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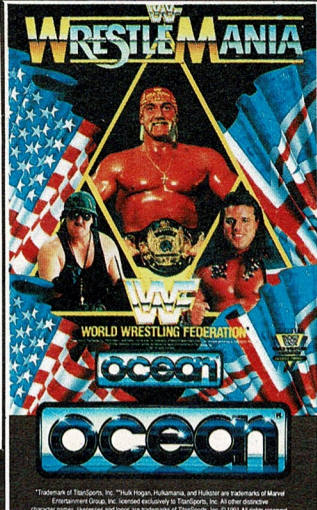
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CTW

An ETP Publication

10.2.92 EUROPE'S ELECTRONIC GAMES TRADE PAPER Issue 373



System 3 battles Activision in £1m row



CALE: System 3 boss gunning for Activision

System 3 is set to embark on a series of legal battles with Activision, remarkably claiming up to £1 million of allegedly unpaid royalties.

The firm is making a number of separate claims against the US games publisher — whose management was turned over to The Disc Company at the beginning of last year.

System 3's disputes centre around a sales and distribution deal that it signed with Activision back in 1987. It covered various titles, including *Last Ninja I & II*, *International Karate*, *IK+*, *Tusker*, *Myth* and *Vendetta*.

Having finally split with Activision in the summer of 1990, System 3 is now claiming that it was never fully paid for sales of its products during the agreement, and that some titles were released when all rights had actually reverted back to System 3.

For its part, Activision categorically denies all claims against it. Regarding the £1 million, an incredulous Activision claims that there is no way it sold enough System 3 product to owe this amount. Also, having apparently never been given any documented evidence to prove that the original Activision/System 3 agreements no longer apply,

it refuses to accept that it no longer has rights over the titles in question.

No action had been taken by System 3 up until now, due to the changes in the management of Activision. It had sought to give the new management long enough to investigate all contracts in full, so that agreements on how much — or indeed whether any — money was owed could be reached.

The final straw for System 3, however, seems to have come with the recent compilation release *Power Hits* — which features 10 of Activision's strongest back-catalogue titles. Included on the product is *Last Ninja*.

System 3 has reacted angrily because it had apparently made TDC aware that it would immediately dispute the appearance of any more of its old titles. And it is the fact that it is the 'new' Activision that has released this latest pack that has made System 3 consider legal action.

The UK firm appears to have taken the stance that its attempts at sustaining goodwill have proven unfruitful — thus it is now considering legal proceedings over all the separate disputes. Activision, meanwhile, claims that it was never aware of goodwill at any time "because we have never received any co-operation".

Show business: insane as it ever was

The show calendar threatened to be thrown into customary confusion last week as a handful of companies lined up autumn consumer shows.

Erstwhile Database Exhibitions director Rita Keane, through her new company CompEx, beat the pack with an announcement in last week's CTW. Now it seems that CompEx is just one of many firms looking to get involved in the console-fuelled, mercurial growth of the games market.

• **CompEx:** The new outfit headed up by Keane is already presenting a well formulated plan. It includes

details such as dates and venue, which, while seeming obvious, are missing from other proposals.

The Wembley Exhibition Centre has been booked for November 13-15th and CompEx is in discussions with various national publications plus the Channel 4 TV hit *Gamesmaster* about sponsorship.

Keane told CTW that a number of leading players in the market have already inquired about booking feature stands.

• **Blenheim/Dennis:** The ECTS organiser and the publisher of *Zero* and *Games Zone* have linked successfully for the last few years to produce the *Computer Shop-*

per Show.

Now the partnership is looking to go full throttle in the games market and take on CompEx head-to-head.

It had looked at Wembley for an event, but Keane's booking has scuppered that notion. Now it looks likely that the team will incorporate a separate games hall within the winter *Shopper Show* which is due to take place at Olympia on 19th-22nd November.

Dennis' managing director Colin Crawford told CTW: "We already have a strong games element in *Shopper* and to extend that and separate it would be easy.

"What we also have is a track record of attracting over 50,000 people to a

show."

• **EMAP:** After the disastrous trade-only CES last year, many people presumed EMAP had bowed out of the 1992 competition. Last week, however, Exhibitions director Neil Wood announced its entry.

He told CTW: "We have a tenancy option in London for later this year. If we go ahead with it, the show will be a console and entertainment based show but rather different to CES.

"Obviously one of the lessons we have learned from last year is that we must talk in depth to people about what the show is before we start selling into it."

• **Future:** The Bath magazine publisher is not actually involved in the battle, but that did not stop it being dragged into the rumour-mill.

At one stage the firm even looked most likely to succeed, with an apparent booking at Wembley and a lot of support from major players.

Leisure director Greg Ingham was, however, only too happy to quash the stories, in his own familiar, vehement style. "We're doing two shows, *Amiga Shopper* and *World of Commodore*. We've got the magazines, we've got the venues and we'll leave it to the others to sort out their function in life."

In true show tradition, a rather muddled picture is forming. CompEx has definite

dates and definite plans, but competitors are predicting anything but a clear road to success.

Shopper is an established, respected event but Dennis may find it tough persuading the trade to commit to a proposal that sounds a tad reminiscent of the old PCW shows.

All of them will find it tough getting Sega and Nintendo, the two firms behind the boom, as neither have been particularly keen on shows of any kinds previously.

It would seem that calendars throughout the country are going to be thick with Tippet before the situation is sorted out.

THIS WEEK:

Company News:

Acclaim	4	Sendai Pub	3
Bandai	4	Silmarils	6
Blenheim	3	Tradewest	6
ELSPA	3	Virgin Multimedia	4
EMAP	3	WH Smiths	3
Europress	3		
Fujitsu	6		
Future	3		
Gallup	3		
Logitech	6		
Konami	3		
Menzies	3		
Mindscape	6		
Nintendo	4		
Ocean	4		
Palace	6		
Prism	6		
Psygnosis	6		
Renegade	6		
Sega	3		
Seikosha	6		

Features:

Chart trouble	8
Can Hex save the world?	12
Inside EA — part two	18
The Independent	14

Charts	15
Reviews	15

Games Rumbled
The future of computer and video games within High Street giant Rumbelows is hanging in the balance, following the firm's decision to pull out of electrical retailing.

Thorn EMI, which owns the chain, is making a 'phased withdrawal' from consumer retailing, incorporating the Rumbelows shops into its UK rental business — which contains the Radio Rentals, DER and Multibroadcast outlets.

Losses of £16 million at the end of its last financial year have prompted the move. The chain apparently hasn't made a profit since 1987.

The firm made a major commitment to computers and consoles in the autumn of 1990, taking on a wide range of Sega, Nintendo, Atari and Commodore hardware throughout its 450 stores.

Double tonic adds fizz to EMAP ABCs

EMAP Images unveiled a mixed bag of ABC results last week, with Mean Machines and CU Amiga emerging as by far the best performers.

The firm announced July-December figures for six of its publications, three of them achieving rises, plus the latest three month update on the progress of *The One for ST Games*.

Mean Machines turned in a spectacular performance, increasing its circulation by no less than 53 per cent to 76,470. This, plus a four per cent nudge upwards by C&VG, to 89,195, has led EMAP to claim with some confidence that it now dominates the rapidly growing consoles publishing sector.

EMAP IMAGES ABC SUMMARY

Title	July-Dec '91	Jan-Jun '91	% growth (on previous period)
<i>Mean Machines</i>	76,470	50,098	+53%
<i>CU Amiga</i>	90,251	78,226	15%
<i>C&VG</i>	89,195	85,764	+4%
<i>The One (Amiga)</i>	48,407	51,625	-6%
<i>ACE</i>	40,722	45,266	-10%
<i>Sinclair User</i>	34,648	44,141	-22%
	Oct-Dec 91	July-Sep 91	
<i>The One (ST)</i>	27,099	19,624	+38%

The remarkable growth of *CU Amiga* continues, meanwhile, with a 15 per cent circulation rise meaning that it has now reached 90,251. Rival title *Amiga Format* is expected to show a rise next week too (hitting 130,000), thus showing that the Amiga market is coping admirably with the rise of consoles.

EMAP's other Amiga title, *The One for Amiga Games*, dipped by six per cent to

48,407, whilst *The One for ST Games* managed a quarter-on-quarter rise of 38 per cent during the upbeat October-December period, taking circulation up to 27,099.

ACE, meanwhile, continued to disappoint as it fell 10 per cent to 40,722 and *Sinclair User* was well and truly hit by the decline of the Spectrum market — falling 22 per cent from 44,141 to 34,648.

CBM cuts jobs

Commodore faced up to the pressures of the recession last week, with 10 redundancies at its UK headquarters in Maidenhead.

The cost-cutting move has actually come at the same time as the departure of Peter Talbot, the firm's longtime national business development manager for government and education who has joined Acorn.

The redundancies are understood to have cut across all departments, including warehousing, marketing, sales and administration.

Commodore is keen to stress, however, that the cuts are simply good management, as the recession's longevity continues to beat all Government predictions. Indeed, it is predicting that its turnover for the financial year ending on June 30th will be some 40 per cent up, topping £100 million.

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With a controlled circulation of 6,500 it covers the entire UK retail marketplace for this sector. It reaches all leading hardware and software buyers, from electrical and toy multiples to mail order catalogues and specialist computer stores. It is also distributed to over 250 shops affiliated to the British Association of Toy Retailers and leading video rental chains that stock sell-through entertainment software.

