses." He was confident that the firm would return to profitability.

MicroPro UK meantime is holding a summer promotion whereby *WordStar 3* will cost £149 to anyone swapping it for another word processing package. This though does not apply to public domain or shareware software but the original price of the package is irrelevant. *WordStar 3* usually retails at £495.

Ashton-Tate is running a voucher promotion for various products. The vouchers can be then exchanged for other Ashton-Tate products.

Undaunted Coders in new credibility race

Code Masters is doing its level best to convince a sceptical trade that its charity title *The Race Against Time* will eventually be a major success.

Thus far, the project has been dogged by two unfortunate occurrences which have left sales trailing in the very nether reaches of the Gallup chart — at best. The firm had predicted prior to launch that the game was destined to be the world's first million seller.

Since then, it has been hit by the unauthorised use of a Jesse Owens photograph on the cover — which caused delays and embarrassment — and then by a further problem with another photograph of Carl Lewis. This featured his old running garb and shoe sponsor; an up to date version of Lewis finally arrived last week. Distributors and retailers are being offered a cover swap by Code Masters should it prove necessary.

"*The Race Against Time* is going to work and it has worked already. We've shipped out 30-40,000 already and if Gallup aren't registering that very highly, that's because Gallup are inaccurate. There's a lot gone into the smaller Woolies' branches that aren't on the Gallup panel," Code Masters' operations manager Bruce Everiss said.

Nonetheless, though neither side will talk about it publicly, it is reliably understood that the vast bulk of units supplied to all Woolworths' stores are being returned via Mastertronic, which is in part responsible for sales into the multiple.

"There's nothing wrong with the product. We've had very good reviews and Newsfield are telling us that they've had a lot of correspondence on the game.

"And the publicity for the whole Sport Aid charity will be increasing month by month until the autumn, which will help sales. We still believe that it's on for a million."

Still on for a million?

Domark ramps up for Empire

Having covered good ground with its *Star Wars* game last autumn, Domark is due to release the follow up at the end of next week.

Joint Domark boss Mark Strachan claimed that *Star Wars* has sold "over 750,000" to date.

The new game *The Empire Strikes Back* is due to for release on July 14th, initially on Amiga and ST. Strachan is hopeful that the product will sell 50,000 units on 16-bit at which he would be "over the moon".

Empire corresponds to *Star Wars* in its graphic format, although it is claimed to be more advanced in its game play.

Domark is planning "wonderful point of sale show cards" in the shape of Darth Vader's head, as well as telephone sales direct to retailers by David Prowse, the actor who played Darth Vader. This, claimed Strachan, is "an advanced warning", and will take place around July 14th or 15th.

The Return of the Jedi, the third in the series, is pencilled in for release this Christmas.

Domark has another idea in the bag: a new computerised version of the old *Trivial Pur-*
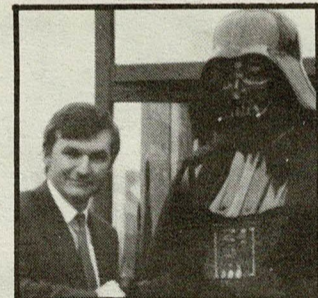
STRACHAN: *Star Wars* Mk II

suit game, for which it has the rights, called *A New Beginning*. Strachan was careful to emphasise that it is not simply a conversion of the board game.

A New Beginning features planets in place of the original cheeses, but still keeps the "silly questions". Strachan said there will be "new questions, new game play, new everything. It's a completely new beginning, hence the title."

Gremlin shifts to Centresoft

All of Gremlin's various departments except the programming team are set to move down from Sheffield to Centresoft's offices in Birmingham.

Mail order and sales activities will be joining the marketing and PR departments in an attempt to centralise the company. Gremlin is planning to move into its own offices in Birmingham later in the year.

Due to the "free spirited nature" of programmers they are not being asked to move down and Gremlin's Sheffield offices will remain open. The move is being seen by Gremlin as a way of "leaving the programmers to get on with it".

"We're making more room at Centresoft but we need to move into our own offices — certainly before Christmas and hopefully before the PC Show," explained operations director Kevin Norburn.

"We needed to centralise the company more because of the way we are structured. We didn't move the programmers because they wouldn't go there. They aren't like normal career-minded people," he said.
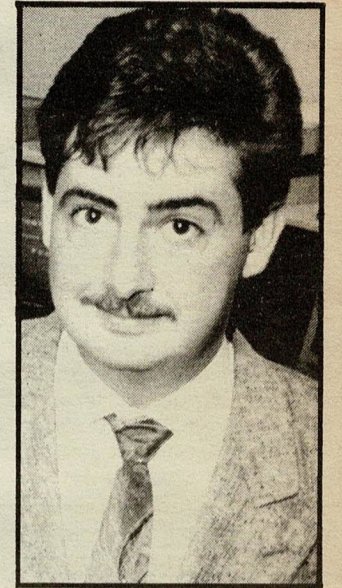
NORBURN: Centralisation

Centresoft's boss Geoff Brown owns a controlling interest in Gremlin. The company employs around 25.

Scandinavian pirates warned

Danish and Swedish software publishers are bracing themselves for a new phase in both countries' appalling history of piracy.

Due to apparent apathy the problem has spread to such an extent that an estimated 65 per cent of games are bought from pirates. Now though the police are beginning to take action with seven cases lined up for the courts.

This new spate of action appears to be the work of the local Union of Software Distributors and Retailers (SUS). Broadly similar to FAST it has been investigating suspected pirates and has been lobbying government for changes in vague copyright laws.

Christian Martensen, editor of *Independent Computer* of Sweden commented: "Piracy will never be stamped out but instead of being on the streets it is being driven underground. People are starting to be nailed."

He claimed that a crackdown on piracy in Scandinavia could send sales of games up by three times. Most games bought in Sweden and Denmark are sourced from the UK and North America.

Publishers 'hypocrites' says angry Trilogic

Software publishers have been blasted by Trilogic for what it sees as hypocrisy.

Various software houses have critised the firm's Expert Cartridge which, they claim, encourages piracy. Trilogic alleges that various publishers are using the device in order to improve programming techniques.

Joint boss Graham Kelly would not deny though that people bought Expert for piracy purposes. He said that "you wouldn't ban kitchen knives because they can be used to murder". He added "I know that some software houses use it and it's foolish to deny that because we can tell when it's been used.

"They criticise us but the irony is they use it." He claimed that people were buying Expert to transfer cassette based games onto disk. It retails at £29.99.

Digital loses Girson

Digital Integration's chief executive Ilya Girson has left the company.

As a result the firm is undergoing a management restructuring with a yet to be appointed operations manager to be drafted in. Girson is understood to be contemplating leaving the games software industry altogether although no decision has as yet been made.

His function at Digital Integration included promotion, accounts and public relations. Before joining the company over three years ago he was software buyer at distributor Websters.
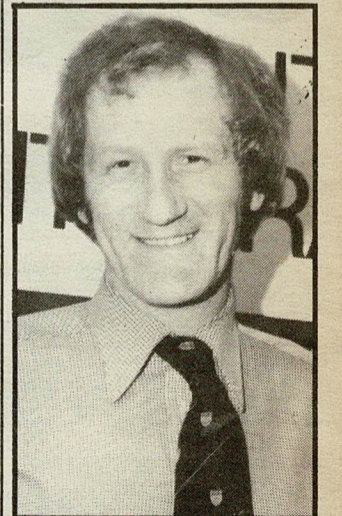
MARSHALL: Low profile

Managing director Dave Marshall commented: "I'm not sure what he's decided to do because he prefers to keep his options open. Basically he's left because he want to broaden his horizons."

Digital Integration is looking either to appoint a PR firm or employ an in-house promotions manager. Marshall has always preferred a low profile and during his employment Girson acted as the company's face.

A sports fancy dress day was amongst the extraordinary theme days which Norbain's sales team have been indulging in recently. This particular venture saw a claimed 25 per cent increase in sales on comparable days.

According to managing director Ken Jacobson these team efforts all go to creating an aggressive and competitive attitude to selling and promotes "esprit de corps" amongst the sales force.

The firm's overall selling performance has apparently increased by 50 per cent since the schemes were introduced in February. Previous theme days included bad taste dress. One participant went to the dubious effort of coming in as an AIDS victim.

In time honoured fashion, dealers are being offered holidays as an incentive. Norbain employees are being offered a day on a combat course.

C64 Olympic Pack

IN STOCK NOW!

OLYMPIC PROMOTION

SDL take great pleasure in introducing Commodore's latest promotional offer for the C64, the Olympic Challenge Pack. The pack has been designed to take full advantage of the excitement created by the 1988 Olympics to be held in Seoul.

A WINNING COMBINATION

The combination of Commodore, manufacturers of the best selling home computer, the C64 and 'OCEAN', the UK's leading games software house, has proven to be an unqualified success. It is this union which has resulted in the creation of the very exciting Olympic Challenge Pack, an outstanding combination of hardware and software with a sporting theme.

THE PACKAGE

The Commodore 64 now comes complete with 'TEN' Top sports simulations incorporating best sellers as well as brand new releases. In addition to the superb software, a high quality Quickshot II autofire joystick and 1530 datassette unit are also included. The C64 featured in the pack has a new slimline casing, with sloping front.

A LOT MORE FOR A LOT LESS

The total value of the goods offered FREE with this promotion amounts to £143.44. These extras are included at no additional cost to the customer - in fact, the reverse is true. The entire system is now priced at a mere £149.99, £20 OFF the old RRP and, with a Dealer Margin of 17½%, no one loses out. The C64 also has a whole lot more to offer, including a vast network of software support. It features one of the largest games software libraries available, with new releases being added all the time. In addition to those specifically written for the C64, the machine also benefits when titles written for powerful 16-bit computers are ported over to C64 format. The new Olympic Pack is a complete offering, with no 'extras' required before play commences!

THE MAIN ATTRACTION

The C64 Olympic Challenge Pack is supplied in a bright, full colour box showing a screen shot of each game. This attractive point-of-sale packaging is effective in delivering the message to your customers, and its built-in carrying handle, makes it easy for your customers to collect.

PHONE SDL TELESALES NOW!

Ensure your position on Commodore's 'Olympic' Team as they begin another successful summer promotion. Call SDL Telesales immediately and secure your requirement.

FREE!

10 TOP TITLES

Each of these ten titles has previously achieved popularity with existing C64 owners at a retail price of £8.95 each.

1) **BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING**   SRP £8.95
Battle to earn a crack at the champ.

2) **BASKET MASTER**   SRP £8.95
Head-to-head basic basketball, one of the fastest sports around.

3) **DALEY THOMPSON DECATHLON**   SRP £8.95
The decathlon's ten gruelling events faithfully reproduced.

4) **DALEY THOMPSON SUPER TEST**   SRP £8.95
Challenge the computer in each of eight events.

5) **HYPER SPORTS**   SRP £8.95
Swimming, skeet shooting, archery, long horse, triple jump, and weight lifting.

6) **MATCH DAY II**   SRP £8.95
Head, volley and kick your way to victory in this sequel to the best seller, Match Day.

