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# CTW

**6.3.89 BRITAIN'S TOP COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY ISSUE 226**

**ocean**

The  
**Brand Name**  
in  
**Entertainment**  
**Software**

## EA redirects distribution

After eighteen months of ploughing a lone direct furrow, Electronic Arts has decided to push its product through traditional distribution channels.

The US firm last week signed deals with Centresoft, Leisuresoft and Microdealer but will also be retaining its own direct operation. The firm is confident that the two usually confrontational methods of selling will work side by side.

Unsurprisingly the firm is not pitching the move as anything like a U-turn and, instead, claims its UK operation is sim-

ply mirroring the US arrangement where distribution and direct sales are already established. EA previously had specific distribution deals with TBD, Mastertronic and Centresoft in order to penetrate multiple accounts.

Despite the blend of bravado and reasoning many observers will see the step as something of a climb down after the firm's fierce championing of the direct cause during its initial UK days.

EA's senior vice president Tim Mott told *CTW*: "Obviously this business is one where the environment is changing rapidly and we'd be like dinosaurs if we didn't change with it. We think that

we've been very successful in establishing the success of 16-bit over here and now that job is done and this is another stage.

"I think it is fair to say that working with distributors can add to our business and give more convenience to dealers and I don't think that was the opinion held a year and a half ago or we wouldn't have done what we did."

Regarding the inevitable competition between EA and its three chosen distributors Mott offered that he did not expect a price war. "In terms of the margins that we can offer dealers and they can offer dealers our understanding is that they will be the same."



EA: Relaxing direct rules

## Ocean budget a cert

Ocean's expected budget label assault has been all but rubber-stamped with the appointment of Pat Kavanagh from Software Projects, *CTW* can reveal.

Although no one at the firm was prepared to comment, it is understood that Kavanagh has taken on the role of budget product manager. One source within the firm seemed shocked that the news had leaked out offering "your sources are well informed".

Only last month Ocean boss David Ward intimated to *CTW* that a budget label could be formed - calling on the firm's much sought after back-catalogue for product.

He noted that he had become far more interested in budget since the majority of budget titles moved up to the £2.99 pricepoint at the tail end of last year. Ocean has also been experimenting with a budget label in Australia.

Ward said that any such move is likely to be made "in the middle of the year" - although Kavanagh's appointment may have brought that launch date a tad closer.

## Chains force Z88 cut



Z88: Cuts giving indies a chance against multiples

Cambridge Computer last week cut the price of its Z88, whilst admitting that Comet and Dixons had pre-empted this latest move.

The machine itself has been cut by £50 and will now retail

at £199.95, whilst the All-in-One pack has been reduced from £299.95 to £249.95. The firm claims that since the machine's launch nearly two years ago a price reduction had been on the cards.

"When we originally started selling the Z88 through mail order it was £199.95, and it was

always our intention to get back to that. We would probably have introduced it around April, but the action of Comet and Dixons brought us forward a bit," commented the firm's marketing manager Paul Streeter to *CTW*.

Cambridge claims that

Continued on back page

## Whispers end as Accolade goes it alone

After months of speculation and a few red herrings US publisher Accolade last week announced that it will be setting up its own UK operation.

The firm's product was previously handled by Electronic Arts in this country but that relationship was severed in January. Since then Accolade has spent time examining the British market and deciding how to handle its next assault.

One widely tipped route for the firm was through a licens-

ing deal with MicroProse. Among the most confident speculators was MicroProse itself.

Those theories have now been dashed as Accolade begins its hunt for premises, a UK boss and a distribution network. The firm is also working on a redesign of its packaging and brand identity in order to make a "clean break" from EA.

Erstwhile EA man Randy Thier was last month appointed vice president of international affairs at the firm and was responsible for the

Continued on back page

## VCS 7800 promised for May

Breaking momentarily from its business push, Atari has claimed that its long promised VCS 7800 is at last nearing the light of day.

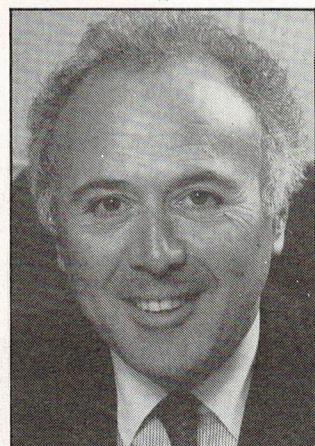
The firm is also currently tying up the contents of its next ST leisure bundle, which should arrive at the end of the month. The Powerpack will have several software extras added to the expected fresh batch of games - a likely addition being a music package.

Atari has overcome its technical difficulties with the 7800 and has tied up several deals

Continued on back page

## Laren breaks Lightning link

Lightning is set to lose its founder Ray Laren and longtime director Norman Mandell at the end of the month.



LAREN: Going...

The move follows the expiry of contracts signed by the duo back in July 1986 when engineering and distribution conglomerate Parkfield bought Lightning for £6.5 million.

It also comes at a time when the firm is seeing its distribution role re-moulded. Currently, the audio and video side is being amalgamated with fellow Parkfield subsidiaries Hollywood Nites and Cineplex to form a new division called Parkfield Entertainment.

The computer operation was re-named Lightning Business to Business last year and, following Laren's departure, this will be solely headed up by newly appointed managing director Loretta Cohen.

Laren set up Lightning back in 1975. He is joint managing

director of Business to Business, treasurer of the Guild of Software Distributors and a BMF council member.

"It just seems like a very good time to be moving on for the both of us," offered Laren to *CTW*. "Our contracts have expired and there simply is no need for either of us to have to work nine to five anymore. Fortunately we've both got enough money to go off and do what we like."

The seemingly amicable split means that Laren will relinquish both his roles within the GSD and BMF. Neither he nor Mandell have immediate plans for the future, although consultancy work seems the most likely outcome.

"Obviously after working with them for all these years it's

sad to see them go, but things change. I'm delighted with my promotion and you should see a lot of new things happening at Lightning in the future," commented Cohen to *CTW*.



MANDELL: Going...

## INSIDE:

### OPUS POCUS

The firm that claims to be in the top four of UK PC shifters has suddenly gone all noticeable by announcing more machines and taking ads in the nationals. *CTW* asks how Opus manages to come up with exciting brand names such as PCV, PCVI and PVII and asks where will it all end? (PCVIII, PCIX and PCX, presumably)..... 10

### 'OLDING HANDS

Audiogenic has been writing games almost as long as Emlyn Hughes has been a loudmouthed soccer has-been. But why has it only ever had two hits?..... 14

### 'OLDING ON

The CPC ranks right along side watching Arsenal at home in the interest stakes, but it's not about to die yet!..... 17

### ON A WANE AND A PRAYER

The hunt for ultra-low cost standard PCs seems to have been superseded by a hunt for ultra-low cost 286s and 386s. Does the £399 clone face a future in a land ruled by *Tharg and the Blasterons*? And what will happen to all those Amstrad-basher stories?..... 18

CHARTS 21/LETTERS 22



Small businesses everywhere are getting a great deal from Commodore.

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# Distributor shake-up promised as Universal nears launch date

**A new leisure and low-cost business software distributor kicks into life next week with claims that it will offer a better service for small outlets.**

Called Universal Distribution, it is being headed up by Simon Cairns - who previously managed Centresoft's extinct London offshoot Capital. The firm hopes to have enlisted 100 active dealers by the autumn.

The new operation has been funded by software development firm and retail outlet

Waxride. "We're going to be bullshit free," began Cairns bullishly. "I look at the larger distributors and naturally enough they have their 20-30 top dealers and then the rest are what you call 'ma and pa' stores."

"Those small stores provide the distributors with the bulk of their business but they're not made to, feel important. They're not informed well enough and they don't receive the right kind of service. We like to think that because we've got our own retail outlet we know what those stores need. Obviously like anyone we'll

make mistakes, but we'll listen to anyone who thinks they've got a good idea on how they should be serviced."

Universal is currently in negotiations with the National Association of Computer Retailers with a view to sealing a 'priority order' deal. The distributor will offer certain advantages to the 26 members in return for it gaining the bulk of their business.

Cairns is adamant, however, that Universal is not about to start cutting trade prices to gain market share.

"We don't want to start a dis-

count war. The retailers benefit in the short-term but they still lose out eventually. There's enough business for everybody.

"What we're going to start is a service war. We'll probably shake up the big boys to better their service. It's all so sluggish out there. We want to create a bit of excitement."

Universal will initially consist of a team of 12 people based in Wembley, London. Cairns hopes that the firm's business will be nationwide rather than limited to the South East, and also plans to

put salespeople on the road visiting dealers.

Same day delivery will be offered in London and the home counties, with next day delivery elsewhere. The initial promotion for the firm requires dealers to design its logo - although the prize has not yet been decided.

"I feel there's a place for a London-based distributor providing a proper service - not just reading off a packet and taking orders. If a product's bad dealers will be told it's bad," added Cairns.

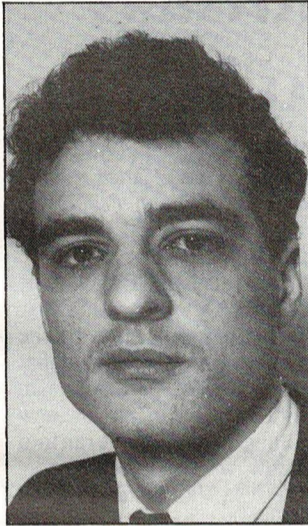
The firm plans to ship its first product on March 15th.

## Loriciels goes for Gold as Elite deal fizzles out

**After a disappointing 12 months Loriciels and Elite have ended their UK sales and marketing deal, with the French firm signing a new agreement with US Gold.**

The Elite deal, which expired last week, launched around six titles onto the UK market none of which enjoyed particular success. The US Gold deal is initially for a year and is expected to produce between 10 and 12 titles.

Commenting for Elite, marketing manager Bernard Dugdale offered: "It has not been a tremendous deal for either of us and no one has made a penny. The product range has not been a strategic advantage to them and no financial advantage to us.



**WEILL: Shift to Gold**

"The major problem with the deal is that the UK market has changed so significantly from the one that they based all their original plans on."

Loriciels president Laurant Weill added diplomatically: "It was a very interesting relationship and we learnt a lot, but this year we're launching a great number of products that need strong marketing so we need someone who has a strong marketing structure."

He claimed that the Elite deal had been more of a unit shifting exercise with telesales and distribution being the two main ingredients. He expects far more from the new deal.

"Basically marketing is what US Gold is very strong in, they always have lots of innovative ideas. Sales were OK with Elite but in France we sell over 40,000 units on some products, with US Gold we can achieve the same sort of thing in England."

The first product from the deal can be expected in April.

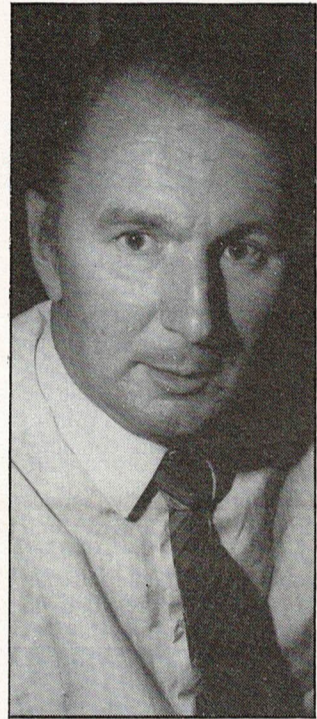
## TBD strengthened in Wynd-Up buy up

**After protracted negotiations, John Menzies last week purchased Prestwich's leisure distribution firm Wynd-Up - and a merger with the chain's own distribution wing TBD now looks imminent.**

Menzies paid £3.27 million for the entire Wynd-Up operation, with Prestwich warranting pre tax profits in excess of £335,000 for the last half of 1988.

Wynd-Up normally handles a similar range to TBD including videos, records and software. Although the firms will initially work in conjunction with each other a merger looks set to take place later this year.

"Considering the fact that I only recently got access to the Wynd-Up premises, at this stage it does seem presumptuous to start quoting timetables for a merger. I would also point out that it will not affect TBD's commitment to soft-



**Smith: Business as usual**

ware or hardware in the case of Atari, and our plans will continue," offered TBD boss Norman Smith to CTW.

## Opus gains trial trio on distributor drive

**In a bid to increase its distributor network, Opus has taken on three new firms on a trial basis.**

Mellcom, MBS and SD have all been taken on a three month

contract. If the deals prove successful then Opus will be looking to tie up a more long term arrangement.

This latest move is part of Opus' concerted push to shake off its direct only image, with

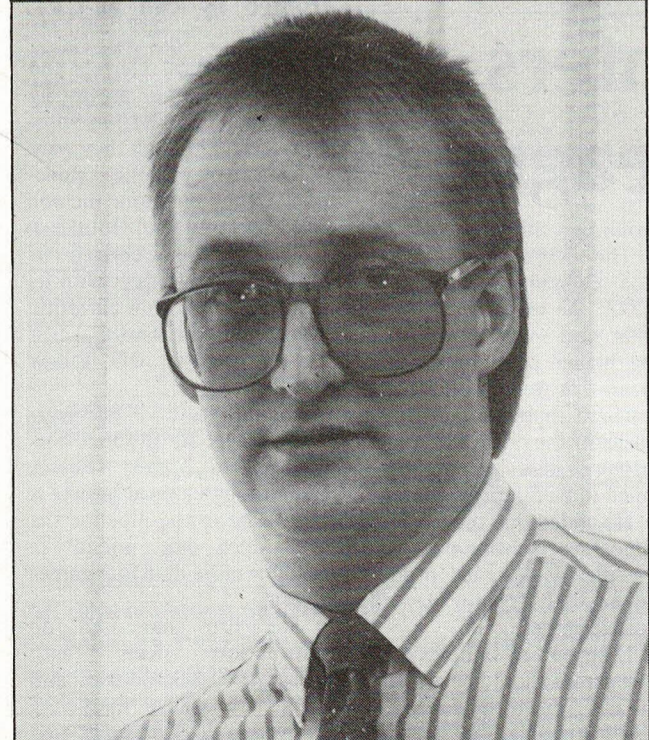
the firm also looking to further increase its share of the business market.

Opus has in fact been going through distributors for the last nine months, and currently deals with Eltec, CBS, Micro-Peripherals, Mellordata and Technical Connections.

"I'm very keen on distributors as I obviously like to supply 1,000 machines to one customer, rather than 1,000 machines to that many different ones. So we are currently looking for first class distributors. I want to see them as an extension of our sales force, and increase our dealer network through them," offered the firm's marketing director Martin Breffitt to CTW.

Meanwhile Opus is flaunting the IBM PC User Group's decision to opt for Opus machines on its latest series of courses, demonstrating IBM software.

"Obviously we are delighted by the Group's decision to use our computers. It is probably the best endorsement of a manufacturer of IBM compatibles could hope for," commented Breffitt.

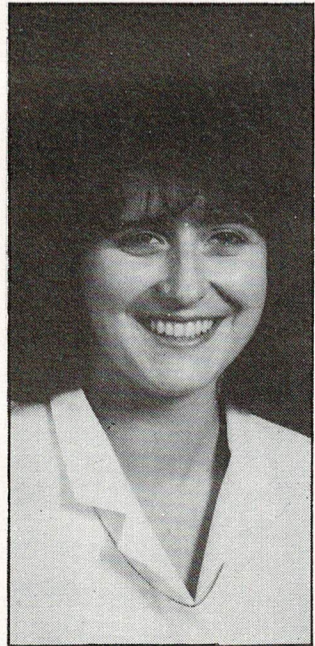


**BREFFITT: More distributors courted**

## Which? rides higher

**This year's Which Computer? Show smashed all previous records, with its attendance figure in excess of 66,000.**

Although the figures have not been officially audited, the show's organiser Cahners is confident that they will top the pre-show target by at least 6,000.