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EUROPRESS
TRADE PUBLICATIONS

Now spring show rivalry simmers too

The competition between spring consumer events grows ever more fierce, with Blenheim's **Computer Shopper Show**, Future's **Amiga Shopper Show** and now **EMAP Images** all making a contribution to the proceedings.

EMAP has joined forces with Blenheim PEL, organiser of the *Computer Shopper Show* to create an Amiga Shopping Centre within the Spring Shopper Show at Olympia.

This puts it in direct competition with arch publishing

rival Future, which runs its *Amiga Shopper* show just two weeks before.

The EMAP event, which takes place on May 28th-31st, will have the backing of both its Amiga magazines — *CU Amiga* and *The One for Amiga* — and will be publicised throughout its other leisure titles.

EMAP marketing manager Marc Swallow commented: "Blenheim have created a superb consumer platform in the *Computer Shopper Show*. With the current strength of our Amiga titles and Blenheim's obvious talents in the exhibi-

tions field, we are very excited at the prospect of what will be a very successful show within a show."

Meanwhile, Future claims that everything is running on rails for its event, which has the backing of Commodore. The firm is looking for around 100 exhibitors and at least 25,000 visitors to attend the show at Wembley on May 15th-17th.

The firm's Stuart Anderton told *CTW* "It's still in the early stages yet, but everything is going according to plan, we're getting everything in place. We're promoting the show in all the Future titles, which amounts to a quarter

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SHOPPER: Welcoming EMAP

of a million ads per month.

"We see our show as being 100 per cent Amiga and however much emphasis the

Computer Shopper Show puts on the Amiga it will still be a multi-format show at Olympia."

ELSPA sticks with Gallup — for now

The results of ELSPA's ballot on the future of the software charts have finally been collated, but appear to have proved inconclusive, providing at least a temporary let off for Gallup.

The vote, which took in the opinions of all ELSPA members, finished with the members equally divided between a distributor chart and a retail chart.

For now, at least, the Gallup chart will be maintained, but changes are expected to be made regarding the way information is collected.

ELSPA will now hold a council meeting with Gallup to discuss possible changes. The objectives of the meeting include expanding the data collection network, studying the possibility of a European chart, and providing analysis of market trends by format in all territories.

General secretary Roger Bennett told *CTW*: "We're maintaining a retail chart for the foreseeable future. We can't stand still. We have to improve upon it and obtain data from a wider retail source so we're negotiating with Gallup as to what we can do to improve the data that is currently available."

Konami hits home formats with Griffiths and Elite II on board

Konami Europe has finally appointed a marketing manager, and will soon start publishing home computer products in its own right.

Pam Griffiths joins the firm after a year as PR manager for Mindscape. She will help co-ordinate Konami's move into publishing on PC, Amiga and ST — which should start this spring.

Decisions on the first few releases are currently being made. There is no doubt over its major autumn release, however, which will be *Elite II*, a long awaited sequel to the mid-80s game which still ranks as one of the best sellers ever on traditional computer formats.

Historically, Konami has licensed all its coin-op titles



GRIFFITHS: Konami addition

to firms like Ocean and, more recently, Mirrorsoft. From this year, however, any coin-op conversions are likely to appear via Konami itself, and its coin-op only image is intended to change as more sophisticated home computer products appear throughout the year, culminating with the release of *Elite II*.

Chains rattle out half-time results

Leading High Street chains WH Smith and John Menzies announced their interim financial results last week, with somewhat differing fortunes.

Whilst Smiths managed to lift its pre-tax profits by 44 per cent from £34.9 million to £50.1 million in the half year to November 30th, Menzies' saw its trading profit fall from £6.7 million to £4.5 million. A rise in pre-tax profit to £2.1 million was recorded, but only due to an exceptional loss being taken into

account last time. Thus, immediate City reaction to the results left the firm's share price down 31 pence.

Menzies, quite understandably, explained that trading conditions were particularly poor in the High Street, where the core John Menzies Retail business reflected the depth of the recession.

Smiths, meanwhile, achieved its improvement in spite of weakness in the music market, where its Our Price chain was hit, and a substantial decline in the contribution from DIY outfit Do It All.

US games trade mag re-thinks

The latest attempt to establish a games-dedicated trade publication in the US has hit trouble.

Electronic Gaming Retail News was launched in June by Sendai Publications, but will no longer be a monthly publication after its current February edition. Instead, the title will become a rather less frequent bi-annual affair, appearing prior to the Summer and Winter CES Shows in Chicago and Las Vegas.

EGRN was circulated to the 15,000 top decision makers and retailers in the US, focusing solely on the console side of the entertainment software market.

"We simply didn't get the kind of response we had hoped for," commented *EGRN* editor Steve

Honeywell to *CTW*. "While we gained a lot of response from retailers, we didn't get the support we needed from advertisers. I think people with video games products here think that they can reach retailers through the news-stands."

Monthly status has been taken away from *EGRN* after

nine issues, with Sendai claiming that overall the exercise still managed to break even.

The firm will now concentrate on its consumer titles — *Electronic Gaming Monthly* (which boasts a print run of 350,000), *Computer Game Review*, *Megaplay* and *Super NES Player's Guide*.



EGRN: Lack of support

Sega gets remotely interesting

Sega last week announced the imminent arrival of a number of new peripherals and packages.

Leading the way will be the long-awaited remote controllers which are due for UK launch next week. The infra red devices will be available for both the Master System and the Megadrive at £29.99 and £34.99 respectively.

The Master System version will work up to five

metres away from the TV and the Megadrive remotes will stretch to seven metres.

They both take four AA batteries and a Sega spokesman said that they last "a very long time".

Meanwhile three official *Sonic* packs are on the way to the UK. All have been announced already and stocks of Master System and Megadrive versions have even sneaked into the country.

This Easter, however, the

official bundles for both static machines and the handheld Gamegear arrive with re-designed packaging. The packaging will also be a new size as the firm incorporates a few ecological concessions. The old polystyrene filling has been replaced by cardboard.

The Megadrive *Sonic* bundle will not change the console's price. The Master System version will sell at £79.99 and the Gamegear will move up to £119 with *Sonic*.

Gollner's a gonner at Europress

Europress Interactive managing director Hugh Gollner has quit the firm.

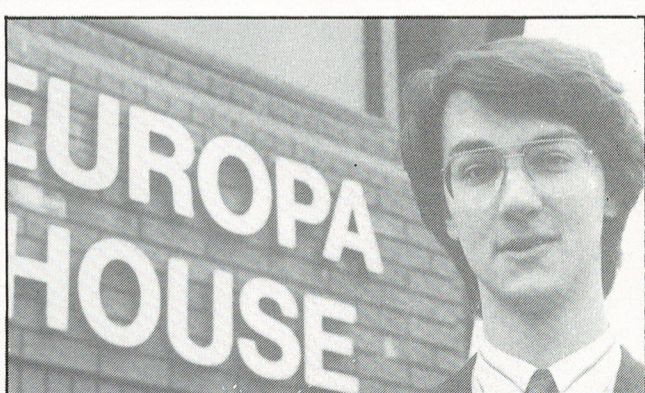
He leaves two years after selling his own publishing firm, cunningly titled Gollner Publishing, to the Europress Group which then formed Europress Interactive.

He will still be working in a consultancy capacity for the division which, at the time of Gollner's departure, is home to *Amiga Action*, *ST Action* and the weekly title *Games-X*.

Gollner told *CTW*: "I've been working with these mags for six years, ever since I left school in fact and I just fancy doing something different. I think I'll go out and get a life."

"Apart from continuing with Europress as a consultant, I'm not sure what I'll be doing. Basically I'm open to offers and I'm not ruling anything out."

Europress Group chairman Derek Meakin offered:



GOLLNER: Bye bye Action man

"Hugh has been a major influence on the development of the group, particularly in the customising of new colour production technology that gave us a head start over our competitors."

"Another of his major achievements has been building *Amiga Action* into one of Britain's best-selling computer magazines, which is now showing considerable potential as a high export earner."

"I am pleased that Hugh

has agreed to continue working for us on a consultancy basis. His skills will now be available not only to his former colleagues on Europress Interactive but also to other publishing companies in the Europress group."

Gollner will not be replaced immediately. The Europress Group's commercial director David Hirst will assume the role of Europress Interactive managing director until a successor is appointed.

Bandai pulls strings to cash in on Thunderbirds revival

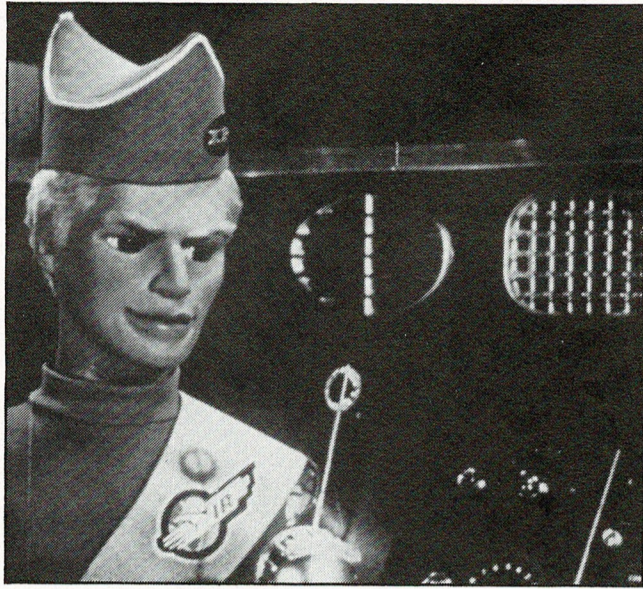
Thunderbirds are go again! Or at least they would be, if Bandai could find the game it's looking for.

