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BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY

#### Lightwave

FOR THE BIGGEST RANGE OF QUALITY **TESTED COMPUTER CABLES AND ACCESSORIES** 

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### MacByte dips out

Software duplicator MacByte has gone bust owing £350,000 in a messy and con-fusing liquidation.

Reasons for the bust have still not become clear despite a recent creditors meeting. The fact that the company reported an annual gross profit of £205,966 on a £700,000 turnover last January makes the liquidation even more baffling. MacByte was losing £100,000 a month in the early part of this year.

It is understood that the firm was chiefly involved in business software duplication. It also distributed duplication equipment in the UK via a licence agreement with Mountain Computer in California and had close contacts in the USSR.

Director Michael McMahon is currently in Germany with his subsidiary MacByte Gmbh which is apparently still solvent. That firm owes the UK branch some £25,000. McMahon has previously exhibited hardware in the USSR against UK Customs rulings an action which resulted in investigations by Customs officials

Creditors were "none the wiser" by the end of their meeting as to the reasons for the sharp losses. Apparently "extensive interrogation" of McMahon took place there, with "no satisfactory explana-

Continued on page two

A TOKEN EFFORT?



Microdealer's boss Lee Ginty recently announced a tokensbased software promotional deal. CTW talks to some optimistic dealers ...... 10

#### TUNNELLING **CHANNELS**

French software house Loriciel claims that its "global approach" will make it one of the very few European publishers to succeed in the UK. CTW listens in .....

#### **BUCKING TRENDS**

David Lester weighs up the chances of budget 16-bit games .....

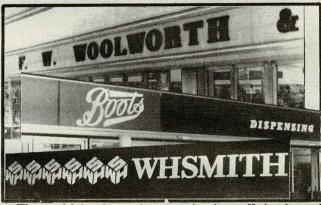
CHARTS 17/LETTERS 18

# Chains link up in new games ruling

Unprecedented agreement on leisure software publishing has been arrived at by the three leading multiple chains.

Following complaints from all sides of the industry about the difficulties of displaying unusual sized boxes, standards for four main areas have been adopted by WH Smiths, Boots and Woolworths. Between them, the stores sell upwards of 40 per cent of all leisure software in the UK.

It is understood that the fourth leading multiple, John Menzies, is also in agreement with the guidelines. Due to its traditionally subterraneanly low profile, though, it is not willing to go public



The multiples hope that software houses will comply with the suggestions, if they don't do so already. The intention is to stick rigidly by the recommendations from September 1st.

At this stage, it is not yet clear what will happen if one of the leading software houses

persists in proffering bastard sizes. The statement from the three firms said that exceptions can be made, though these are evidently to be discouraged.

The statement in full:

Budget (i) All budget software must be packaged wherever possible in a single cassette clear audio case.

(ii) Deviations will be considered for selection only in the event that the product has multiple cassettes or extensive instructions which cannot conveniently fit inside a single audio box. If the product deviates it must follow the guidelines as per 8-bit software.

Acceptable pack - Single audio clear box

8-bit software (cassette) (i) No software will be stocked in a size larger than a standard A5 box.

(ii) Individual titles must be packaged in a clear double audio box. Deviations will only be considered for selection if the product requires more than two cassettes or if Continued on page two

#### **UK** cloners brush off **Dell deal**

IBM's continuing hunt for backdated royalties took a further step last week, but the smaller UK cloners are still unworried.

Opus and Spectrum both reacted nonchalantly to the news that the major US cloner Dell has signed a licence agreement with IBM to pay royalties on sales of both past, present and future compati-



**DELL: IBM deal** 

This is the first deal to be made since IBM made clear its intention to seek retroactive payments on claimed patent infringements. It is demanding one per cent of total sales to be paid back by the end of the year.

"We're not worried about the threats but we are holding

Continued on page two

Epson is lining up faster versions of its entire PC range for later this month, with prices rising between £100-£200.

The move will follow swiftly the 10 per cent hike on all Epson's printers which comes into effect this week due to the European Commission's recent 33.4 per cent levy on imported Japanese dot matrix

Epson itself is preferring not to give exact details on the PC increases and two new models until their official announcement just prior to the PC User Show on June 28-30th.

"Epson product is conspicuously underpriced at the moment and many competitors have been shifting their prices up of late," commented UK corporate communications manager Edward Huggins to CTW.

Epson's erstwhile entry level machine the PCE with one 20Mb hard drive will go up £100 to £1,299 (ex VAT).

There will, however, be a new starting system for £799: a PCE with single floppy drive and no video adaptor.

A single floppy version of the PC AXII AT clone is also lined up, costing £1,299. The current version will increase by £200 to £1,699. The PC AX40 and 80 will also see an increase of £200 to £2,199 and £2,495 respectively.

The hikes are being attributed to substantial performance improvements rather than any need to counteract rising D-Ram chip prices or

the like. Each machine is expected to run 75 per cent faster as a result of the enhance-

The printer price increases range from a miserly £4 on the bottom end LX800 and top end ink jet and laser printers, to £84 on the previously £745 EX1000. The nine pin LX800 now retails at £279 and the entry level 24 pin model, the LQ500, has gone up £14 to

Epson said it was determined not to transfer the full Continued on page two

## **Amstrad** dishes it out

**Amstrad will become** one of the prime movers in embryonic satellite TV market next year with the launch of a £199 dish and reseiver.

The firm is currently "tooling up" for the production of up to 100,000 units per month. Deliveries are expected to begin in the first quarter of 1989 with assembly taking place in a high unemployment area in the UK.

The 60 centimetre dish and receiver will be branded Amstrad Fidelity. Currently such products are selling for around £1,000, plus up to £200 for aerial erection. Amstrad's offering will be VAT inclusive and installable for as little as £40.

Amstrad chairman Alan Sugar characteristically argued that "a lot of nonsense" has been talked about the satellite TV market so far. He hopes that his cheap package can clear up any confusion and ignite the market's poten-

EMAP will be launching its first new leisure Penn will edit The One and more flexibility in page decomputer magazine in nearly seven years next September, backed by a quartet of former Newsfield writers.

The new title is provisionally called The One, and will cover the burgeoning 16-bit entertainment scene. Unveiled at the PC Show, the initial print run will be 50,000 with a cover price of £1.50. Erstwhile Zzap editor Gary



EMAP's DUMMY RUN: A spread from The One, due in September

former Newsfield colleagues sign. Given all the pages pub-Graeme Kidd, Julian Rignall and Steve Jarrett will be amongst the regular contributors. "Software houses are prepared to spend more time and money in making 16-bit software special, so they deserve special support such as detailed two or three page re-

views," Penn offered.
One hiccup for EMAP has been the name. The initial far stronger title 16-Blitz appears to have been nixed after the possible threat of legal action from the publishers of youth culture magazine Blitz.

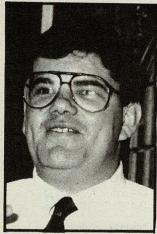
EMAP is claiming that The One has an advantage in its size, which will be larger than A4. The aim here is both to allow it to stand out on the shelves amongst the plethora of A4 size glossy computer magazines, and to enable lished to date in computer magazines, layouts in general are becoming repetitious.

A dummy issue is due to be shown to potential advertisers this week. The launch is being backed by a claimed £150,000 adspend.

In effect, EMAP will be up against both Ace from Future Publishing and Newsfield's The Games Machine, though they also cover the 8-bit sector. It will also be fighting for market share against the rackful of ST and Amiga specific magazines launched in recent

**©**EMAP's last leisure market computer magazine launch was back in November 1981. Since then, it has purchased both Sinclair and Commodore

# **Borland profits leap**



KAHN: Profits up to \$7m

**Borland last week** posted year-end pre-tax profits of \$7.17 million, a figure broadly in line with most City analysts' predictions.

This 52 per cent increase was supplemented by a 162 per cent rise in sales and royalty income from \$29.2 million to \$76.5 million.

The results were helped enormously by the firm's good performance in the last quarter ending March 31st.

Pre-tax profits for this period totalled \$2.1 million compared to just \$250,000 the previous quarter. Sales and royalty income rose from \$21.7 million to \$29.2 mil-

It was Borland's comparatively poor performance in the third quarter that led to the revision of year-end predic-tions. Both Barclays de Zoete Wedd and Schroder Securities were at one stage forecasting a \$13 million profit.

The fourth quarter benefited from the successful introduction during the preceding period of products such as Quattro without experiencing high marketing costs. In all, six new products were launched in the 1987/88 fiscal year.

Whilst announcing the results, Borland also finally unveiled the English version of its Sprint word-processor which will retail at £195. The OS/2 version of relational database Paradox was also launched, carrying a rather higher price tag of £549.95.

On the results, Borland chairman Philippe Kahn offered: "As demonstrated by our recent product announcements Borland continues its product development programmes and looks forward to a successful future.'

#### Chains

Continued from front page

instructions are too extensive to conveniently fit inside a double audio box.

(iii) Deviations will be packaged either in an A5 size box (cardboard or plastic) in which case the artwork must be landscape or a softbox, or 152mm x 182mm (cardboard or plastic) in which case the artwork must be portrait.

The preferred option from above for any product not in double audio cases is the softbox size and the meeting strongly recommends that publishers move toward this size of packaging as soon as possible.

●8-bit software (disk)
All 3" or 5.25" disks suitable for the Amstrad CPC, Spectrum +3 or Commodore 64 machines must be packaged where possible in a clear crystal compact disk size case or the same size box as the cas-

Acceptable packs: double audio clear plastic box, softbox (portrait artwork) and A5 box (landscape artwork)

#### ●16-bit software

It is very strongly recommended that as soon as possible all 16 bit product, whether imported or manufactured in the UK will be packaged in: i) Crystal compact case

ii) Softbox (cardboard or plastic)

iii) A5 box (cardboard or plastic) as 8 bit.

It was recognised that this was an area of rapid growth and therefore packaging should be standardised as soon as possible.

# Epson

Continued from front page

33.4 per cent levy imposed by the EC on to its consumers. "We're absorbing the increase as much as we can. It's going to hurt us but still less than the majority of our competitors. Because of the volume of our business and inherent profit we're in a better position to ride the levy," said Huggins.

Epson has six months further lobbying to do until a law is passed to make the levy stand for five years. A pessimistic Huggins noted that the initial ruling is "unlikely to be repealed".

"We're going to have to bear the pain. But the long term effect on reduced bottom line profit will ultimately cause us to rethink our investment plans in the UK," he warned.

## MacByte

Continued from front page tion forthcoming".

The creditors succeeded in removing the directors'choice of a 'friendly liquidator' in favour of joint liquidators from London accountancies Robson Rhodes and Touche Ross. Eric Stonham from Touche Ross told CTW: "They lost their sales staff and they were going to lose the Mountain account, but we have yet to scrutinise this fully.