**SMITH: Best show ever**

According to Cahners' sales manager Belinda Smith the show's success can be attributed to a variety of factors: "A lot of exhibitors made a huge effort not only with their stands, but also through linked advertising and ticket promotion. Also our radio and TV ads appear to have been very effective. Another factor is that all enquirers get sent an entire pack previewing the show, which makes the conversion rate very good. Obviously we're absolutely delighted."

Cahners also introduced training sessions this year for staff manning the stands. "In the past staff have been ill-equipped to handle enquiries, and have failed to realise the selling potential of the show. The training has proved very successful, with a lot of orders being picked up at the show."

Cahners is claiming that the 1990 Which? already looks good, with over 95 per cent of exhibitors rebooking for next year, and the new April dates guaranteeing milder weather. "Also we will be co-located with a communications exhibition, which because there is a relationship should draw in more crowds than the Boat Show."

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# Gremlin catches cold with Federation bug

Gremlin was left apologising to consumers and retailers last week after a bug was discovered in its top selling *Federation of Free Traders* title.



STEWART: Apologetic

The problem on original ST versions means that it cannot be saved to disk - a virtual necessity due to the nature of the gameplay. It is understood that some 10,000 faulty copies entered into distribution channels. All those that haven't already been sold have been recalled.

"It's a major hiccup, but it's not a disaster," commented Gremlin boss Ian Stewart to CTW. "We've done more testing on this product than anything else we've ever put out. The error was that all the testing was done before protection was added. It appears that it's the protection that has caused the problem."

Since discovering the bug Gremlin has had staff working

flat out' to rectify it as soon as possible. The new disks should be available some time this week.

"The general public have been absolutely fantastic. We're obviously replacing any disk that is sent back - but we've found that some of them don't want to because they're so into the game," added Stewart.

"It's caused the most problems for retailers. All we can do is apologise and say that all faulty disks will be replaced."

The bug is the latest set-back for the title, which had already been delayed. But Stewart is confident that, overall, sales will not be damaged.

"This product is still getting reviews of 90 per cent all over the place and it'll be selling for two years. Luckily this isn't a two month arcade title - if it had been we'd have killed it."

# Eltec takes to the road with new image

In a concerted effort to push its image more upmarket, Eltec is set to embark on a series of dealer roadshows.

The roadshows will be held throughout the country with Eltec offering participating dealers various courses in commercial training. These are being held in conjunction with leading management consultancy firm Tack International.

The new Eltec image will be embodied in the firm's new logo, glossy promotional literature and a change in attitude towards its dealers.

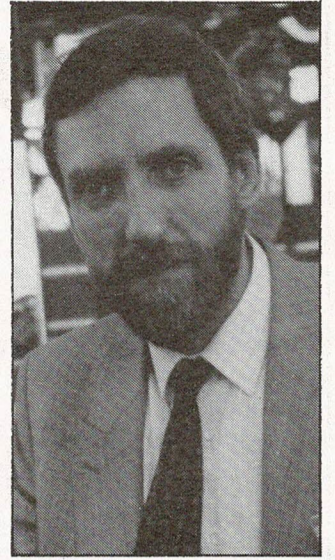
"We want to put it across that if a dealer comes on board with Eltec their business will increase by being associated with our new image. We will be helping dealers make more profit through the courses, and we will be working closely with them, helping the dealer to sell.

We are trying to make Eltec the Sainsburys of the computer world by offering quality, a better image, and a better product range," offered the firm's marketing manager Stuart Smith to CTW.

The firm claims that its change in image has not been prompted by its recent takeover by AB Electronics. "Obviously being part of a PLC has a stabilising effect, and you have to be more professional. We are rationalising ourselves, but we had quite naturally got to that watershed before the buy out."

Smith intimated that there would be large incentives for dealers to attend the roadshows, but at this stage he was reticent to comment any further.

The Eltec Roadshow kicks off on April 6th at the Noke Hotel in St Albans. Other dates and venues include: April 13th (The Marketing Suite, Eltec's



SMITH: Altered image head office, Bradford), April 20th (The Golden Valley Hotel, Cheltenham), April 27th (The King James Hotel, Edinburgh), May 4th (The Strathallen Hotel, Birmingham) and May 11th (The Gosforth Park Hotel, Newcastle).

A further London venue is also being organised, where the press will attend a prize giving ceremony for Eltec's top dealers.

# More computer growth in the Wilding life

Office equipment chain Wilding last week announced further plans for expansion in its computer division, whilst eyeing additions to its hardware range.

The moves follow last month's announcement that it will be setting up its first computer only store in London, scheduled to open in April. Now the chain has acquired another London site which

will concentrate more exclusively on computers.

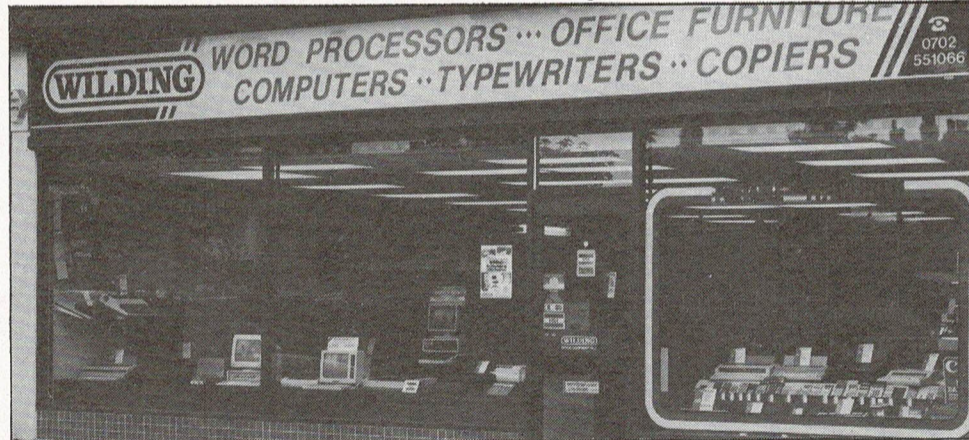
The site consists of five shops under an office block and the plan is to devote one area to the firm's more traditional retail activities while the other four are turned over to the ever-expanding computer business.

The firm's retail and service director John Howlett commented to CTW: "We've got our foot in the water but I still can't say how far we're going to swim. With London though it's

different, it can always take more than one store.

He went on to reveal that if the two stores proved a success the chain would be eventually looking to open computer-only stores in all the UK's major urban areas.

Meanwhile, Wilding is currently analysing the market and evaluating whether or not to expand its hardware range. Any additions that are made will be in the high end of the market.



WILDING: One more for the High Street

# French record company enters software Palace

Palace has tied up the UK distribution rights to the first software exploits of French record company Delphine.

The Paris-based company decided to enter the software market last year. Its first product is "imminent" and will be launched simultaneously in the UK and France. Previously Delphine has taken the blame for establishing such notable Gallic recording stars as Richard Clayderman.

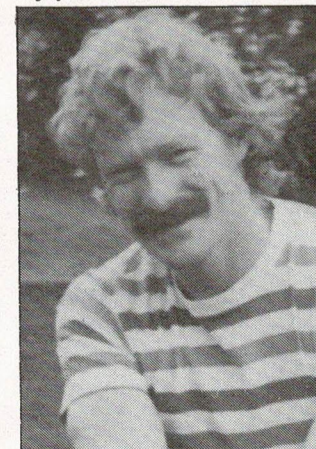
The first game due is *Bio Challenge* and will be available on ST, Amiga and PC formats only. After that the firm intends to release around three or four products a year, all exclusively on 16-bit and PC formats.

Palace director Pete Stone told CTW: "The games are very much in the arcade style and should suit this market. We approached them when we heard what was going on, there was a bit of competition for the deal. I think they chose us because there are a lot of similarities between the two companies and with a larger more obvious firm they may just become part of the machinery."

All the product will be marketed under the Delphine name. Stone admits that it will be an uphill struggle to establish 'brand identity but confidently predicts the games will eventually "run under their own steam".

Stone also claimed that the deal would break the tradition

of European software stifling in the UK market. He described the games as "very international, you just pick up a joystick and blast".



STONE: Paris catch

# Emerging Krisalis opens up to USD

Fledgling software house Krisalis has tied up a promotions and merchandising deal with USD.

With the firm's first release, *Prison*, now available, Krisalis appears to have sorted out its operations. Leisuresoft will be handling the firm's primary distribution and Jeremy Cooke's Software Business will be taking on European sales.

According to Krisalis director Tony Kavanagh the choice of USD appears to have been a natural one. "We thought they were the best and they came out after long negotiations with the best deal. They have offered us a complete package: sales, sales ledger, credit control and credit protection."

USD boss Andy Wood commented: "We are delighted to be able to add Krisalis product to the USD portfolio, particularly because of the high quality of their software. *Prison* is developed by the Teque team who of course won the best 16-bit conversion award at this year's InDin for Amiga *Pacmania*."

Krisalis got off to a shaky start due to a dispute with Chrysalis Records for originally using the same name

(CTW December 19th). The spelling has since been changed, although *Prison* will feature the original Chrysalis monicker.

"For the game *Prison* we've got until October with Chrysalis as it is spelt now. If the game continues to sell past that then whilst the packaging will be identical it will have the new spelling on it. When we ran into trouble we had already produced 15,000 boxes, but all subsequent product will feature the new spelling," offered Kavanagh.



WOOD: Another signing

# Players enters Premier league

Interceptor has become the latest publisher to join a growing market trend and announce a £2.99 budget label.

The firm already has its £1.99 Players range which will be maintained alongside the new Players Premier label. The new range will be launched at the European Computer Trade Show on April 16-18th.

It will initially be releasing 10 games, most of which will be available on the three major 8-bit formats. Included in the first batch will be *Task Force*, *Vigilante* and *Eagle Storm*. After that burst of activity the schedule will be relaxed to

around six titles a month.

The firm's sales manager Rod Cobain commented to CTW: "We won't be making a great deal more money from the higher price but it does mean that we can offer better software in better packaging. Basically the range will consist of games that have only just failed to be full price games."

He added that the label will almost exclusively deal with specifically designed product rather than try to play the licence game.

Distributors' samples of the first games should be available in early April with retail availability scheduled for the first week after the show.

# Epson flows

Epson last week announced two major deals as part of what is pitched as 1989's "europeanisation" plan.

The firm secured distribution into prestigious corporate outlets Computacenter and Businessland. Between them the two newly appointed resellers offer 26 outlets.

Epson claims that the deals give its distribution activities "a new dimension" and along with more unspecified aspects of the "europeanisation" plan will secure "a competitive edge in the company's future channels to market".

Epson's director of business development Nigel Foxwell offered: "We are planning over 40 per cent growth in 1989 - three times the industry average. Our new business partners will give Epson customers easier access to the company's extremely wide product range and our planned inroads into Europe. This has to be good news for our customers."

# CRL deserters perform Magic

Last week witnessed the first release by fledgling software house Digital Magic - the firm being fronted by two ex-CRL men.

Both Gerrard Derrett and John Law were previously employed by CRL as programmers, although they were reticent to play up the connection. Other directors include Jules Burt and Paul Holmes.

The firm will be concentrating on 16-bit product with its first game *Scorpion* currently available on the Amiga, whilst an ST version will follow shortly.

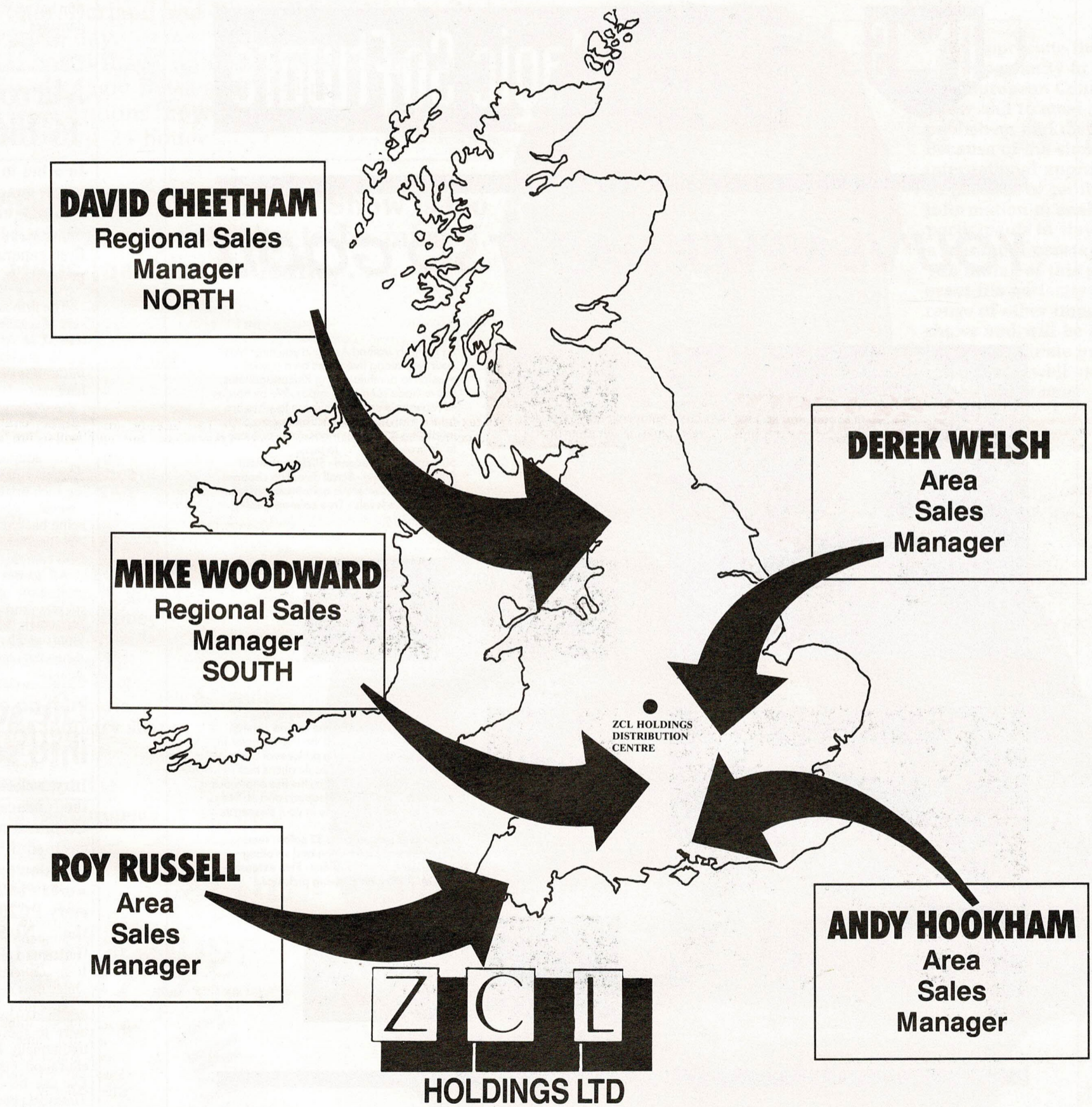
Digital Magic will be releasing its second product this week called *Trained Assassin*, and although a third project is said to be in the pipeline the firm does not intend to produce more than four games a year.

The firm has tied up distribution deals with Leisuresoft, Microdealer and Guillemot whilst marketing and promotion will be carried out in-house.

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## Now Matrix 386 falls to NCR Tower-bashers

NCR's hawk-eyed patents division pounced again last week following the launch of Digital Matrix' Desktower 386 machine.