As an impressive 1992 licensing programme builds up for the cult puppet TV show, Nintendo's UK distributor is anxiously trying to find an NES *Thunderbirds* title which it saw demonstrated at the Las Vegas CES back in January 1991.

Whilst unsure whether the product was ever released in the US, or even completed, Bandai is keen to track the product down — with a view to releasing the title later this year.

The reason for such interest in the assorted heroes of International Rescue is a steady groundswell of opinion that they might just become a hot property this year.

Since a regular re-run of the series began on BBC2 jogged the ever-nostalgic



THUNDERBIRDS: Who's pulling the strings?

memories of the British public, Universal Matchbox has announced the arrival of a diecast *Thunderbirds* toy range in October.

This will strengthen a licensing attack that already includes a Fleetway Publications bi-monthly comic

(sales hitting 160,000), an Adam Leisure LCD handheld, toys from Tyco, Superjouet and Bluebird, sell-through videos from Channel 5 and a West End show.

There is even talk of a Hollywood movie being planned.

Acclaim adds paper weight to T2 promo

Acclaim revealed another weapon in its impressive *Terminator II* promotional armoury last week, a link with the *Daily Mirror*.

The game, which will appear on the LJM label, is not actually due out until March, but Acclaim is determined to wet, if not positively drench, the public's appetite before then.

The *Daily Mirror's* T2 week will run for five days from February 10th, concentrating on the Gameboy rather than NES version of the title. Each day, 30 Gameboy T2s will be prizes in a competition.

In Scotland, the *Daily Mirror's* sister paper, the *Daily Record* is running the same promotion. The Mirror Group is spending £250,000 promoting the week through TV

advertising and in total, the promotion should hit around 12.8 million readers.

Acclaim has already secured advertising space on the front of the *Terminator II* video (expected to be seen by 15 million people in its first three months of release) and linked up to do a day long promotion of the game with Capital Radio on February 26th.

Virgin plays its new CDs

Virgin Communications last week outlined its immediate CD software plans — including the introduction of a new label.

The firm has actually been active in the CD field since 1987, but little has materialised other than the laser disc and CD-ROM title *North Polar Expedition*, which was recently included on a pilot scheme for CD-ROM in schools.

Virgin Multimedia is the new label. This will handle education and productivity products, whilst Virgin Games naturally looks after the leisure catalogue.

The first two titles on Virgin Multimedia are set to appear this month — comprising of a CDTV version of *North Polar Expedition* and a CDTV music teaching program called *Musicolor*. Both will retail at £49.99.

Virgin Games dabbles in the CDTV market this month too, with the release of *Spirit of Excalibur* (£29.99) — which will also appear on PC CD-ROM (£34.99) at the same time.

Games' imminent CD-ROM release schedule consists of existing PC titles with multimedia enhancements.

Wonderland, *Zork Trilogy*, *Infocom 4* and *Supremacy* will all appear in March, retailing at £34.99.

Ocean hails Caesar

Ocean has picked up the European rights to Virgin Games' successful *Caesar's Palace* Gameboy title — in a bid to attack the handheld's significant base of 'older' users.

Caesar's Palace was one of Virgin's earliest US releases, and features blackjack, roulette, poker and fruit machine sub-games. It is likely to appear in June/July.

"We've been looking at products that will appeal to a different agegroup than things like *Robocop*. There are apparently a lot of older Gameboy owners out there," commented Ocean's Dean Barrett to CTW.

Ocean's Gameboy portfolio currently consists of *Robocop* and *Navy Seals*, with *Mr.Do* imminent. As



CAESAR'S: Ocean has a gamble

well as *Caesar's Palace*, releases for later this year include *Hook*, *Addams Family*, *Super Hunchback* and *Robocop II*.

Ads up for grabs at busy Nintendo

Nintendo's advertising and marketing strategy is currently on the move both in Europe and the US.

In the States, Bill White, the manufacturer's longtime director of advertising and public relations, has been promoted to the new position of director of marketing and corporate communications.

His new job will involve "focusing on the development of new licensing opportunities for the video game

company in the entertainment field, including television, movies and theme parks".

Meanwhile, two advertising agencies, Publicis and Young and Rubicam Paris are to compete for Nintendo's Super NES account — believed to be worth about \$40 million across Europe.

Both companies already do some work for the manufacturer and it is thought that Nintendo may eventually decide to split its business, using one agency for the UK and the other for the rest of Europe.

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UBISOFT, one of the leading European software publishers and distributors, is looking for a UK SALES MANAGER.

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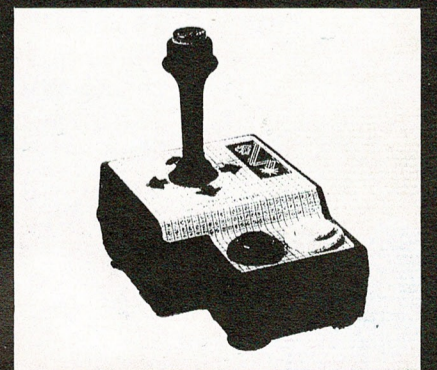
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Tradewest lines up SNES double

More details have emerged of US publisher Tradewest's plans to establish itself in the European marketplace.

Having already revealed its plans for a five-pronged 1991 attack on the 8-bit NES with games such as *Battletoads* and *Indy Heat*, the firm last week announced quite a double on the 16-bit Super NES due to be launched here in May.

Not surprisingly, *Battletoads* (currently one of the hottest Nintendo properties in the world), will be among the early releases and this will be coupled with *Super Double Dragon* — an updated version of Tradewest's biggest success of all time.

Tradewest's president, Byron Cook told CTW: "The *Double Dragon* franchise is one of the all time greatest in the entertainment software industry's history,

generating hundreds of millions of dollars in sales.

"*Super Double Dragon* has quietly been in the works for well over a year and is nearing completion. It is our hope that it will drive hardware sales the way our original *Double Dragon* did back in 1988.

"Combining *Battletoads* and *Double Dragon* should give Tradewest International the strongest one-two punch in the industry."

Previously, Tradewest has attacked Europe through licensing product, but now it has set up an international division to handle the job.

Tradewest International is using the management facilities of Paris based publisher The Disc Company. It is keen to stress, however, that although TDC handles the Activision brand, Tradewest International is a totally separate project, with Tradewest being the only brand on its forthcoming products.

Psygnosis shuffles

Psygnosis has appointed Maggie Goodwin as its marketing manager — something that it has previously done without.

The fact that the position is a newly created one is particularly strange considering that with *Lemmings* the publisher pulled off what was undoubtedly the marketing coup of 1991.

Goodwin joins the firm

with a background in "marketing, advertising and PR".

Other changes within the Liverpool software house see Diane Lefley being promoted to the position of European sales manager and Sue Campbell taking over as UK sales manager.

This apparently leaves sales director Dave Crawford with nothing to do and he wonders if anyone fancies a round of golf.

Printer duo get busy

Big rumblings in the printer market from Seiksha and Fujitsu this week, with Seiksha launching a new low-end model and Fujitsu announcing a series of premier dealerships.

Seiksha's new entry level machine is the SP1900 Plus — a nine pin dot matrix machine with a price of £155. The firm is looking at the education and small business markets.

Features on the machine include a speed of 192 cps in fast mode, 160 cps in draft and 40 cps in NLQ. It is fully compatible with Epson FX850 and IBM Proprinter II.

Meanwhile, back at Fujitsu, the firm has appointed 50 new printer dealers and

mounted a nationwide end user promotion.

Each new Premier League dealer will be given demonstration stock, special POS and leads from new ads and direct mail-outs. A series of open days are also being planned.

Fujitsu dealer marketing manager George Zervos commented: "The dealer open days will provide the main focus to the first part of our new campaign. We will be mounting regional radio and local press promotions aimed at bringing extra potential customers into participating dealers premises.

"Fujitsu technical, sales and marketing personnel will attend these special days when we will be offering attractive deals to purchasers of Fujitsu products."

Logi grabs Gravis

Logitech is set to make an impact in the world of joysticks after acquiring a 44 per cent stake in Canadian PC stick specialist Gravis.

The firm will now be handling sales and marketing of Gravis products through its European subsidiaries. After taking out a convertible debenture option Logitech could end up owning a controlling 58 per cent of the firm.

A survey taken by the firm has apparently revealed that the joystick market has an annual growth rate of 30 per cent in Europe as opposed to 16 per cent in the US.

Raffaella Ettore, who will now be director of Gravis Europe, commented: "A low end joystick has a life expectancy of around three months — or about 100 hours of use — which has created a huge replacement market. What we are seeing is that users, on average, purchase up to three low end joysticks before moving up to buy from middle to high end product manufacturers such as Gravis, in order to find a unit that lasts.

"Logitech's financial participation in Gravis will lead to strengthened co-operation that will create future synergies in the form of an extended product line."

UK window for Silmarils

French publisher Silmarils, formerly an affiliate of Palace Software, has broken away to form its own UK office.

The first product to go through Silmarils UK will be *Storm Master*, due out on Amiga, ST and PC in mid-March. This will be followed by a compilation in April.

Four other new titles are planned for 1992 and two more compilations are also in the pipeline.

Hennerly commented to CTW: "Their product traditionally does much better in Europe than in the UK but we aim to change that. I think that this will be the year Silmarils really break through over here."

Gods smile on Renegade

Renegade has announced its first console product for Europe and the US, licensing *Gods to Mindscape*.

The game will be published through the US firm — which is a third party publisher for both Sega and Nintendo — on the Megadrive and Super NES. There will be no 8-bit versions of the game.