7) **MATCHPOINT**   SRP £8.95
Join the singles competition at the world's most famous tennis championship.

8) **SNOOKER**   SRP £8.95
A simulation featuring supersmooth cue control.

9) **TRACK AND FIELD**   SRP £8.95
Test your skill to its limits. Includes multiple player option.

10) **WORLD SERIES BASEBALL**   SRP £8.95
The all-American sport, captured to perfection in this simulation.

DATASSETTE UNIT

A 1530 Datassette unit has also been included to ensure all data is loaded and stored simply and with efficiency.   SRP £44.99

JOYSTICK

To round off a fantastic package, Commodore have included a high quality Quickshot II autofire joystick, tough enough for even the most vigorous player.   SRP £8.95

TOTAL SRP NORMALLY £143.44

NEW LOW PRICE

In addition to the top quality software bundle Commodore are offering, they have succeeded in making this outstanding package even more attractive by reducing the RRP of the Commodore 64 by £20. The entire system now costs just £149.99! With a Dealer Margin of 17½% the C64 is better value now than ever before.

C64 OLYMPIC PACK PRICE

£149.99

INCLUDING VAT

DEALER PRICE: £107.60

FREE DEALER PACK REQUEST FORM

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Position: ....

Company: ....

Address: ....
....
....

Postcode: ....   Telephone: ....

I am interested in ☐ Commodore 64

I already stock ☐ Commodore 64

SNiPPETS

Prestwich-backed software house **Big Apple** claims to have hit on a novel packaging idea for its new products, the first of which is set to appear next month. The titles will be packaged in a cigarette packet-styled flip top. Why hasn't it been done before? "Maybe no one has had sunstroke and has accidentally put a cassette inside a cigarette box like I did," Big Apple boss Terry Ashton said. "It then occurred to me that it would be a good idea for games." Beyond its first game *Oops* (Spec, C64, PC, ST, and Amiga), the firm is releasing another 11 full priced titles in its first year, along with 24 budget games on its Brooklyn label. Amongst the newies is a game based on the California raisin character, which will be backed by three girls dressed as raisins at the PC Show in September. The firm is also launching the Billy Bronx Club — a brand awareness, sales incentive, marketing effort which is based on tokens redeemable against such as records, tapes, videos, CDs carried by various divisions of parent company Prestwich Holdings. Meantime, the firm has also revised downwards its first year turnover target to £1.5 million from £2-2.5 million. Ashton says that this is due to it being much better to beat target clearly than merely to attain it . . .
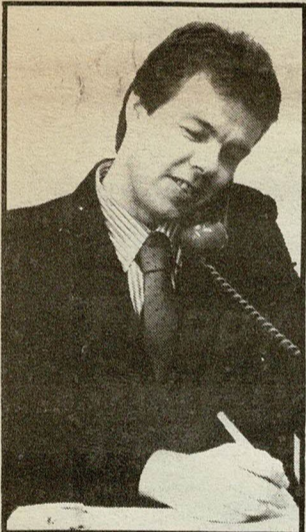
ASHTON: Striking a light

Atari's meisterwerk the Abaq is set to appear in a series of Tea Marketing Council TV adverts breaking in the autumn. The beast in question is said to be featured prominently on screen as an inevitably boffiny professor attempts to solve a pressing matter. The Abaq, after sundry cogitations, throws up the answer "Brenda — the tea lady", which indicates that it was a pretty damn stupid question in the first place . . .

A filofax compatible program for the PC is about to be launched by **Kempston**. *Daatafax* was originally to be called *Datafax* but a company of the same name objected so strongly that an *a* had to be drafted in. Daatafax includes diary, phonebook, notepad, graphics and calendar. It comes with the relevant stationery and costs £79.95 .

Printer manufacturer **Brother** has reacted to the proposed levy on dot matrix printers from Japan by reminding as many people as possible that the firm had stopped importing in 1984 and manufactures in the UK . . .

It's beginning to seem like **Software Limited** spends most of its time receiving awards. Now it's to two more from **Computer Associates** and **Wordtech**. This follows **Migent** and *Borland* bestowing an award on the London distributor two weeks ago . . .

Research Machines is now offering a three year warranty on all of its standard system components. According to the obviously bullish firm "quality lies in a company's culture" . . .

HANDYSIDE: Yet another plaque

Another addition has been made to **Kuma**'s seemingly eternal K range. This time it's *K-Gadget* for the Amiga. Priced at £29.95 it can apparently speed up the design and coding of complex gadgets . . .

Lifetree has appointed **Barrington Harvey PR** to handle its public relations. Marketing manager Colin Bastable had worked with the PR firm's boss Simon Harvey whilst at MicroProse . . .

Amiga Centre Scotland and **Commodore** are joining forces to sponsor a competition aimed at computer animators. The entries will be judged at the Edinburgh Festival in August, the winner receiving an A500 or hardware to the same value . . .

The **Dataflex Design** Stradcom modem is being bundled with **Bristol Software Factory**'s *TeleWriter II* package. BSF director Richard Maugham reckons that the £325 price tag will mean "users can save themselves a few bob" . . .

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Amiga, Atari & BBC

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Amiga owners can easily upgrade to twin floppy operation with Cumana's high quality external 3.5 inch floppy drive. The CAX 354 conveniently takes its power from the host computer offering a full 720k of formatted storage to A500 owners.

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IS THE ATARI ST REALLY A BUSINESS CONTENDER?

There was a time, not so long ago in Atari's befuddled past, when the ST was being pitched as a business machine that could also run games. The problem then was that there were almost as few business packages as there were games. It didn't take off in either capacity. Nonetheless, Atari ploughed on, busying itself with launching the

machine again and again until finally it was able to cut the price to turn the ST into what it always should've been: a games machine. So what, then, of the original notions of the ST range being suitable for business? Overleaf, sundry firms active in that sub-sector have their say. Here, *ST World*'s **IAN TINDALE** makes the pitch for the ST to be regarded seriously.

ST: Plausible business contender?

Anyone considering buying a computer for business use, could do no better than to look at the Atari ST. The traditional reasons for settling on an IBM PC clone, in this day and age, only point to a marked lack of imagination. Either that, or the buyer still subscribes to the old "it must be IBM compatible, it must be IBM compatible . . .".

Frankly, pointing out to prospective buyers that the ST is 68000 based and the PC is 8086/88 based is neither here nor there. The last thing that someone in the formative stages of choosing a business system needs is confusing 'noise words' like this.

So these are some of the points which a prospective business user needs to know:

Absolute GEM

None of the PC family offers as crisp and readable a display as the ST does on its monochrome monitor. The PC clone will often use GEM as a bolted-on 'frontend', and is usually quite slow in operation compared to GEM on the ST. As well as having a fast GEM implementation, the ST's GEM is in ROM, which means that it consumes no RAM.

The ST offers a very cost-effective personal laser printer, achieved in a unique fashion, which the standard PC cannot emulate. The ST has a high-speed DMA port through which it can communicate with a wide variety of divices such as hard disks, CD-ROM units and, of course, the Atari laser printer. Use of the ST's DMA port results in phenomenal speed compared to most other standalone laser printers available for the PC.

In these days of power

programs, power users and power lunches, the need for a new reasonable amount of memory is a realistic one. The PC's standard 512K, to a maximum of 640K, is archaic, to say the least, and harks back to the days when people raved about *WordStar*, and continental drift was all the rage.

The ST is designed to come in small packages for individuals who may only need 512K initially, to a standard one megabyte on the 1040ST, and up to four megabytes on the Mega ST range, recommended for serious business use. ANY ST can easily be upgraded to take 4 megabytes, which it instantly recognises.

The price advantage of the ST is a very real one. As most people who have already taken the plunge into a business computer system will

aver, the main cost is not the initial hardware, but it is the software you will need — and will continue needing — as your requirements grow.

Regardless of the starting cost of either an ST or PC-based kit, there is no doubt that users will have more left in the kitty with an ST range of software than the equivalent in PC software. ST software is also inherently easier to use, so all staff can use it with less time spent on training them. A related point is that the new generation of programmers will inherently be more au fait with 68000 that 8088/86, so more new software is always rapidly emerging for the ST.

To make transferring easier for those already embedded in the PC age of yesteryear, the ST allows a reasonably IBM PC-compatible file format on disk. Lotus-compatible
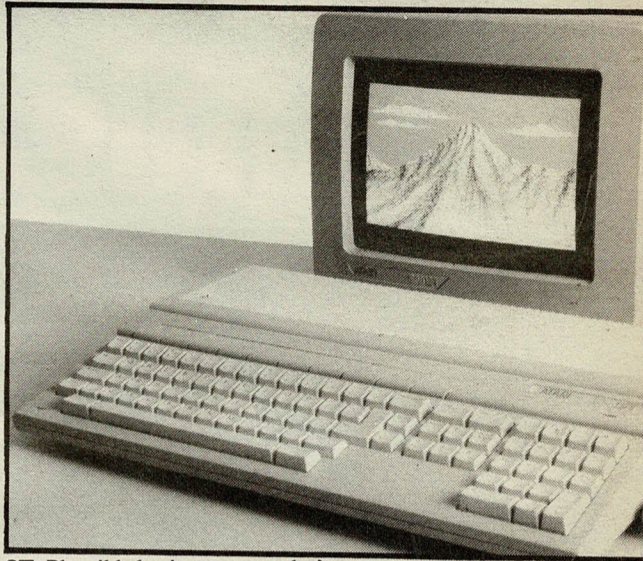
spreadsheets are available, with full use of GEM.

Another significant factor is that the ST now has CD-ROM. The new Atari CDAR 504 Optofile, costing only £399, will be an asset to the professional, educational and business communities.

And the band played on (an ST)

The ST is also at home in the more creative arenas of the business and professional field. It is the obvious choice for music and studio work, graphics and CAD applications, and, using Cyberstudio, rough demos of a promotional video for a product can be created, saving thousands of pounds in time

and resources.

The ST has a few disadvantages, too. Due to the fact that it uses a far more advanced technology for data transfer, hard disks for the ST cost much more than the PC counterpart. Also, the non-PC compatibility affects the chance of obtaining cheap hardware and software, which can be the case with PCs currently.

The requirement of having to change monitors if you need to use both colour and monochrome applications is tedious. The fact that GEM is in ROM can be a disadvantage too — updating it is made difficult. Also, no decent page-making software seems to have surfaced for the ST — yet!