No sooner had the £999 machine been paraded at the recent *Which Computer?* Show than a now familiar letter was sent by NCR. It warned of DM's apparent copyright infringement of the registered Tower trademark.

The letter promised litigation if the Desktower kept its name, and like Schneider

before it (*CTW* February 20th) the small UK firm has opted not to contest the issue.

"I suppose in some ways it's nice to be regarded as a serious threat to NCR. I can't fight a company the size of that - it's ludicrous. - they could squash me like a bug, I'm sure," offered DM's boss Clive Warner to *CTW*.

Some 2,000 units of the Desktower have already been shipped following its launch at *Which?* and Warner is hoping that, again as in Schneider's

case, these will be allowed to sell through without legal action.

The proposed new name for the 386 is Deskdor - 'tor' being the old English word for tower.

NCR defended its position claiming that "you can't avoid infringing a copyright just by adding a bit to the name."

Don Millichap of the firm's patents division also defended the decision to warn such a small offender.

"A trickle can turn into a flood. If you let one firm get away with it then other people will think they can too. Tower is our registered trademark and we will continue to protect it," he told *CTW*.

## Budgeteers court between two versions of legal row

The legal wrangle between Code Masters and Alternative took another twist last week with both firms claiming different outcomes from an initial court hearing.

The row stems from Code Masters slapping a writ for breach of copyright on fellow budgeteer Alternative. It claimed the packaging of Alternative's Formula Grand

Prix plagiarises its own Grand Prix Simulator.

The case gained an initial court hearing during January. Alternative claimed the outcome of the case was a defeated Code Masters being "shown the door" while Code Masters itself claimed the court had given its case the green light and had decided that although an injunction could not be taken out to stop the game there is a case to answer.

Alternative boss Roger Hul-

ley told *CTW*: "Basically at the end of the day they've been told to go away and been pointed to the door. We've always thought the whole thing was ridiculous and if they decide to pursue this any further they'll just be throwing good money after bad."

At Code Masters, however, the view seems to be that failure to get an injunction is a minor hiccup and that on the whole the court appearance provided a positive result and enough encouragement to continue the case.

A Code Masters spokesman offered: "We went to court to see if there was a case to answer and they decided that there was. There wasn't an injunction but we will still be seeking damages."

The case continues, probably.

## Mirrorsoft's 16-bit blitz

In a bid to increase consumer awareness, Mirrorsoft last week embarked on what it describes as the first general 16-bit retail promotion.

The firm is offering purchasers of selected 16-bit games a free ST or Amiga disk, featuring a playable first level of *Blasteroids*. Purchasers will also have automatic entry into a national draw with the chance to take part in a Combat Zone day out.

In addition participating retailers will hold a draw, offering such prizes as T-shirts and watches. The promotion is being backed by Bullet, which has produced a nationwide POS campaign.

All games featured in the promotion will carry special stickers and include: *Falcon*, *Dungeon Master*, *Speedball*, *Triad*, *Bombuzal*, *Orbiter*, *TV Sports Football*, and *Rocket Ranger*.

## Lite switches into schools

In yet another push into the education market Commodore has tied up a deal with Electric Distribution to bundle *Timeworks Publisher Lite* with every PC20 sold through the NUS organised 'Futures Loan' scheme.

The move is the latest in a long line of promotions designed to push the manufacturer to the forefront of the traditionally BBC dominated education market. *Timeworks Lite* can be upgraded to full *Timeworks* package.

Electric Distribution's commercial manager Neal O'nions offered: "We are delighted to be associated with Commodore and are pleased to be making desktop publishing so much more accessible to students through this important offer. I'm sure the combination of such impressive software will prove a real boon to the production of professional looking documents."



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# MGT E.T.A. slips again

MGT has once more delayed the launch of its much trailed Sam Coupe, whilst the firm is set to receive an injection of cash from an unknown source.

Contrary to previous claims that the Spectrum clone would be available from late April, the firm will now begin shipment of the machine in August. The initial volume of production is expected to increase as a result of MGT seeking additional

strength in the company from an as yet unnamed source.

"It will make us better off from a financial point of view than we would have been. We are talking to a number of people to make sure that we have sufficient strength to start with a bang rather than a whimper," offered the firm's director Alan Miles to CTW.

The firm is denying that the machine's delay is in any way related to production problems. "We will have 200 pre-production units ready by late April, but at that time we want

to get all the bugs out of the system, as we are aiming for the lowest possible fault rate. Really it is not a delay it is just an extra step that we've added".

MGT claims to have already spoken to a number of major retailers and that the response so far has been "encouraging". It is also claiming that the machine has attracted substantial interest overseas and that one European distributor is set to place an order in excess of 20,000 units.

Although the firm has no firm commitments from soft-

ware houses, it appears confident that companies will be willing to write for Sam. MGT itself will also be producing software in the form of a spreadsheet, word processor and database.

MGT is also pitching Sam at the education market. "We will be test bedding the Coupe in Scottish primary schools in the Grampian region. There is a need for a computer in education that schools can afford more of than the Archimedes. We have also contacted the Sinclair School User Group in Birmingham, and are compiling a list of existing software that we can import to the Sam".

# Konix rushes to avoid catalogues of disaster

After much confusion and a few dubious claims the mysterious Rushware 100,000 units order for the Konix console now seems to rest on the Welsh manufacturer meeting the deadline of the influential German mail-order market.

The 100,000 figure was given to Konix by the German distributor as an idea of how many it could sell. However, at least half of those orders were expected to come from mail-order catalogues which are published in July.

To be included in the catalogues Konix must produce

satisfactory publicity material and software by April. At the moment it is not certain if this deadline can be met and the Rushware deal is in the balance.

Rushware boss Jurgen Goldner explained that although no deal had been struck he was impressed with the console so far and had carried out extensive research into the machine's chances of success in the German market. He claimed that all responses have been positive.

"Our order hasn't been cancelled but then it has never really been signed, we're just waiting to find out if they can get in the catalogues. We really don't know what is going to happen", Goldner told CTW.

# BT sell-off begins

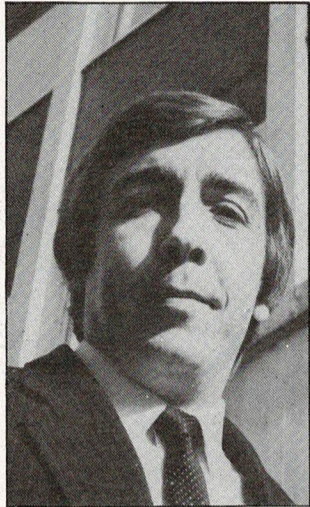
The task of finding a buyer for Telecomsoft began in earnest last week, with several firms showing interest.

Telecomsoft boss Paula Byrne is still hopeful that the company will be bought as a complete package, despite speculation that the three labels could be sold off separately.

Meanwhile, confusion has been mounting over Telecomsoft's rights to the Rainbird name, having originated from ex-publisher Tony Rainbird.

"It is a registered trademark of BT, and they have the rights to the name. They can do what they want without my authority and without any recourse from me. I don't like it being sold, but I am completely out of it," offered Rainbird, who now fronts PR firm Inter Mediates.

BT is currently at the stage



**RAINBIRD: Same name but no claim** of issuing a "Telecomsoft prospectus" to interested parties, who in turn must sign a confidential non-disclosure agreement. Byrne admits that the whole selling process is being "wrapped in a shroud of secrecy".

# Ivy to spread in dealer push

Business software firm Ivy has launched a new range of low cost business skills packages, and is currently looking to establish a nationwide dealer network.

The firm's dealer push is designed to capitalise on the apparent growth in computer assisted learning (CAL), and as an incentive Ivy will be offering 50 per cent margins on its software which retails at £65. The firm is also trying to get its range in both Dixons and Tandy.

"CAL now accounts for 12 per cent of the UK training market, and is worth £240 million, three years ago it only made up three per cent. So far we have had a terrific response

from dealers, the product carries no risk, you can sell it with no support, and you can keep selling it as there are new releases all the time," offered the firm's boss Kenneth George to CTW.

Ivy currently boasts a catalogue of 20 packages, with a further 16 scheduled to be released this year. The PC software broadly falls into five categories: marketing manufacturing, people management, finance and strategy." The subjects covered include *Controlling Stress*, *Creating Value for Shareholders* and *Managing People*.

As part of its dealer drive, the firm has recently employed a dealer manager in the form of Charles Mepherrell, whose task will be to liaise with new retailers.



KONIX CONSOLE: Rushing for German market

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<p><b>Amiga Disk Drives Inside &amp; Out</b></p> <p>Abacus</p>	<p><b>Amiga Disk Drives Inside &amp; Out</b></p> <p>-is the most in-depth reference available covering the Amiga's disk drives. Learn how to speed up data transfer, how copy protection works, computer viruses, Workbench and the CLI DOS functions, loading, saving, sequential and random file organization, more.</p> <p>ISBN 1-55755-042-5</p>	<p><b>AmigaDOS Quick Reference *</b></p> <p>-an easy-to-use reference tool for beginners and advanced programmers alike. You can quickly find commands for your Amiga by using the three handy indexes designed with the user in mind. All commands are in alphabetical order for easy reference. Includes Workbench 1.3</p> <p>ISBN 1-55755-049-2</p>	<p><b>New!</b> <i>AmigaDOS Quick Reference</i></p> <p>Abacus</p>
<p><b>Amiga For Beginners *</b></p> <p>Abacus</p>	<p><b>Amiga For Beginners *</b></p> <p>-the first volume in our Amiga series, introduces you to Intuition (Amiga's graphic interface), the mouse, windows, the CLI and Amiga BASIC and explains every practical aspect of the Amiga in plain English.</p> <p>ISBN 1-55755-021-2</p> <p>Includes Workbench 1.3</p>	<p><b>Computer Viruses: a high-tech disease *</b></p> <p>-describes what a computer virus is, how viruses work, viruses and batch files, protecting your computer, designing virus proof systems and more.</p> <p>ISBN 1-55755-043-3</p> <p>Probably the best and most current book on virus preventive measures.</p> <p>PC Week 11-21-88</p>	<p><b>COMPUTER VIRUSES</b></p> <p>Abacus</p>
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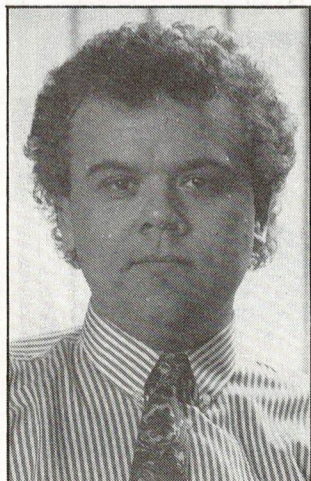
# SNIPPETS

After several months of negotiating Amstrad has finally signed a deal with GPT for the production of PC2286 and PC2386 machines in the UK. The plant in Kirkcaldy, Fife will make up to 20 per cent of the total units required - each one costing £10 more than its Far Eastern-built brethren. The deal has painted Amstrad in a somewhat unusual role of White Knight, with its completion saving the Kirkcaldy plant from closure. GPT employs 700 people and is the town's largest private sector employer...

With smart cards increasing in popularity in the UK organisers of this week's Smart Card '89 exhibition at the Novotel, Hammersmith are predicting the best response yet. Other nations already use smart cards for such things as hotel 'door keys', car log books and security systems. They also look set to become more visible in the UK computing industry - with Atari's Folio pocket PC using them. Interested parties should go along to the Novotel on March 7-9th.

Acorn's PR agency Hi-Tech has gained something of a reputation in this column for digging up tenuous links between its client's products and the outside world. This week the firm has excelled itself by 'revealing' that the CD jukebox built by Arbiter - currently blaring away in over 1,000 pubs and clubs - actually relies on Acorn Master boards. A nation rocks with astonishment...

Network firm Corvus is claiming major orders for the Omninet 1 hardware and PC-NOS software it supplies for Amstrad's AMSNOS LAN. "In the first six weeks of 1989 we shipped over 7,500 transporter cards to Amstrad," commented European managing director Mark Lewis. "That has to mean we're looking at Amstrad's share of the LAN market being worth at least three million pounds - and it's more likely to be four." The Amstrad network is currently being backed by £100,000 of advertising...



WYLIE: Lined up

Frontline has promoted its sales manager, Glenn Wylie, to sales director. He joined the company a year ago, and was previously in the microcomputer industry for 12 years. To fill the vacant post of sales manager, Frontline has appointed Lorraine Chalmers, who has over 11 years' experience in the industry...

Giant computer dealer MBS

last week announced the resignation of chief executive Stafford Taylor - along with a warning that it moved into loss in 1988. The latest fall into losses marks the failure of a rescue attempt launched three years ago by Taylor. The poor financial results appear to be the result of the pricewar caused by IBM's decision last year to increase its number of UK distributors from two to eight... Isle of Wight firm ISM has tied up UK rights to a series of Amiga products from US

firm Antic Software. The animations system Zoetrope retails at £99.95 and can be used either as a standalone paint program to create 2D 'animated fantasies' or to animate 3D images. This flagship product is backed up by four design disks: *Architectural Design; Future Design; Human Design* and *Microbot Design*. All retail at £24.95 each... The UK's first low radiation monitors, designed specifically to achieve low electrostatic and



TAXAN: Put a tiger in your machine

electromagnetic fields, have been launched by Taxan. The SuperVision 780 LR costs £629, and the MultiVision 770 Plus LR costs £699... Cameron Communications has been appointed UK distributor for Toyo Corporation's range of colour video printers... After just three months ex-Leisuresoft marketing co-ordinator Beverley Gardener has left PR firm Barrington Harvey for Audiogenic. She will be handling the label's publicity...

**FULL WARNING STATUS: CONDITION RED**

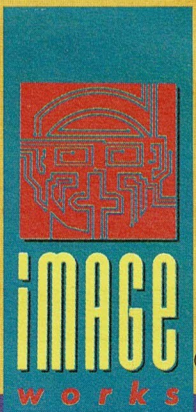
# BLASTEROIDS

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LEAF-BLA

# TRUE CONFESSIONS OF AN AMSTRAD BASHER

With yet another new batch of machines, Opus is threatening to move out of its public langour into a new age of high profile pitching. The longtime dependence on 'invisible' education sales has been replaced, in part, by a growing dealer base and the odd dalliance with national advertising. KELLY BESWICK reports . . .

To be in third or fourth position in anything is perhaps the most difficult of all. You are neither the best or the main contender - you are essentially just there, sitting on the sidelines and plotting your eventual rise to the more prestigious heights.

Such, it would seem, is the position of Opus. In the last four years the British manufacturer has built itself up into a major concern, with an estimated turnover of £32 million this year. It has broadened its horizons, expanding beyond its traditional area of education into the corporate sector. On the way it has picked up such clients as British Rail, British Gas and Marconi.

Yet Opus is not content to rest on its laurels and the winds of change are blowing strongly through the firm's Surrey office. Opus is looking to stretch itself even further. It's not pretending to even be in the running for the coveted first or even second place, but it wants to make damn sure that no-one below can possibly usurp it.

So how is Opus going to secure and strengthen its posi-

tion in the market? Well, one of its more standard tactics is to increase the range of its machines, so that it can now offer the much touted "one stop shop", whereby customers can be offered the complete solution for all their requirements.

### Boast inside the machine

The firm believes that with the latest additions to its range that goal has now been accomplished. Not only has it added another 286 and 386 machine, but Opus is boasting that they are in fact the highest specification low cost machines in the UK.

Such boasts are not uncommon, and as it would be very difficult to find hard evidence to refute the claim, then it must stand - as a good selling aid if nothing else. According to the firm's marketing director Martin Breffitt, the response to these latest additions has been "amazing".