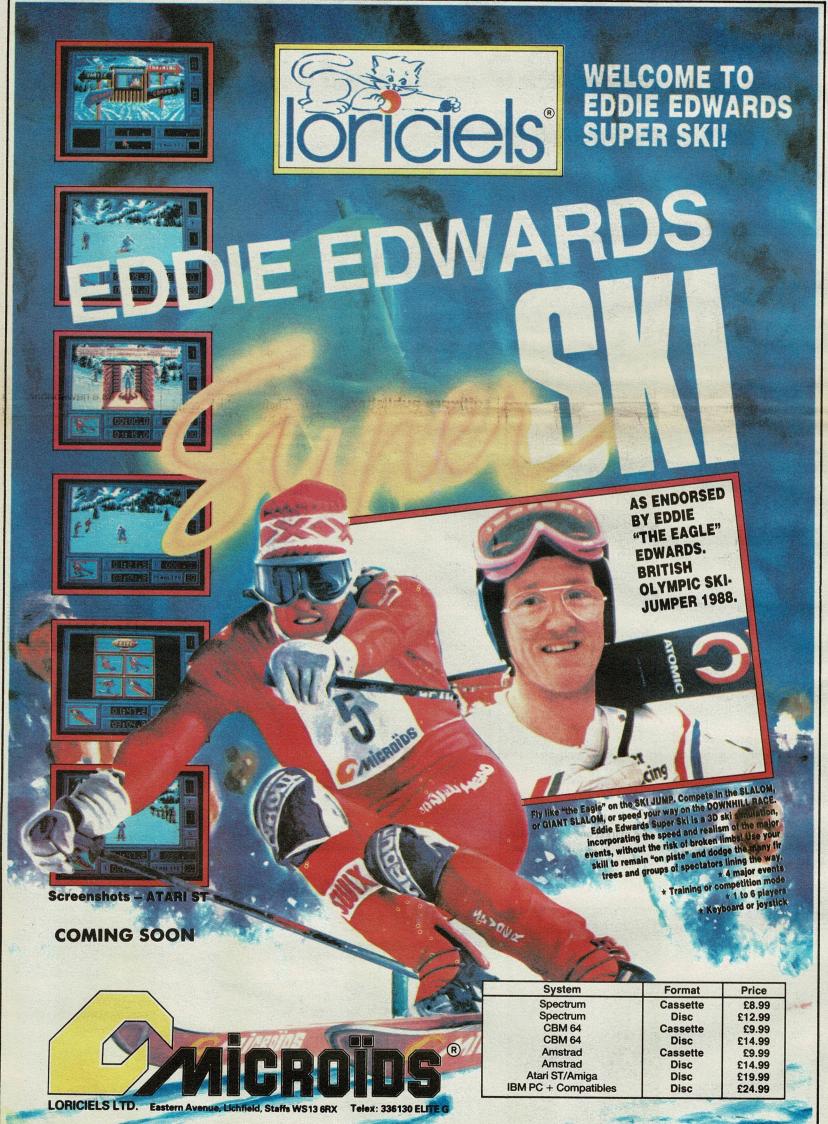
"It's a relatively complicated matter made worse by the fact that the landlord of the firm's premises changed the locks in May. The directors wanted to go into liquidarion at the end of April couldn't get the resolution from the shareholders."

The Hayes based firm was set up three years ago. Major creditors include Xidex (£56,035); Mountain Computer (£74,413) as well as Eden Plastics, Memorex, Burroughs Machines, MBS and Tetra.

#### **Dell deal** brush off

Continued from front page talks with some of our suppliers about it," offered Steve Cole at Spectrum, which produces the SBC range.

This reaction was echoed by Opus' sales and marketing director Martin Breffit: "It's something we'll be discussing, perhaps, later this year," he told CTW.



# CBM 64 leisure push Seoul bundle kicks off

Full details of Commodore's C64 Olympic theme summer bundle were announced last week.

It has emerged that contrary to earlier statements the new price of the 64 will be £149.99 and not £139.95. Ten mainly Ocean games loosely based on the Seoul Olympics are being bundled with the machine.

This was announced by CBM Europe's top brass at the Commodore Show amongst promises that the firm would be throwing its weight behind the leisure sector "wholeheartedly". It is now understood that £6 million has been allotted to advertising the leisure machines, the bulk of which will be directed at the Amiga market. TV ads are being planned.

The Olympic Summer Pack features ten games inper Test, Barry McGuigan's Boxing, World Series Baseball and Track and Field. A competition is also being organised with a trip to the Games in Seoul as the major prize.

"We're going to take back some of the market share which we deserve," said a clearly animated Kristian Andersen (vice president for Northern and Western Europe). "The UK is number one on our list. I'm going to give them quite a lot of money - but we want it back.'

Marketing manager Dean Barrett echoed this and said that the A500 would now be aimed directly at "the so called yuppie market". "We have not forgotten the consumer market," he said. "We'll be attacking all fronts."

UK boss Steve Franklin said at the press conference that "we want the business market. But the consumer of the A500 price cut was made at the conference. Andersen played down fears that grey imports from cheaper machines on the continent

would have any effect. He claimed that some suppliers were using Commodore products as a loss leader to attract young buyers.

"They might be losing two

or three per cent. These are commodities for young people and they're the ones they want in the shops. I don't



**OLYMPIC PACK: £20 off** 

# Hardware giants to bite Bullet?

After its entry into the software merchandising market earlier this year record industry promotion company Bul-let is planning a foray into hardware business.

Plans are afoot to pitch Atari, Commodore and Amstrad for in-store promotion business. This will almost certainly not include any technical demonstrations: the traditional approach of posters, competitions and so on are more likely.

It had been mooted that Commodore was planning such a move already although, as yet, no decisions have been stage it isn't clear whether this made. Bullet managing director Barry Evans could not give any specifics on what precise form the merchandising campaigns would take.

'It really depends on what they want us to do," he said. "I should think Atari and Commodore will be very interested." On the possibility of Bullet appointing technically trained staff he commented: "I don't think we'll be getting involved in that side of things - just merchandising and in store promo-

On the software side Bullet is currently in negotiations with Electronic Arts to handle its games promotion. At this EVANS: Hardware pitcher

will take the shape of a long term deal.



# **ESPA** closer

The entertainment Software Publishers' Association is still in the process of gear-ing up, following a presentation last week to a handful of the leading leisure software publishers.

Mastertronic, Telecomsoft, Mirrorsoft, Code Masters, Domark and The Edge were all present, and messages of support were sent by EA, Ocean, US Gold, and Grand

Effectively, the meeting with Countrywide PR decided that the putative chairman of the nascent body Simon Treasure should produce a detailed business plan. This will then be put officially to all interested parties, with the aim that the body can be officially formed in July.

One option being investi-

gated is changing the Guild of Software Houses Ltd to ESPA, which would be cheaper than forming a new company. Though defunct as a trade body, there are still some funds in GOSH though half was transferred to the Federation Against Software Theft - which could form the basis of ESPA.

As well as funding an autumn promotional budget to push software in general, ESPA is keen to act as a central data collection, like its US counterpart.

"We'd like to be able to supply detailed information to our members so that we can all have a handle on what's really going on out there. And one thing that we want all software houses to know is that we've no desire to be a rich men's club for just the big firms. We want all publishers to join in," Treasure



TREASURE: More body talk

#### irrorsoft manoeuvres

Mirrorsoft is set to unleash a new label this autumn following the signing of its first ever coin-op li-

The deal has been made with Atari Games Corporation and its subsidiary Tengen for Blasteroids. This was apparently in the face of strong interest from US Gold/ Ocean and BT. A second deal has also been signed with Atari Games for the conversion of Mirrorsoft's own Tetris to the Nintendo in the US, Canada and Japan.

Whilst finalising the deals Mirrorsoft has also been involved in switching its primary distribution between two firms within the Maxwell group. Microdealer has taken over the business from book distributor Purnells of Bristol.

Mirrorsoft's marketing manager Tom Watson refused to explain the new label's remit at this stage. "When Blasteroids comes out it won't be published as a Mirrorsoft product, that's all I can say," he offered.

The Blasteroids deal is Mirrorsoft's first ever venture into the potentially lucrative field of coin-op licencing. It will have all format rights to the game throughout Western Europe and Australasia.

The Tetris tie-up is likely to be followed by further crossover deals. The Russian program has performed well in the US on C64 and PC via Mirrorsoft's US subsidiary Spectrum Holobyte. Atari Games has a licence to write for the Nintendo whereas Mirrorsoft currently hasn't.

"Neither deal should be seen as a one-off but as the starting point for a substantial relationship between us and Atari. We're currently assessing each other's capabilities and seeing what we have in our catalogues," added Watson.

The primary distribution

change has come as no major surprise considering Mirrorsoft and Microdealer are linked both by owner and market. It is being pitched as "group rationalisation".

"Mirrorsoft obviously have a very close understanding of the requirements of the software market and their physical situation in Milton Keynes is also extremely convenient especially when you're shipping stuff to Pontefract," said



WATSON: New label due

## **Key Punch budgets** on Europe launch

Large US budget leisure software house Key Punch is planning to set up in the UK and Europe by September.

US budget firms have hitherto enjoyed only a very low profile over here and the details of this foray are, at present, scant. According to one source though Key Punch has been enjoying considerable growth in recent years

and is "giving Mastertronic a run for their money over there".

It seems likely that the budget preference will continue in the UK. Key Punch's president Bob Devine will be at September's PC Show to make the appropriate announcements although it is more than likely that the firm will want to have established a beach head here before the peak selling season gets underway.

# **Computer Trade Weekly**

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Office as a newspaper.

In recent weeks the distribution of the Gallup chart via CTW has been rejigged. This is in order to make sure that it is targeted most effectively at those sectors of the trade which find it most useful. Principally this means the

larger active firms, the distributors, software houses and, of course, the dealers. If in recent weeks your Gallup chart has ceased to arrive please write to our circulation department quoting your reference number on the plastic bag in which your CTW arrives.

Please write to The Circulation Manager, CTW, BTC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts SG1 2DX.

# extends Amsoft media Schneider no

A deal to sell the first **Amsoft-branded 3.5** and 5.25 inch disks has been tied up between the Amstrad User Group and DiskXpress.

The AUG is handling end user mail order sales, with DiskXpress and SJB supplying the trade. The deal marks the first use of the Amsoft name without Amstrad being involved directly, though it will be receiving royalties on sales.

Typical prices are pitched as being below those from rival disk manufacturers such as Maxell and BASF. Retail levels for packs of ten are £9.95 for 5.25 and £19.95 for 3.5 (both inc VAT).

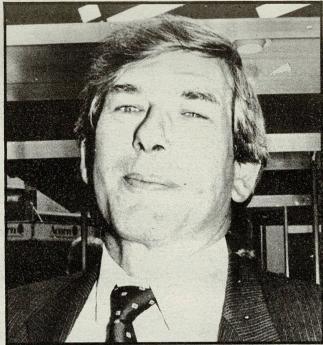
End users are being mailed with details via the user club, and ads backing the push will ted around the country.

be appearing in the relevant three Future Publishing, three Avralite and two Database magazines.

Amstrad's Mike Mordecai told CTW: "For the first time, we're letting the user club use our name under licence. We'll only be involved if there's a problem, which there won't be."

Amstrad via Amsoft will still continue to sell its own 3 inch disks for the PCW range.

The deal marks something of a coup for the user club, which operates independently of Amstrad. The organisation has grown over the years from a single office in Newcastle to its current level of 15 outlets, including sundry learning centres. By the end of the year, according to sales manager Keith Patterson, it will have grown to 25 offices dot-



MORDECAI: Disk deal

# ewson sets up ST splurge



Hewson has become possibly the last maor publisher to wake up to the burgeoning 16-bit sector, with a flurry of ST titles lined up for release.

The label - which has its sales and marketing handled by Gremlin - admits that so far it has not fully attacked the new high value market.

"We haven't really had a proper go at it yet," commented eponymous boss Andrew Hewson to CTW. "When you get a new machine you have to sit down and think about what you're doing and then do it properly."

Hewson has eight ST titles set for release by the end of November. These include new product as well as conversions of old games such as Zynaps and Exolon which first appeared last year.

Hewson is confident that his firm's strong 8-bit shootem-up brand image can transfer to the new format. "The ST users are probably a bit older but in terms of games they'll end up blasting away like everybody else."

No Amiga games are pencilled in for release as yet due to the "bigger learning curve" on development and state of the market.