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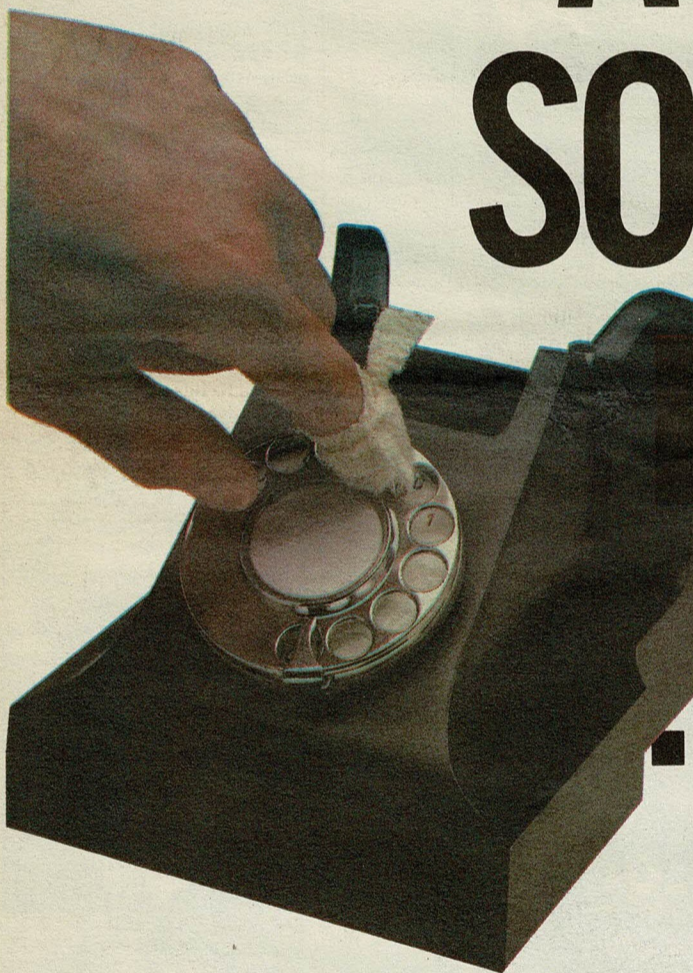
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...ENDS HERE

For more than a decade Personal Computer World has consistently presented a show that gets talked about and with over 500 exhibitors both from the UK and with a large contingent from overseas this year's event will be even bigger, even better, and truly international, with a separate hall dedicated to each sector of the market. And to reflect this new direction we've retitled the event The Personal Computer Show and moved it to a larger and more appropriate venue, Earls Court. For the first time the Show has been divided into three separate halls. In the Business and Professional Hall you'll be able to see and try all that's new in personal computing from Hardware and Applications Software through to peripherals such as Printers, VDU's and Disk Drives. The General Hall contains systems appropriate for smaller business users and the Leisure Section has all the latest games, software and equipment. So whatever part of the industry you specialise in you're sure to find the right products at the Personal Computer Show.

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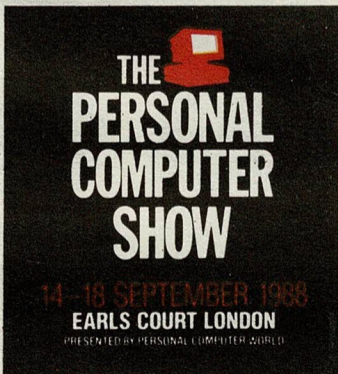
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ST: BUSINESS UNUSUAL

With Commodore's Amiga 500 recently being pitched directly at the small business user via the System A500 bundle some have been asking whether or not this would be an ideal move for Atari's ST. *CTW* asks how the ST is faring in the business environment . . .

ATARI

"Obviously the main thrust of the ST originally was as a business machine. It changed over 18 months so that the 520 was redirected into the consumer market.

"The 1040 and Mega are being sold into business and the dealers which we have on board are business dealers as opposed to retailers of computers only. They've been well pleased with it." Are you happy with the range's performance as a business machine? "I suppose I have a biased opinion but in business and education we've done well. We know there's more to be done and we intend achieving that."

Are end users buying the 520 for business purposes? "I would not have thought that great numbers are putting the 520 into business and education environments — they're going for the machines with a bigger spec."

Atari has come up with a summer bundle for the games market. What about something similar for business? "Of course there's the Microsoft Mega 2 bundle. We've got an approved budget of £2 million for advertising. A fair proportion of that will go into the entertainment market but we'll also be advertising the business range.

"We're getting a dealer network together and we'll have effective distribution. The end user will have a full source and we'll be using the list.

"The ST is based on 68000 and it's faster. The PC is industry standard but in terms of computer versus computer the ST is superior. Some people are entrenched in the PC/MSDOS — it's changing but it'll be a slow process."

Paul Welch
Sales director
Atari UK

Precision

"The high quality of the monitor and the ability to handle lots of memory, especially with the Mega, means that products such as *SuperBase* look very good. It's because of good presentation and ability to operate.

"I'd like to see Atari put more focus on the business end. That would be fine. That would do a lot of good although I'm not sure that it would be sensible with the 520 because of the positioning of that market.

"It's success lies in the education market and in the utilities and government sectors. Also, because of its price positioning, it's ideal for the small businessman."

Nigel Lovett-Turner
Sales director
Precision

LOVETT-TURNER:
Education push

Kuma

"There's no reason why people shouldn't be using the ST for business — it's got more memory than PCs. As a user I can't understand why anyone would want to use a PC. STs are so much nicer to use.

"We deal with a lot of large organisations which use it including some county councils. There's also small business and self-employed people who've got a 520 at home.

"I've noticed that people are upgrading from being games players and using it to index book collections and record collections. That, I suppose, is the top end home user. I can't really see the ST as a games machine anyway.

"In the UK it's being taken more seriously as time goes on. I remember looking at sales figures of spreadsheets in Germany and they were good. In the UK they were . . . OK. Over there business

has been taken more seriously from the start.

"We've got people who've started out with spreadsheets and databases on the 520 and have moved up to the 1040 and Mega. People tend to upgrade. But at the recent Atari Show though there were a phenomenal amount of new users, both business and games.

The problem is that some reviewers are looking at spreadsheets from the point of view of Lotus *1-2-3* users, they don't see why anyone should use anything else and inevitably the software doesn't get a good review.

Jon Day
Marketing director
Kuma

SDL

"It fulfils a lot of requirements which aren't simply number-crunching as in art studios or advertising agencies. These are more creative applications than in standard business environments.

"It's best in areas where perhaps IBM PC compatible machines aren't suited like graphics applications. People are generally going for the 1040 and Mega ST for business because of the larger memory. They lend themselves better to business for spreadsheets and so on.

"The Mega has been well received into business and there's access to good programs. And there's DTP. It's a very powerful DTP machine and you can get a whole system for a couple of grand."

But what is the likelihood of the 520 being used as a business machine? "I think it's unlikely. Atari have got a very powerful games machine in the 520 and a very powerful business machine with the 1040 and Mega. There's no need to go down that low for business.

"Some people are using the 520 for business word processing and DTP. But in the main they're going for the bigger machines. We've had a lot of success with the STs in the computers for business market."

John Arundel
Group marketing
manager

ATARI ST USER

"I know that Atari would like to see it as a business machine but the public are buying the 520 at least as a games machine. Bigger models like the 1040 and Mega STs are used for business or as development tools, but there are much fewer of them than the 520.

"We did a survey in our magazine and business users were well down on the list. Of course leisure interest came top. A survey for 1040 users only would more than likely put business first but there are only so many users."

How is it then that so many business and development software houses advertise in publications such as *ST User*?

"There's interest in that area and we do plenty of re-

views for spreadsheets and word processing packages and so on. Obviously there are business users and there's no shortage of business packages. Many CAD programs and the like can only really run on the bigger STs.

"I would really like to see a broad spectrum of users. It's odd that Atari were pushing the machine so hard to business users and then they do that £400 bundle of games software.

"It would be nice to see Atari do some kind of business or serious bundle on the 520 some time in the future."

Roland Waddilove
Editor
ST User

SOFTWARE EXPRESS

"It's really doing well for this time of the year. The summer months usually seem to be dominated by games. As far as business is concerned it's been coming together since May.

"I think that's got something to do with machine availability and the fact that there's some good software around. There's been good reviews in the PC press as well as ST magazines.

"People are especially interested in DTP and databases. It's not only standing up against the PC and Macin-

tosh in those areas but it's beating them. Where people have already got PCs though it's hard to sell anything else.

"With word processing, DTP and databases the ST has got speed and quality every time. What I'd like to see is Atari doing more advertising and promotion. There's been plenty on this games summer promotion but what about a business pack? Something like a database and word processing pack . . .

Would you like to see an Amiga System 500 type promo on the 520? "The 520 is capable of running good business software but it's only being used by very, very small businesses. It's only the odd person who's buying it for business or productivity and then it's mainly just for word processing. The Mega's really the one."
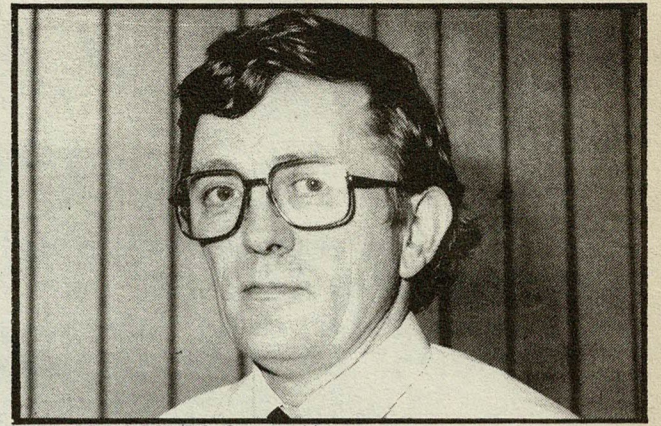
CLONESOFT PUT IN CONTEXT

Research firm Context claims that the low-cost business market was worth £2.4 million through independents and multiples during the first quarter of 1988. Despite the recent depression in some quarters about clonesoft sales publishers and distributors still found the figure hard to believe. STUART DINSEY looks at the current state of the market and dealers' experiences . . .

Everyone has heard mumblings about the low-cost business software market falling some way short of initial expectations. They have become louder and louder since the turn of the year and have probably suffered from the "if it's said often enough it must be true" syndrome.

Very few have actually stood up and proved conclusively that any promise of a budget software bonanza has so far been unfulfilled. Thus, the market was ultimately pining for some real information on the subject.

That information recently arrived hidden in one of the sub-sections of a PC market analysis by respected research firm Context. Those figures on low-cost business software at last provided some meat for the Cassandras' bone of contention. The trouble is they provided rather too much meat.

According to Context, the clonesoft market was worth £2.4 million at retail in the first quarter of this year — that includes *all* sales through specialist dealers and software-stocking multiples.

At last a figure had been unearthed but on hearing it major players such as Gem Distribution, Amsoft and Migent all disagreed. The doom and gloom might be justified in some areas but surely the total market is worth more?

If an average of £100 is taken for a single unit then £2.4 million of sales in a quarter works out as 24,000 units sold. That in turn indicates 6,000 units a month and 1,500 a week. If one considers that there are in excess of 2,000 outlets stocking budget business software in the UK (including Dixons, Wilding, Laskys, Tandy etc) then according to Context each outlet sells fewer than one unit a week.

Context will argue that it doesn't track direct or mail order sales in its research. Everyone knows that this will make up a slice of invisible sales, but as Gem boss Paul Donnelly commented, the number of dealers, distributors and publishers currently involved in the low-cost sector simply could not survive in a market worth just £10 million a year. He won't divulge his own firm's annual turnover in this market sector but joked: "If the Context figure's true, mate, we're doing bloody well."