"In the hardware market you can't just come out with five or six machines. You have

to find out what the customer needs. As the market progresses people now want 286 and 386 machines and we've got to be seen supporting that area. From the beginning I was very optimistic about them and I'm very pleased with people's reactions."

The new additions - the PCIV 286 and PCV 386 - are priced at £1,199 and £1,999 respectively. The 286 model comes with a 12 MHz clock speed, whilst the PCV 386 has a clock speed of 20 MHz. Both machines include fast hard disk drives, optional 3.5 inch or 5.25 inch floppies, 1Mb of RAM, 102 key keyboards and monochrome monitors with VGA option.

"Three or four years ago our major area was in the education market. Since then there have been dramatic changes and there has been a massive jump. Our corporate base has increased substantially. These new machines are being pitched at both areas," offers Breffitt.

The firm is claiming to have substantially increased its share in the business market

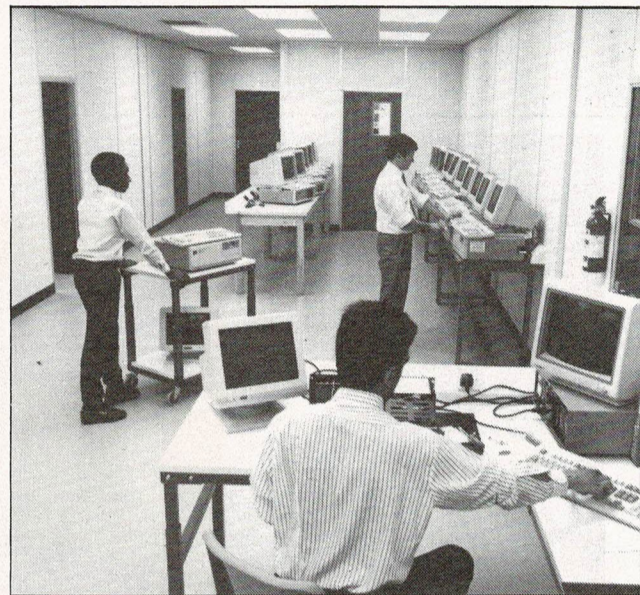
which now, along with the public sector (excluding education), accounts for 56 per cent of its sales.

So, having pumped new life into its range of machines the firm has embarked on a new marketing and advertising strategy. "At the moment we are undergoing an expansion programme. We've taken on a new sales manager and are getting more involved in that area. This year we are obviously trying to get across that the company has a broad range of machines. We will also be stressing the importance of quality and reliability - placing more emphasis on after sales and back-up support."

### Getting dealers back-up

Opus will be reducing its advertising in the computer press, with its eye directed more towards a national campaign. Indeed the firm recently advertised its two new machines and 24-hour helpline in the *Financial Times* and the *Telegraph*.

"We are changing our adver-



OPUS: The machines are taking over

tising strategy and emphasising not just computers, but the back up as well. We want to make it clear that we're not selling just a box. Okay so we're not the cheapest, but we want to be perceived as a company that offers long term support. At the end of the day people do not buy boxes, they buy tools and want reliability."

Also on Opus' list of new

year resolutions was a concerted push to expand its distributor network and subsequently increase the number of dealers through distributors. It is extremely keen to move away from its direct sales image, and has in fact been going through distributors for the last nine months.

Those firms it currently Continued on page 23

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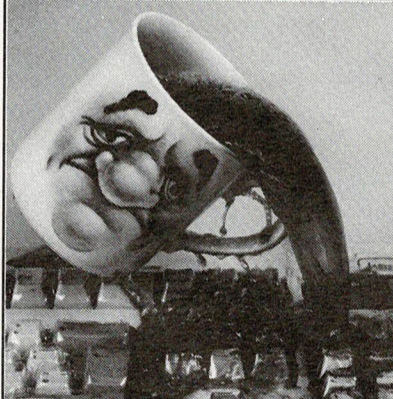
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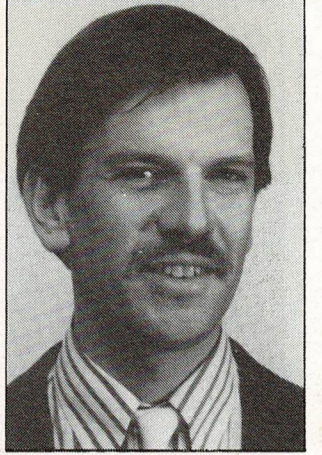
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# YOU'RE ONLY AS OLD AS YOUR LAST HIT

How after all these years did Audiogenic actually manage to have a hit again? And why is the firm that is older than some of its customers trying to hide its name by planning new labels? KELLY BESWICK reports from an old people's home . . .



**CALVER: Identity crisis**

To set about changing an image that has become entrenched over a period of nearly eleven years is

no small task.

To shake off people's conceptions and pump new vigour into something that has to all

intents and purposes become stale and inconspicuous takes considerable time, effort and indeed money.

Many companies have tried, but the success rate has not been good. It's a bit like the actress who has appeared in a

string of low budget, tacky movies and then suddenly turns around bemoaning her fate and declares to the world

that she wants to be taken seriously. A few have bridged the gap, but for every one that's made it there's a thousand little starlets still struggling.

Audiogenic claims to be one of the oldest names in the software business, having originally been born as Supersoft way back in 1978. Yet despite being something of an industry veteran the firm is considered to be almost on the periphery of the industry - a company that somehow plods along, occasionally churning out a good game, but more often than not it sits on the sidelines, with some not even sure if it's still in existence.

The firm's past does not follow a clear chain of events, which goes some way to explaining why its current image is blurred and confused. Audiogenic was in fact a duplicating house, which having run into financial difficulties, was acquired by Supersoft in 1985, with the latter adopting its name.

In turn, Supersoft began life as a software developer for the PET and later moved onto the BBC Electron. These old machines whilst originally supplying much of the company's revenue, have also shrouded the firm in a dated, almost on the brink of death image. Okay, so being a veteran sounds good, but not if you are perceived as a doddering old totterer, stale and decrepid, and unable to grasp the latest innovations.

According to Audiogenic boss Peter Calver all this is about to change. Calver is only too aware of how his firm is perceived, and claims that 1989 will see a turn around in the company's image and subsequent fortunes.

"People know the name, but they also remember the old days. They say that we used to do good stuff, but some think that we went bust ages ago, like the original Audiogenic did. I've been working hard to change that image and move more upmarket, but things aren't happening as fast as I would like," offers Calver.

**Hughes a good buy then!**

Can Calver really succeed when many others have either curled up and died or simply gone to that never never land set aside for so many software firms - that of complete and utter obscurity? Calver believes that the wheels have already been set in motion, following the firm's recent success with Emlyn Hughes' *International Soccer*.

Clearly Hughes is not the most converted ex-footballer to tie up a licence with, and indeed Calver concedes that many of the kids who actually bought the game wouldn't have even known that he once captained England. Nevertheless

Continued on page 14

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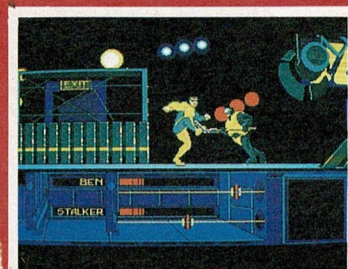
DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE???

\* The release of the computer game coincides with Braveworld's launch of the video for rental libraries on the 21 March 89.

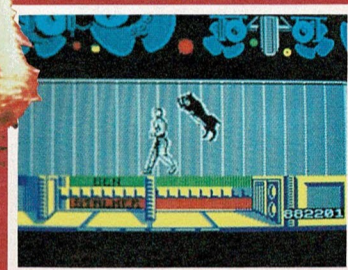
\* There is a limited offer of "THE RUNNING MAN" books by Stephen King included in the Amiga/Atari ST and PC packs.

\* The video has a 30 second Grandslam commercial at the beginning.

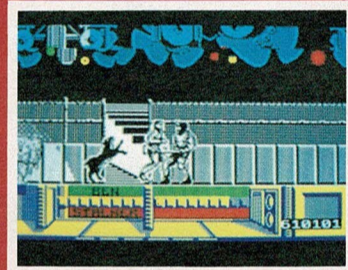
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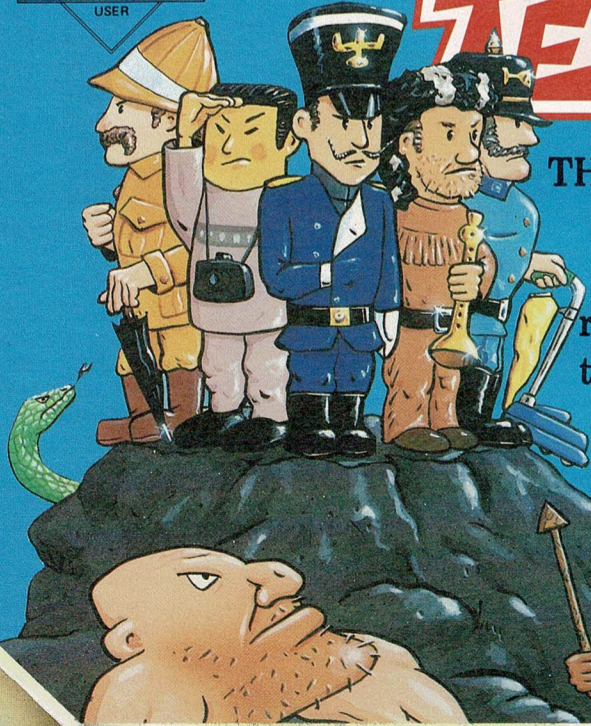
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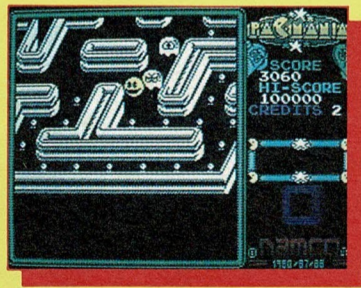


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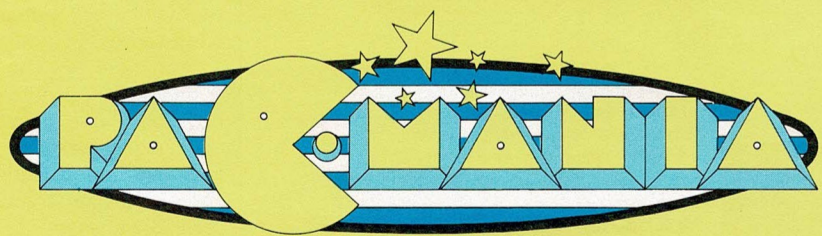


ATARI ST



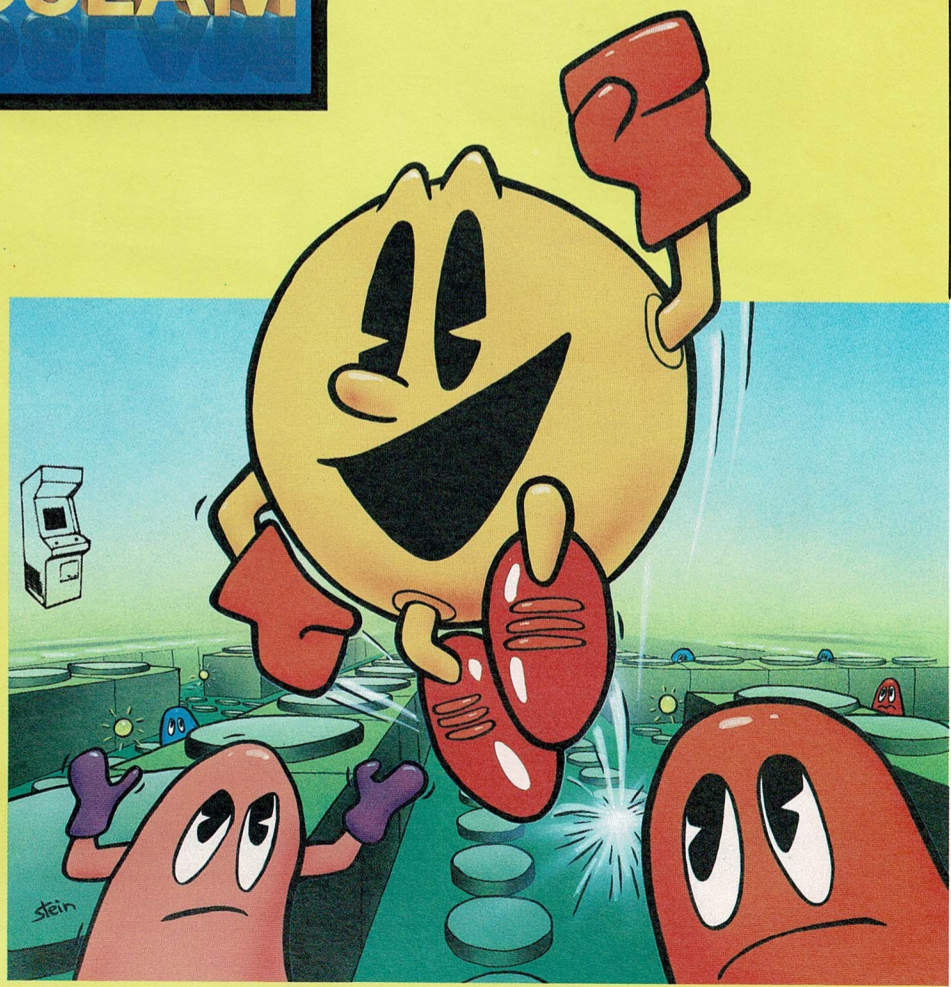
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# YOU'RE ONLY AS OLD AS YOUR LAST HIT

Continued from page 11

the game has done surprisingly well.

Calver attributes its success to the quality of the game itself, claiming the licence was "a good way of selling more of what is a good quality product anyway". The firm claims to have invested over £40,000 in producing the CBM version alone, and it will be the firm's emphasis on development that Calver believes will instigate Audiogenic's new image.

That is if Audiogenic

remains as the company's name. "Audiogenic isn't exactly a great name and it certainly wasn't chosen, it just sort of happened. Really it doesn't mean anything and we have great problems in getting people to know the name."

In order to rectify this and as part of its new upmarket, street cred image Calver is considering splitting the firm into a number of brand names. "We'd like one for sports and one for arcade style games, and prob-

ably a few more, but not too many. It will be a bit like Domark with the TV games label, and Mirrorsoft's Image-works." Indeed, the firm's next sports release will go under the Sports Action label, which hardly slides off the tongue, but Calver seems quite happy with it.

In the meantime the firm is tying up several licensing deals, and whilst they hardly fit into the *Robocop* or Michael Jackson league, Calver is confi-

dent that if it's a good game then even if it's only a relatively well known name it should help sell a few more copies.

Tapping on its success with Emyln Hughes, the firm will be using the name to promote its latest quiz game. "It's nothing like a *Question of Sport*, really it's closest to the quiz games that you see in pubs. In the past quiz games have been very poor sellers, whilst in theory they are usually big licenses. If you read the reviews for *Bob's Full House*, it doesn't seem much fun to play on your own. We've taken the approach of developing a computer game that will also work in the pub, and I'm currently talking to firms to try and turn it into a

pub game as well."

Another licence in the pipeline is *Lone Wolf*, which whilst bearing an uncanny resemblance to a license that did pretty well for Ocean, is in fact a character in a series of childrens books, which Calver boasts have already sold in excess of six million. The role playing game will be released around June to tie in with two new *Lone Wolf* books.