Other titles are expected to follow from the Bitmaps' publishing label, although nothing else has been announced yet. *Gods* will reach

the Megadrive at the end of the year and the Super NES in early '93.

Renegade boss Tom Watson told CTW: "We're only doing 16-bit versions of the game, apart from taking into consideration just how much of the 8-bit market is left, it's an extremely complex game and to do it justice you need 16-bit technology.

"We're doing our own Sega development here, so this is just seen as part of a continuing process as far as we're concerned, rather than a solitary publishing opportunity."

Prism reflects surprise growth

Prism has announced a confident set of interim financial figures for the six months up to the end of September 1991, with both turnover and profits well up.

Pre-tax profits were up by 23 per cent from £303,000 in the corresponding period in

1990 to £374,000. Turnover increased from £5.2 million in the same period in 1990 to £5.8 million — a rise of 11 per cent.

The group's core business of records and computer games apparently performed well, with claims that the firm's Pocket Power software range has now sold over 500,000 units.

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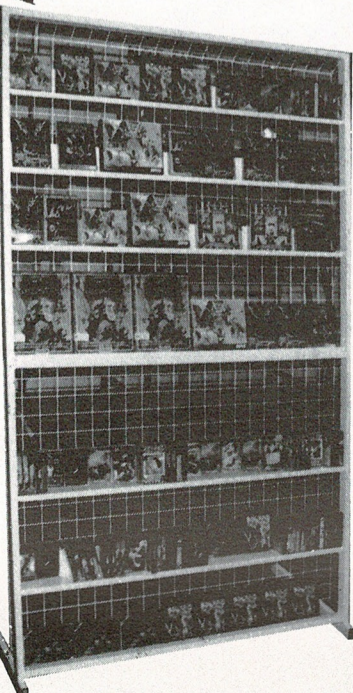
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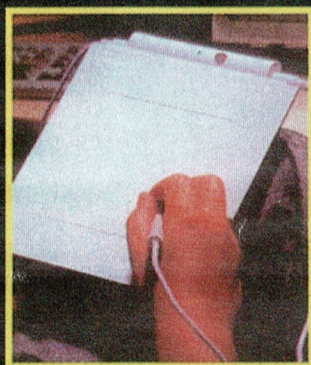
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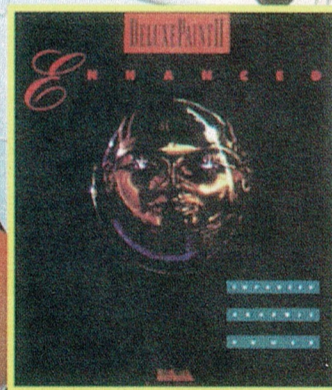
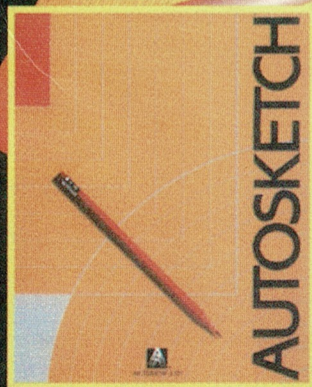
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NEWS ANALYSIS: THE UK ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE CHARTS

CHART TORQUE

A recent ballot amongst ELSPA members has left the Gallup chart grimly hanging on to its position as the industry-supported provider of entertainment software sales research. Herein, CTW examines the effectiveness of the current system by asking 10 key people on the inside — and the outside — of the market...

CTW	Steve Carsey Gamesmaster, Channel 4	Peter Molyneux Bullfrog	Larry Sparks Acclaim	Richard Steele Centresoft	Roger Bennett ELSPA
1. How do you currently rate the accuracy of the Gallup chart?	"As a spokesman for Hewland International I can't say how accurate the chart is but I can say that Gamesmaster has had an instant effect on it. On a distribution chart we wouldn't be able to immediately gauge the success of the programme."	"I don't think it can be a complete representation of what happens, just from the experience we've had from our own products."	"I view it with some scepticism because of the reporting-in procedures they have, which I think are questionable."	"Not very highly, the retail sample is not big enough. It represents a fair number of stores but it's not representative of what's happening in the market."	"The source of data is currently very limited, therefore it cannot be seen to be sufficiently accurate as to be credible yet. But, it is acceptable to a limited number of industry interests."
2. Name the major change, if any, that you would like to see?	"I feel that the only way it can be made more accurate is to get more Gallup machines into the shops and into places like Dixons."	"I believe that the majority of samples are taken from around London area, so obviously the thing is to broaden the net."	"I strongly believe that the industry needs a chart. What it needs is the introduction of EPOS machines into larger areas where the majority of business is."	"I would like to see it include retailers such as GameVision and Boots."	"A means by which we can keep up with retail patterns, and ensure not only access to multiples but independents and other retailers too."
3. Would you like to see the Gallup chart used as a promotional tool for the market, and if so, how?	"At one point we considered using charts in the program but it was more hassle than it was worth, having to edit it all the time. So we decided against it, but we may do it on the second series. I would like to see the chart given more exposure outside the dedicated magazines."	"It would be lovely to see, but in reality I don't think the papers would be interested in running a chart. I think there's just a general apathy on behalf of the major media."	"It's important as a promotional tool, it's always good to use information to help us and show how successful we are in the market."	"I'm more interested in it being accurate for the trade, but it's good if it can be used for promotional purposes."	"Yes, when it's accurate enough to satisfy people from the sample point of view, it will no doubt become a very useful PR tool."
4. Do you think the Gallup chart should concentrate on fewer market sectors to improve accuracy and reduce cost?	"It would be wise for ELSPA and Gallup to look at what the growth areas of the market are, 8-bit is near enough down and out and consoles are rising."	"It would be tempting to cut out 8-bit, the key is, if they're going to extend the number of stores, to make it as simple as possible."	"There are too many subdivisions which are not needed, there should be clear differentiation between handhelds, consoles, and 16-bit computers. No one pays attention to all the different charts to be honest."	"I think we need it. It would be a shame to cut down the number of charts, they're there for the right purpose. A PC chart is important for instance because it's understated in the normal chart whereas some stores sell quite a lot."	"When the data is collected it all goes into the system anyway, so publishing it isn't an extra cost. It's not a question of what Gallup collect — it's a question of what the industry requires in terms of information. Those that subscribe to the chart want as much as possible, it's a minimal cost — it probably costs £10 to publish extra charts."
5. Do you think a distributor chart could be an effective substitute for the Gallup chart?	"I can see how a distributor chart would be more accurate in some ways, but it's not able to give us an immediate response to the programme."	"We used to get the Leisuresoft chart and, in a way, it was good for a short term picture, but a distributor chart never shows the returns on a product."	"Not really, because it will be biased towards the distributor, a combination of distributors might stand a better chance of working."	"It's not a substitute, what we need is an accurate chart. Distributor charts have their uses, but it really should be a retail chart."	"That remains to be seen, we shall find out. There is every possibility that we may run one alongside the Gallup chart. Whatever we do we should produce a chart that is representative of the market at that time."
6. Would it worry you if console sales were not monitored?	"It doesn't worry us because if we do feature charts in the future, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. But it would be foolish to ignore them because they get the most attention."	"Yes, because that's the big growth area and it has to be monitored very carefully. It will be interesting to see the battle between Sega and Nintendo when the Super NES is launched later in the year."	"Yes it would. We need to monitor them accurately. The real world out there now takes the console market seriously, so we need a chart for it."	"Yes, I think that would be a problem."	"Yes, I think it would be a shame if it wasn't part and parcel, given the importance within the market. It's a very useful guide for promotion of the industry."
7. Do you subscribe to Chartalk?	"Yes"	"No"	"No"	"Yes"	N/A
8. What is the current All Formats number one, and what was number one before that?	"Don't know"	"Don't know"	"WWF (correct), Terminator II (correct)"	"WWF (correct) and The Simpsons (wrong)."	"WWF(correct) and Lemmings (wrong)."
9. Do you think a UK chart is losing significance because of the emergence of a European marketplace?	"Very possibly. One of the reasons that we don't feature the chart is that we hope to sell the programme abroad."	"It would be nice if we could get a true European picture, but at the moment we have a hard enough time getting the UK chart together."	"The UK is important because we need to know what is happening in our territory. But now we need to take the blinkers off and look further afield."	"It's still significant. It would be great to have information on Europe, but I think that would probably be a bit costly."	"Yes it is losing significance amongst publishers, but that isn't to say it isn't significant."
10. Do you think the Gallup charts influence sales?	"Not much, there's so much hype that goes into the lead up to a game's release. If it gets to number one it can be a help, but generally it's a reaction to the field rather than the other way around."	"I think they must do, but it's hard to answer because we're at the wrong end of the retail business. If they don't, they should."	"The product and the quality of the product influence sales. The chart position is an after effect and all it can influence is a firm's track record."	"Charts can influence sales, although I don't know whether the Gallup chart does or not. Most chains do their own charts and the titles are promoted around that, but I don't know if they base them on the Gallup chart."	"Yes, there's no doubt that when kids look at the charts in a magazine it can influence sales."