Donnelly estimates the market to be worth around £40 million a year, at retail, whilst Paperback Software UK's William Poel plumps for a rather more conservative £20 million. These two, though, will admit that they're only guessing. And unlike the research firms they're not charging a couple of hundred pounds for the effort.
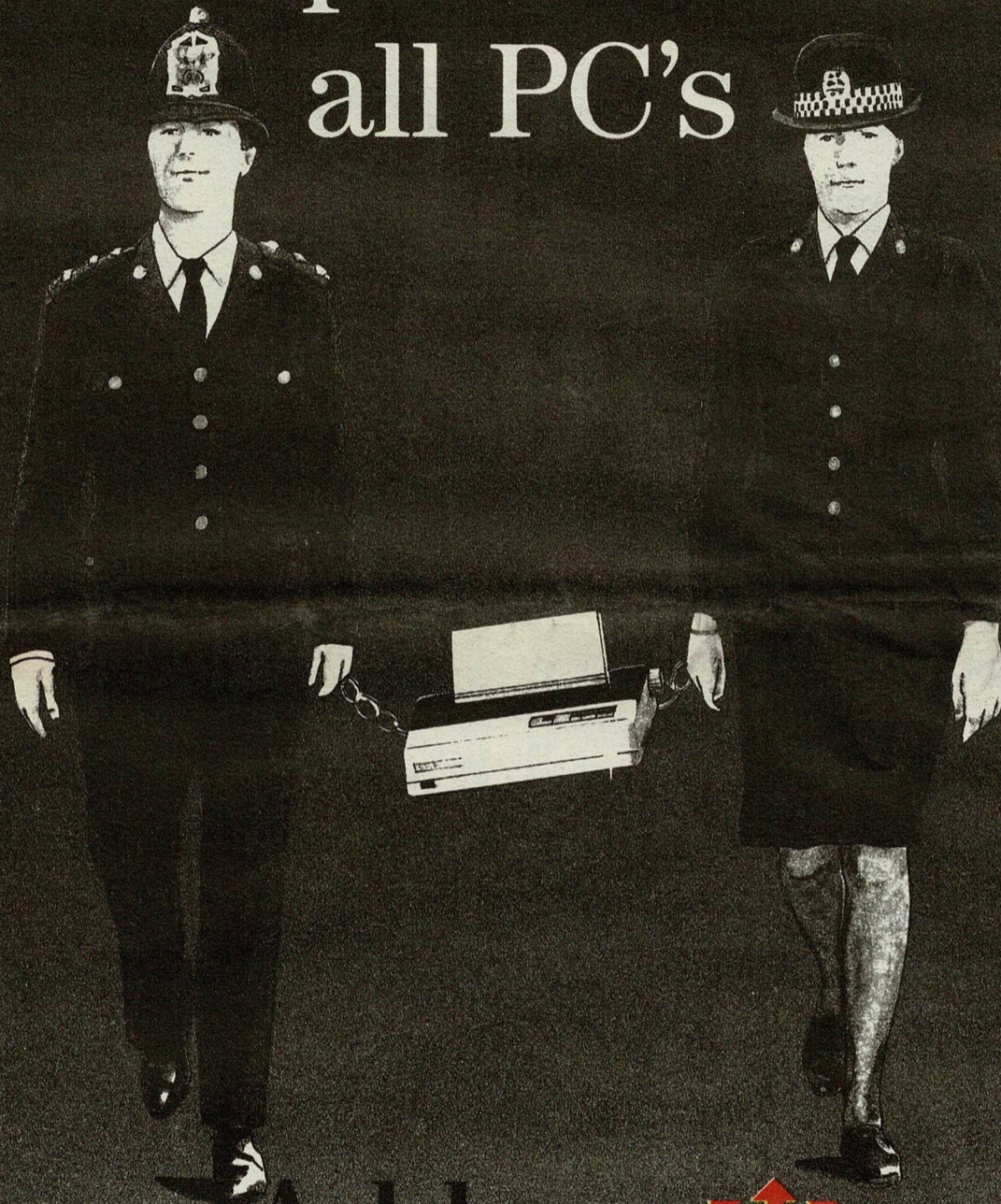
Milking monitors

In dealerland it is very hard to get an accurate feel for the way *they* feel. This is obviously because all of them will have different views, ambitions, specialities and expectations. They are also notorious for finding something to complain about even when things are pretty damn wonderful.

In the clonesoft market it is even more difficult because of the scope there is between those who sell it. An Amsoft package could turn up anywhere from a games/video shop in a small village to your friendly neighbourhood Dixonsalike to a decidedly throbby IBM dealership.

In Context's defence, this makes it horrendously difficult for research firms to monitor sales effectively, especially as despite attempts to get to grips with shifts in PC vendors most are probably using their classic dealer list. That list is usually pre-Amstrad 1512 and pre-trading up.

Also, the strength of Dixons and its fellow multiples looms large in this market. It's hard enough to get their royal corporatenesses to comment on anything at all — let alone sales figures. One would assume, however, that if Dixons was only selling one piece of business software a week it would have replaced its 50 titles with yet another crate of personal stereos, cameras or TVs by now.

John Hodgson of **Stockton Software** in Cleveland is one of those dealers who is generally disappointed with the development of a much touted new market. That said, sales of sub-£200 business software still makes up just under a third of his business, and he only stocks safe lines such as Sagesoft, Amsoft, Database's *Mini-Office Professional* and the like.

"It seems that when people buy the hardware they get special offer software thrown in. That's depressed sales," he comments.

It's a common gripe which comes not only from most dealers but non-participating publishers too.

David Vicary of **Vics Independent Computer Supplies**, Perth, reckons that it takes around two to three months for a PC buyer to come back for software. But he isn't worried about clonesoft sales, seeing them as a steady income all year round. This is especially helpful at a time of year when parts of the games market roll over and die.

"We certainly haven't got anything to complain about. Sage's accounts packages do very well as does *Mini-Office*."

As with many of the more games orientated dealers, high price packages tend not to sit on Vicary's shelves. He prefers to wait for orders and then has them in a day later.

Sell by dating

He also uses distributors who grew up in the games world. This points to one of the problems from which clonesoft might be suffering. With no disrespect to them, Greyhound, Gem, Centresoft, Microdealer and the like did come from the games world and tend not to invest in dealer seminars and technical support to the same degree as the established business outfits. At the same time, firms like First Software, Software Limited, Softsel and P&P could be accused of not fully understanding the needs of a leisure/business dealer.

Thus, many dealers are not fulfilling their true potential on business software because they are simply uneducated. One set of distributors will give them a straightforward service which has been proven over several years but is possibly still lacking in the business area. The other set are too aloof and sometimes look down on small dealers.

A classic example of this is **Nimbus Computing** in West Wickham in Kent. Owner Steve Browne stocks around 20 business packages but candidly admits that only a couple of them provide steady sales. He knows that they only make up five to 10 per cent of turnover because he is not tackling the market properly. And this is occurring because he hasn't been given

enough help.

"I've got customers coming in and saying they're looking for such and such an accounts package. They want it to do this and that and immediately I'm flummoxed. I don't really know what they want."

Distributors should not fool themselves that just because a product is cheap and

best ones. Glyn Davis at **Computer Centre** in Hornchurch, Essex, believes that a lot of dealers were caught out initially by taking on low-price product "dumped" on the market.

These days, however, things are apparently a lot better. In fact, he doesn't like calling product over £125
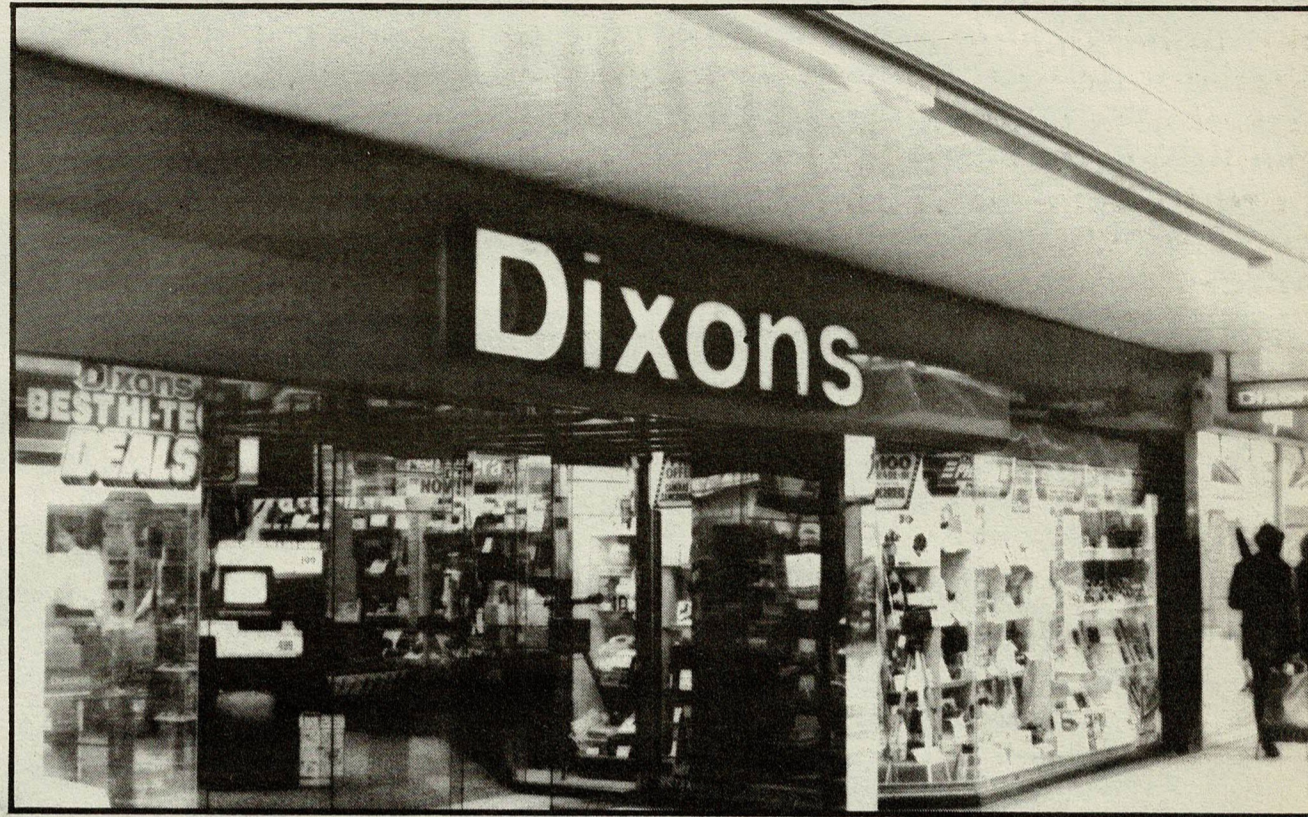
75 per cent of his software business.

"It's never as good as you'd like it to be — we're all greedy. You have to accept that you might sell half a dozen PCs to a company and then just one piece of software, but things aren't too bad."

It certainly is the case that low-cost software hasn't really materialised into the absolute bonanza that many hoped for, but then they were probably unrealistic hopes.