One does get the distinct impression that whilst emulating the activities of other software houses, Audiogenic just doesn't have the capital behind it to tie up what can best be described as the really sexy licences. This can best be seen in the firm's much vaunted

attempt to produce games specifically for girls. A brave idea, but extremely difficult to implement.

## Girls just wanna have fun

The cynics and chauvinists have been expecting Audiogenic to come up with such wonders as *Knitting Simulator*, or perhaps *Fairy Liquid's Washing Up Rally*. Instead, the firm has sealed a licensing deal with Laura Elsworth. What? You've never heard of her? Well, unless you're heavily into pistol shooting the odds are that you wouldn't have.

Elsworth does in fact shoot for the junior British team, and the pundits are banking on her for the next Olympics. Nevertheless it's pretty obscure, and something of a long term investment on Audiogenic's part. "I think it will appeal to girls, as it is someone their own age and at the start of her career. It is someone they can feel in association with rather than look up to and by buying the product they will be helping her. I admit it is a bit of gamble for us, but she has had quite a lot of publicity and was recently in the *Sunday Times*. You've got to try these things."

As yet no launch date for the Elsworth game is available, but the firm will be looking to create awareness of its female orientated products in such magazines as *Just Seventeen*, *Honey* and *Jackie*. Calver admits that finances will probably not allow for fully fledged advertising, but he is hopeful of gaining a few column inches simply on the novelty value of the product.

Meanwhile, the firm is looking to make greater inroads abroad, admitting that it has not had the impact in Europe that it could have done. Calver blames this on putting too little effort into marketing, a situation that he believes will be rectified with the employment of a full time sales manager.

Calver will also be making sure that any new products will be potential sellers in the US market and available for the right machines. So far the firm has only had one release in America and that was *Impact*, sold in the US through Mindscape, but rechristened *Blockbusters*.

All in all Audiogenic has twelve releases planned for this year, all of which will be available on 16-bit, as well as 8-bit. Indeed the firm is, if somewhat belatedly, keen to get in on the ST and Amiga market, having had its first and only stab at it in August 1987, with *Impact* on the ST.

Calver is keen to shake off the firm's PET and Electron tag, and whilst he would have been quite happy to drop all the old products and get on with building up the new, he admits that a gradual fading out will have to suffice "otherwise we would go bust".

And here lies the crux of Audiogenic's problem. Basically as a one man band it appears to operate on a shoestring, and unfortunately when shoestrings are stretched they are liable to snap.

Audiogenic's image may not be changing quickly enough for Calver's liking, but then again has he really got much choice? Perhaps the wheels have indeed been set in motion with the firm's recent success, but after eleven years those wheels must be rusty. To get them rotating smoothly and regularly will be an expensive uphill struggle.

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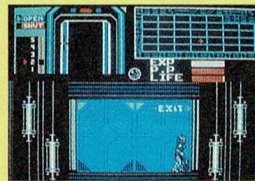
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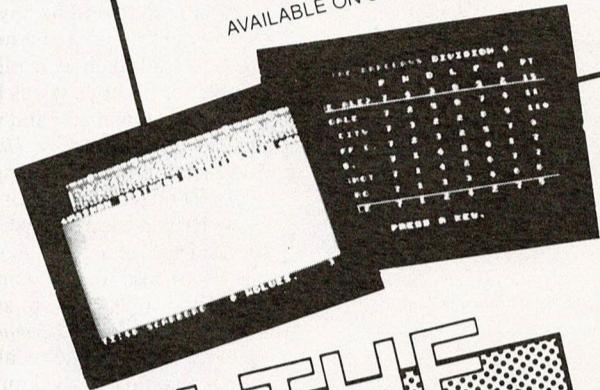
The whole thing looks incredible - the best I've seen on the Sega. Y's offers depth and playability and will keep you engrossed for weeks. It's a must! C+VG, March 1989

# FIRST PAST THE POST

## SOCCER STAR

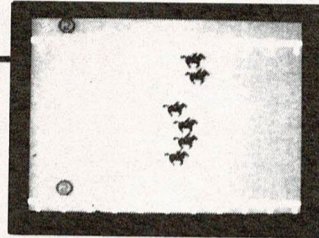
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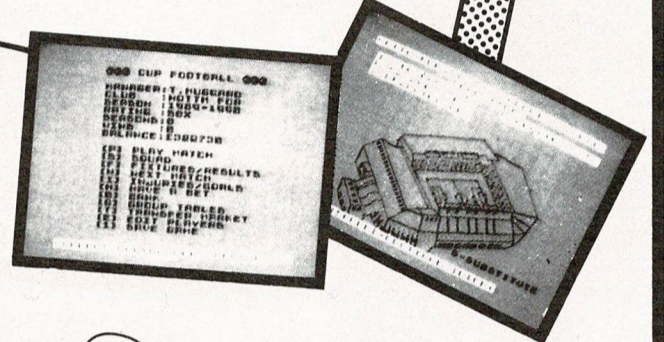
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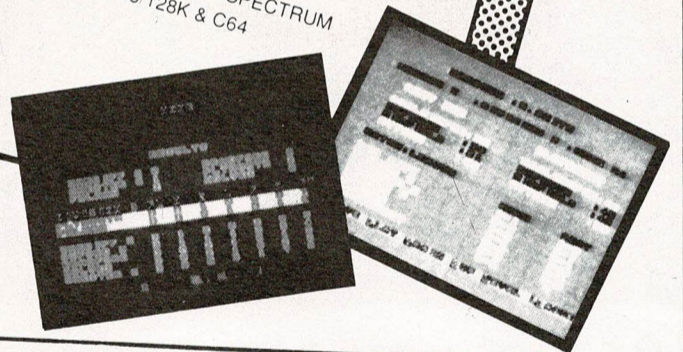


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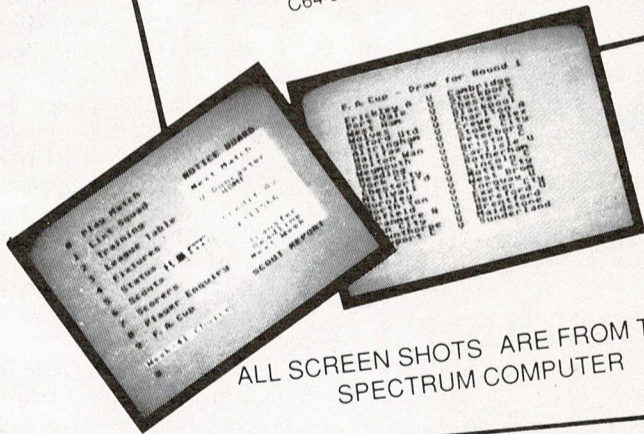
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# THE CPC: DEAD, DYING OR BETTER THAN EVER?

Of the five major leisure formats, arguably the least glamorous is the Amstrad CPC. In fact, publishers have been moaning about poor sales in this sector for the past few years. But the fact remains that its software sales market share is still easily twice the size of the ST and Amiga put together. In fact, in the past three months that share has actually *risen* by three per cent.

**JEFFREY DAVEY** unravels the mystery . . .

**M**alicious rumours about the smothering of the CPC have been circulating ever since I acquired a 464 in 1985.

Each year, all the computer publications spend a month or two echoing claims about the format's imminent demise from publishers, distributors, "Brentwood sources", retailers, journalists, editors, pundits, and anyone who has enough time to pass an opinion.

The funny thing is, despite this ritual denunciation – the CPC lives. Furthermore, just to confound all those who keep predicting its death, Amstrad recently retooled their CPC factories in South-east Asia for production of a newer, cuddlier, and more reliable model. Unless Alan Sugar has gone totally insane, these aren't the actions of a company about to kill off a machine.

According to Don Carter of distributor ZCL the CPC is the mainstay of the mail order business and has been doing "phenominally well" for many years for firms such as Gratton

and Littlewoods. After being assured by Amstrad that the CPC was selling so well that there was not enough stock most of the time, ZCL took it on just before Christmas and

distributed it to independent retailers.

Not only did it apparently sell in massive amounts over the holiday period, it's continuing to sell through. In fact,

ZCL was so delighted at its performance that it's now part of the firm's regular catalogue – unlike to more popular Spectrum, which sells well over Christmas and then demand

dries up.

No machine, however well it sells, can do without software and Niki Penny of Loricels still sees it as one of the three major viable formats. Loricels has the

strange distinction of being one of the only companies in the UK where games are programmed on the CPC first and then translated for the C64 as a secondary move.

Loricels' case is different to most publishers because all its Amstrad software is programmed in France where the CPC is the major format. Even though sales are low compared to those of, say, the C64 Loricels' line is that "as long as I can sell a reasonable number of units I'll continue to produce for it".

Target Games founder/programmer Julian Gollop broke with tradition by stating that the CPC is "a very good computer . . . on a par with the C64". His main justification for this is that its "quite a good machine to program on – easier than the C64 . . . faster than the Spectrum".

He cites Amstrad's marketing tactics and its great value for money as major reasons for its continued success. However, he's pessimistic about its future – "a year or two . . .

Continued on page 23



CPC: Unpopular with publishers - but still a strong format volumewise

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# IT'S THE END OF THE WHIRL AS WE KNOW IT

Only a couple of years ago the announcement of a sub-£400 PC would cause gasps of disbelief from the established business fraternity. As it is now low-cost 286s and 386s that are making the headlines just where do those ultra cheap clones fit in — is there really a home market? Could small businesses still find a use for them? CHRISTINA ERSKINE reports . . .

It was two and a half years ago that Amstrad announced that it intended to revolutionise the IBM PC-compatible market by offering PC clones at a price that almost anyone could afford — plus, most importantly, a distribution set-up which meant that buyers could walk into their local Dixons and walk out with an Amstrad PC.

It worked. Amstrad set a new low price of £400-£500 for standard XT clones which a number of companies then tried to match and, in some cases, beat. Advertising suggested that people could buy a PC for themselves and bring work home to run on it (anything to do with working from home sounding seductive to the average commuter), a theme Amstrad evidently still believes has plenty of mileage — look at the advertisements for the PPCs and also the PC200.

What then happened when you brought home work which needed to be finished off using *WordStar* or *Lotus 1-2-3*, or any other package costing sums not too dissimilar to the computer itself, had perhaps better not be investigated too deeply.

Yet the cheap PC as an all-purpose home machine is taking some time to get going. Computer philes in the USA have been buying up PCs for home use in vast numbers for some time. A year ago, PCs were said to count for 60% of all home computers being sold in the US. The Atari ST and Commodore Amiga have been received with less than the enthusiasm, aspiration and heated debate that they have enjoyed and suffered in the European market, while American PCs can also be

bought for less than their British counterparts.

In the UK, it is therefore generally deemed that such a thing will shortly happen here, since it is held as wisdom that whatever happens in the US will inevitably happen here six months later. However, it certainly hasn't happened yet.

## VAT's the way to do it

Most buyers of sub-£500 PC compatibles appear to be business users. Amstrad is hardly free with its research figures, but says that something like 80% of Amstrad PC buyers at one point were also VAT registered.

The majority of customers appear to have bought cheap clones to use as office machines for staff in small companies to replace the typewriters, or to increase the number of computers to something approaching one per desk rather than one per department, with most probably being used almost exclusively for word processing. Many of the individuals who might have bought them for this purpose had quite possibly — and ironically — already bought a PCW.

A £400 PC as a word processor "with potential" is one thing. But could you really run a business on a low-end 1512, an Atari PCI, an Opus PCII?

The answer is 'yes', but not for £400. For rock bottom prices, you get a rock bottom spec and essential peripherals, such as a printer, and add-one which are so desirable as to become essential within a short space of time, such as a decent monitor, and a hard disk drive, will soon push the overall price up into four

figures. Then of course there's the software needed — and even if you were to buy cut-price 'clonesoft', you're talking about £50 per package.

"An adequately configured business system will cost you at least £1,000 — that's the entry price. And the market for very very cheap PCs has pretty well disappeared," said a spokesman for Atari, which has recently dropped its low-end PC1 and PC2 machines — although it never appeared to be particularly wholehearted about introducing them in the first place.

## For flick's sake

There is also concern about the robustness of machines at the sub-£500 end of the PC market. After all, those price savings have got to come somewhere, and most noticeably to the buyer it will be in plasticky casings, clackety keyboards and flickery monitors. Compaqs look like tanks in comparison.

Certainly the emphasis — for business use — has moved squarely into the AT-compatible area, the 286s and 386s, where prices are beginning to fall, and processor speed and storage capacity are the main selling points.

But if very cheap XT clones are no longer in vogue, they still sell, and this is where the home buyer comes in. Software houses report — cautiously — that the PC games market is "growing", especially as a larger number of retailers are now beginning to stock PC games in greater numbers. Commodore also points out that the educational sector needs PCs — both schools and colleges, and individuals, who may not have the budget for

anything above £500. "An A level computer science student needs a DOS machine and so there's a big market there," said a spokesman for the company.

The games publishers, too, are generally careful to configure their titles to run with the lowest graphics modes — Hercules mono and CGA — upwards. The number of games which will only run in EGA mode are tiny — Electronic Arts' EGA-only *Zany Golf* was written in the US and released here "as an experiment", according to EA's Mark Lewis.

Mirrorsoft's marketing manager Tom Watson detects a more discerning buyer in the PC owner. "With our PC titles, the casual software purchase just doesn't seem to happen, although people so seem to be prepared to go to lengths to hunt down a particular product. Sales levels of our products have varied hugely, with a title such as *Falcon* on the PC selling substantially more than others."

In general, though, PCs are seen as business machines first and playing games as a very secondary adjunct to that.

Hence Amstrad's move to configure, market and name a separate machine — the Sinclair PC200 — as a 'home' PC, in contrast to the Amstrad 1512 and 1640.

The real motivation for buying a £400 PC has to be a variant on the 'nobody ever went broke buying IBM' formula, that it's a safe, versatile purchase — even if with the increased penetration of 68000 machines in the home and AT-compatibles in the office, a £400 XT-compatible begins to look like the lowest common denominator of them all.