The ST games lined up are: Zynaps and Cybernoid (July); Netherworld and Nebulus (August); Roadstar XRi and Exolon (September) and Astaroth and Stormlord (November). Price has not yet been de-

## **OFTEL** calls time on Micronet price

Micronet has been forced to increase its subscription and time charge prices by OFTEL after complaints by competi-tors that they were too low and thus un-

A new charge of 1p per minute has been introduced for off peak periods with peak time rising from 6p to 7p. The quarterly charge is now £20 as opposed to £16.50.

Micronet was formerly able to "cross subsidise" by put-ting some charges through British Telecom. OFTEL has ruled that this can no longer be practised since Micronet has its own profit figures and actual call time is not a consideration.

"We have to operate off our ROSENBAUM: Prices up own profit and revenues," said Micronet's David Rosenbaum. "You could blame OFTEL for the price increases but that wouldn't be entirely fair.

"People complained that see prices going up.



our prices weren't fair but this still keeps us well below our competitors." He added: "There have been people who aren't pleased with the increases but nobody likes to

# Gem tracks

Amiga software sales are fast catching up with those for the ST, according to Gem Distribution.

The claim comes at a time when the firm has just secured a distribution deal for the Aegis range of Amiga packages handled in the UK by HB Marketing.

"We're finding that our current business - which hasn't yet been affected by the Amiga price cut – is running about 60/40 in favour of the ST. But six weeks ago it was 80/20. The Amiga stuff is really beginning to shift," said Gem's joint managing director Peter Bellamy.

On current sales the Amiga business is split 70/30 leisure to business packages. Despite the ST's evident lead on games packages, the figure for Atari's machine are 60/40 leisure to business.

The HB deal means that Aegis' desk top video packages and the like are being added to Gem's current claimed 800-strong 16-bit distribution list. "Much of this is for imported products, but we've tried to avoid any exclusive deals because we don't really agree with them. It's too much like holding a gun to someone's head."

Meantime, Gem has also taken on MAP's network accounts package MAPNET. This is despite Gem being Amstrad's largest software distributor at a time when the Brentwood firm is soon to announce full details of its own Corvus-based low cost network (CTW May 2nd).

"We will sell the Amstrad network as well as the MAP product. We're a distributor and we're just not set up to say 'you should buy this and not that'. Our job is to make as many packages as possible available to as many retailers as we can. Each network product will have its own suppor-

# ters," Donnelly noted. POPULAR COMPUTING 70p WEEKLY

# to PC Show

German manufacturer Schneider has ruled out a PC Show launch for its business computers, but is still hoping to have its UK operation fully up and running by the au-

The firms also revealed last week that it is seeking to appoint four distributors in the UK with the inevitable 'discussions" already taking

The Schneider PCs - ranging from the £450 Euro to the £2,000 Target AT portable were seen for the first time in the UK at the Brown Goods Show in May.

"We've been very pleased with the reaction so far. We invited all the major distributors and some of the dealers to have a look and talk about what they think of our products," offered Schneider UK's marketing liaison coordinator Cliff Preston.

Multiple outlets such as Rumbelows, Dixons and Currys already take Schneider's hi-fi products and are claimed to be "interested" in taking its computers. No definite deals have been signed, however.

"The trade reaction has been interesting. We thought it would be 'this is just another PC' but it's been very encouraging. The Schneider brand name is better known here than we thought at first," added Preston.

### **Locomotive shunts** upgrade into place

Evergreen PCW wordprocessing package LocoScript 2 has been upgraded and undergone a price increase of £5.

Its publisher Locomotive has also introduced two new products for the range of machines - LocoFont and LocoKey. The former sports ten typefaces including joined up writing. The latter allows end-users to customise their keyboards for various language quirks such as in Russian and Welsh.

LocoScript 2 itself has an extra typeface and can support 250 different printers. It now retails at £24.95. Locomotive though is pushing the £34.90 bundle of LocoSpell and LocoScript as a better option for dealers and users alike.

Boss Howard Fisher told CTW: "We want to offer dealers a better discount on the bundle. We aim to convert LocoScript 2 users to the new addition." Fisher said that LocoScript in its various forms has sold "tens of thousands".



LOCOSCRIPT 2: Upgrade and price hike

# Tatung PC push backed by ADT

Tatung is seeking to firmly relaunch itself as a computer manufacturer folof a £1 million deal with distributor ADT.

The Korean firm is probably best known for its less than successful attempt to cash in on the home computer market with the Einstein three years ago. This is despite it being one of the world's largest monitor manufacturers.

The Einstein - now out of production - sold just 11,000 units. Tatung is now pitching itself as a business machine manufacturer with three ranges of AT machines: the 4000, 7000 and 8000. Prices start at around £1,200.

Network specialist ADT has placed a minimum order for 1,000 monitors and machines, worth £1 million. It is the first time the Twyford firm has handled PCs since dropping the Amstrad 1512 six months ago.

"We're very interested in their monitors and we thought we'd have a go at their PCs as well. We can offer them as Novell workstations or alternative PCs to a dealer's main line," commented ADT's marketing manager Brian Elliott to CTW.

Tatung is planning a major brand awareness campaign in the computer press to back the monitors and PCs. These have been brought together in a newly formed Information Products Division.

"The message we're trying to put across is that Tatung is very, very serious about its computer business and is committed to selling products in the UK under its own name," Tatung's UK sales manager John Wainwright told CTW.

# **Another editor** takes Pop helm

Focus has appointed a new editor for its flagship consumer magazine Popular Computing Weekly.

Paul Marks has moved over from the trade press to head up Popular. He formerly worked as editor of Micro Systems Design for two years. Also, the magazine has lost its staff writer Leslie Bunder who is being replaced by graduate Kelly Beswick.

Since Focus bought Popular from Sunshine Publications last September it has been edited variously by Christina Erskine, Francis Jago, Brendan Gore, John Brissendon and, for a short period, Tony Hetherington.

Marks was reluctant to comment on his appointment saying: "I've only been here four days and I don't really know . . ." Later though he said that he would be concentrating on news content and "making it a bit more punchy".

"I've always read it and it's OK," he said. Marks has a degree in computer electro-



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\*CTW 1987-1988 Dealer Survey



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# for C64 mags

Commodore magapublisher zine Antony Jacobson has sounded a warning of impending trouble for the to continue producing full sector's 8-bit titles.

announcements - he argued that Zzap, Commodore User, title Commodore Computing International will be squeezed hard from early next year.

"With CCI, we've just had but I can't believe it won't go down after Christmas. All the Commodore mags will suffer, and I believe that that'll be around 25 per cent all round.

"We're already seeing thinner Zzaps and Commodore Users because their ad base is being eroded both by the budget publishers and the growth of 16-bit. They haven't really got a serious ad base to fall back on. Your Commodore, as everyone can see, is doing very badly, but they have got more of the serious utilities-type adver-

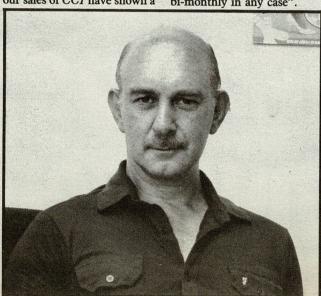
"I think there'll be a dramatic change next year, and we'll probably end up with just one games and one serious title," Jacobson

Supporting his argument, he said that Commodore's price cut on the 64 takes it closer to the toy market and makes it even less likely that many publishers will be able price 64 titles. Additionally, Fresh from the Commod- the Amiga chop means that ore Show - replete with its even more 64 - and other -A500 and C64 price cut owners will be making the transition to 16-bit this year.

"It's all speculation, of Your Commodore and his own course, and I'm saying this at a time when we're doing well. Our distributors Comac have been amazed to discover that since we split Amiga User our fourth best month ever, from CCI back in January, our sales of CCI have shown a

month-on-month increase. That's because of the resentment that some 8-bit owners have to 16-bit material appearing in their magazine. But I still expect it to go down next year."

CCI - one of the handful of computer titles that doesn't file for an official ABC figure - is claimed to be selling 41,000. SDome 26-28,000 of these are in the UK. And Jacobson is making the bold pitch that Amiga User with a 44,000 print run is the world's biggest selling Amiga title "except for one issue of Amiga World in Germany, which is a bi-monthly in any case".



**JACOBSON: Commodore Cassandra** 

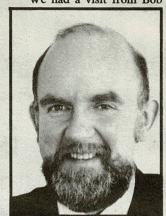
# Trouble looms Database doubts Atari show plan

Database Exhibitions has derided prospects of Atari organising its own consumer show (CTW June 6th).

Atari floated the possibility of its own event after the apparent success of a trade exhibition at the Cafe Royal, Database runs the consumer orientated Atari User Show twice a year.

"We'd be very surprised if they decided to get into showbiz," offered spokesman Mike Cowley. "I would think that they're too busy selling product to bother with a specialist market in its own right. good job directly and indirectly.

"We had a visit from Bob



**COWLEY: Showbiz** 

We're doing a sufficiently Gleadow (Atari UK's boss) to the last show and he liked it so much he brought his kids the next day.'

Atari's recent trade forum attracted 100 dealers and 60 software developers. Atari is known to be looking at vertically integrating its activities and the possibility of that including shows is not being denied.

Cowley said that the trade forum was "a completely different ball game" from any consumer event adding "I'd be very surprised if anything is on the cards . . . " The next Atari User Show has been pencilled in for November 25th to 27th.

**Barrington Harvey** formerly Headlines - has been appointed by Commodore to represent its leisure activities.

This is the first hardware account for the Finsbury based firm. It has previously always been involved in leisure software companies such as MicroProse, Domark, CRL and Grand Slam.

CBM's current PR firm Burgess Daring will still be handling the business side of the company - a function to

which it is more suited.

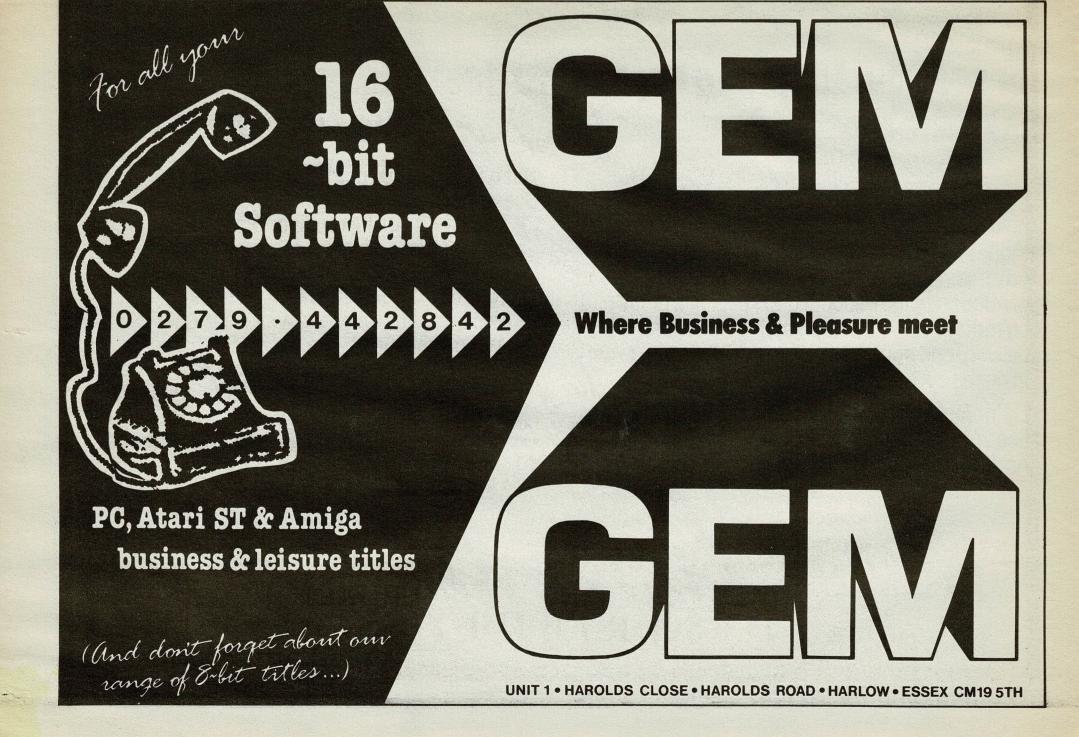
Barrington Harvey's eponymous boss Simon Harvey explained to CTW: "It's a real opportunity for us because it's our first hardware account. Burgess Daring and I will be working together closely and we have some good things planned."