NEWS ANALYSIS: THE UK ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE CHARTS

CTW	John Pinder Gallup	David Hancock The Daily Mirror	Dave Perrett Game Ltd	Archer Maclean Developer	Alan Dickinson Dixons
1. How do you currently rate the accuracy of the Gallup chart?	"Given what we're sampling, it's very accurate indeed. We don't have data from Boots yet but we're hoping they will join later in the year, and we're also planning to link up to every Virgin store in April."	"We don't use the chart at all, we take the Leisuresoft charts, but Gallup have never approached us to take the chart on. "It would have been nice to have been made aware of the existence of the chart."	"I would say that the charts are 80 per cent OK."	"Well, there's not much else to go on. It's one of the only ways I have of knowing how well the product I've been involved in has done."	"The accuracy of the chart is only as good as the number of people that put into it."
2. Name the major change, if any, that you would like to see?	"The major change would have to be to increase the number of retailers we're covering."	—	"I would like to see the All Formats scrubbed and replaced by just an Amiga one, an ST one etc."	"I would like to see actual sale volumes published, but that will never happen."	"I would like to see the video games charts have a little more definition and detail in them."
3. Would you like to see the Gallup chart used as a promotional tool for the market, and if so, how?	"Definitely, yes. We see them as having two functions — as market research and as a promotional tool"	—	"It is to a certain extent, but I'd like to see it done more often."	"In many ways it already is, because I often read articles with publishers saying 'look we've been number one for two weeks' etc etc."	"The only people that see it as a promotional tool are the publishers within it. The industry has come of age anyway, it's the fastest growing retail sector, but maybe the organisation within is not up to scratch."
4. Do you think the Gallup chart should concentrate on fewer market sectors to improve accuracy and reduce cost?	"It might be better to focus on one or two tables, if you look at lots of different charts it's not as effective as a marketing tool."	—	"Yes, I think it should be reduced to three or four top formats."	"No, I think they already do most sectors quite well."	"Yes I do, because it would make for a more realistic picture. For any sort of data to be worth anything, it has to be credible."
5. Do you think a distributor chart could be an effective substitute for the Gallup chart?	"No!"	—	"Absolutely not."	"No because there are so few distributors that deal in real bulk."	"As we know it's possible to load up retailers with product, so sell through is a better way of measuring it than sell in."
6. Would it worry you if console sales were not monitored?	"It would obviously be crazy not to monitor console sales."	—	"Yes, I think they should be included."	"I would very much prefer to see them monitored."	"I think that's one thing that needs to be done."
7. Do you subscribe to Chart-talk?	N/A	—	"No"	"No"	"No"
8. What is the current All Formats number one, and what was number one before that?	N/A	—	"WWF — don't know"	"WWF — don't know"	"Don't know"
9. Do you think a UK chart is losing significance because of the emergence of a European marketplace?	"I don't think it's losing significance. Each territory likes to have its own chart."	—	"No, I don't think so."	"I would like to see a separate European chart and UK chart."	"It may well be, but is it of interest to people in the UK market to know what's number one in Italy?"
10. Do you think the Gallup charts influence sales?	"If the chart is given enough publicity and exposure then, yes, it does influence sales."	—	"Yes it can, because for a lot of people it's their only guide."	"Marginally, it's hard for me to know because they try and keep them out of my way."	"Not really, the charts are retrospective rather than forward looking."

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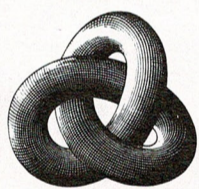
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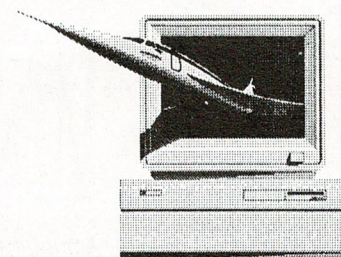
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NEWS ANALYSIS: HEX

LET'S TALK ABOUT HEX BABY

Can fledgling publisher Hex save the world with its combination of environmentally friendly software and kickin' dope sounds? Or are we already doomed? **RONNIE DUNGAN** gets on the one...erm...homey...

It's regularly been noted that games which glamourise the idea of blowing people up, shooting people, flying warplanes aren't necessarily a good idea.

It's not that kids are likely to go out and do exactly the same, but it gives them the impression that it's all make believe, when in fact it's all too real.

As long as it's the good old Brits or our good chums the Yanks giving the Viet-Cong, other communists, or a few Nazis a bashing then that's OK, that's not bad taste is it?

If it's people we don't like, such as the nasty IRA or anyone else doing the shooting then that's not on, it's an affront to public decency and good taste.

What's needed is a love thang. People, we've got to get a love thang going here, a vibe, one love with each other, you know the sort of thing.

The only thing is, love thangs tend not to make money in the software business, blowing people up may be obscene but it's great fun by all accounts. Combine it with some element of hipness and you may have something.

What then, could be hipper than a pop star? Even the

Bitmap Brothers never managed to scale such heights. Hex, on the other hand, already has.

The label is a joint venture between a video production firm called Hardwire and DJ group Coldcut, which has had hits with Yazz and Lisa Stansfield, and is also a successful production team.

Top Banana is the first product from the firm and will be accompanied by a 12 inch single and video called *Global Chaos* featuring sampled sounds from the game. The basis of the game is that you have to spread love, not bullets, using the central character KT.

A very sound idea and, with the involvement of Coldcut as well, one which fits in nicely with current rave culture. Ravers tend to love people a lot, mostly because they're too out of it to do anything else.

Hex's involvement in the software market only stretches as far as a couple of dodgy games released with Cambridge Software, for which, it claims, it hasn't been paid yet.

As Hex marketing director Robert Pepperell explains: "In a way it's quite good that no one has ever seen or heard of the games because they weren't very good. *Top Banana* is the first title that

we have produced and written ourselves, we will also be looking to publish other people's product as well.

"The video business is very similar to the computer business. We recently got a job producing titles for LWT, and we got the job because we sent them in a copy of the game. I don't see our computer software running as an isolated business on its own. We're releasing a record and video with the game and we see a merging of different mediums. It's happening already, and we will help to push it forward."

Blob a job

DMI is currently taking care of distribution of the Hex title, a firm known in the industry for doing...this and that. Although the lads at Hex may have carved themselves a very successful career making those funny moving blobs on the wall at raves, they need a bit of a leg up in the games industry.

"It's difficult to make it alone because we haven't got many staff at the moment, but hopefully we have a long term relationship developing there. Basically we went with DMI because they were the only ones who rang us back and came down

to see us. I like them because they're very energetic and hardworking."

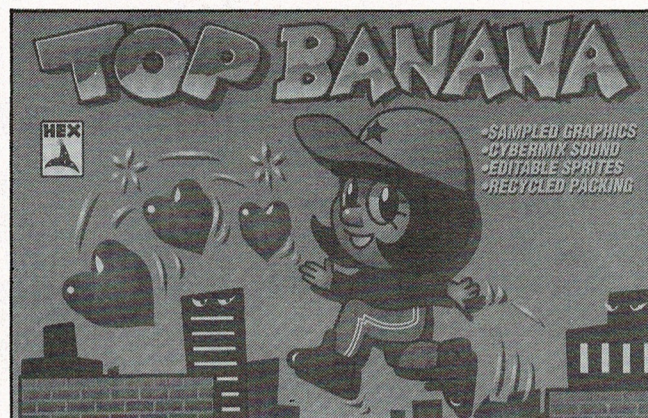
Now, Hex won't like this, but it has to be mentioned that it might be beneficial if Coldcut could muster up another big hit, because it's been a while, and if Tammy Wynette can do it so can they.

If that happens then KT will become the first computer character to hit the charts which will just about rubberstamp the arrival of computer games as a youth culture phenomenon. A live *Top of the Pops* appearance may present a bit of a problem though.

The presence of the record and video means that TV and Radio stations have an added incentive to get involved with the game, and at the moment the computer game may well be more interesting than the record to them.

"Radio and TV stations are run by people over thirty who haven't perhaps been aware of computer games before. But this Christmas there was Sega and Nintendo and all these computer ads all over the TV and it came as a bit of a shock to them. It generates interest in the record when we tell them about the game as well."

Just eighteen months or



TOP BANANA: Hex-rated

maybe even a year ago, that last sentence would have read the other way around, which just goes to show how hip games have become.

If reviews count for anything other than ad revenue, then *Top Banana* will do reasonably well for the firm. But, as Coldcut know only too well, the problem will be following it up.

At the moment, with the video production team much in demand, the firm is stretched, so to release a sufficient amount through the year means employing more programmers.

"If *Top Banana* is successful then we can take more staff on so it's all a matter of how fast we go. If *Top Banana* does fail then we will have other things to show for it and we can still release other games."

One failure won't be enough to deter Hex spreading the word, the 'word' seemingly being love,

peace and understanding — nothing funny about that.

"I think we've had quite a positive response to the game so far. You don't kill things in the game, which is something we did partly out of boredom with killing things. The game demands that you think more about what you're doing.

"It's to make people aware that the environment is as important as what you're shooting, we're not claiming that it will change the world but we feel more comfortable with it."

Being associated with the dangerous world of pop music hasn't done the Bitmaps any harm, but on the other hand, it hasn't really helped them in any promotional sense.

If Hex can utilise its connections to its advantage, it could pave the way, and the days when *Sonic the Hedgehog* fills out the Albert Hall may not be far off. □

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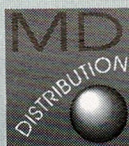
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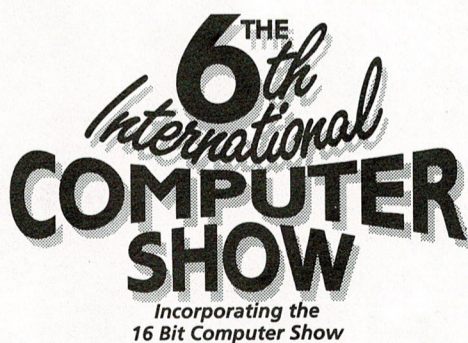
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THE INDEPENDENT

DIRECT DEBIT

STUART GARRETT returns with more concern about direct sales. This week, The Mysterious Case of the Disappearing Game Gear Accessories...