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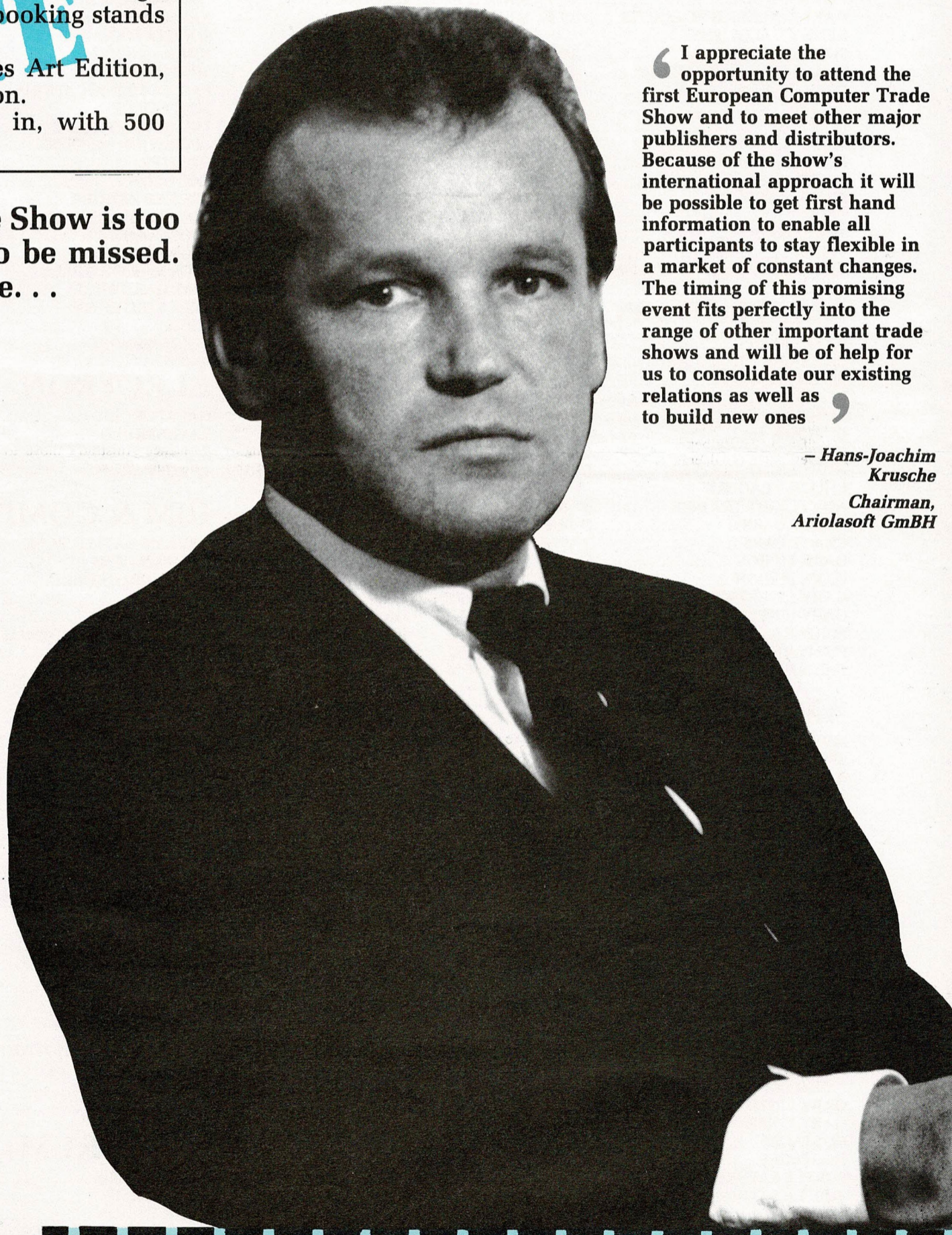
Industry experts will address the big issues:

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- Where will the big money be during the next decade?
- What is threatening the industry now and what threats are on the horizon?
- How will the industry shape during the 1990s?

Starts at 12.30pm on the opening day of the European Computer Trade Show – Sunday, April 16.

I appreciate the opportunity to attend the first European Computer Trade Show and to meet other major publishers and distributors. Because of the show's international approach it will be possible to get first hand information to enable all participants to stay flexible in a market of constant changes. The timing of this promising event fits perfectly into the range of other important trade shows and will be of help for us to consolidate our existing relations as well as to build new ones

– Hans-Joachim Krusche  
Chairman,  
Ariolasoft GmbH



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# The Release Schedule

Software information Services

06/3/89  
WEEK 9

New leisure software

A vital reference to new and forthcoming software, expected release dates and prices. Updated weekly.

## AMIGA

AFTERBURNER .....	24.99	IMMINENT	ACTIVISION
ALIEN LEGION .....	24.99	MID MARCH	GAINSTAR
ARTURA .....	19.99	IMMINENT	GREMLIN
BARBARIAN II .....	19.99	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BLASTEROIDS .....	24.99	LATE MARCH	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL .....	19.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
COSMIC PIRATE .....	19.99	IMMINENT	OUTLAW
CRAZY CARS II .....	24.99	MARCH 21	TITUS
D.N.A. WARRIOR .....	19.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION .....	19.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
DRAGON NINJA .....	24.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
DRAGONScape .....	19.95	MARCH 14	SOFTWARE HORIZONS
DUGGER .....	19.95	OUT NOW	LINEL
FUN SCHOOL 2.....	19.95	MARCH 14	DATABASE
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	19.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
KENNY DALGLISH'S			
SOCCER MANAGER .....	19.95	OUT NOW	COGNITO
LORDS OF THE RISING SUN .....	29.99	MARCH	CINEMAWARE
OPERATION NEPTUNE .....	24.95	MID MARCH	INFOGRAMES
R-TYPE .....	24.99	MARCH 22	ELECTRIC DREAMS
ROBOCOP .....	24.95	EASTER	OCEAN
SHOOT-EM-UP			
CONSTRUCTION KIT .....	24.99	MARCH	OUTLAW
SPACE QUEST II .....	24.99	OUT NOW	SIERRA
SUPER HANG-ON.....	24.99	OUT NOW	ELECTRIC DREAMS
TECH .....	19.99	MID MARCH	GAINSTAR
THE CHAMP .....	24.95	EARLY MARCH	LINEL
TRIAD.....	29.99	OUT NOW	MIRRORSOFT
VIRUS INFECTION PROTECTION.....	29.99	OUT NOW	DISCOVERY

## AMSTRAD CPC

BARBARIAN II .....	D 14.99	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BARBARIAN II .....	T 9.99	MARCH/APRIL	PALACE
BLASTEROIDS .....	D 12.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BLASTEROIDS .....	T 9.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL .....	D 14.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
BUTCHER HILL .....	T 9.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
CHUCK YEAGER'S			
ADV FLIGHT TRAINER .....	D 14.95	IMMINENT	ELECTRONIC ARTS
CHUCK YEAGER'S			
ADV FLIGHT TRAINER .....	T 8.95	IMMINENT	ELECTRONIC ARTS
CRAZY CARS II .....	D 14.99	MARCH 21	TITUS
CRAZY CARS II .....	T 9.99	MARCH 21	TITUS
DARK FUSION .....	D 14.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION .....	T 9.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	D 14.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	T 9.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	D 14.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	T 9.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
THE NATIONAL .....	T 9.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES

## AMSTRAD PCW

MINI OFFICE PROFESSIONAL PLUS	49.95	MARCH 14	DATABASE
SPELLING CHECKER			
& THESAURUS .....	24.95	MARCH 21	DATABASE

## COMMODORE 64/128

ACTION SERVICE.....	D 14.95	IMMINENT	COBRA/INFOGRAMES
ACTION SERVICE.....	T 9.95	IMMINENT	COBRA/INFOGRAMES
BLASTEROIDS .....	D 12.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BLASTEROIDS .....	T 9.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL .....	D 14.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
BUTCHER HILL .....	T 9.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
D.N.A. WARRIOR .....	D 14.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
D.N.A. WARRIOR .....	T 9.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION .....	D 14.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION .....	T 9.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
FINAL FRONTIER.....	D 17.99	MARCH 15	PSS
FINAL FRONTIER.....	T 12.99	MARCH 15	PSS
FIREZONE .....	D 17.99	OUT NOW	PSS
FIREZONE .....	T 12.99	OUT NOW	PSS
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	D 14.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	T 9.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
HOSTAGES .....	D 14.95	MARCH	INFOGRAMES
HOSTAGES .....	T 9.95	MARCH	INFOGRAMES
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	D 14.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	T 9.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
SOCCER Q .....	T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
WARLOCK'S QUEST .....	D 14.95	OUT NOW	ERE/INFOGRAMES
WARLOCK'S QUEST .....	T 9.95	OUT NOW	ERE/INFOGRAMES

## ATARI ST

ALIEN LEGION .....	24.99	LATE MARCH	GAINSTAR
ANDES ATTACK .....	9.95	OUT NOW	LLAMASOFT
BARBARIAN II .....	19.99	OUT NOW	PALACE
BLASTEROIDS .....	24.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL .....	19.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
CHAOS STRIKES BACK .....	14.99	LATE APRIL	MIRRORSOFT/FTL
COSMIC PIRATE .....	19.99	IMMINENT	OUTLAW
DARK FUSION .....	19.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
DRAGON NINJA .....	19.95	EASTER	IMAGINE
DUGGER .....	19.95	OUT NOW	LINEL
F-16 COMBAT PILOT .....	24.95	IMMINENT	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FUN SCHOOL 2.....	19.95	MARCH 14	DATABASE
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	19.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GRIDRUNNER.....	9.95	LATE MARCH	LLAMASOFT
KENNY DALGLISH'S			
SOCCER MANAGER .....	19.95	OUT NOW	COGNITO
KINGS QUEST IV .....	29.99	OUT NOW	SIERRA
MINI OFFICE			
PRO. COMMUNICATIONS .....	24.95	OUT NOW	DATABASE
MINI OFFICE			
PRO. SPREADSHEET .....	24.95	OUT NOW	DATABASE
OPERATION NEPTUNE .....	24.95	IMMINENT	INFOGRAMES
ORBITER .....	24.99	OUT NOW	MIRRORSOFT
ROBOCOP .....	19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
ROCKET RANGER .....	24.99	APRIL	CINEMAWARE
ROY OF THE ROVERS.....	19.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
STOS COMPILER .....	19.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS MAESTRO .....	24.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS MAESTRO PLUS			
(INC. HARDWARE) .....	69.95	EARLY APRIL	MANDARIN
STOS SPRITES 600 .....	14.95	MARCH 28	MANDARIN
TECH .....	19.99	EARLY APRIL	GAINSTAR
THUNDERWING .....	19.95	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC

## ELECTRON

GALAFORCE.....	T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
RAVENSKULL .....	T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
REPTON 2 .....	T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON
THRUST .....	T 2.99	OUT NOW	BLUE RIBBON

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ABRAMS BATTLE TANK	3.5+5.25	24.99	MID MARCH	ELECTRONIC ARTS
BATMAN - THE				
CAPED CRUSADER.....	5.25	19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
BILLIARDS .....	5.25	19.95	MARCH	ERE/INFOGRAMES
CRAZY CARS II .....	5.25	24.99	EARLY APRIL	TITUS
F-16 COMBAT PILOT (EGA) .....	5.25	24.95	IMMINENT	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
FINAL FRONTIER.....	3.5+5.25	24.99	MARCH 15	PSS
FIREZONE.....	5.25	24.99	OUT NOW	PSS
OPERATION NEPTUNE .....	5.25	24.95	MARCH	INFOGRAMES
ROBOCOP .....	5.25	19.95	EASTER	OCEAN
SINBAD .....	5.25	29.99	MARCH	CINEMAWARE
TECHNOCOP .....	5.25	19.99	IMMINENT	GREMLIN

## MSX

BLASTEROIDS .....	T 9.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
HERCULES SLAYER			
OF THE DAMNED.....	T 7.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN

## SPECTRUM

BLASTEROIDS .....	T 9.99	APRIL	IMAGE WORKS
BUTCHER HILL .....	T 7.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
CAPTAIN BLOOD .....	T 9.95	MID MARCH	EXXOS
CUP FOOTBALL .....	T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
D.N.A. WARRIOR .....	T 9.99	OUT NOW	ARTRONIC
DARK FUSION .....	T 7.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	T 7.99	OUT NOW	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	T 9.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS
SOCCER Q .....	T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES
SOCCER STAR .....	T 2.99	MARCH 16	D & H GAMES

## SPECTRUM+3

BARBARIAN II .....	D 14.99	OUT NOW	PALACE
BUTCHER HILL .....	D 12.99	MARCH 16	GREMLIN
DARK FUSION .....	D 12.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
GARY LINEKER'S HOTSHOTS .....	D 12.99	MID MARCH	GREMLIN
PURPLE SATURN DAY .....	D 14.95	IMMINENT	EXXOS

*Out Now* = Released within the last month. *Imminent* = Expected at time of publication.

Dates given are expected release dates. Please allow for slippage. Software Information Services is a department of Inter-Mediate Ltd.

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# ALLFORMATSTOP40

TW	LW	WK	Title	Publisher	Formats
1	1	53	GHOSTBUSTERS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AT MS
2	2	2	WEREWOLF OF LONDON	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM
3	4	4	TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
4	3	10	ROBOCOP	OCEAN	SP CD AM
5	5	11	KNIGHTMARE	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM MS ST
6	7	5	INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY	FIREBIRD	SP CD AM
7	6	20	JOE BLADE 2	PLAYERS	SP CD AM BB EL C1 ST AG
8	8	11	MOTORBIKE MADNESS	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM ST AG
9	16	4	BMX FREESTYLE	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
10	NE	1	DRAGON NINJA	OCEAN	SP CD AM
11	11	12	OPERATION WOLF	OCEAN	SP CD AM ST AG
12	29	2	SAS COMBAT	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
13	14	38	GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM AT
14	12	6	BIG FOOT	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
15	20	61	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
16	26	13	INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
17	10	25	GAUNTLET	KIXX	SP CD AM AT MS ST
18	13	4	BACK TO SCHOOL	ALTERNATIVE	SP
19	34	18	ADVANCED PINBALL SIM	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
20	15	59	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC	SP CD AM AG
21	9	12	AFTER BURNER	ACTIVISION	SP CD AM ST
22	NE	1	DEATH STALKER	CODE MASTERS	SP AM
23	21	24	BOMB JACK	ENCORE	SP CD AM C1 ST AG
24	30	2	CAMELOT WARRIORS	ARIOLASOFT	SP CD AM
25	17	2	WORLD GAMES	KIXX	SP CD AM MS ST AG
26	27	35	SUPER STUNTMAN	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
27	24	11	ACE 2	CASCADE	SP CD AM C1
28	38	2	THE DOUBLE	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD
29	23	34	YOGI BEAR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
30	19	4	WHO DARES WINS 2	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM BB C1 AT MS
31	RE	9	BMX NINJA	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
32	NE	1	WEC LE MANS	IMAGINE	SP CD AM ST AG
33	22	16	FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR	KIXX	SP CD AM BB EL C1 AT MS
34	35	15	COMMANDO	ENCORE	SP CD AM BB EL C1
35	39	2	STREET GANG	PLAYERS	SP CD AM
36	RE	7	THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR	ALTERNATIVE	SP CD AM
37	33	47	DIZZY	CODE MASTERS	SP CD AM
38	RE	28	EUROPEAN FIVE A SIDE	FIREBIRD	
39	25	10	LEADERBOARD	KIXX	SP CD AM AT ST AG
40	28	13	DOUBLE DRAGON	MELBOURNE HOUSE	SP CD ST AG

## SHARE OF SALES BY PUBLISHER

Publisher	Units sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
MASTERTRONIC	17.0	16.3	16.5	10.3
CODE MASTERS	16.6	14.8	12.9	9.3
ALTERNATIVE	11.0	10.2	10.3	7.6
FIREBIRD	7.8	7.2	8.1	9.3
OCEAN	6.3	6.2	7.5	8.6
KIXX	5.1	5.5	4.5	4.5
PLAYERS	4.2	4.3	3.9	4.2
ENCORE	3.4	3.2	4.9	6.1
US GOLD	2.7	3.6	4.0	3.2
CASCADE	1.5	1.6	2.2	2.8
ACTIVISION	1.4	1.9	2.5	1.8
ATLANTIS	1.3	1.2	1.0	—
MELBOURNE HOUSE	1.1	1.4	1.1	3.0
BUGBYTE	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.1
IMAGINE	1.0	—	—	—
MIRRORSOFT	1.0	1.5	1.4	1.4
ZEPPELIN	1.0	1.0	1.2	—
BLUE RIBBON	0.9	0.7	—	1.2
MICROPROSE	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.3
PALACE	0.7	0.7	—	—
SEGA	0.7	0.9	1.8	1.5
ADDICTIVE	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.9
AMERICANA	0.6	0.6	0.7	—
RACK-IT	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.2
SYSTEM 3	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.4

## SHARE OF SALES BY MACHINE

Machine	Units sold (%)				Titles sold (%)			
	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago	This week	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
SPECTRUM	40.4	40.1	40.9	42.1	25.8	27.1	26.4	28.6
AMSTRAD	21.0	20.1	19.2	17.0	18.8	17.3	18.9	18.0
COMMODORE 64	19.8	20.8	19.7	23.5	21.6	21.6	21.8	23.4
ATARI	5.0	3.4	4.4	1.4	6.3	5.7	5.9	3.3
ATARI ST	4.6	5.1	5.4	5.9	8.0	8.7	8.4	8.9
AMIGA	3.7	4.3	3.9	2.9	5.9	6.6	5.4	4.5
BBC	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.4	3.5	3.0	3.2	2.6
ELECTRON	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.6	2.2	1.7	1.7	2.3
COMMODORE 16	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.8	1.8	2.3	1.9	2.0

## AVERAGE SALES PER PANEL SHOP

This week	Units Sold		
	Last week	4 wks ago	12 wks ago
111	77	83	86

All charts shown are copyright of Gallup. The All Formats Top 40 and Share of Sales by Publisher charts refer to the Total Market. Week ending February 18th 1989.