On the decision to change the name of the company from Headlines he offered: "Headlines has been around for some time and the name is associated with the past. This fits in with my aspirations and plans.'

For Commodore, market- HARVEY: CBM move

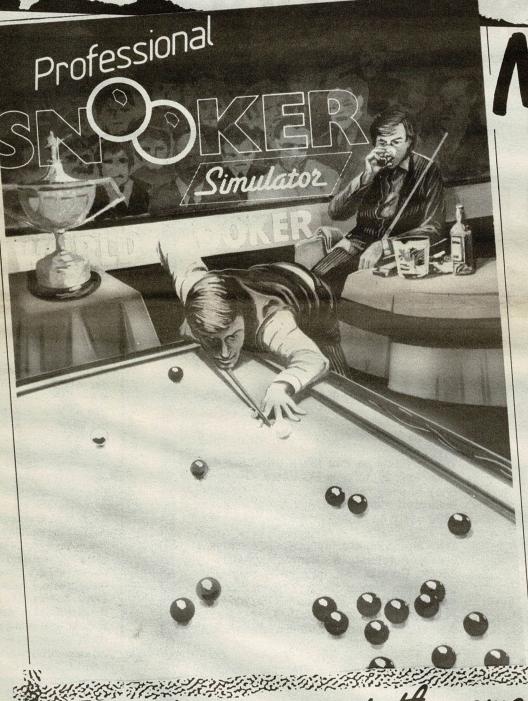
ing manager Dean Barrett said that the appointment had been made because of Harvey's "success in the leisure area". Harvey was formerly deputy editor of CTW.





# BLACK BALL QUESTION-

Q... What is the best 8 bit snooker game?
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#### Monday June 13 1900

## SNIPPETS



Page Three model Corinne Russell made an appearance at Shekhana in Tottenham Court Road the other weekend to promote Martech's Vixen. Shekhana won the privelege after a raffle - based on volumes taken was drawn by Electronic Arts. Eire based distributor Interface claims that budget sales have increased by 30 per cent in the last six months. Boss John Lenihan told CTW that full price games are 'dying a death" in Southern Ireland. It's being suggested

that budget accounts for 80 per cent of Eire's games market . . .

The third **AmiEXPO** is due to be held on July 21st in Chicago . . .

There is a whisper that Anco's boss Anil Gupta is less than pleased with Newsfield for printing the final screenshot of Strip Poker II in The Games Machine. Gupta apparently views this as being offensive to those readers who wouldn't necessarily want to buy the game. Gupta though is preferring to keep his

customary low profile on the matter . . .

Industry media stars no. 468:

Ocean's software
development manager Gary
Bracey last week made an
appearance on kids Saturday
morning TV show Get Fresh.
He was announcing the winnr
of a competition involving
devising a scenario for a

Mindscape has tied up the rights to George Lucas's \$40 million movie Willow.
Unfortunately the film looks to be heading for a flop after

computer game . .

the US's critics mauled it. One said the magic adventure was "déjà voodoo" Apparently Activision turned down the licence mainly because of the disaster of Lucas's last project Howard The Duck which the firm had gained the rights to . . Roving games journalist Ciaran Brennan has been appointed deputy editor of Dennis's Your Sinclair. Brennan was formerly editor of Zzap and has recently been a sub-editor on Video Trade Weekly . .

**REAVLEY: Into DDL** Dealers are being offered a mail order catalogue for computer supplies by DDL. The dealers will then be passing the brochure onto customers thus avoiding any investment in stock. DDL previously engaged in this last autumn and claims that the catalogue "is the most comprehensive from any supplier". Meantime, the distributor has appointed David Reavley as sales director. He moves over from parent company MBS where he has spent the past two years. On the 26th October IBM is

due to hold its seven day show/conference/seminars at

The Business Design Centre in London. It is not known at this stage whether or not Database is organising the event as was the case last year. Newsfield's Computer Games Championship kicks off this Saturday at Edinburgh. Commodore has donated the machines and Konix has given 60 joysticks to the tournament. Heats will also be held in Gloucester, Birmingham, London and Leeds. Semis will be held in the capital and in Manchester with the final taking place at the PC Show next September.

events has forced Comley Computers to change the name of its new package for employment agencies, Regalia. During the lau speech aboard the Regalia boat on the Thames the firm's managing director Bob McCalden was issued with an injunction from a competitor using the same name. 200 guests witnessed the proceedings grind to a temporary halt. The name of the product has swiftly been changed to Micromatch. McCalden said later: "Despite

An extraordinary series of

the interruption a good time was had by all – even the bailiff." The latter apparently said that it was the best injunction he had ever served. According to Gallup the Atari ST's value market share has

reached 20 per cent – ahead of the C64 (18.5 per cent). This is the highest share the machine has gained yet . . .

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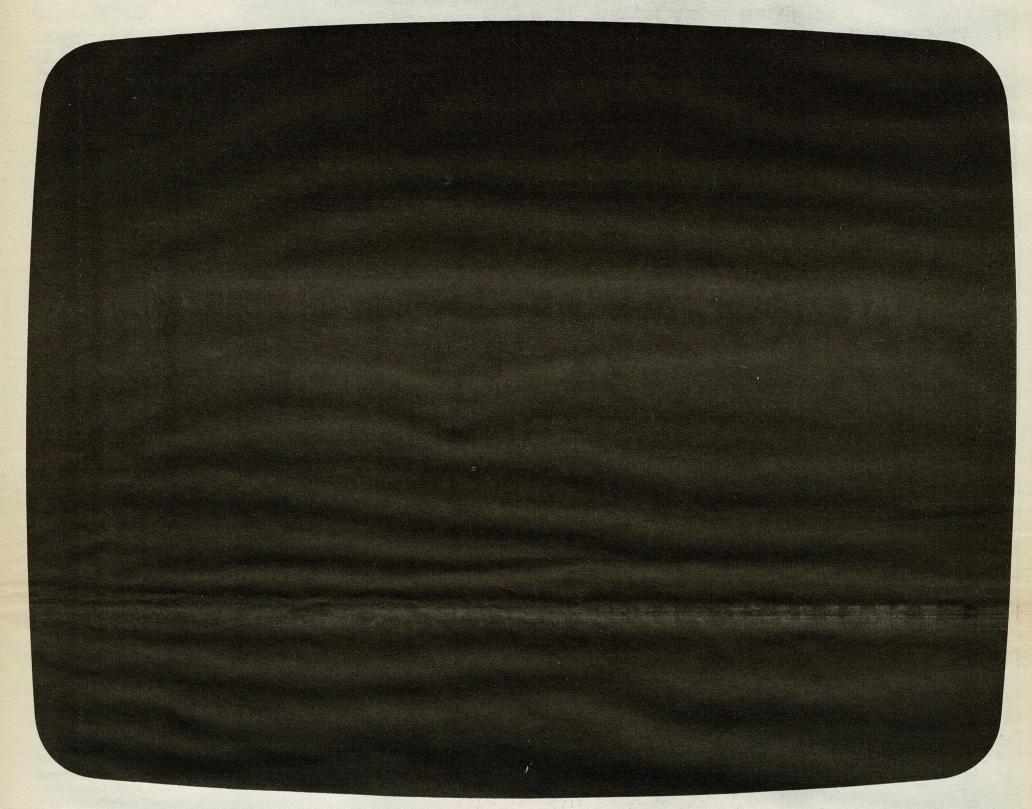
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The results have been instant. 'Garfield', '10', 'Rim Runner,' 'Tetrus' and 'Shoot 'Em Up' are just some of the games that have already benefitted from the Bullet treatment.

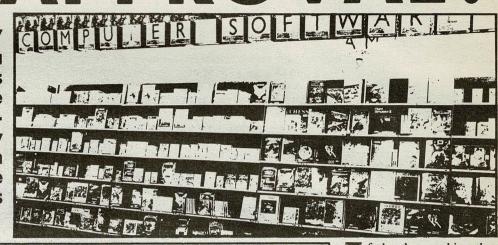
For more information on how we work, and how we could work for you, contact Barry Evans or John Parker on 01-992 7725 or at The Charthouse, 57 Ramsay Road, London W3 8AZ.

We'll make all the difference to the way dealers see your games.



# STAMPS OF APPROVAL?

Microdealer has latched on to petrol stations' marketing tactic of giving away tokens. In a first ever end-user promotion games it supplies will be specially stickered. Every £5 purchase then receives a token redeemable against sundry computer goodies. This, along with a new plan to sell T-shirts, is being pitched as a much needed tonic for retailers worrying about the dreaded summer droop. STUART DINSEY gets their reactions . . .





If there's one thing that dealers have always agreed on it's distributors' marked reluctance to provide sufficient end-user sales support.

It seems that no matter how good a firm's turnaround speed is, how enticing its discounts are or how pleasant its telesales department attempts to be this is never quite enough.

Historically dealers have wanted proof that a distributor can put as much effort into helping the shop sell the game as it does in making sure the shop places the order. That means more posters, stickers, window displays, demos – in fact anything that might make a title shift once it's on the shelves.

A distributor's argument has always been that the POS material must come from the software houses in the first place and if it doesn't exist it doesn't exist. Also with their small margins many would argue that they simply haven't got time to be dishing out freebies, and that the job should be done by the publishers themselves.

This discrepancy between what a dealer wants and the service a distributor thinks it should provide has led to the formation of firms like USD and Active and the arrival of record marketeer Bullet. The combination of these firms' success, an appetite for larger market share and the onset of the tough summer period has at least spurred one distributor, Microdealer International, into action.

It has come up with two bright ideas, ideas which will actually take a distributor out to the public for the first time without cutting out retailers.

The first - and most important - initiative is a token promotion along the lines of those run by petrol stations. All Microdealer's stock will be specially stickered and the retailers will be supplied with a roll of tokens. The consumer receives a token for every £5 worth of purchase. Those tokens are then redeemable against sundry computer products such as joysticks, mouse mats and free games. The final details are still to be announced as are the more dangleable products on offer.

If nothing else, Microdealer is making an effort to stimulate retailers' business and all dealers contacted praised the firm for its efforts. Some, however, were more aggressive than others when explaining why such a move is good news. Most hadn't even heard of it.

"It's about time the distributors got off their backsides and did something," responded Tricia Steadman of

"They should be out there promoting product rather than leaving it to us or saying software houses won't do this or that."

#### Kids are all right

S he in part defended Microdealer's erstwhile lack of on the road support, though, offering that a distributor shouldn't just be sending out glad handers because everybody else is these days.

"I know Microdealer are going to put reps on the road. But you can only put them out if they're actually doing something like this promotion. Otherwise retailers will just say 'not today thank you'. There's got to be clear marketing tactics behind it."

Following Microdealer's announcement of the token scheme one would imagine that a number of distributors are kicking themselves for letting a rival gain first blood. Even some of the retailers contacted revealed that they had been toying with a similar style promotion for the summer themselves.

"I think the kids'll go for it. I talked to them before about giving away a budget game every time they'd bought a total of twenty," commented John Barker of Hagar's Electronics in Sheerness. One dealer had even run a promotion in which a free budget game was offered with every full-price purchase.