The fact is that some firms have done particularly well with well-priced and well-packaged product that is pitched perfectly at the potential sub-£200 buyer. Sagesoft

with its slashed accounts packages and Amsoft with its re-marketed licences are two of the most obviously successful.

Yes, some opportunities have been missed and more can be done. Firms generally tend not to market their product actively — particularly to the trade — thinking that if

cheerful it still won't put fear into the heart of a business software virgin. Publishers too should remember that manuals are more helpful if you don't need a degree in Chinese to understand them.

Most dealers agreed that the products that have stood the test of time since the original explosion in 1986 are the

budget. "There's a lot of good software between £179 and £199. It should be called midrange products," he says defiantly.

Perhaps the most precise reading of the market was made by Ron Francis of **Computer Plus** in Sittingbourne, Kent. He stocks over 40 packages and they make up around
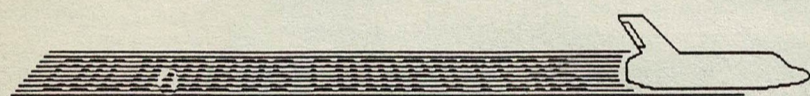
it's aimed at Amstrad owners it will walk off the shelves on its own. Many dealers, also, simply haven't been given the help or taken the time out themselves to get sufficiently clued up.

And yes, Context's research in this sector is awry. Well, at least, it had better be — for everybody's sake.

DIXONS: By Context reasoning each store would be selling just one piece of clonesoft a week

DIRECT SELLING: DIRECT TIPS

Last week NICK JOHNSON looked at some of the reasons and background to the whole issue of software houses selling direct. This time round, he offers some practical advice to those on the edge of considering just such a bold move. Such is the controversial nature of this whole topic — affecting, as it does, all retailers, distributors and publishers — that we hope to be able to publish a response from a firm on the other side of the fence at a later stage . . .

To sell directly to retailers requires careful planning. It is not a haphazard way to approach the market but a strategic one, and it is an integral part of a software house's overall planning.

The retailer requires five services to be able to sell effectively a software house's product. Point of sale material and product information are of prime importance. Good terms and discounts, a quality range, 24 hour delivery and a reasonable minimum order level are necessities.

Electronic Arts took many months to decide its approach and to gear up its resources. But its method was only one of several options.

There are probably only five possible approaches in all. And one of these — inevitably — is likely to suit an individual software house's requirements better than any other.

Going it alone requires a massive in-house range of products to meet the demands of 80 per cent of the market. Currently, the US Gold/Ocean group could offer its titles directly, as could BT and its labels. A smaller player in the market would find it impossible.

If a publisher were able to join up with another group of houses with complimentary product, there may be real benefits. Assemble a group containing a budget range, adventure, arcade and inexpensive business catalogue, and you have a single source that would interest a retailer enough for him to buy directly from you.

This may seem simple enough but the combined marketshare needs to be 10-20 per cent of the total software market. Assume that the UK retail value is £80 million per annum (which at distributor trade price is around £35 million). In which case your combined turnover in the UK needs to be £3.5-£7 million. Each of the five partners in the direct sales operation must thus currently be selling £1 million of software.

Fired up, sweetie

Option number three may seem like playing with fire. If distributors are drawing up software houses behind them by offering primary distribution, why not simply choose the best and then join? At the same time, you might as well give up and open a sweetshop, since you'll be dictated to even more and will probably find a dramatic down-turn in sales.

Setting up as a distributor/wholesaler requires no magical ingredient. Sensible buying at good discounts and then selling all you buy are the only pre-requisites. Thereby, on the back of selling a necessarily wide range, you could sell your own line effectively.

One small problem. The distributors — being the ridiculous political animals that they are — might just cease to buy your products. Therefore the distribution company you set up must be seen to be totally unrelated to your own software house. Perception is all — but it costs.

The fifth choice is now no longer really viable. The purchase of a distribution company was successfully undertaken by Mirrorsoft as an insurance policy. A couple of years ago, Microdealer is believed to have cost

£750,000, a sum none could afford these days.

Some regional distributors are left. But they are successful only in covering certain, defined areas of the country. True national distribution costs — and costs fistfuls more than it would be worth investing in a small distribution company in the first place.

USD, Bullet and Active all talk directly to retailers, passing orders to distributors. But could not these orders be passed back to the software house or group of publishers to be fulfilled directly. If minimum order levels as set by the group could be achieved, then there should be no reason not to sell directly.

State of independents

What do you require to be successful? Your success will depend upon having a good solid base of independent customers to sell to.

There are some 500 retailers currently in the software market of any note. I suspect that 250 of these hold 70 per cent of the total software sales. From day one, you need to be able to sell to 100 outlets. They also need what might be defined as 'successful servicing'.

Sales staff are your most important asset. Building the rapport required needs professional telesales staff, but it also requires reps on the road. These give a face to your company and are the best way of opening new accounts. It is interesting to note that Microdealer and Centresoft/US Gold now have salespeople regularly visiting their major independents.

Discounts are important. Too much given away to retailers makes you no profit; too little and the retailer may not be motivated to buy from you. However, incentives like free stock, holidays and volume related discounts are highly motivational — if they're presented correctly.

To be efficient requires a computer system giving up to date stock information, product range, ordering history, selling profile, etc etc. Additionally, the printing of both delivery notes and invoices are necessary. Nothing will lose your distribution company more credibility than out of stock situations, incorrect invoices and general inefficiency.

An informed retailer is likely to be a happy retailer. (Some are ridiculously grumpy sods, of course, but that's another story.) So what's needed are correct release dates, videos, point of sale and sample packaging. Trying to get any of these out of some publishers is like teaching an eel to juggle; no one said it was going to be easy.

As a means of keeping order levels up, back catalogue titles must be sold constantly. All too often quality products die because a distributor no longer "mentions" them to the retailer after launch day. Also, it may be possible to co-ordinate complimentary releases for the same day of the week, EA charges for deliveries of less than £100; why not adopt the same approach, thereby reducing some of the costs?

If you and your fellow group members start to sell directly, what happens to the existing independent distributors? You must eliminate all supplies to them (be careful as supplies to them (be careful as this approach), or supply few. Also, these distributors you supply must be told to sell within a given discounts structure, otherwise they will always offer better discounts thereby taking your market away from you.

Multiple choice

So far, this piece has focused on the independents, bless 'em. Yet WH Smith, Boots, Menzies, Woolworths and the other major chains make up somewhere in excess of 50 per cent of the total market. Access to these stores is gained via TBD, Centresoft and RM. There is little conflict of interest in two cases. But it may not be in the interest of Centresoft to supply your titles to its multiples if you are taking away some of its turnover at its independent level.

An EA type deal with TBD, Centresoft and RM allowing them only to sell your products to their multiples may be the best approach.

But take a leaf out of the book of the book distribution and newspaper world. Most books and newspapers are sold to the chains on a full sale or return basis. It is up to the newspaper and book distributors to produce as high a level of return per shelf metre as possible. These distributors buy space on the shelves and then put in the titles they want.

If a multiple could be persuaded that for a given area of space you with your product range could bring better returns, then you're in. Serviced by merchandising teams and backed up by telesales staff, your titles will always make it to the market.

If small groups of direct sales teams start, the educating of the retailer market will continue along the EA line, away from the distributor.

Not only do distributors have too much product to sell, but they are often tied in with another software house. They make more profit from selling their own in-house software than they do from a third party. Basic economics indicates as much. Can you name a major distributor which is not tied in with one publisher in some way or other?

Beware snipers

In these two pieces, various ideas and plans have been examined. However, if groups do set up there is one characteristic required over and above quality products, money and marketing.

It's guts.

You will be sniped at by all around you. You will be offered the chance to change your mind; you will be threatened; and you will be laughed at. But above all remember that you may now have started to change this market and you will always do a better job selling and promoting your own products yourself.

Good luck!

essential telephone numbers CTW essential telephone numbers CTW essential telephone numbers CTW essential telephone numbers CTW

SOFTWARE HOUSES

Company	Number
ABC	01 661 0488
Activision	01 431 1101
Adamsoft	0706 524304
Addictive Games	0202 296404
Advance	01 381 2756
Alligata	0742 670930
Alternative	0977 797777
Amazing Games	0233 83273
Amcom	0908 569212
AMS	0925 413501
Amsoft	0277 228888
Anagram	0705 210012
Anco	0322 92513
Anglosoft	0203 611943
Arcadia	0792 403363
Arcana	0272 297162
Arnor	0732 39011
Artic Computing	0401 43553
Atlantis	01 771 8642
Audiogenic	01 861 1166
Beau Jolly	07372 22003
Binary Design	061 832 4759
Blue Ribbon	0302 21136
Blythsoft	0728 3011
Borland	0734 320022
Bourne Educational	0794 523301
Britannia	0222 481135
Bubblebus	0732 355962
Bug Byte	01 439 0666
Cambrian	0766 831878
Casanova	0923 38043
Cascade Games	0423 504526
CCS	01 858 0763
CDS	0302 21134
Chalksoft	0775 69518
Chaos	0703 472605
Choice	09603 69129
Clares Micro Supplies	0606 48511
Code Masters	0926 814132
Compusound	0527 21439
Compsoft	04868 25925
Conversion Co	0947 605859
CP Software	0993 823463
Crysys	01 278 2377
CRL	01 533 2918
Dalali Software	01 681 1365
D + H Games	0438 314134
Database	0625 8748
Databyte	01 482 1755
Data Design	021 520 4046
Delta 4	04893 5800
Denton Design	051 709 3919
Dialog	0371 831009
Digita International	0395 45059
Digital Integration	0276 684959
Digital Research	0635 35304
Doctor Soft	0903 770044
Domark	01 947 5622
E2S	0223 462200
Edge	01 831 1801
Eidersoft	0708 856 468
Electric Dreams	0703 229694
Electric Studio	0462 420222
Electric	0480 66433
Electronic Arts	0753 49040
Elite	0543 414188
Endurance	01 367 8213
English	061 835 1358
Exocet	0782 811002
Firebird	01 631 5206
Firecracker	0782 44119
Gilsoft	0446 732765
Godax	0734 302600
Goliath Games	0934 22538
Grand Slam	01 247 6434
Gremlin Graphics	021 356 3377
GST	0954 61258
Heinemann	01 637 3311
Hewson	0235 832939
Hi Soft	0525 718181
Icon Design	061 773 9618
Images	0329 822672
Incentive	07356 77288
Infinite	061 256 1303
Infogrames	01 364 0123
Innova	0453 835379
Interceptor	07356 77421
Intuitive Systems	0438 317966
JCL Software	0892 27454
John Wiley	0243 784531
Konami	01 429 2446
Kosmos	05255 3942
Kuma	07357 4335
LCL	0491 579345
Level 9	0344 487597
Livewire	061 834 4233
Llamasoft	07356 4478
Locomotive	0306 887902
Logotron	0223 323656
Longman	01 236 0081
MacMillan	01 836 6633
Mandarin	0642 878888
MAP	061 624 5662
Martech	0323 768456
Mastertronic	01 377 6880
Matand	0332 513095
Maynard International	0734 302600
Melbourne House	01 377 8411
Microboard	04862 23845
Microdeal	0726 68020
Microgame	0223 841053
Micro Power	0532 834006
Micropro	01 879 1122
Microprose	0666 54326
Micro Selection	01 831 1801
Microsoft	0734 500741
Migent	01 499 4752
Minerva	0392 37756
Mirrorsoft	01 377 4644
Mizar	0908 679569
Mosaic	0425 57077
Novagen	021 449 9516
Ocean	061 832 6633
Odin	051 709 4462
Pandora	07356 77421
Palace	01 278 0751
Palantir	0491 574204
Piranha	01 836 6633
Pirate	01 278 2377
Players	07356 77421
PMS	021 643 7688
Power House	01 879 7266
Powerplay	0273 601882
Precision	01 330 7166
Probe	01 680 4142
PSS	0203 667556
Quest	0242 583661
Quicksilva	01 439 0666
Rainbird	01 240 8838
Real Time	0532 458948
Rio Promotions	01 349 2764
Robico	0443 227354
Robtek	01 847 4457
Sagesoft	091 284 7077
Sandpiper	0978 355333
School Software	010 35361 27994
Scisoft	07737 64501
Severn	0594 43352
Sharpsoft	01 739 8559
Smart Egg	0273 601882
Softek	01 831 1801
Software Projects	051 428 9393
Solar	061 724 8622
Solo	0905 58351
Speedysoft	024026 3703
Supersoft	01 861 1166
Superior	0532 459453
System 3	01 431 1101
Talent	041 552 2128
Tasman	0532 438301
Thalamus	07356 77261
Topologika	0733 244682
Trust	01 278 2377
Tynesoft	091 414 4611
Ultimate	0530 411485
US Gold	021 356 3388
Virgin Games	01 727 8070
Vortex	061 872 4747
Walking Circles	061 797 1624
WE Software	0684 69059
Xlent	021 3276110
Zeppelin	091 281 4401
Zoomsoft	01 482 1755