CTW apologises for errors in last week's chart due to poor transmission of original copy

# Soft options

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

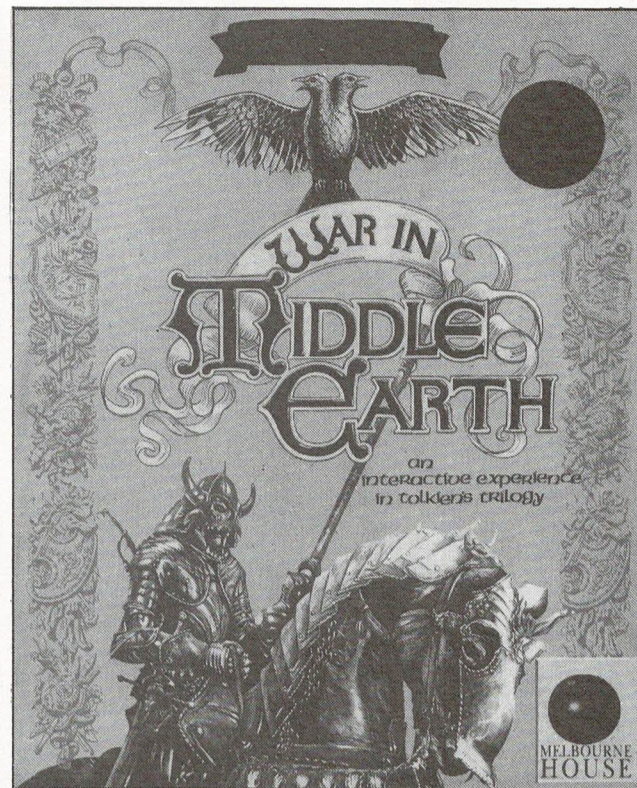
**△ CODE MASTERS:** *Grand Prix Simulator II* (SpAM-£2.99). Well, the original caused a bit of a fracas between the Coders and Alternative over copyright laws - the main point of which would seem to be just how different can Grand Prix games be? This follow up may provide some answers... but then again...

**△ CODE MASTERS:** *Street Gang Football* (SpAm-£2.99). A budget fight where a football match breaks out here as two gangs stop at nothing (nothing?) to win. A cynic may suggest that the game could owe something of a debt to the street soccer section of the firm's recent full price effort *Four Soccer Simulator*. It's a good job we're not cynics.

**△ MELBOURNE HOUSE:** *War in Middle Earth* (C64-£9.99-£14.99). This could of course be a wonderfully ironic comment on the ridiculously hackneyed comment on the '80s... but I doubt it.

**△ GRANDSLAM:** *PacLand* (SpC64AmMSX-£8.99-£14.99). The enduring if not endearing little Pac thing resurfaces again. This time he's battling against Blinky, Inky, Pinky and sadly non-rhyming Clyde in an effort to get to Fairyland and put some magic boots on. Nuff said.

**△ COGNITO:** *Kenny Dalglish's Soccer Manager*. Grandslam may have the team but Zeppelin's full price label has the manager. Dalglish himself is a man of few words and most of them are incomprehensible whingeing about



something or other so hopefully he will be largely ignored in favour of a quality footy game from a firm more used to the £2.99 price point. **△ OCEAN:** *Batman*. (Ag-£24.95). Unlike all the ridiculously predictable consumer titles, I'm determined to get through this without saying something as obvious as "holy something or other" or "the caped crusader". Anyway this is a great licence with the main man and the boy wonder pitched against arch enemies The Joker and The Penguin. Mind you, I've always wondered about this particular crime fighting duo, they seem so close and both have a peculiar fondness for wearing tights. Holy horrible suggestions Batman... damn.

**△ BLUE RIBBON:** *Gaforce, Ravenskull, Repton 2, Thrust* (BBC-

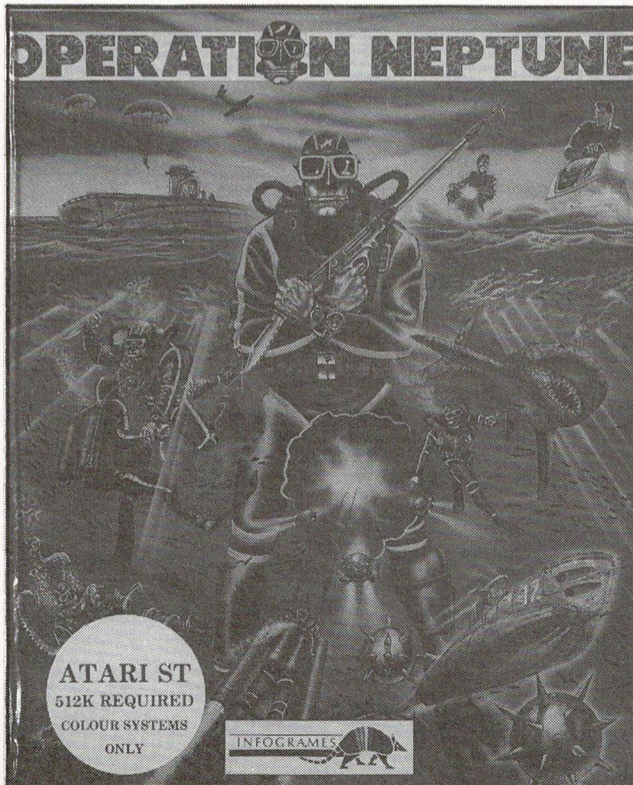
£2.99). More of the Superior back-catalogue emerges on the CDS budget label. None are destined to set the world on fire, in fact singeing The Isle of Wight may prove too tough a task, but at least someone's still bothering.

**△ RICOCHET:** *Hacker* (Ag-£9.99). Strange that in the current witch-hunt atmosphere of the computer industry a game glamourising the supposed scourge of the 20th century should appear, but here it is on the Mastertronic 16-bit budget label. "You've stumbled into something during a late night session with your modem" says the packaging. Well haven't we all. From then on it's just hacking without the risk of prosecution.

**△ EXOCET:** *Hyperdrome* (Ag-£19.95). Standard shoot-'em-up stuff involving spaceships, missiles, lasers, droids and "mega beasts".

**△ INFOGRAMS:** *Operation Neptune* (AgPC-£24.95). Lots of under sea blasting from the French firm which claims it is accompanied by "cinematically breathtaking" graphics. The ultimate goal is to "rid the world of the dreaded yellow submarine". Well it's not a great album, but I can certainly think of better targets.

**△ CDS:** *Steve Davis World Snooker* (STAg-£19.99). Follow up to *Steve Davis Snooker*, but doubtful if there is a world of difference. The game will only be available on 16-bit machines - apparently due to the memory requirement of the game.



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



CAD?

DTP?

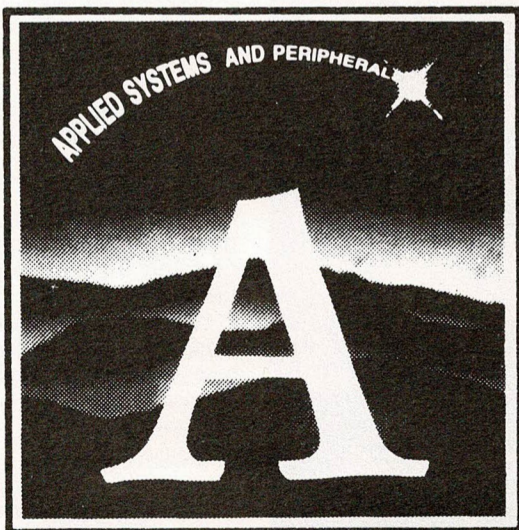
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Distributor



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## SPEAKEASY

## A rambler writes (and writes and . . .)

I expect you will have a very large mailbag in response to the letter by Miles Better Software (CTW January 30th), well you would have received this letter earlier if I hadn't been misguided enough to use an Amiga for word processing. Can anyone recommend a WP for an old Amiga 1000?

Don't say *Kindwords*, that hung-up on me last time I attempted to write to you (after six verbose bloody pages) and I can't bring myself to use it again. These words, should they survive to the print-out stage, are being processed by *Protext* which seems to be about as friendly as, well, something that isn't very friendly.

Perhaps I've been spoiled through too much use of a PCW but I can't get word-wrap or print in anything other than draft mode and the manual is not terribly helpful, abrupt and intimidating in fact (if that's possible for a manual), I'm too afraid to ask it to check my spelling in case it gives me a bollocking and it seems so business-like that I daren't interrupt it again to try to find out how to set preferences ("You again! What is it this time? Can't you see I'm busy? Piss off!") but I digress, onto the main points of my (original) letter:

Firstly (and this isn't one of them), Mr Miles' experience was shared by us regarding Commodore 64s. Approximately 50% back is about right although it was probably more. I know that in the majority of cases the fault was simply alignment but you try explaining that to eight irate customers at once (as I had to do on the first Tuesday back after Christmas) and what is worse is when they start talking together ("Oh you had that problem as well did you? My poor little Quentin was crying his eyes out on Christmas day").

We had thirty-four (yes 34) Commodore 64s back on the first Tuesday alone so may I, through the pages of your august publication, thank Commodore for making this a truly memorable Christmas for all the staff here and all our disappointed customers. Recriminations are pointless now but let me just add that next Christmas I will be recommending *Speak-and-Spell* and *My Talking Computer* rather than any tape-based Commodore ("All you Quality-Control staff, get on the production line!") machine.

Secondly, can a spokesperson from Elite (or Ocean or Softek or anyone else) explain to me why Amiga games are retailing for five pounds more than the ST versions? Is it:

- a) a conspiracy organised by Atari to put punters off buying Amigas.
- b) a mistaken belief by certain software houses that Amiga owners are more wealthy than ST owners. (What sort of figures have they got access to?)
- c) increased development

costs (Oh yeah, like on *Bombjack*?).

d) increased production costs (one disk as opposed to two in a lot of cases).

e) a(nother) mistaken belief that because there is such a drought of good software on the Amiga, poor Jo Public will be grateful for any tit-bit thrown (chucked, in a lot of cases) his way. (*Army Moves*, *Bombjack* etc.)

f) the old story of making hay while the sun shines.

PLEASE, ALL OF YOU, RECONSIDER!

If the punters (and therefore us, by default) are switching to 16-bit machines in a big way (and I think they are) then we in the leisure side of the market are in a lot of trouble:

Despite initial figures from 'reliable market sources' (Oh yeah we can rely on Dixons) the ST did not sell as well as the Amiga last year (certainly not around here anyway, the split was 8/1 in favour of the Amiga). This is bad news for the software 'industry' in a number of ways:

1) The game with the ST will last 'little Quentin' (who was so pissed off with his 64 that he's upgraded to an ST, that's if he didn't lose interest altogether and had a BMX bike instead,) so long that we'll all grow little white wispy beards waiting for him to buy another game.

2) The ST customers seem to be predominantly either pre-pubescent teenage boys or boring would-be musicians. Neither category seems to have much disposable income that isn't already spoken for (comics, sweets, drugs, etc.)

3) PIRACY! Yo ho ho! Any Dork from Pork soon learns to copy software on the Atari. It may even have been the deciding issue in choosing that computer. ("Oh come on Mum, Gavin says he'll give me hundreds of copies so I won't need to buy games. I can spend my paper-round money on other things then,") and if you think that piracy is a small problem to a computer with such a large software base as the ST then try to remember the huge 8-bit Atari range not too long ago. LEARN THE LESSONS OF HISTORY.

The ST is destined to go the same way. (Even Nostrodamus predicted "A calculus machine with an in-built midi port will seem to point the way forward but, like a Harvey Wallbanger, will disappoint. Beware this false God (and keep only minimal stocks of its software, for it is destined to ultimately be bundled with every game that has ever been written for it, and a big disk box with an 'Atari' logo").

It is only quite recently that this, the most enigmatic of all his prophecies, has been given meaning by world events.

I could go on, in my original letter I did expand upon this theme so let's here it for *Kindwords*, the WP with critical acumen built in. ("I'm not storing this rubbish on any of my disks. And no I won't print it either I'm going to crash!")

Nice to see how sensible

everyone was regarding compilations last year. That is sincere, I mean that. ("Alright Dale, they probably know what sincere means, don't labour the point.")

Any chance of Activision releasing *Super Sprint* on the Amiga? It would make a lot of people very happy.

Best wishes to Code Masters regarding upping of prices, will everyone else imitate them in this respect as well? I hope so.

Finally.

This is the listening organ? I'd like a new kind of Software Distributor.

One which doesn't hide behind 'out of warranty' - over three months old' clauses for software which is out of stock when it is returned to them.

One which packs parcels in a professional manner.

One which uses a carrier that does not employ ex-footballers. ("And Charlton beats the defender and shoots, it's there! Soft Centre's parcel is in the net. It's starting to look a bit tatty now though, oh it's OK, they've found another parcel. Oh my word, this one is destined for Soft Centre too. Those boys are in for a shock when they open these.")

One with telesales staff who have a knowledge about the products they are selling. (Pushing my luck here.)

One that sends credit notes by the same ultra-fast-special-delivery service as they use to send the bills out with. (You listening ANDY?)

One which allows a certain SOR (say 10% of turnover, like EA).

One which doesn't sell us a product as new which is later found to have another shop's price sticker on the INSIDE of the cassette inlay.

One which gives discount proportional to turnover.

One which processes returns quickly so that the titles have not been re-released on Ricochet by the time they are returned to us.

One who listens to complaints and does something about them.

One who stocks a larger range of titles than us (not as easy as it might sound) and who will obtain for us other items on a special order basis.

One who sends us 'goodies'.

One who will support us by giving us things (T-Shirts etc) when we attempt to hold a charitable event.

Thanks for listening.

If anybody believes they run (or work for - I'll talk to anyone) such a company, please get in touch. We spent more than 70K on leisure software during last year.

Finally may I urge all retailers who are not already involved to get in touch with Vic at Computability in Ebbw Vale. We're all in this together.

Sorry if I've rambled a bit, please feel free to edit should you wish to publish.

Sorry if any spelling/typing is incorrect but I didn't risk having my Amiga check it for me. And no I am not biased in any way against Ataris.

Yours as ever  
Dale Bradford  
Soft Centre  
Gwent

- Er . . . thanks for the letter.

## SPEAKEASY

## Basic mistake?

In early August last year we received an odd letter from The Computer Centre, 81 St Leonards Road, Bradford, BD8 9QE stating that 'about two and a half weeks ago we posted a faulty disk which belongs to one of our customers . . . the disk had a sector missing . . . the program was called *BBASIC* for THE PC' then the usual close and 'P.S. We look forward to receiving the *BBASIC* by return.'

I telephoned for clarification as all our product at that time had been sold either direct or through less than four outlets, none of them in the Bradford area. Most of our customers had registered with us and were known to us, and in any case all product is serialised, and updates carry the original serial number for that customer.