It is clear after just a small amount of research that retailers are all for such schemes in principle but, as ever, they are wary of complications. Several mentioned the problems arising from stocking product which hasn't come solely from the Microdealer warehouse. They were worried about having to explain to a customer one week that the more games they buy the more tokens they build up, only to say "this one doesn't count" the next.

Barker was particularly concerned about the complications, especially considering he majors on budget product and does little business with Microdealer. Thus, his store could end up having just a handful of titles with the special stickers. This would not necessarily be perceived by the kids as a dynamic new promotion.

Microdealer will obviously hope that the kids will latch on to the promotion as a result of advertising in the Newsfield and EMAP monthlies. Retailers might than have to order more product than usual from Microdealer simply due to end-user demand.

Steadman agreed that the promo will give Microdealer 'an advantage" when it comes to ordering but all are playing it cool at this point. Karen Sutherland, owner of Atari World in Manchester commented resolutely: "I order what I need and what I know will sell. I order according to my customers and not according to what seems a good deal."

Microdealer might even be optimistic enough to hope that some retailers might take up an exclusive deal. These are rare, mainly because people like to shop around for the best bargains and a distribuof something or other most of the time.

Vic Purnell of Computability in Ebbw Vale has got an exclusive deal - with R&R. He backed Microdealer's move as a good idea it will have a fight on its hands to bring him into the fold. "I've made a commitment to get the deals that I get. If R&R can't supply then I might go to someone else."

His ideal world would see R&R following up with its own version of the token system. For other dealers who buy from, say, three or four distributors this could be a nightmare. Imagine if motorists got different petrol tokens

tor will usually be out of stock depending on which pump they used?

#### Getting shirty

ike most retailers, Purnell was pleased with Microdealer for trying something new. He was particularly enamoured with the fact that the £5 purchase rule gives 8-bit full-price and 16-bit buyers a better deal. For instance, someone buying just one ST game might gain five tokens whilst a budget collector has to make three purchases for a single token.

"I'm all for selling the higher priced games. We can all sell the budget stuff but it's getting harder to sell anything else," said Purnell.

The question of course for the shops is whether such a promotion actually increases business. Barker offered that there wouldn't ultimately be any more software sold, but that those who stocked the stickered games might steal sales from shops not taking

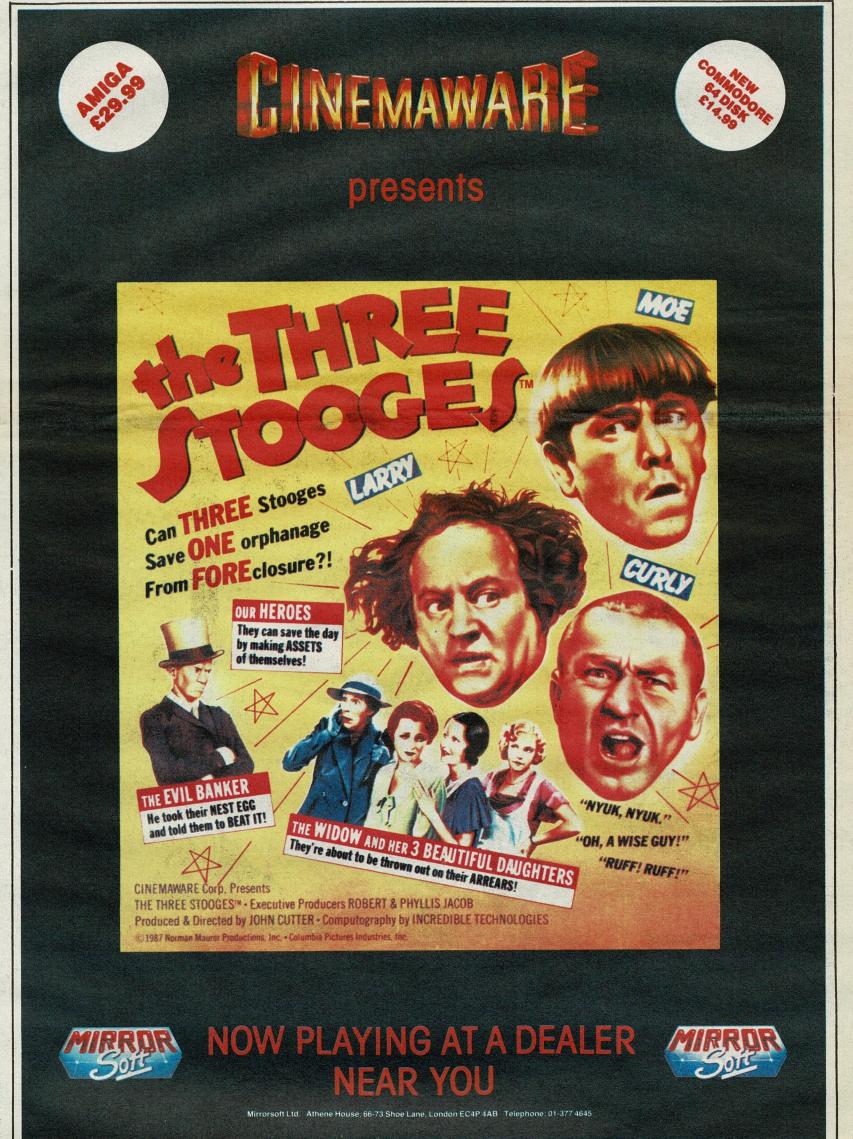
"The only thing I can compare it to is Green Shield stamps. My experience is not so much that people buy things to get the stamps but that they buy it from a particular place because they do the stamps. People aren't stupid," said Barker.

Continued on page 19



Monday June 13 1988 Page 11

GINTY: Masterminding Microdealer's token effort



# CROSS CHANNEL ATTI

French software veteran Loriciel has been up choosing of product suitable and running here since the beginning of the year. With a little help from Elite via a sales and distribution deal the firm hopes to break into a market which has traditionally been too busy stretching its arms out across the Altantic to bother with Europeans wanting in. COLIN **CAMPBELL** listens in to the plans afoot . . .

houses have been faced by the torrent of US and UK pro- money to carry them over.

ike salmon fighting duct pouring onto the contitheir way upstream nent. Those planning to set European software up in the UK have traditionally needed the flesh of big

Apart from the odd hit, none has made much of a splash.

All, though, have recognised the need to be conservative in their picking and in France. The firm was set

for the UK market. The French in particular have been quick to note that those games which are hailed as technical and creative achievements etc in France will simply confuse and bore

And so the theories of how to cross the Channel are being dragged out again. This time it's Loriciel with all the promises - an independent software publisher with a substantial distribution network

ware growth and has prospered since with various sorties into other projects such as business software.

Of course the Gallic link is being furiously played down. Loriciel is stressing that its products here are international. Its games are not French titles being marketed in the UK. They are simply titles.

Also, it has been acknowledged that the UK market is best left for the British to understand. Thus, Loriciel has not set up as a completely

independent entity. It has forged links with an already established company - Elite.

Of the options available it was deemed inappropriate to licence out product to a UK publisher. That would have left the firm with little control over an operation which is clearly being regarded as vital in the company's growth.

A straightforward set up and hit 'em policy was also rejected because of the sheer struggle of coming to terms with a foreign and trenchant market alone. The cost of such an operation will surely have played its part in that decision.

So Loriciel has placed its own product manager, Nikki Penny, in the Elite camp to oversee games and generally to keep a close eye on developments here. The games themselves go through Elite's distribution pattern which is a hell of a lot easier than tunnelling new channels into the market.



WEILL: Global market syn-

Previously, Loriciel has licensed out some of its games to Activision. The impact was an instant anticlimax and it's an episode which Loriciel is adamant is history, not part of future plans and therefore not worthy of discussion.

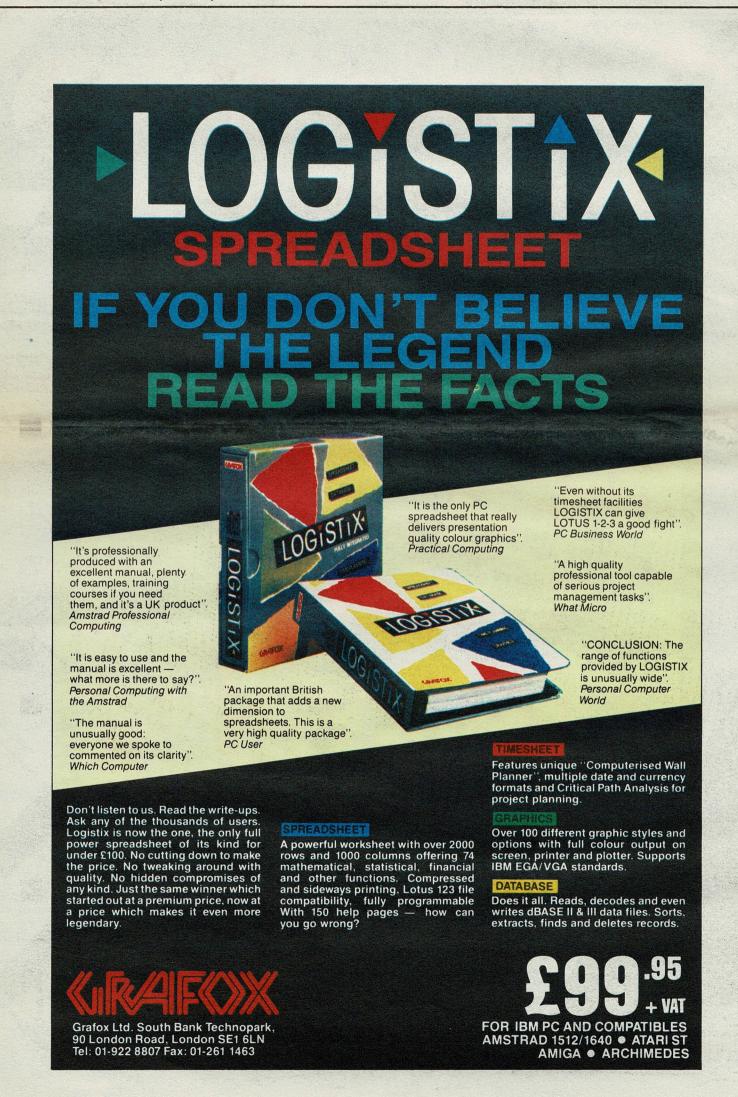
After this is established Penny is more than ready to explain product policy here and now. "As far as product is concerned it is up to us to decide whether to release it. Loriciel Ltd (Loriciel UK) will take the game, evaluate it and go to Elite. Then we'll discuss it and take a careful look at it. If we feel it is good for the UK market then we'll adapt it and release it. It's not a carte blanche across all our products."