Pssst! Desperate to buy AC adaptors for your best-selling Game Gears? If so, you might want to know about a funny thing which happened on the way to this column. Oddly, there's a coincidental link with our references a few weeks ago to the ethics or otherwise of

direct selling by certain main agents and distributors. We were deliberately non-specific then, though we've been asked many times since just who we had in mind. Now it's time to be a lot more specific, this time about a new departure from simple standards many may

feel should be the norm. **Batteries rammed** Like most independents (and, for all we know, the monolith chains too) we've been a teensy bit short of Game Gear AC adaptors for quite some time. In fact, so short we even began to wonder whimsically whether

Sega possibly had a secret portfolio of shares in the battery business. After all, the Game Gear does get through Duracells at a rather scary rate. There was the odd timing of Game Gear accessory releases too, doubtless accidental but still rather strange. Remember early December when Rechargeable Battery Packs came out with no sign of AC adaptors with which to recharge them? Unless, of course, you sat in a car with the Car Lighter

Adaptor, also newly available, and recharged the Battery Pack that way. Happily the clouds cleared just before Christmas when Game Gear AC Adaptors suddenly appeared. Until, that is, they just as suddenly disappeared a week or two later. Ever since we've had a stream of gloomy Game Gear owners dolefully asking whether we had AC Adaptors. **Sega Access-sorry** Which brings us to a would-be customer

last week. He's a special favourite because, we joke not, he's so far spent well over a thousand quid with us on consoles, handhelds, cartridges and accessories. A true enthusiast. With a drawer full of dead batteries at home, not surprisingly he's quite keen to get an AC Adaptor for his Game Gear. We've not been able to supply him so far, and because he lives some distance from us he thought he'd phone Sega to see when Adaptors would arrive and we'd therefore be getting some.

After he'd phoned them, he felt he should drop in to let us know what he'd heard. What he told us ruined our day. No, we lie. It ruined our week and quite possibly our month. After getting through to the main Sega number, he was cheerily told the area he wanted was Sega Customer Relations.

When he'd been transferred, he spoke to an even more cheery person who helpfully told him the elusive AC Adaptors would be arriving "at the end of next week".

That's about now as you read this, so you can hope your distributor will be getting stocks at long last. Unless, of course, Sega has sold them all in advance.

Do we hear you asking how that could possibly happen? Allow us to suggest one possibility.

The helpful person at Sega didn't finish by answering our customer's question and telling him when Sega's stocks would arrive. Far from it.

The Sega person went on to suggest that our customer give his credit card number so that "A Game Gear AC Adaptor could be mailed directly to him as soon as they came in, postage and packing all included in the price of £9.99".

Thankfully, our customer has ethics and courteously declined the offer.

When he first told us, however, we found ourselves doubting that this otherwise outrageous invitation could really have been made as he described it.

That's why, posing as a battery-bankrupt Game Gear owner, we phoned Sega ourselves to ask about AC Adaptors.

And guess what? If we'd given them our Access number we'd have been receiving a small parcel containing a Game Gear AC Adaptor round about now.

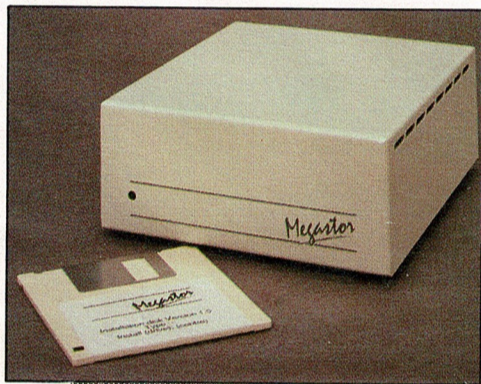
There'd have been two other effects. Sega would have become marginally richer than it would otherwise and, if we'd been a genuine private customer, a distributor and a retailer would have lost a sale.

It makes one wonder just how many sales have already been lost and how much actually rather than marginally richer Sega has already become.

Are some of those Megadrives, Game Gear and Master System cartridges which never seem to be available disappearing that way perhaps?

Dear God, are there no principles at all in this business? □

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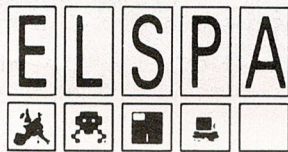
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CHARTALK

Compiled by Gallup on behalf of ELSPA
WEEK ENDING February 1st 1992

MARKET SHARE BY PUBLISHER LABEL (VALUE)

PRICE CATEGORY	PUBLISHER LABEL	% UNIT SALES			
		THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	2 WKS AGO	3 WKS AGO
TOTAL	SEGA	22.7	25.8	26.1	22.0
	NINTENDO	10.5	11.1	10.3	9.4
	MICROPROSE	10.3	1.6	1.7	1.9
	ELECTRONIC ARTS	10.1	9.2	11.8	10.6
	OCEAN	6.5	8.3	8.2	9.0
	HIT SQUAD	4.4	3.7	4.2	4.6
	CODE MASTERS	4.3	4.7	4.6	4.3
	U.S. GOLD	2.9	3.8	3.8	4.1
	KIXX	2.4	2.8	2.2	2.2
	MIRRORSOFT	1.5	2.2	1.6	1.7
	PSYGNOSIS	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.5
	VIRGIN	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.1
	ATARI	1.2	1.2	1.0	2.1
	EUROPRESS S/W	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.2
	MINDSCAPE	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0
	DOMARK	1.0	1.5	1.4	1.3
	ZEPPELIN	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.6
	CORE DESIGN	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.1
	GREMLIN GRAPHICS	0.8	1.4	0.9	1.3
	HITEC SOFTWARE	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9
	ANCO	0.8	1.1	0.9	1.1
	UBISOFT	0.8	0.7	0.9	1.3
	MILLENIUM	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.8
	ALTERNATIVE	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.1
	TRONIX	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.1
	BEAU JOLLY	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8
	KRISALIS	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.9
	EMPIRE	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.8

NB. Shares shown thus '—' are below the cut-off point of 0.5 per cent.

TOP 20 — CONSOLE BY INDIVIDUAL MACHINE FORMAT

RANK	TW	LW	TITLE	MC	PUBLISHER LABEL
1	1	1	SONIC THE HEDGEHOG	SG	SEGA
2	10	10	ROAD RASH	MD	ELECTRONIC ARTS
3	4	4	JOHN MADDEN 1992	MD	ELECTRONIC ARTS
4	5	5	S.C.I.	CO	OCEAN
5	17	17	DONALD DUCK	MD	SEGA
6	8	8	DONALD DUCK	SG	SEGA
7	2	2	JAMES POND 2 — ROBOCOD	MD	ELECTRONIC ARTS
8	14	14	SUPER MARIO LAND	GA	NINTENDO
9	6	6	SUPER KICK OFF	SG	U.S. GOLD
10	16	16	SONIC THE HEDGEHOG	MD	SEGA
11	—	—	WORLD GRAND PRIX	SG	SEGA
12	15	15	THE NINJA	SG	SEGA
13	18	18	SECRET COMMAND	SG	SEGA
14	11	11	ROBOCOP 2	CO	OCEAN
15	9	9	SUPER HANG ON	SG	SEGA
16	—	—	JOE MONTANA FOOTBALL	GG	SEGA
17	3	3	SONIC THE HEDGEHOG	GG	SEGA
18	—	—	WORLD SOCCER	SG	SEGA
19	7	7	STREETS OF RAGE	MD	SEGA
20	—	—	F22 INTERCEPTOR	MD	ELECTRONIC ARTS

GALLUP SALES PANEL STRUCTURE

The Gallup figures above are based on retail sales recorded through a panel of independent computer software retailers, the entire WH Smith and John Menzies chains and a selection of Virgin and Woolworths stores. A number of key chains, such as Boots, Dixons, Argos and Toys R Us, do not currently supply sales information. Thus, companies who are particularly strong in such stores are understated.

All Gallup software charts are the copyright of ELSPA from April 1st 1990. The charts published weekly in CTW are extracts from 'CHARTALK' which is compiled in report form both weekly and monthly by Gallup on behalf of ELSPA. There are 25 charts in 'CHARTALK' covering all formats, pricepoints and with market share statistics. 'CHARTALK' is available from the general secretary at ELSPA on 0386 830642/831223 — or write to him at Station Road, Offenham, Near Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 5LW.