DISTRIBUTORS

Company	Number
A&S Software	01 595 4904
Addons	0703 634775
ADL	0785 566344
Amiga Centre	031 557 4242
A1 Primary	0977 797777
Asap	0734 280222
Audio Merchandisers	01 523 2981
Barry Paul	01 405 6078
Beta	0443 478777
Richard Bielby	0536 771429
Bookpoint	0235 835001
Budget Top Rack	0782 44119
Capital	01 928 5524
Capital Computer	0705 21001 2
Capri Marketing	06285 31244
Centresoft	021 356 3388
Chevron	04024 55453
Clares Micro Supplies	0606 48511
Columbus Computers	061 370 2118
Computatill	061 652 8006
Computer All	0232 644927
Computer Bookshops	021 706 1250
Comp. Sales & Merch.	0254 776677
Computer Tape W'sale	0232 692644
Data Micro Distrib	0635 523443
DDL	0925 814529
Drakus	01 549 7943
EEC	01 885 4111
Electomusic Research	0702 335747
Electric Distribution	0954 61258
Eltec	0274 722512
Euromax	0262 602541
Europa	0782 610011
Exeter	0392 77369
Export Systems	01 434 2891
1st Software	07357 52244
First	0256 463344
Garwood	0245 460788
Gem	0279 412441
Greyhound	0532 436300
Hamilton W'sale	021 742 5359
HB Marketing	0895 444433
HL	0501 41624
Hugh Symons	0202 745744
Jaybee	0537 56326
Kelator	01 546 0827
Lazer	0392 50434
Leisuresoft	0604 768711
Lightning	01 965 5555
Lightwave Leisure	051 639 5050
MCD	0268 590091

ANCILLARY

Company	Number
Ablex Audio	0952 680131
Active	01 385 7622
Advanced Finishers	0296 27178
Appletree Print	0302 890000
Ateka Tape Racks	0323 845880
B&L Distribution	0254 76316
Barrington Harvey	01 278 0333
BMF	01 487 3735
Bullet	01 992 7725
Bulletin 1000	01 221 3592
Capital Services	0222 461801
Columbus Computers	061 301 4320
Compact Case Int	07356 71500
Compunet	01 965 8866
Context	01 937 3595
Conversion Company	0527 21429
COS	01 609 8771
Crown Dust Covers	0984 33377
Dataclone	01 847 2785
Data Duplication	07356 77421
Dictaphone	09262 38311
Disc Copy Labs	0604 760261
Disc Form	0274 733129
Eden Plastics	01 646 5556
ELR International	0483 505705
FAST	01 430 2408
Fitzroy	01 388 9871
Forty Two PR	01 736 4281
Gallup	01 794 0461

Company	Number
Meedmore	051 521 2202
Microdealer Int.	0908 74000
Micro Peripherals	0256 473232
Midland Records	0543 378222
New Star	0277 220573
Norbain	0734 752201
Northamber	01 391 4100
Palan	01 368 5545
Pelham Distributors	01 879 3769
P&P Micros	061 8317922
Pick and Choose	0706 217 744
Prism	01 804 8100
PST	01 756 1616
R&AG Preston	0656 880965
Ricketts	01 223 3457
RM	01 848 7511
R&R Distribution	0977 795544
Screens	09274 20664
SDL	01 300 3399
Selective Marketing	061 225 9624
Silica Distribution	01 309 0300
Silicon Centre	031 557 4546
Simtek	0925 414025
SJB	0509 610333
Softly Softly	0705 673691
Softsel	01 568 8866
Software City	0332 291219
Software Express	021 328 3585
Software Limited	01 357 6424
Software Sales	01 226 0828
Stage One	0428 4001
Swift	0625 34999
Target	0922 644631
TBD	0782 566566
Thompson Cook	0527 25000
Thornley Distrib	061 627 0935
3SL	0270 761516
Twang (Wholesalers)	0734 580200
Ultrasoft	0743 241506
USD	01 879 7255
Vanguard Leisure	0772 617665
Wilkinson	0532 685955
Wonderbridge	01 995 9060
Wynd-Up	061 872 0170
ZCL	0543 414817

HARDWARE

Company	Number
Acorn	0223 245200
Akhter	0279 443521
Amstrad	0277 228888
Apple	0800 010 0500
Apricot	021 454 9091
Atari	0753 33344
Cambridge Computer	0223 312216
Camel Products	0223 314814
Casio Electronics	01 450 9131
Cheetah	0222 555525
Citadel	01 951 1848
Commodore	0628 770088
Compusound	0527 21429
Connexions	01-411 1282
Coolridge	0532 670625
CST	0438 352150
Datel	0782 273815
Dell Computers	0344 863999
Digitask	0342 24631
DIP	0483 301555
ELR	0483 505605
Epson	01 902 8892
Euromax	0262 602541
Four Systems	01 844 1399
Inter Orient	01 441 9866
JVC	01 450 2621

Company	Number
Gorick	01 493 8590
Headlines PR	01 278 0333
IDC	01 995 8082
IDD	01 731 8199
IEE	010 3314 535 4383
Instep	0753 45133
Interceptor Print	07356 77421
Inter-Mediates	0279 726585
JPPR	0726 61185
Kiltdale	0242 525458
Kustom Covers	0705 380531
Loadplan	01 200 7733
Magnam	0635 65509
Marjacq	01 724 0565
Microcontrol Systems	0602 391204
Micro Interface	01 340 0310
Micronet	01 278 3143
MICROS	041 334 6163
Montbuild	01 486 1951
Musicon Design	061 773 9618
NMA (PR)	01 487 3735
Option Racks	0935 824072
PC-XS	0734 394155
PDD	0532 526422
RAM/C	01 892 6596
Ramp	0234 213032
Red Box	0223 323143
Reflex Magnetics	01 722 9231
Richman Software	0279 25401
Romtec	0628 74242
Rose and Co	0954 211257
Satra	01 402 5151
Seikosha	0753 685873
Silicon Studios	061 627 3245
Simon Stable	0869 252831
S'ware Consultants	01 831 1882
Software Express	01 595 9047
Solution PR	0273 561306
Spool Data	0244 817602
S/W Dup. Ser.	0438 811730
Tequila Marketing	0925 726848
Top Copy (South West)	0726 68188
Transform	01 658 6350
Trojan	0792 205491
USU	01 379 5791
Verran	0276 66266
Wharton	01 891 6197
ZX Microfair	01 801 9172

Company	Number
Kempston	0908 690018
Konix	0495 350101
Kuma Computers	07357 4335
Mattel	0533 826666
Microvitec	0274 390011
Miles Gordon	0223 311665
Miracle Technology	0473 50304
Mitsubishi	0923 34618
Nidd Valley	0937 844661
Nintendo	0203 28701
Olivetti	01 785 6666
Opus	0737 765080
Psion	01 723 9408
Ram Electronics	0252 850085
Red Box	0480 87464
Research Machines	0865 249866
Rockfort	01 203 0191
Romantic Robot	01 200 8870
Samsung	01 391 0168
Schneider	0604 769255
Schon Keyboards	04865 3836
Seiko	0628 34655
Seikosha	0753 685873
Sharp	061 205 2333
Sony	0784 61688
Spectravideo	0235 555455
Spectrum	0582 402545
Star	01 840 1800
Tandy	0922 710000
Tatung	0952 613111
Toshiba	0932 78566
Trojan	0792 205491
Vulcan Electronics	01 203 6366
Watford Electronics	0923 37774
Zenith	06286 68588

PUBLICATIONS

Company	Number
Ace	0225 446034
Amiga User	01 278 0333
Amstrad Action	0458 74011
Amstrad Computer User	0277 234434
Amstrad PCW	0277 234434
Amstrad Prof. Comp.	0277 234434
Apple User	0625 878888
Atari ST User	0625 878888
Atari User	0625 878888
CCI	01 278 0333
Commodore User	01 251 6222
Computer Shopper	01 631 1433
Computer Weekly	01 661 3044
Courtesy Publications	0372 60234
Crash	0584 5851
CTW	Editorial 0438 313470
	Advertising 0438 310105
	Circulation 0438 310106
	Fax 0438 741247
CWTAP	0625 878888
Disk User	01 437 0626
Games Machine	0584 5851
MicroScope	01 631 1433
Micro User	0625 878888
PC Amstrad	01 439 4242
PC Dealer	01 439 4242
PC Plus	0225 446034
Pop Weekly	01 834 1717
Sinclair User	01 251 6222
Software Choice	0372 60233
ST/Amiga Format	0225 446034
ST Update	01 834 1717
ST World	0243 783932
Telelink	0625 878888
The Bug	01 883 1606
Your Commodore	01 437 0626
Your Computer	01 834 1717
Your Sinclair	01 631 1433
Zzap	0584 5851

SPECTRUM TOP 20

TW	LW	Title	Publisher	RRP£
1	7	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
2	1	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	7.95
3	NE	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	9.99
4	2	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
5	3	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	4	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
7	35	BRUCE LEE	AMERICANA	2.99
8	13	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
9	NE	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
10	14	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
11	NE	SWORD SLAYER	PLAYERS	1.99
12	11	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99
13	25	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
14	6	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
15	15	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
16	5	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
17	21	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
18	9	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	8.99
19	8	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
20	RE	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	2.99