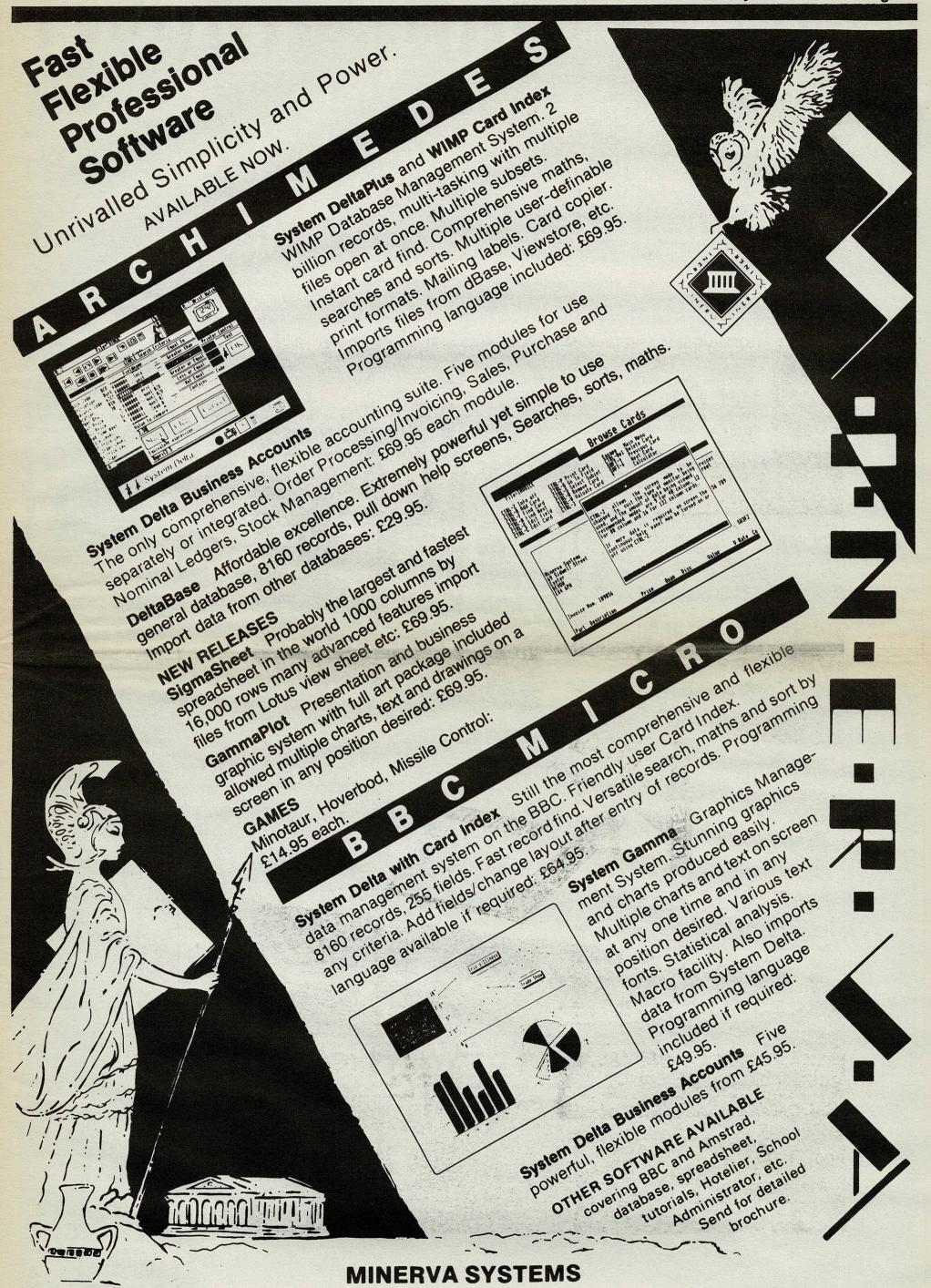
#### Ski's the limit

W hilst Loriciel has been here since January it has thus far concentrated on the formats from whence it came: CPC, PC and some ST. The company is now writing for the C64 and Spectrum machines which are not generally regarded as being of any importance in France.

Loriciel's president directeur general Laurant Weill holds the view that both markets are indeed poles apart in their specialised tastes but that there is a vast middle ground that can be exploited. Its new title Eddie Edwards: Super Ski holds a strong licence name which at least for the moment holds international appeal.

The game itself has been received favourably by the Continued on page 19





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# NFLATIONARY BUDGET

Budget games of the 16-bit variety have had a rough ride from those who would much rather that they didn't take off. And who can blame them? The market is growing and people are prepared to pay full price. Those who have tried their hand at 16-bit budget have often dropped it or at least upped the pricepoints. DAVID LESTER analyses the situation as it

time in software, or so someone famous might well have said. Before Christmas, as I reported in an article in Popular Computing Weekly, most of the major budget software houses were on the verge of launching their own 16-bit brands, with games to sell at £9.95. Since then, some games have appeared, some have not; and of those that have, only some have kept to the £9.95 price they were initially intended for. And CTW has only recently run a headline to the effect that budget ST software is a non-

So why is this? Are the software publishers beginning to thing that budget software for the Atari ST won't make any money, or that there aren't enough STs around yet? If that were the case, I could understand it, but it isn't. Unfortunately, it seems as if the software industry has returned to its attitudes of three years ago.

When budget software was money they can make from

ix months is a long first launched in 1984, it was slated by all and sundry who weren't in on it, as being bad for the future of the games industry, bad for programmers, etc etc. But when budget survived its first six months reasonably successfully, the criticisms changed, to slagging off the quality of budget software. And the biggest sellers of software (people like Smiths or Boots) didn't want to know about budget games, because there wasn't enough money in it for them.

> That, of course, has all changed now. People have not had any option but to accept the huge success of firms like Mastertronic and Code Masters, and the trend seems to be veering still further towards selling games at two or three quid.

Most publishers have stopped complaining about the poor quality of budget games, and are getting in on the act themselves, while the major multiples have been enjoying the truth about how much

the cheap games for some

Given all of which, as 16-bit software begins to take off, it seems eminently sensible for firms to start budget ranges on 16-bit. Which is precisely what most budget labels thought just before Christmas - but now, only some are strongly along that route.

And why? Because the retailers, and some software houses, are bemoaning the low quality of ST software, and alleging that the market is not yet ready for it. This at a time when most consumer mags are full of letters from readers who can't afford current 16-bit prices!

#### Multiple turn off

P robably the most notable publisher to change its mind is Code Masters. It was literally on the verge of launching its first 16-bit title, BMX Simulator, at a stated price point of £9.99, when the idea was suddenly dropped.

Bruce Everiss explains the U-turn: "The problem was

that budget software on the ST had a terrible reputation; people thought it was a load of rubbish. And the multiples wouldn't stock it, they said that their margins were too low. If the multiples won't take it, then there is no point in going at the price." Sounds familiar, doesn't it? (1984 revisited.)

Other firms have had mixed reactions and decisions. Anco has been particularly active at the £9.95 price point for some time, especially with Amiga software. But boss and industry veteran Anil Gupta, echoes Everiss. "The multiples just won't touch it, which means that sales are much lower than they need to be. They've been very disappointing."

However, although his firm will be cutting down on its new releases, it has by no means given up on the price point. Anco still believes it is right, but must wait for others to believe that, too. Meanwhile some of its new releases are appearing at Code Masters' chosen point, £15.

The tale continues through many of the non-big-fourbudget houses. Pirate has upped its price point on 16-bit to a mid-range £14.95 and will not be putting out any ten pound ST product until "at least the middle of next year" according to boss Henry Kitchen. Bug Byte has also shelved its 16-bit budget range with its one and only title remaining toute seule for the medium term.

Newly relaunched Power-House relates similar stories, while newcomers such as Zeppelin will not be putting out 16-bit product for a good few months yet.

But there are exceptions, and they're major exceptions at that. The two big boys which forced budget's success in the early days on 8-bit, Firebird and Mastertronic, have been putting out titles at £9.95 since last year, and

plan to continue doing so. While sales have not been as high as they might have been, both firms claim to have been quite satisfied with sales so

Players recently launched Joe Blade, its phenomenal success on 8-bit, at £9.95, which has sold well on the ST. Prism, too, sports a huge catalogue of titles for varying budget prices on 16-bit machines, mainly re-releases. Diamond Games is a third medium-sized budget label to be sticking to its guns on pricing — although having to fight retailers to do it.

Most publishers are now convinced that there is room for a 16-bit budget price point; the problem simply comes in determining where that is to be. (Sounds just like the 8-bit market again, doesn't it?) The labels themselves seemed keen to go out at just under a tenner, the sticking point being the multiples.



Amidst the 16-bit hits, few are budget

Future Publishing Ltd is fast gaining a reputation as Britain's most dynamic publisher of computer magazines. The company has seen spectacular growth since its launch three years ago, thanks to a string of successful monthly titles including Amstrad Action, 8000 Plus, PC Plus, ACE (Advanced Computer Entertainment) and ST Amiga Format (issue 1 out June 16th). To continue this growth we are looking for a new senior member of the management team.

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#### Quids in

ne has to recognise that there are a number of differences between 8 and 16 bit markets. Until recently, most 16-bit product has been selling for upwards of twenty pounds—and in some cases, considerably upwards of that, especially for more serious software.

Partly because of that, and partly by nature of the preautumn '87 price differential on hardware between 8 and 16-bit, the ST and Amiga had a much older ownership profile. And the key to budget's success has been the impulse purchase of something by, or for, young kiddies — impulse because of the throwaway price of a couple of quid, which was a pretty cheap afternoon's entertainment for a few children, at the very worst.

But ten pounds is different. You don't just throw away tenners all over the place (at least, you don't on the rates you get for writing computer articles!). Furthermore, 16-bit owners expect something a little bit special from their software. After all, had they wanted just a cheapo game for a couple of hours' entertainment, they would have saved a few bob and gone and bought a Spectrum or Commodore instead. So the 16-bit owners will be considerably more discerning about what games they buy. At least, they will be until the nature of the 16-bit software buyer veers away from twenty-year-olds and older.

And that seems to be the crux of the matter: the nature of the ST and Amiga games buyer today.

From the success some of the more simple licence conversions ported up from 8-bit have had, it would seem as if the ST owning population, in particular, is changing. Ocean and US Gold are both poised, about to overwhelm the 16-bit market with vast quanities of new titles. This can only increase the appeal of the computers to the younger buyer (even if it puts other, more discerning buyers off!). This can only be good for the would-be budgeteers on 16-bit.

The whole matter is complicated still further by a much more blurred range of prices. Full price firms charge anything between £14.95 and £24.95 for an ST or Amiga title, and more for very exceptional titles. However, the budget firms put off the £9.95 price-point are also charging £14.95, inviting questions as to which are budget products, and which are not.

Some might argue that it is of only academic interest as to how each firm is perceived by the market place, but I think the distinction has more significance than that.

#### Expectation is all

If you think that you are buying a budget product, your expectations are considerably different from those you would have if you were paying several pounds more a

game. Which is really just another way of saying that, despite the loud cries to the contrary from several budget producers, there really are differences in quality between the budget / full price divide.

For some games, the differential might only be perceived, for example by better packaging, the inclusion of a novella or other goodies, or by the game having a licence tagged onto it for good measure. But nonetheless, it does exist. So there can only be a degree of confusion when you can buy a "full price" game for the same amount of money are you are paying for a "budget" game.

Clearly, given that choice,

most rational consumers (if such beings really do exist in the computing industry — which I have often paused to wonder, but that is certainly another story. . .) would automatically opt for the higher perceived value item, or the "full price" product. This is especially important when you consider that highly regarded publishers like Palace and Elite have charged just £14.95 for their ST and Amiga games and that several others are following suit.

Yet another problem that the ten pounds price point has caused for 16-bit games is that more than a few firms have used it as an outlet for substandard games. They get a lousy game developed which would undoubtedly tarnish their reputation if they tried to charge their normal price for it, so they get some cash back by terming it a budget release.

This is not what "real" budget is at all. The serious budget publishers actually selling at £9.95 are producing upgraded, 16-bit versions of their budget ranges, by and large, with the occasional addition of completely new titles.

All of which fits in with what is going on in the full price arena, and makes a lot of sense. One of the main factors behind budget software purchases is thought to be the

CTW Monday June 13 1988 Page 15

image of the publisher, which is why branding is so important: teenagers will actively search out a Code Masters / Firebird / Rack-It release because of who publishes it, rather than because of its inherent qualities (at least, to some extent).

Hence one would not expect budget-priced one-off releases from the full-price houses to do well, as there is no brand reputation to stir up demand.

#### Back to CTNs

A s so often, it is a chicken egg situation: it is only by increasing the volume of "proper" budget games at £9.95 that the problems will be overcome, as with 8-bit years ago.