CTW STOCKWATCH

by Mark Ramshaw

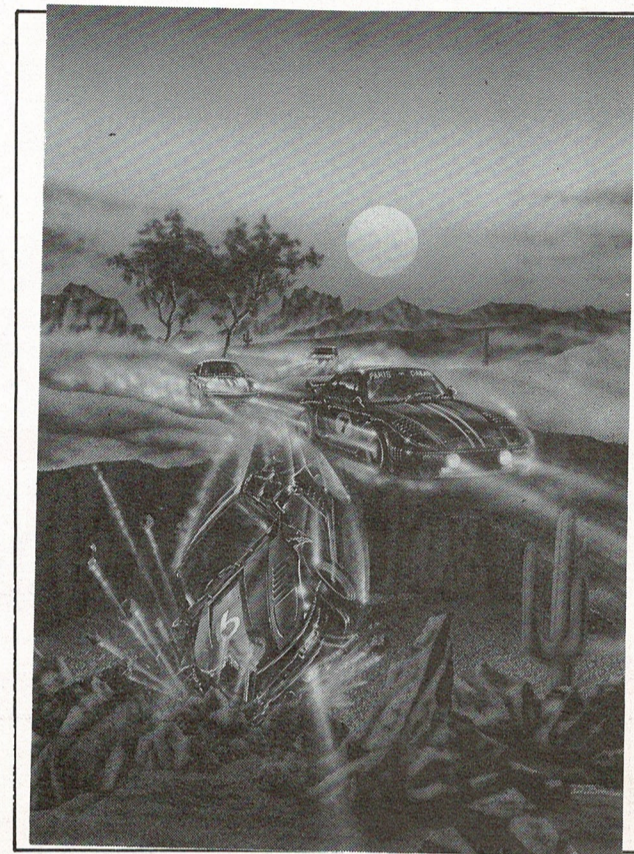
That legend of parallax scrolling, *Shadow Of The Beast*, is finally getting the Master System treatment, courtesy of Tecmagik. Of course this being 1992 it's no straight conversion but a *Mastermix 92* version, or 'remix' if you will (well, I will if you will).

Tecmagik's pushing the fact that the technical wizardry of the game has been pushed even further, with 11 levels of parallax scrolling (trust me, it impresses the punters) as well as a customised control system to take advantage of the Sega's keypad, adding arcade adventure elements to the platform style game.

Press coverage has included front cover features on *Mean Machines* and *Sega Pro*, with reviews from *Pro*, *Sega Force*, and *Game Zone* at the magic 90% mark. European magazines have been similarly ecstatic, to the extent that Master System *Beast* has even won the coveted *Tilt D'* or award.

Outside back ads can be found on all the aforementioned magazines, while in-store promotion comprises A3 posters and A4 outsize dummy boxes. If the Master System generation take to the *Beast* as well as the Amiga owners originally did, then Tecmagik ought to have a bit of a hit on its hands.

Jaleco's *Big Run* was a bit of a middle-of-the-road (pun fully intended) coin-op racing game, in the *OutRun* goes cross-country mould. Of course, as any seasoned gameplayer knows, what was unspectacular in the arcades usually makes the best subject material for conversion to computer. And so we have Storm's



Amiga and ST versions of *Big Run* just hitting the streets.

Boasting a range of classic cars and 'exceedingly fast' 3D graphics, *Big Run* focuses on the Paris to Dakar rally. This being an arcade conversion, the emphasis is firmly on arcade thrills, rather than simulation-like attention to detail, and so will sink or swim on the good old-fashioned question of playability, rather than artistic merits.

Having already had the cover disk treatment on *CU Amiga* and *The One* (disks are also available to retailers), the kids will know pretty much now what to expect, and if that doesn't do the trick then there's always the lure of

limited edition toy Storm Porsches. Racing cut-outs are also available to retailers, with the forthcoming *Indy Heat* also featured.

There's no reviews as yet, though advance coverage has been bordering on the sycophantic. "If this is the kind of stuff we can expect from the Storm label, let's hope it pours down!" So says *ST Action*. Yes, quite.

Remember to call 0225 442244 to have your new products featured in Stockwatch, and send product samples direct to CTW's offices.

Mark Ramshaw is Deputy Editor for Amiga Power.

CTW EVENT CHECK

CTW Event Check welcomes details of any shows or conferences being planned for the leisure/low end business marketplace. Please address all correspondence to CTW EVENT CHECK, The BTC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2DX. Or fax us on 0438 74127.

FEBRUARY

16 Bit Computer Show: February 14th-16th, Wembley Exhibition Centre, London, 081 549 3444
Computer Arena: February 19th-23rd, Larnaca, Cyprus, 081 742 2828.
The Video Show & Home Entertainment '92: February 28th-29th, Business Design Centre, 071 485 0011

MARCH

Cardiff Computer Fair: March 7th, Cardiff City Hall, 0273 607633
Manchester Computer Fair: March 15th, The Forum, Wythenshawe, 0273 607633
Amiga Expo '92: March 20th-22nd, Odd Fellow Palaet, Copenhagen, Denmark, 01045 3391 2833
CD-ROM Europe '92: March 31st-April 2nd, Metropole Hotel, Brighton, 0895 622233.

APRIL

Amiga Berlin '92: April 2nd-5th, Berlin, Germany, 01049 8106 34094
The Which Computer? Show: April 7th-10th, NEC, Birmingham, 081 948 9828
European Computer Trade Show: April 12th-14th, Business Design Centre, London, 081 742 2828

MAY

Brighton Computer Fair: April 18th, Corn Exchange, Brighton, 0273 607633
Foire de Paris: April 29th-May 10th, Paris, France, 010331 43 87 01 39
Portable Computer Show: May 12th-14th, Olympia 2, 081 742 2828.
Amiga Shopper Show: May 15th-17th, Wembley Exhibition Centre, 0224 442244
Spring Computer Shopper: May 28th-31st, Olympia, London, 081 742 2828.

JUNE

Technology in Leisure and Entertainment (TILE): June 1st-3rd, Maastricht Exhibition and Congress Centre, Holland, 0985 846181

OCTOBER

Multimedia '92: June 9th-11th, Olympia 2, London, 081 742 2828
European Conference on Multimedia and CD ROM: October 7th-9th, Wiesbaden, Germany, 081 940 3777

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3 GREAT REPLAY OFFERS



INSIDE EA — PART TWO

BETTER AFFILIATE THAN EVER

Whilst Electronic Arts is undoubtedly a major global force in its own right, its impressive cluster of affiliate labels certainly add a touch of spice. DAVE ROBERTS talks to a trio of the leading players...

MINDCRAFT

Ali Atabek, Mindcraft's boss, started life as a games developer and it would seem pretty true to say that he's only just stopped being one.

What he has become is a software publisher. He's been publishing software for a few years, but he admits he's been doing it as a developer.

In 1992, however, he's changed sides. "It's time to stop being amateurs", he explains. "We've got to learn to meet deadlines or face the consequences." Now does that sound like a developer talking?

Atabek entered publishing through a product called *Magic Candle*. Prior to that he had contributed a few games to SSI's success.

With *Magic Candle*, he decided he wanted a rather better return for his work.

"You couldn't do it today. You couldn't just start publishing with one game, retailers wouldn't talk to you. It was hard a few years ago when I did it. Even EA turned me down first time round when I approached them for distribution."

So instead of EA, Mindcraft linked with a Califor-

nian outfit called Miles Software. "It turned out to be a disaster. They went out of business and nearly took us with them."

But Mindcraft survived and moved on to a relationship with a rather more respectable bedfellow, MicroProse. *Magic Candle*, *Keys to Maramon* and *Breach* all worked well for the partnership, but in 1990 Atabek decided to switch to EA.

"They certainly have more experience with affiliates than MicroProse and from day one I had wanted to work with them, so when the chance came it was an easy choice to make."

"It's time to stop being amateurs We've got to learn to meet deadlines or face the consequences."

Ali Atabek, Mindcraft

Throughout the changes Mindcraft's style has never wavered. "We do epic RPGs, big games, complex games. They are the hardest ones to get together and because of that they're not very cost-effective. I wish I'd come up with something like *Tetris* really."

"But I want to establish Mindcraft as a major force in the RPG genre. I want people to see our name and know that they are going to get a good game."

Five products will attempt to build that reputation, *Magic Candle II* and *III* will be among them.

Atabek's hope is that people will notice the products, spot the common Mindcraft name and start to ask questions about this new publisher, for even after a few years in the business, that is what Mindcraft seems to be. □

THREE SIXTY

Talking to Three Sixty's president Tom Frisna in one of the Las Vegas CES restaurants proves to be rather tricky.

He's not hard to talk to, far from it, and there isn't much extraneous noise to complicate conversation. It's just that every thirty seconds or so he has to break away to say hello (or "hi" to be more precise) to some industry acquaintance.

Frisna has been coming to these things, CES not restaurants, for years and years and ooh ages and is obviously an expert

schmoozer, hence the stop start stuff.

He originally worked for Atari, but then it seems most people in the US games market did. He was first really prominent in the software world as founding president of Accolade.

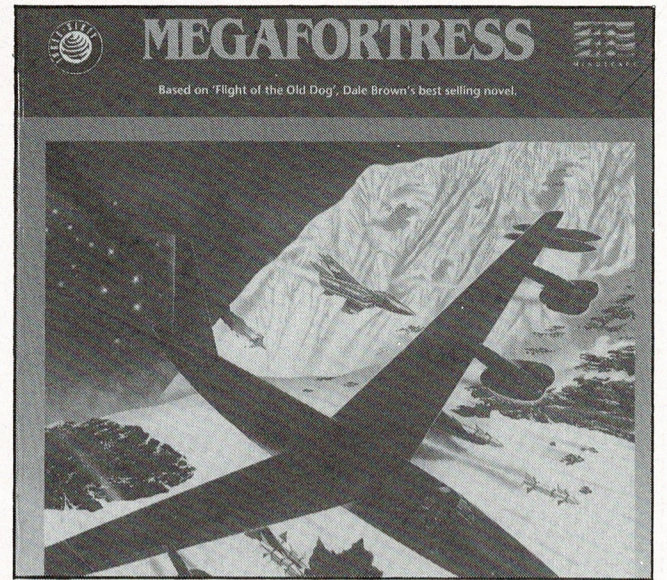
After two years, and with the firm well-established, he left the publisher due to some "personal differences". Sounds intriguing doesn't it? It is actually but it was all off the record so tough.