C64 TOP 20

1	2	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
2	1	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
3	NE	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	1.99
4	8	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE	9.95
5	10	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
6	20	BRUCE LEE	AMERICANA	2.99
7	15	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
8	3	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
9	16	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	9.99
10	11	IMPOSSIBLE MISSION 2	EPYX	9.99
11	NE	GREAT AMERICAN ROAD RACE	FIREBIRD	1.99
12	12	KONAMI'S ARCADE COLLECTION	IMAGINE	9.95
13	4	ALIEN SYNDROME	ACE	9.95
14	35	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
15	13	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
16	22	FRUIT MACHINE SUMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
17	17	FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
18	19	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
19	RE	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	1.99
20	RE	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	1.99

AMSTRAD TOP 10

1	3	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	1.99
2	4	A C E	CASCADE	2.99
3	1	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
4	NE	BEACH BUGGY SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD	1.99
5	5	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	1.99
6	2	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	1.99
7	NE	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	1.99
8	14	BRUCE LEE	AMERICANA	2.99
9	7	FRANK BRUNOS BOXING	ENCORE	1.99
10	12	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	9.99

ATARI ST TOP 5

1	NE	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2	ADDICTIVE	19.95
2	6	GAUNTLET 2	US GOLD	19.99
3	2	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.99
4	4	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	14.95
5	1	CARRIER COMAND	RAINBIRD	24.95

AMIGA TOP 5

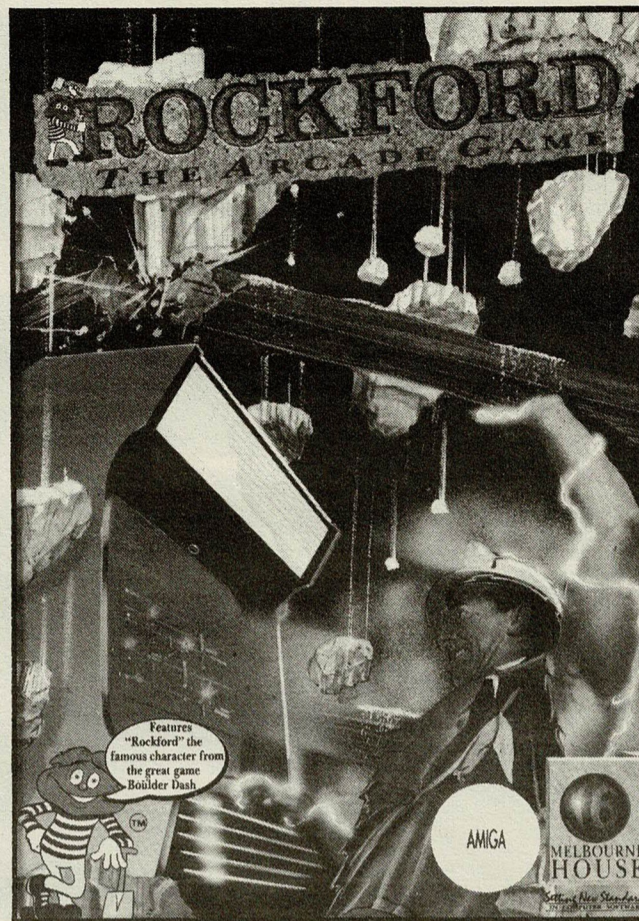| 1	1	INTERCEPTOR	ELECTRONIC ARTS	24.95
2	NE	THREE STOOGES	MIRRORSOFT	24.95
3	4	AAARGH	MELBOURNE HOUSE	19.99
4	NE	PETER BEARDSLEYS FOOTBALL	GRAND SLAM	19.99
5	RE	ROAD WARS	MASTERTRONIC	19.99

SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago	This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
SPECTRUM	45.5	44.4	43.5	46.0	31.0	29.8	27.6	28.4
COMMODORE 64	22.6	22.2	21.2	21.3	23.6	24.0	24.9	22.5
AMSTRAD	17.7	18.5	18.7	16.3	18.5	19.9	20.4	18.3
ATARI ST	4.4	5.0	6.2	4.0	7.5	7.5	7.5	6.8
COMMODORE 16	2.1	1.6	2.2	2.0	2.6	2.0	2.7	3.7
BBC	1.9	1.4	1.4	2.2	3.3	3.3	2.9	3.8
AMIGA	1.7	2.5	1.7	1.6	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.8
ATARI	1.1	1.7	1.7	1.2	2.0	3.4	4.0	2.7
ELECTRON	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.7	2.6	2.6	2.2	2.8

AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

Units Sold			
This week	Last week	4wks ago	12wks ago
76	76	83	100

Soft options

ROCKFORD THE ARCADE GAME

Features "Rockford" the famous character from the great game Boulder Dash

HEWSON: *Marauder* (64 — £X.95) Amphetamine shoot 'em up in the classic style. Hewson is moving into the 16-bit fray soon and should do well when the gamers get bored of pretentious titles which claim to have a point. ▲

INCENTIVE: *Dark Side* (SpAm — £9.95-£14.95) Sequel to the much praised *Driller* and programmed in the Freescape design. Apparently this one has a mite more gameplay than the original. *Driller* itself is being cut in price from £14.95 to £9.95 in order to "attract a wider audience". ▲

MASTERTRONIC: *Rockford* (Am — £2.99) Good value bit of budget which deserves a peek in the charts. ▲

MEDIAGENIC: *Craps Academy* (Ag — £24.95) Mediagenic releases crap game. No surprises there but craps really is the basis of this. Dicey. ▲
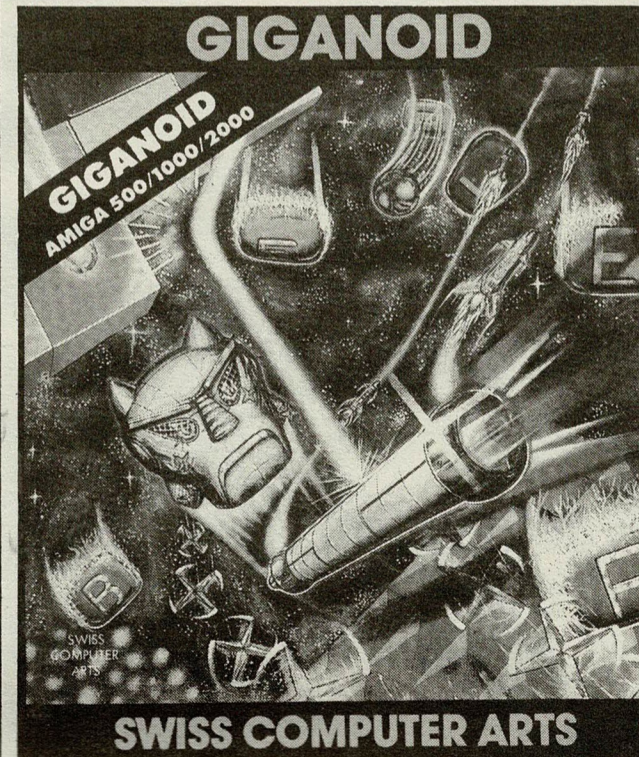
▲ **CASCADE:** *19* (SpAm64 — £9.95/£14.95) Inspired by a record released in 1985, announced by Cascade over a year ago and delayed at least three times. It's another game based on the Vietnam war but maybe this conscript has missed about where the 1936 the boat. ▲ **CRL:** *Brainbox* (ST — £19.95) Go into a pub these days and it's more than likely that a trio Olympics were held or who the patron saint of taxidermy is. CRL has kindly launched a computer game which hopefully will drive them home and leave us all in peace. ▲

DARK SIDE

of real ale swillers will be hovering over a trivia machine babbling tosh

MEDIAGENIC: *Land Of Legends* (Ag — £29.99) Here's an idea to grab the imagination. A game in which the player roams about dungeons encountering fiendish beasts. Be warned. The beings who play these things will be slithering into retail outlets up and down the land complete with anorak and oversized trousers. ▲

MICRODEAL: *Giganoid* (Ag — £14.95) Trendy *Breakout* affair with a few quirks thrown in to give it a taste of originality. Microdeal has invented an absurd storyline to pump up the interest factor but *Breakout* clones are still as popular as ever. ▲

OCEAN: *Where Time Stood Still* (Sp128ST — £7.95-£19.95) Time has certainly stood still on this offering. It was pencilled in for a May launch but difficulties have meant a delay. Not a licence of the much televised movie, but broadly similar nonetheless. ▲

SILVERBIRD: *Pogostick Olympics* (64 — £1.99) It may seem like the worst idea for a computer game since *Jack Charlton's Fishing* but other formats have been well received by the youngsters.

GIGANOID

GIGANOID AMIGA 500/1000/2000

SWISS COMPUTER ARTS

Dealers: conservatism rules

Re: "Opus (and others) slammed" (CTW June 27).

Mr Clark of Cerac certainly seems to have had his problems. However, he should not tar all suppliers with the same brush. Some of us offer on-site rather than return-to-base support, and if he had opened his eyes and looked around, he'd have no doubt discovered several companies, including my own, who take a different approach to dealer sales. Big doesn't always mean beautiful, Mr Clark!

That is not my main point, however. Mr Clark — and his fellow dealers — should try to imagine what it's like from the other side of the fence, i.e. what it can be like, trying to sell to a dealer.

Frankly, 90 per cent of them never seem to open a trade computer magazine so I should be on safe ground. By not doing so, they never learn of new developments, and therefore carry on with the same old tired products, month after month.

So, it's necessary to resort to calling them direct. A typical scenario:

"Hello, it's the sales manager of XYZ Co — can I speak to your marketing/sales manager please?"
a) "He never talks to anyone on the phone."
b) "He's in a meeting," (permanently) "can you call back?"
c) "Can you send us some literature (for my bin)?"

With the one in ten cases where you get further, we try:

"If you need a quality machine, at the right price, ex-stock, with a free on-site warranty, why don't you try one of ours for two weeks — no strings attached, and we'll pay the transport in the unlikely event you don't sell it?"
a) "We're quite happy selling Amstrad (none of our customers will ever need anything else)."
b) "We only sell about one PC a month (ever wondered why?)."
c) "It sounds alright, can you send us some literature (for my bin)?"

In the same issue, you quoted CompuAdd's Bill Hayden as saying that the major retail and mail order players in the UK lack professionalism. Now I don't want to tar all dealers with the same brush — there are some very good ones out there — but, there are an awful lot more who walk around with blinkers on . . .

Yours sincerely
Clive Warner
Managing director
Digital Matrix
Solihull

— Whereas some might think that Clive Warner is a little foolish going public with strong views about some dealers' lack of professionalism, it's doubtless what many smaller manufacturers believe. Nonetheless, with the Amstrad adspend and strong distribution, it's evident that anyone else has got a tough battle on his hands to win the hearts, minds and wallets of dealerfolk.

Subtle isn't the word

I've just had the misfortune to read the letter (CTW June 13th) sent by the two – and I choose my words carefully – "Members of The Bug Editorial Team". Yes the eponymous Jaron and Jeffrey.

What a pair of narrow-minded, shortsighted and plain naive kids. But I suppose their rantings can be excused because, after all, they are "kids".