And yet the multiples are apparently not prepared to make that step and stock such product yet, which means that the software houses en masses are delaying releasing games at that price point. You only have to begin to consider the snowball effects which this might have on hardware sales, before you realise how short-sighted it all is.

And, yet again, it seems to be down to Mastertronic, and Firebird, and their excellent CTN networks, to carve out respectability for what will surely be a very buoyant sector within eighteen months.

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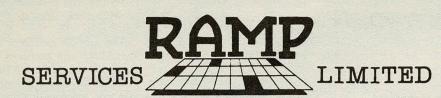
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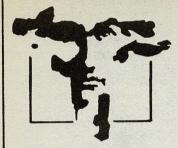
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## **SPECTRUM TOP 20**

W	LW	Title	Publisher		RRPE
1	1	TARGET RENEGADE	IMAGINE		7.95
2	9	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE		1.99
3	3	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC		1.99
4	8	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC		1.99
5	2	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON		1.99
6	6	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS		1.99
7	4	ACE	CASCADE		2.99
8	16	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS		1.99
9	7	TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE		1.99
10	18	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD		8.99
11		SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE		1.99
12		FA CUP FOOTBALL	MASTERTRONIC		1.99
13	14	BUGGY BOY	ELITE		7.95
14		SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS		1.99
15	13	POPEYE	ALTERNATIVE	19	1.99
16	10	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN		9.99
17	RE	SIX PAK 3	HITPAK		9.99
18	21	ATV SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS		1.99
19	17	NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR	FIREBIRD		1.99
20	27	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS		1.99

# C64 TOP

7	YOGI BEAR
5	ACE
RE	SHANGHAI KARATE
2	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS
15	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR
4	TARGET RENEGADE
3	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST
1	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER
8	IMPOSSIBLE MISSION 2
11	MATCH DAY 2
6	GHOSTBUSTERS
22	SOCCER BOSS
26	DRACONUS
RE	ROGUE TROOPER
14	PAC-LAND
9	ALIENS
27	OUT RUN
13	FA CUP FOOTBALL
RE	POPEYE
31	PLATOON
	5 R2 15 4 3 1 8 1 6 22 6 R4 9 9 7 13 RE

' <b>4</b> U '	
ALTERNATIVE	1.99
CASCADE	2.99
PLAYERS	1.99
OCEAN	9.99
CODE MASTERS	2.99
IMAGINE	9.95
MASTERTRONIC	1.99
BLUE RIBBON	1.99
EPYX	9.99
OCEAN	8.95
MASTERTRONIC	1.99
ALTERNATIVE	1.99
ZEPPELIN	2.99
ALTERNATIVE	1.99
QUICKSILVA	9.95
MASTERTRONIC	1.99
SEGA-US GOLD	9.99
MASTERTRONIC	1.99
ALTERNATIVE	1.99
OCEAN	9.95
TOD 40	

		AINICITIAL		
1	2	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	CONTRACTOR
2	1	STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER	BLUE RIBBON	
3	8	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE	
4	11	WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS	OCEAN	
5	2	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	
6	NE	RALLY DRIVER	ALTERNATIVE	
7	7	ACE	CASCADE	
8	3	SHANGHAI KARATE	PLAYERS	
9	RE	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MASTERTRONIC	
10	RE	ROGUE TROOPER	ALTERNATIVE	
		ATADI CT	TOD 5	A CONTRACTOR OF

1	NE	GAUNTLET 2	US GOLD	19.9
2	1	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD	19.9
3	2	CAPTAIN BLOOD	INFOGRAMES	24.9
4	3	BUGGY BOY	ELITE	14.9
5	4	DUNGEON MASTER	MIRRORSOFT	24.9
2000	STATE OF THE PARTY.			A THE PARTY OF THE

# AMIGA

1	NE	AAARGH
2	NE	THREE STOOGES
3	5	LEATHERNECKS
4	4	ROCKFORD
5	RE	SIDEWINDER

MELBOURNE HOUSE	19.99
MIRRORSOFT	29.99
MICRODEAL	19.99
MELBOURNE HOUSE	19.99
MASTERTRONIC	9.95

#### SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

	Units sold (%)			Titles seld (%)					
	This	Last	4wks	12wks	This	Last	4wks	12wks	
Machine	week	week	ago	ago	week	week	390	<b>290</b>	
SPECTRUM	43.8	43.5	46.1	44.7	31.6	27.6	28.3	30.0	
COMMODORE 64	22.7	21.2	23.8	23.9	26.5	24.9	25.3	23.3	
AMSTRAD	19.1	18.7	17.3	16.5	18.5	20.4	19.0	18.0	
ATARI ST	5.5	6.2	3.1	4.3	6.6	7.7	6.0	5.3	
COMMODORE 16	1.8	2.2	1.9	1.8	2.8	2.7	3.1	3.8	
BBC	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.9	2.7	2.7	3.5	4.1	
ATARI	1.3	2.1	1.3	1.1	1.8	4.0	4.4	2.9	
ELECTRON	1.3	1.0	1.3	1.6	2.5	2.2	2.6	3.2	
AMIGA	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.3	2.0	2.9	2.6	1.9	

#### **AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP**

	Units	Sold	
This	Last	4wks	12wks
week	week	ago	ago
86	83	98	92

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

▲ BIG APPLE: Oops! (Sp64STAgPC - £7.95-£19.95) It's nice to see new labels coming along with fresh game themes. This one features a droid "scooting around the space-time continuum collecting vital gravity pods". Breathtaking originality ain't the word. Boring is. A ELECTRONIC ARTS: The Bard's Tale III: Thief of Fate (64 -£14.95) This game must rank with the Ultima series by Origin as winners of the 'hasn't that been out 15 times already?' award. It hasn't, of course, it just feels like it. A **ELECTRONIC ARTS:** Wasteland (64 - £14.95) Another role-playing

adventure but this time set in the post-nuclear age of 2087. The usual smattering of potions, swords and spells is traded for weapons and grenades. This game will join countless other EA titles on the 'stayers' shelf. A **ENCORE**: Airwolf (SpAm64C16BBCAt -£1.99) The second release from Elite's fledgling budget label arrives on no fewer than six formats all at the same time. This should guarantee it a fair bit of success, particularly



amongst the product-

1.99

1.99

1.99

9.99

1.99

1.99

2.99

1.99

1.99

1.99

starved lesser formats. A FIREBIRD: Enlightenment (Ag - £19.95) After the sheer unalloyed excitement of coming so close to infecting 20 reviewers' Amigas with the dreaded virus, Telecomsoft has done the much more boring thing of actually releasing the game. It's "a traditional run round mazes and shoot things" little number that Commodore User gave a good review to months ago. Much less fun than the virus, though it ii nit the Amiga Top 5. A GREMLIN: Skate Crazy (SpAm64+3-£7.99-£14.99) No it's not yet another skateboard game but an attempt to make rollerskating just as streetcred. This is a typically strong Gremlin release aimed at the youngsters but a more mature outlook is being promised shortly. Oh-soexact golf and soccer simulations are being lined up to start the gradual process of changing the brand's image. ▲
MASTERTRONIC C16



finally got so old and decrepit that firms can't even be bothered to release single titles on budget anyome. This is a selection of four ageing titles (Disasterblaster, Laza, Pacmania and Olympic Skier) which must have thought they had finally trudged off to the software skip in the sky. That said, C16 Compilation still provides good value with games that are better than some of Mastertronic's competitors' singles release efforts. ▲ PIRATE: Them (Sp – £1.99), Dynaster (Sp - £1.99), SS Panzer (64 - £1.99), Pirate Base (64 - £4.99), Voyage (64 -£1.99), Rollerboard (64 -£4.99), Value Pack (Sp64 - £1.99) and Take Five (+3 - £7.95). A flurry of games which Software Publishing Associates will no doubt hope can transform the label into a budget chart contender. The Powerhouse has managed to do it in recent weeks so there's no reason why Pirate can't - unless no one buys the games, that is. A REBOUND: Sweevo's World (SpAm-£1.99) Gargoyle's oldie from early '86 comes back to life on yet another rerelease label. This game apparently sold some 30,000 units in its earlier full-price form. A once released by Activision

had to happen. The C16 has

RICOCHET: Ballbiazer (Am64 - £1.99) The Lucasfilm Trailblazeralike joins the hordes of old

games all trying to repeat the success of Steve Davis, Fist and Ghostbusters. Give it another six months and budget firms will be rereleasing re-releases on rereleased compilations for £2.99. A SUPERIOR: Repton Thru Time (BBCE1 -£9.95-£14.95) Superior's Repton series of games has chalked up some 100,000 units in all. This one will no doubt perform as ably as the last. It takes up a Time Machine theme taking the little chappie through Prehistoric, Egyptian, Victorian and future settings. ▲
TOPOLOGIKA: Return to

Doom (AmPCWPCBBCEI+3) -£12.95) A follow-up to Countdown to Doom which was originally released by Acornsoft. This is promised to be completely different and original, as if you didn't know. A US GOLD: Infiltrator II (64 -£9.99) The sequel to "the game that rocked America" makes it on to the C64 after some delay. This includes the original version just for that added touch of value. A US GOLD: Street Sports Basketball (Sp+3Am-£8.99-£14.99) The C64 version came out ages ago and being all alone it found it tough going when trying to make a chart impact. The Spectrum and Amstrad versions together

might fare a little better.



KEY: Sp = Spectrum; 64 = Commodore 64; Am = Amstrad CPC; ST = Atari ST; Ag = Amiga 500; +3 = Spectrum +3; PC = IBM PC/compatibles; PCW = Amstrad PCWs; C16 = Commodore 16; Mac = Macintosh; XE/XL = Atari XE console and 800XL; Sg = Sega console; Nn = Nintendo console; VCS = Atari VCS 2600 console; MSX = very unlikely.

#### SPEAKEASY

## **Dealer** in distress

More on sexism

ranco Frey's response to ture 'can hardly be termed

Ref: Independent Death: RRPs. Even then, this in no "Publishers blasted" (CTW May 30th)

To: Mr Michael Donoghue, Atari Business Computers, Leicester.

t a moment when I am At a moment when plate an enforced trading closure, your own feelings and experiences are readily concurred with when I read my CTW last Saturday.

Like yourself, I started last year (see CTW 24/8 and 14/9) with only £500 and a lot of personal effort to get myself off the ground.

Unfortunately, like yourself I too began to feel and find that when it came down to the crunch, literally no one amongst publishers and distributors had either ears or powers to react to the fact that the only way I could survive was by giving at least 20 per cent off everything against

our letter in CTW (6th

June) can't be allowed to pass

without comment. Firstly, let

us make it quite clear that the

issue of sexism is neither 'in-

significant' or 'boring'. Fran-

co has made it quite clear what

TGM thinks of women - they

are seen as being servile and

His assertion that the pic-

way met many source prices and offers

Inevitably, this had led me into trouble financially, and this is my only source of trade, employment and income. I wonder just how I can ever hope to trade out of the situation — when as you noted, at each and every turn of contact or media publication, other public outlets are able to offer cheaper prices.

As an otherwise substantially experienced business person, I can always understand and accept that the large chain groups etc can invariably purchase in bulk and at better prices.

However, apart from your own publicised comments, I can neither understand that it is good business practice or accept the fact that many many other outlets to the public can actually market pro-

offensive' is blatantly untrue.

The exploitation of women is

offensive in every way, from

the way it encourages crimes

against women to the way it

recommends, almost insists,

that they conform to society's

blueprint of how a woman

should look and behave. How

ducts at prices less than we can actually buy them.