He then worked with old Atarian Nolan Bushnell trying to market something called an Androbot. "We tried to give people an R2D2 but it was too ambitious. We had an apocalyptic rise and fall but that was about it."

"Then I decided I wanted to publish, but not just anything, something ambitious. I'm a pusher, I want to do things that other people might shy away from."

What he did was set up Three Sixty and start working on a computer version of a US board game called *Harpoon*. Daring stuff I'm sure you'll agree.

Unfortunately, the project did not go to plan. Frisna blames himself: "I didn't do a good enough job of manag-



THREE SIXTY: Part of EA's circle

ing the developers. Ultimately it was my responsibility, my mistakes.

"After eighteen months, the whole thing had crashed and very nearly taken us with it. We'd published a few little things along the way, but really the whole point of the company was to publish *Harpoon*."

"January 1989 was the low point of my life, we really were flat on our arse. Then, I was introduced to the author, Tom Clancey. He believed in the project and decided he wanted to back it."

"What he did was buy ten per cent of the company and what we did was use the money to create *Harpoon*. The company was trimmed

back to me, a secretary and seven programmers. I took no salary and we all just went for it."

"I owe those programmers my life. They did a fantastic job. The product eventually came out in January 1990 on the PC and sold 20,000 copies." A mini-series must be a possibility.

The relationship with EA stretches back to just before then. Like Clancey, the firm showed some faith and then reaped the reward, but only in the US. In the UK, *Harpoon* was not exactly a direct hit.

"Originally, I went with Mirrorsoft, because Jim Mackonochie was there and he wanted to show the firm just what can be done with an intelligent game like *Har-*

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INSIDE EA — PART TWO

poon. Then, of course, he left and all Peter Bilotta cared about was turtles.

"The launch was very weak and I was very disappointed. Now it's going to EA and they're going to make a success of it."

In between times, Three Sixty turned to Mindscape which released *Das Boot*, *Blue Max* and *Megafortress* in 1990.

"Then EA said they wanted a worldwide deal and I couldn't really say no to a company that stood by me in the States when things weren't looking so hot."

So a two year deal with EA has been signed and the product will begin to flow through this year. *Harpoon*, once more with feeling, is leading the way and titles based on the winter Olympics and the Gulf war are on the way.

The Three Sixty logo will feature prominently on the new packages as, after a struggle and a few false starts, Frisna starts to build his brand over here.

He enthuses: "This is a dream. It couldn't have worked out any better." After the rocky road he's taken to get

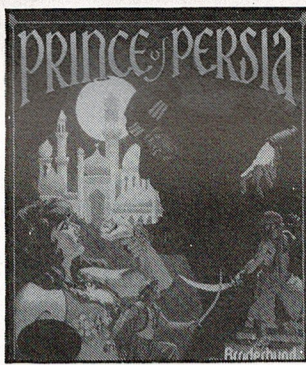
here, he can surely be forgiven a touch of hyperbole as he enjoys the view. □

BRODERBUND

In Europe, Broderbund is actually quite a new addition to the EA family.

Previously, the label went through Domark. They were always an odd couple. Broderbund is not strictly a games label. It's not fair to say it's not serious about leisure, but it's pretty safe to say that Domark is serious about very little.

The firm's co-managing directors, Mark Strachan



PERSIA: More to come
and Dominic Wheatley, never really did recover from seeing Monty Python's *Upper Class Twit* of the Year

sketch as young men.

And while their wacky populist veneer does front a successful and admirable business, some of Broderbund's productivity titles did nestle a little clumsily next to the Tengen line-up and James Bond's latest.

EA, producer of probably the finest productivity title in the world, *Deluxe Paint*, does seem a slightly more snug fit.

Sales director Steven Dunphy offers: "Domark's focus is exclusively on the entertainment side, we have a much greater emphasis on

the edutainment market."

A-ha! There it is, that word, edutainment. It's just the latest in a line of portmanteaus that the computer industry has been rather keen on lately, but it does seem rather important to Broderbund.

Through some of its products, the *Carmen Sandiego* series in particular, the firm has practically defined the term — something which others who bandy it about so freely have often failed to do.

But Broderbund has not always been involved in such cerebral pursuits. When it started in the dim and distant days of 1980, the firm was involved purely in entertainment.

It even got quite heavily involved in the 8-bit NES when the console explosion was just a little pop.

Dunphy remembers: "We did quite well, but then the market just turned into a bidding war. You had to carry huge inventories and it became very risky. Now I don't think that we have the critical mass to be a player in console publishing."

An honest appraisal, and one which causes him no undue concern. Titles like the *Carmen Sandiego* series have become the cornerstone of Broderbund. They are even used in some US schools.

Dunphy concedes, however, that edutainment has not really blossomed in the UK, blaming the rather uniform structure of the British schools system.

Most recently, the firm's UK profile was raised by the critical and commercial smash, *Prince of Persia*. Encouragingly, Dunphy promises that it's the sort of thing we should come to expect from Broderbund.

Certainly *Prince of Persia II*, due out through EA this year, should offer something along similar lines.

"In the past we've done a lot of different titles, perhaps too many and some of them haven't been all that we would have liked. Now, we're not just throwing things against the wall.

"We're being a little bit more considered, taking our time. Some of the games due out this year have had two or three years work put into them already."

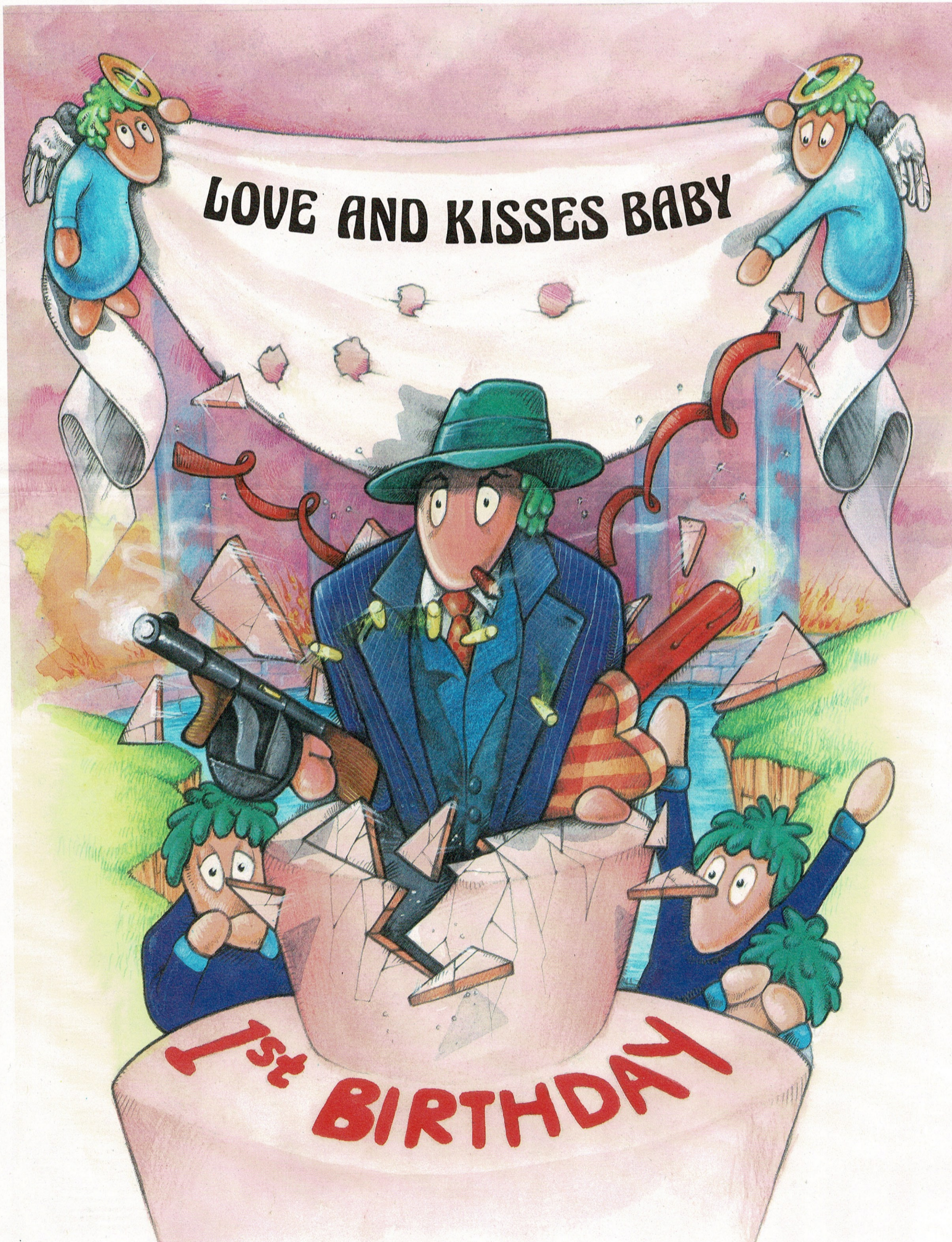
"The market is demanding big games and the technology is demanding quality graphics, quality sound, that suits us just fine."

Something else that Dunphy feels fits his masterplan quite neatly is the emergence of various CD formats.

Broderbund has produced a series of educational titles called *Living Books* for use on CD PCs. Dunphy believes they represent one of the finest exploitations of the emerging technology. The UK will be able to judge when the series begins to filter through EA later this year.

It would be unfair and, more importantly, inaccurate to say that Broderbund's time with Domark was spent merely treading water. *Prince of Persia* and the *Carmen* series prove that admirably.

But EA seems to be a more appropriate conduit for Broderbund's full range. □



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