They seem to be typical of the home computer age. Resplendent in flares and anoraks, the gruesome twosome (plus members of the "editorial team") haunt the pages of magazines, microfairs and on one (or was it two?) memorable occasions, television.

It surely can't be normal for young people such as these to sit in front of TV screens blasting away blobs from the Planet Mega-Mega-Shoot-'em-Up, or hunting for the lost drainpipe in a far away cave armed only with a water pistol, and then writing about them (badly). Whatever happened to healthy activities like football, kiss-chase (or is that sexist?), rock music etc etc?

Pseudo claptrap such as the rubbish that J&J serve up in their crusade against sexism is, quite frankly, embarrassing and merely shows what sheltered, boring, pathetic existence the little creeps lead. If they are the future of "journalism", "intellect", or God forbid "Government", then Christ help us. What harm can a picture of a naked woman do – apart from shocking J&J into realising that women's bodies do exist in all their glory (or, in some cases, lack of it – oops, sexist).

Face it kids: you're fighting a pointless battle. What's more, the battle doesn't even exist. Even if it did, your "campaign" is on a par with Napoleon trying to fight Eisenhower – swords against tanks. Brilliant.
Yours in total bemusement,
Steve Ryles,
North Devon

– If Steve Ryles didn't exist, would anyone have bothered to invent him?

Strip wit

At the risk of killing off the exchange of letters between The Bug and Franco Frey, surely the most entertaining since The Great Corporate Willy Waving Correspondence, can we make what seems to us an obvious point? The month before The Games Machine printed the final screen of Anco's Strip Poker, Rod Lawton, reviewing it in Ace, observed that the only reason people bought such games was for the final screen, and that if you published it, there would be little point in shelling out for the software itself. This is exactly what TGM have done.

We can appreciate Anco being a bit miffed, and Franco Frey pretending diplomatic ignorance, but you'd think that The Bug would see the funny side of it, not to say approve.
Yours right onwardly
Chris Elliott and Richard Edwards
Productions Creative Writing
London E12

Franco frayed

Poor old Franco!
Yours faithfully

Graeme Kidd
Sawbridgeworth
Herts

KIDD: Loquacious

Poel the other one

Please don't call it "clone-soft".

The "budget" software market has very little to do with "clones" of high priced software these days. 'Geriatricsoft' more appropriately describes the offerings of those who exhume back-catalogue products and relaunch them just 'cause they're cheap. Maybe "Lazarusoft" would do.

But most budget software is based on opportunistic attempts to unload non-standard, underfeatured and underpowered products in the wake of the "Amstrad effect". The so-called "skinnysoft" market.

The haunting of the marketplace by the products that were once written off by the original publishers has fogged the issue for those of us who genuinely offer products that match and exceed the performance of the current up-market titles: hence our intention to introduce our new upgrades at the more traditional end of the marketplace.

However, we are not abandoning the budget market-place, because our current budget range will remain sedately at the budget point — "steadysoft" — while the Turbo charged, feature injected upgrades appear at the prices that dealers like, and users trust.

The ASA's recent criticism of Amstrad for misleading the market with its not-so-industry-standard range of software highlights why it is necessary to re-establish the difference between our range of "musclesoft" and the rest of the budget brigade.

Yours etc
Bill Poel

Paperback Software
Brentwood
Essex

— A new verb is shining in the firmament: to poel. It means to get hold of the wrong end of the stick, embarrassingly so. For the esteemed William appears to be the only figure who believes "clonesoft" to mean packages which clone high-priced software. The world and its Amstrad-buying auntie has been using the term to mean cheap software for clone machines for many a good month.

Still, it fills up a few column inches with marginally interesting prose . . .

SOR point

To all Software Distributors:

Would you also like my account of approx £15,000 per annum? Price — SOR.

That's £30,000 worth of business offered in just two weeks (ref Hagar Electronics letter *CTW* issue 191).

Let's look at the problems from the distributors point of view.

Problem 1. Retailers over ordering, giving distributors larger returns handling costs.

Solution 1. Limit returns to X per cent of monthly order value.

Problem 2. Accounting problems arising from distributors not knowing what their true sales are.

Solution 2. Operate a standard invoice/credit note procedure, with true sales becoming apparent and predictable within a few months. After all distributors all get SOR from the software houses.

Advantages 1. Retailers have less dead stock, meaning capital is released to buy more recent titles, keeping both retailers and their customers happy.

Advantages 2. Retailers will be more willing to accept the word of 'telesales Sally' about the *Megablaster* game from Unheard of Software Ltd. This will give new software firms with quality product a chance to get a foothold in the market. These new companies may also be willing to give the wholesalers a higher margin than they get from the larger established houses.

The first wholesaler to put the right deal together, and stick an ad in *CTW* announcing the fact, may just make a killing!!

Yours hopefully
Brian Beattie
Nebulae Computer Supplies
Carrickfergus
Co Antrim

A creep writes . . .

Unlike your previous correspondent (Viva Freebies, *CTW* May 30th), I really don't mind sounding creepy at all – he did, anyway. Having just returned from eight wholly amazing days and nights in Singapore and Bangkok, I would appreciate the use of your pages to shout a resounding thank you to both ZCL and Commodore.

The tour organisation was excellent, the hotel accomodation superb, the itinerary nicely balanced, and ZCL's and CBM's staff helpful and understanding.

Like the Mexico trip, there was no effort to disguise this as anything other than a well-deserved reward for a fair amount of hard sales work: no doubt the relationships that were built on gallons of Thai beer will bear further fruit for all parties in the next twelve months.
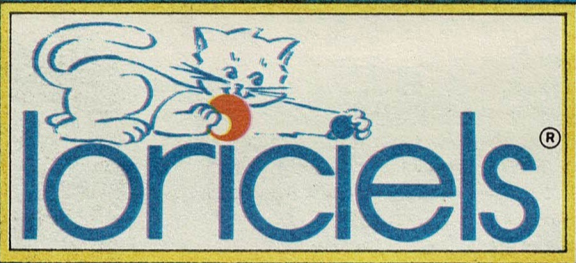
The retailer is all too often seen as the poor partner in the selling business, and it was refreshing to be treated respectfully (some of the time) and entertainingly (the rest of the time) by two of the so-called big-shots of the industry.

Naturally both ZCL and Commodore have been able to extract extra sales and presumably PR from this exercise, but for my part, I have also managed extra sales, extra profit, and had a hell of a good holiday thrown in as well.

So, thanks again and I suppose I am looking forward to the Amstrad weekend for 700 at Skegness.

Another shy retiring retailer maintaining his anonymity to preserve his credibility – besides, I didn't let the wife know where I was going.

– Ah, there's nothing so fine as to receive someone else's thank-you letter. And if the other manufacturers can see how well behaved dealers can be, perhaps they'll also indulge in foreign junkets (that was fairly subtle, wasn't it Amstrad, Atari etc?).

Hart breaks
Continued from front page

while Commodore staff, there appears to have been little prospect of Hart ever joining Atari. "I don't think they would ever have wanted me. Just what would Tom Hart ever have done there?

I've got a lot of respect for Bob Gleadow and he has for me, but I'd find it very difficult trying to persuade people that the ST was better than the Amiga when I know that that's not the case. Leaving Commodore doesn't mean that you can lose your love of a product like the Amiga."

The move for Franklin to take over sales appears to be a logical move. Much of his former career with Rank Xerox and then Granada was spent as a salesman, and those around him point to his particular personal aptitude for this area.

Hart's departure is wholly unrelated to that of the more junior David Hill (*CTW* June 27th). Coincidentally, two other Commodore staff members also announced their resignations last week; neither is understood to have held an especially important position in the overall scheme of things.

The changes were announced at the very end of Commodore's financial year to June. Hart said that it would be difficult to say if there would be any possible benefit to sales with Franklin in charge, since that would imply criticism of the current incumbent, Jim Housego.

PC User
Continued from front page

"Our stand has been crowded the whole time," offered Borland's UK boss Denis Moran. "I don't care what takes place outside and what other people think."

Star Micronics' sales and marketing manager Roger Bayley also came out in support. "I think it was a good decision to come. Why go into the summer saying 'we're going to have a drop'? Instead, we're here doing something about it."

Mindscape
Continued from front page

Gremlin (*Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer*) and Databyte (*Superstar Ice Hockey*).

More substantially the firm had a publishing agreement with Mirrorsoft which involved all its 16-bit games. That runs out this month. Cinemaware products used to be marketed in the UK via Mindscape and through Mirrorsoft.

This spring *CTW* asked Mindscape boss Roger Buoy whether or not he would be setting up here: "Eventually one has to set up in the UK," he said. "We're all playing in a global market."

Disk drought
Continued from front page

25 per cent. It is not though, wholly unknown for distributors and manufacturers to ramp up shortage fever in the market.

Meantime another disk supplier has warned of shortages. DiskXpress director Greg Kyriacou told *CTW*: "It's a matter of limited capacity and manufacturers are building that up and making heavy investments. It's a growing medium."

New Olivetti man takes Acorn helm

Acorn has appointed Olivetti's executive vice president for strategy and development Elserino Piol as its new chairman.

Olivetti has a controlling interest in Acorn and believes that someone from the Strategy and Development Division should oversee Acorn's operation. Thus, erstwhile chairman Bruno Soggiu's recent move out of this area has caused the change.

Acorn is insisting that Soggiu remains both a major figure within Olivetti and a director at Acorn. Piol had been his immediate boss at Olivetti.

"Like Bruno he'll spend a reasonable amount of time here but he's not a full-time executive," explained Acorn's financial director Sam Wauchope to *CTW*.
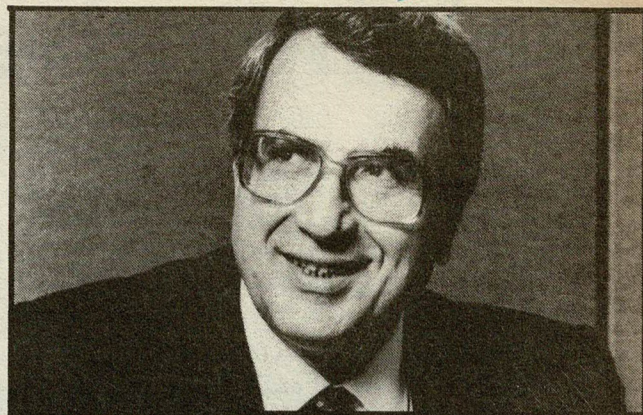
"I don't think it'll have a major effect on how we're run. It'll assist us in opening certain channels in terms of working with Olivetti to the maximum benefit.

Wauchope expects Olivetti to start using an increasing amount of Acorn-developed product for its own lines.

The first of these tie-ups was announced recently when Olivetti decided to add Acorn's new laser card to its ETV range. The initial order was worth around £500,000.

Soggiu was chairman at Acorn for 18 months. In that time it posted 1987 losses of £3.3 million.

Wauchope, however, refuted suggestions that it had not been a successful reign.

PIOL: New man at Acorn

"It was a mixed time but we achieved a lot. One or two things happened which we didn't want to happen but it certainly wasn't a black period."