We made no satisfactory contact with the company despite at least three calls. We have had no disks at all returned due to bad sectors, nor any returned from the West Yorkshire area with a mention of The Computer Centre.

I received, on Friday (January 21st), a request for a copy of *BBASIC* with a rubber stamp showing The Computer Centre asking for a copy of *BBASIC* with a note at the bottom asking 'please send me the invoice with the *Border BBASIC* and manual'. The price of *BBASIC* is only £69.98 including VAT and P&P and a credit account with an unknown company is hardly worth it for that small amount.

Does anyone know of The Computer Centre in Bradford? Are they an honourable company?

Yours faithfully  
Dominic G. Hibbs, B.Sc., B.A.,  
Border Computing and  
Programming  
Bucknell  
Shropshire

- Unfortunately we can't help you any further with The Computer Centre as you already have the address and we certainly could not make recommendations about anyone being "an honourable company".

It all sounds a bit confusing - especially the supposedly returned *BBASIC* - but if there is anyone out there who can give Border a hand in contacting the Bradford store then they should write to Dominic Hibbs at Greenbank, Dog Kennel Lane, Bucknell, Shropshire SY7 0AX.

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# TRUE CONFESSIONS

Continued from page ten deals with are Eltec, CBS, Micro Peripherals, Mellordata and small dealer 'cum' distributor called Technical Connections.

"I'm extremely keen on distributors as obviously I like to supply 1,000 machines to one distributor, rather than 1,000 machines to as many different ones. We are currently looking about for first class distributors and I want to see them as an extension to our sales force."

At the moment the firm has set up a trial deal with three companies - SD, MBS and Mecom. Breffitt also claims to

be currently in negotiation with Lightning. Opus is waiting to see how the firms perform before it will commit itself to any long term deals, with the objective of not only achieving a geographical spread, but the opportunity of pushing its range further into the business sector.

Opus is not only looking to increase its market share in the UK, the firm also plans to dip a big toe in the previously icy waters of the Soviet Union.

The firm has become one of the founder members of the Moscow-based organisation known as the International Computer Club. Other mem-

bers so far include the State Bank and Moscow University.

According to Breffitt the objective of the club is as follows: "It represents all business and computer users in Russia. Various groups have joined forces to identify hardware and software, as they were concerned about the need for computers out there. We have put together a list of approved manufacturers and we will help to provide large organisations with people like ourselves."

## Russian around

Opus is heralding its membership of the club as the opportunity of getting a foothold in a "monster market".

The firm already has its marketing brochure available in Russia, as well as office space within the organisation. So far there is one Opus representative based in Moscow.

"We will be providing support, sponsorship and machines. We've already donated two machines to assist the relief operation in Armenia. There is a huge potential market. We were invited, and we introduced ourselves. We now recognise that we've got friends out there. The organisation will also be helping us at the British Trade Fair. They will assist us with translators, data banks, advertising, publicity and even TV coverage. In

fact we have already been on TV as a company involved in the organisation."

Back home Opus is consolidating its traditional position in the education market with the recent sponsorship of the first direct grant Grammar school. Skegness Grammar School recently severed its ties with Lincolnshire County Council and is now receiving direct funding from central government. This means that the school is free to spend its money and seek sponsorship from local industry.

Opus has become the first firm to back the "opt out" scheme, and has donated six machines, with the school set

to purchase a further six. "Opus has seen an opportunity in this area and it's huge, not only with grammar schools but also the possibility of polytechnics. It shows that industry is prepared to support schools, and it provides an alternative source of funding."

This recent spate of activity is all part of the firm's plans to achieve greater visibility. Opus appears determined to secure its position in the market and is exploring every possible avenue in its bid to increase the firm's market share.

This will hardly have IBM or Amstrad quaking in their boots, but it may well ruffle the feathers of a few others.

## DEAD, DYING OR BETTER THAN EVER?

Continued from page 17 depending on other countries". His products, such as *Laser Squad*, will continue to be on the Amstrad as well as the other Spectrum and C64, at the moment at least.

Those hard at work writing about it (apart from me) have good things to say about it too. Nick Fisk, long-standing reviewer for fanzine *The Bug* says that whilst the machine is "good all-round, not outstanding for anything in particular" and certainly good value for money some software companies are to blame. CPC owners get "fobbed off with poor conversions" he says, such as those which seriously under-utilise the format's graphics and sound capabilities and which only seem to emulate the Spectrum.

Fisk continues by saying that the CPC is very much "regarded as more of a business computer than the Spectrum and C64, that's why it's still going". The CPC won't hold this for long though, he continues, the Sinclair PC is becoming the main cheap business computer - the CPC's future in business is starting to fade. When it comes to its future, "after a couple of years, it'll (the industry) be 16 bit". He gives the CPC no more than two years.

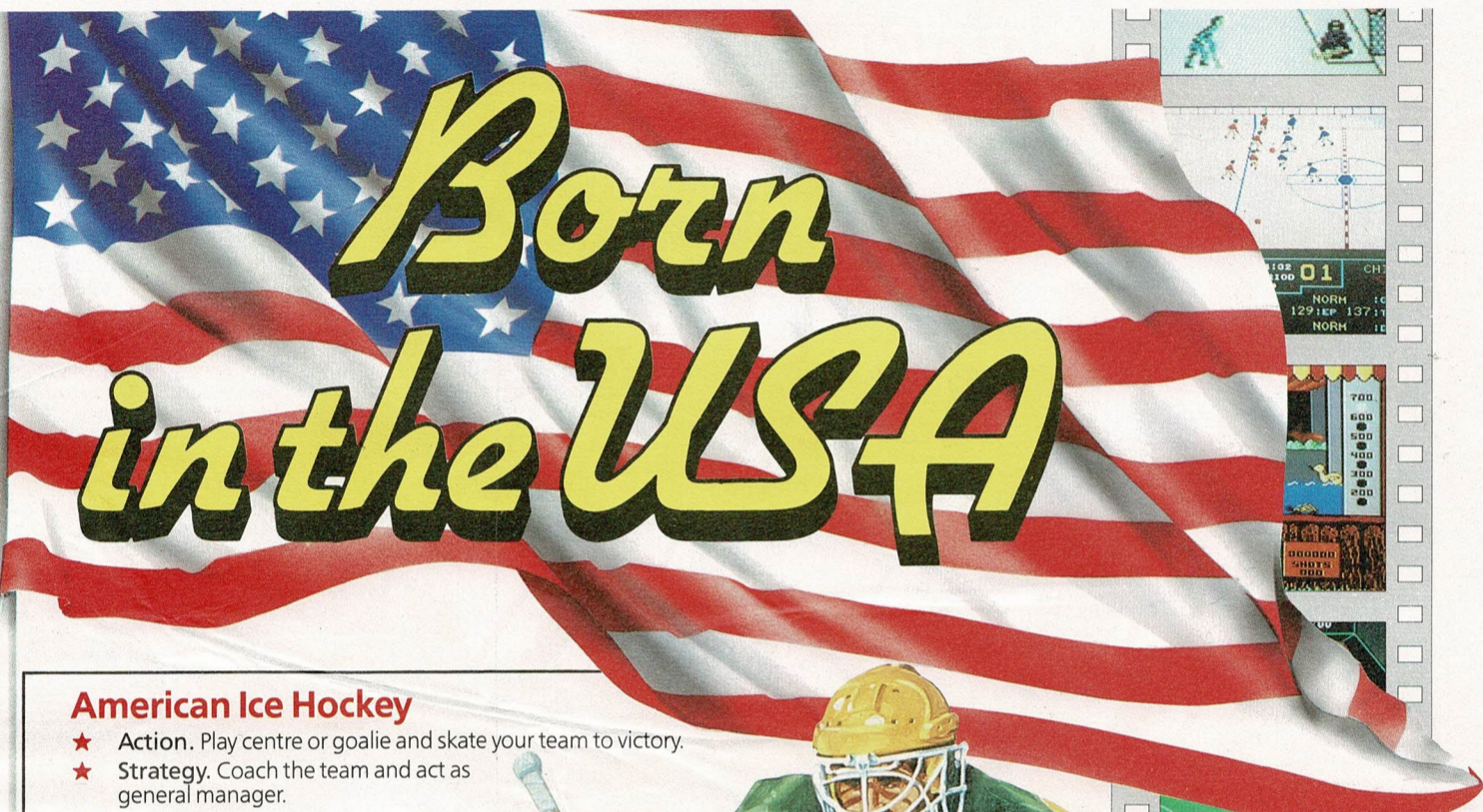
## Old formats never die (quickly)

Whilst that sounds very pessimistic, it has to be said that this seems to be the same story for the other 8-bit formats. Gallup claims that the ST and Amiga are very much gaining as the Spectrum and C64 remain constant.

The biggest shock with the figures, though, has to be the recent rise of the CPC. From 18.5 per cent three months ago, as opposed to the C64's 21 per cent and the ST's (the next major seller after the CPC) 6-7 per cent, the Amstrad has lurched up to over 20 per cent (week ending February 11th). In the unlikely event of this trend continuing, Alan Sugar could corner the market by having the two largest selling home computers (CPC and Spectrum) in the country - hardly what was predicted by many people just under a year ago.

There's no question that with the advent of 16-bit, 8-bit is largely doomed, but it's going to take quite a while for even the ST to catch up with the big three.

Magazine editors are going to have to find other things to fill their pages - reports of the CPC's death will have to be shelved if this "only way is up" trend continues.



### American Ice Hockey

- ★ **Action.** Play centre or goalie and skate your team to victory.
- ★ **Strategy.** Coach the team and act as general manager.
- ★ **Choice.** One and two player options. Play against the computer or another opponent, or play two against the computer.
- ★ **Excitement.** Exciting graphics and animation. Full player movement for up to 12 players on the screen.
- ★ **Realism.** Compete in a hockey league featuring players of varying abilities and ages.

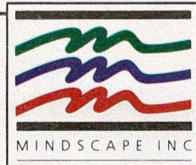
### American Club Sports

- ★ 6 complete games.
- ★ Realistic sound effects and colour graphics.
- ★ A variety of menu settings, including skill levels from beginner to expert.
- ★ Highest score tables that keep track of the top players in each game.
- ★ One and two player options.

### American Indoor Soccer

- ★ **Be the player.** Headers, bicycle kicks, passes, dribbling, injuries - all the fast-paced action of indoor soccer.
- ★ **Be the coach.** Pick the team, make the substitutions and decide tactics.
- ★ **Be the general manager.** Buy and sell players. Can you build a team to top the indoor soccer league.
- ★ **Realistic graphics and animation.** Up to 12 players at a time on the pitch.
- ★ **Play alone or with a friend.** Play against the computer or another opponent, or play two against the computer.

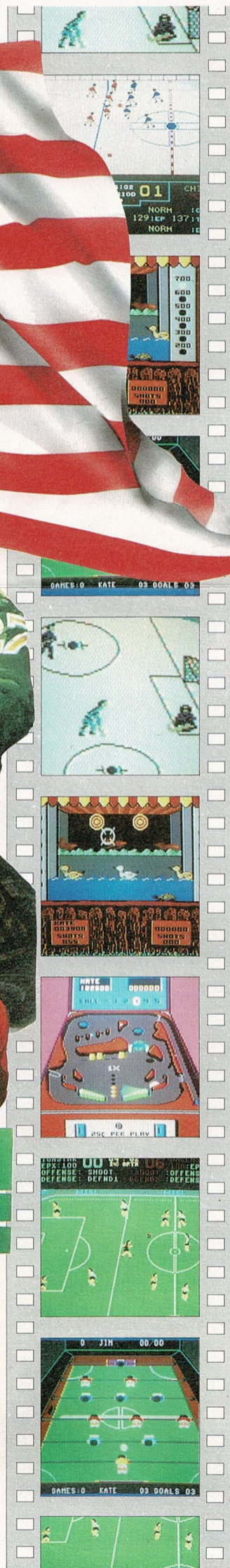
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## Chains force

Continued from front page  
reductions have been made possible through good sales of the added value packs, and a reduction in production costs as well as components – in particular those utilised in the LCD display screen.

The firm is strenuously denying that these latest price cuts are in any way designed to make way for its IBM-compatible portable set for launch later this year (CTW January 23rd).

"This new product will in no way replace the Z88. There is still a tremendous market. We are currently getting involved in the Macintosh side, and there has been a lot of interest and noise from the education sector."

Cambridge is in fact set to release a Macintosh user pack at the end of March. It will incorporate the Z88, 128K RAM pack, a carrying case and "all the necessary cables and software to make it compatible with the Apple Mac". The MacLite Pack will retail for £299.95.

Meanwhile, the firm has tied up a deal with the Shropshire Education Authority, whereby the Z88 has become its official portable. The county is set to purchase over 100 machines.

## Whispers end

Continued from front page  
decision regarding the UK market. He told CTW he found the MicroProse offer "very tempting" but believed it was time to make "a more positive move."

"Accolade is going to have a small but meaningful presence in the UK. It's extremely important for us to have complete control over our own brand over here. We're going to be investing heavily in Europe simply because now we're in a position to do it whereas last year we weren't."

"We're happy with the job that EA did for us and it is certainly something to build on, however, we believe that from a style point of view their packaging does not represent Accolade and we will be doing something very different. At the moment we're spending our time choosing a primary distributor and someone to head the operation," Thier commented to CTW.

## VCS 7800 promised

Continued from front page  
with major mail order catalogues – including Great Universal Stores and Littlewoods. It should become available in quantity around May time.

The 2600's older brother will retail £30 higher at £69.95, including one game and a joystick. Atari hopes that its addition will be a further boon to the already established Atari Games Centre idea which concentrates on the firm's console hardware and software.

"There are currently 76 independents signed up as Games Centres, but we would like that to be 100. The 7800 offers better graphics, running all 2600 software as well as the new generation of titles we'll be providing," commented Gleadow to CTW.

Meantime, Atari has embarked on a major education offensive, proffering four major offers which variously promote the PC3, PC4, Mega ST2 and ST1040 music pack.

# Gallup aims to halt jibes

Following the latest trade criticism directed at Gallup's open and total market charts, the research firm looks set to incorporate the two together.

Several software firms have been up in arms over the division, claiming that it produces considerable discrepancies and places certain companies at an unfair advantage.

"We were never comfortable with the idea, but it seemed like

the only way of keeping people happy. Yet restrictive trading policies are changing, for example Woolworths is broadening its policy. So it's a good time for us to review what we're doing and adapt to the changing market. Our objective is to get rid of producing two charts," offered Gallup chart manager John Pinder to CTW.

Exactly how this will be achieved is unclear at the moment, with the firm currently talking to retailers and software houses to establish a

more representative analysis of the market.

The new all encompassing chart looks set to appear at the beginning of April, with Gallup revamping the complete look of its weekly report *Chartalk*. The firm also plans to create a greater split between budget and full price software.

"Ultimately all we're here for is to serve the industry. So the whole format of the charts is really a question of what the industry wants and over the next few weeks we will be listening to everyone," added Pinder.

# Bodies unite to outlaw hacking

Many of the UK's largest computer users and manufacturers have joined forces to push for legislation to outlaw computer hacking.

Written proposals were submitted to the Law Commission arguing that current laws were inadequate, contradicting the body's previous claims that existing legislation was generally broad enough to deal with all difficulties.

Organisations lobbying for a new law include the Confederation of British Industry, Institute of Chartered Accountants, British Computer Society and Computing Services Association.

The list of proposals also suggested: anyone who introduces a computer virus should be prosecuted; laws should be harmonised internationally; computer eavesdropping should also be made an offence and unsuccessful attempts to hack should be outlawed.

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