I note too the CTW comment appended to your letter. But I wonder just who if anyone bothers to take notice. To date, I seem to have found no one cares whether you survive or not, and sometimes I've even found that CTW is not even seen or read.

Personally, I've loved every minute of my active maturity and enjoyed helping novice adults/parents, allowing the children to play some of the games on my own computer/ Sega system which I use in the shop — and even had Xmas cards and presents from some of my customers.

But what long term use is this, when reality prevails and the actual shop turnover disastrously dwindles away be-

1. Widespread magazine/ media publicity proves that someone/somewhere is in fact giving substantially preferen-

agery is more likely to strengthen or create more degrading views of women within

Franco's reference to 'the beauty of nature' surely involves people in natural rather than sexually provocative poses. Wouldn't a naturist magazine and not TGM, a computer magazine, be more appropriate for this?

Since its conception, TGM seems to have displayed great prints derogatory photos and articles portraying a negative tial prices — otherwise how else could that outlet succeed by offering prices less than your own?

2. In my own area, there is Dixons, Boots, Smiths, Woolworths — all of whom go by the book and stick to RRPs generally.

However, there is also a mystifying retail 'saver' shop which can market games at least £5 off and a distributor supplying another chain of shops who is not even listed in CTW distributor columns.

3. There is also a very substantial market place on three days a week in this town and two traders there who somehow or other have access to supplies of everything at prices I certainly cannot get. All the latest releases are always available and even Sega Systems are only £69.

4. I have even had two teenagers come to my shop touting

image of women throughout the magazine - aiding and abetting the sexist influences in our society.

One of the most offensive things that Franco said in his reply was that we were 'Public school boys'. All members of The Bug Editorial Team have avoided such elite, rulingclass establishments and have attended state-run, coeducational comprehensive schools in Haringey. Where did the information for Franco's patronising and slanderous attack originate? Surely, a top publishing executive such as Franco should check their facts BEFORE making such offensive allegations?

As for going 'back to reading *The Beano*', that has to be almost as insulting as the 'Public School Boys' allegation. The day anyone catches us reading what we see as an Establishment-orientated, sexist, racist, heterosexist, disablist, ageist, conformist,

sales for boxed/wrapped software such as Barbarian/Knight Orc and so on - at only £3 a

5. You mentioned bundled software deals and I wonder how the software publishers can explain away the fact that it was media quoted on the Atari ST deal that software we are supposed to be selling at £19 to £30 per item — was in fact available to Atari for only 50/75 pence.

6. Quality control product D.O.A. whereby there is a constant stream of failures and as the retail outlet - it comes down to your expense to return/obtain replace-

How about forming an 'Independents Union' - I am game to enforce some responsibility on others.

Yours faithfully Jennifer Horsford Soft Centre Romford

Royalist pulp is the day that the Government has finally censored everything else out of existence. Or, more seriously, if Franco Frey is trying to be patronising - ageism isn't funny.

Finally, whilst our serious side is seemingly always put across in our letters, we do have a humourous side. After all, to produce nearly 34 issues of The Bug without prostituting our principles and to find his joke about us 'bugging' CTW (how original) funny AGAIN shows we must have a sense of humour.

Yours in comradeship Jaron Lewis and Jeffrey

Members of editorial team The Bug

P.S. Issue 34 of The Bug will arrive soon, any company wishing to take advantage of our ever-so-cheap advertising rates should contact us soon,

#### sexually available objects just he managed to ascertain that hypocrisy in its coverage for we were claiming he would be there to be looked at. It is true and of women. It has had that this ignorant attitude is 'creating sexually perverted articles covering sexism in the very 'boring', but the sexual teenagers' about to embark on 'a carnal rampage of rape and industry which condemed oppression and rape of women is hardly 'insignifiwomen's oppression yet it still lust' we really don't know. Surely, this could be a result

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for some people but sexist im-

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# Renting rights and wrongs

Stuart Dinsey's astute analysis of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill (CTW, May 16) seemed to suggest that the leisure industry can only gain from legislation enforcing royalties on software leasing — because at the moment it earns nothing from the renters.

However, he did not mention an aspect of the proposed legislation which has more disadvantages for leisure software producers than for their counterparts in the business sector.

Clause 60 of the Bill begins by noting that rental will be allowed "after the end of the calendar year in which copies ... are first issued to the public in the United Kingdom."

Most full-price games houses are geared to make their major releases toward the end of the year, because somebody put Christmas

If Bill becomes Act, leisure software producers will have only a year and a bit before their product is on the library shelves; and it'll be tough to interest a budget house in a

title which it might be able to publish only weeks before leasing starts. In effect, the legislation means major games released October-December will be lost entirely to the rental sector after as little as 13 months.

But the rental holdback in the business sector would be approaching two years, because business software houses are not obliged by the market to concentrate on the pre-Christmas period.

Stop the clause! Yours sincerely **Barnaby Page** The Games Machine Ludlow

From last week's news story, it appears as though the clause containing the salient details relating to software rental rights has indeed been (all but) stopped.

But in any case, the argument about budget re-runs - had the Bill become law - is a nonstarter. Renting really only works on the principle of offering products at much cheaper prices. An old hit coming out at £1.99 hardly allows much scope for renting to make sense.

#### SPEAKEASY

If the reality of retailing in Romford is as bleak as it is painted here, then what hope is there for the rest of the country? Yet at the same time, there are evidently many dealers doing pretty well out of the computer business.

As for an Independents Union, without wishing to kill anything off at the ideas stage, it has to be said that the proposal has been floated numerous times inthe past with precious little resulting. As with most trade bodies (bar FAST and the GSD), the initial enthusiasm soon wanes, the organisation is left in the hands of a tiny few whom everyone else derides as unrepresentative, and the dwindle down factor comes in with a vengeance.

There again, other industries have shown that it is possible for the indies to club together to form buying consortia. But it seems a bit early in the development of the computer retailing industry for that to happen here

## The claims in Spain...

W e were naturally disappointed to read Erbe's letter in your latest issue (June 6th, issue 189).

It was our primary intention to convey the excellent news that we are now distributed by DroSoft in Spain, and it was not our intent to criticise Erbe's performance in public. That is not our

However, now that Erbe have made this response we feel we should set the record straight:

1. Softek granted Erbe a limited license to produce its games in Spain which expired in November of last year. We did not renew this agreement, as was our option to do so, due to what we saw as a lack of performance on our products by Erbe since their drop in retail price. That is a fact, and whilst we are glad to hear that in general their sales were up, in our case we actually sold fewer units at the lower price via them than before the price change.

It is quite untrue that Erbe cancelled any agreement with us; their agreement with us expired in November and despite their express wish to us to continue we chose DroSoft in their stead.

2. We take great exception to their claims that Softek were unusually difficult to deal with and can only suppose this is 'sour grapes' on Erbe's part now that their strongest and most aggressive rivals now publish our games.

**Best wishes** Tim Langdell Managing director Softek Intl Ltd



LANGDELL: Softek case

#### ATTITUDE

Continued from page 12

press and there's little doubt that it'll perform credibly here. But there are "intellectual" games which the French market holds in high esteem but which are seen here as rather impenetrable.

Whilst there have been attempts to market them here they have come to little. As a rule youngsters simply won't buy a game with a French flavour as opposed to something with say, a North American taste. Captain Blood is but an exception.

"The French market has its own way of thinking as does

the British market. But there aren't good French products and good British products - there are just good products," explained Weill.

'It's not true that the UK doesn't like French product. But if you want to launch an, intellectual game then it just won't fit in. All French product is not the same.'

It's an obvious point which is often overlooked. Games which sell well in France include the likes of Out Run. If their taste is broadly similar to Britain's then there is no reason for no crossover. To view the French market on the basis of the strange and esoteric is being seen as unnot just the British and Americans who can wheel out good sports simulations and shoot

"Everywhere in the world the software houses know what is a good product which will work everywhere. To make a product which works everywhere doesn't mean that it has to be without spirit. Now we make games with the UK and US in mind. Before we might have only had the French market in mind.'

Eddie Edwards is drafted in to prove the point. "Just look at it. It's a good game and it'll do well. People in the UK are sufficiently open-minded to recognize a good product. It's images are fading."

#### Out to launch

oriciel claims to have long held the policy which is thankfully becoming more fashionable now - that of limiting releases to the few games worthy of launch and likely both to sell and further the company's image. Weill believes that in France there has been a "polarisation" between good games and bad games with those average titles rapidly diminishing.

"Two years ago people thought that we were crazy to publish products with the long term in mind. The UK market is the most advanced

point it is different." Nevertheless, various UK software houses have been taking that view for some time with EA and MicroProse traditionally keeping release schedules at a

minimum.

A major difference in both markets appears to be the nonchalance with which French publishers view coinops. Whilst their British counterparts are forever scrambling for this coin-op licence or that French publishers couldn't really give two hoots.

Not surprisingly that's because of the lack of coin-ops in France. Whilst here there is an arcade presence everycities and holiday resorts in France.

"Coin-ops don't mean much to us," said Weill. "OK, so *Out Run* sold well in France but that wasn't because of the coin-op link. It would have done well with a different name.

"In the UK people want security and brand names and that's normal. It's a difficult market and you need a year to be fully recognised. September will be the real launch for us because it's taken us since the beginning of the year to understand that market. We are prepared to do whatever is necessary and we'll be one of the top UK publishers within

#### STAMPS OF APPROVAL?

Continued from page 11

Very few retailers, it seems, are likely to set up racks of Ocean and Activision T-shirts in their stores. Steadman at Bits and Bytes immediately raised the point of dealing with enquiries about colours running, shrinking and wrong sizes. "We're a computer specialist not a glorified clothes shop. We don't just stick anything in the corner and hope it sells."

John Anderson of Long Eaton Software Centre predicted that he would probably give a T-shirt to anyone buying three games at a time. "If the price is reasonable they sound like a good thing. You couldn't give one away with a single game unless it was for the ST or something."

#### Work ethics

come.

"No retailer should sit back and say 'I'm all for an easy life'. Just as the distributors have started reacting with new marketing approaches so it is time for retailers to do the same," explained Steadman.

Sure, Microdealer's promotion will take some explaining and could even cause some complications regarding other distributors' stock, but the msaage is clear. If retailers can make this one work then they could be in for a bonanza of end-user sales aids as all the other distributors catch on.

their retailers for years.

Microdealer's second new initiative involves the buying up of software houses' logos for exclusive use on T-shirts. Packs of 60 or so will be sold to retailers for around £200. These can then be sold on as merchandise or used as freebies.

B its and Bytes is possibly the most promotion led retailer in the UK currently with activities ranging from large mailshots to free Easter eggs. It's small wonder then that it was the most in favour of Microdealer's efforts. Its message of "more of the same please" to other distributors generally sums up what retailers have wanted for a long

But as Steadman pointed out, for promotions to work fully and an outlet to succeed fully shop owners can't just sit back and ley everyone else do the consumer coaxing. Microdealer's decision to take up a tried and tested marketing technique is a step in the right direction and it should only be a small taste of things to

And why not? Most other industries have been helping



# NO STRINGS, PULLEYS OR LEVERS, JUST SERVICE

Archimedes was one of the world's greatest mathematicians and engineers, famous for his study of spheres, cones, cylinders, spirals and irregular volumes. He also invented the principle of levers and pulleys and devised his unique way of raising water.

So is it any wonder that Hugh Symons, one of the nation's foremost computer distributors is now handling the fastest computer in the market place today. A computer bearing the great man's name and so powerful that it can handle up to 4 million instructions each second (18 million per second under laboratory conditions). Yes, Acorn have joined forces with Hugh Symons to market the brilliant Acorn range including the Archimedes.

Archimedes himself would have been proud of this combination, an equation that on one side represents the finest computer equipment around and on the other a most respected distributor with all the experience, back up and resources.

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