ATARI ST USER

The top-selling Atari ST magazine

Volume 3
Number 9
November 1988
£1.75

CLASSROOM INVADER

Could the ST be the ultimate teaching tool?

REVIEWS

MicroLink modem plus K-Comm II, Swiftcalc, Mark Williams C, Data Manager Professional, Super Sequencer ST, Master Tracks Junior

TYPE-IN

Mouse-driven trivia shell for multiple-choice tests

GAMES

Better Dead Than Alien, Spitfire 40, Platoon, Killdozers, Bombjack, Bermuda Project, Fire and Forget, Revenge II, Chubby Gristle, Space Harrier and much more!

FEATURES

Piracy and the ST, plus Vektor Grafix interview

Curing hardware faults ... using loops in Basic ... colour mixing with the ST's palette ... working your way through adventures ...

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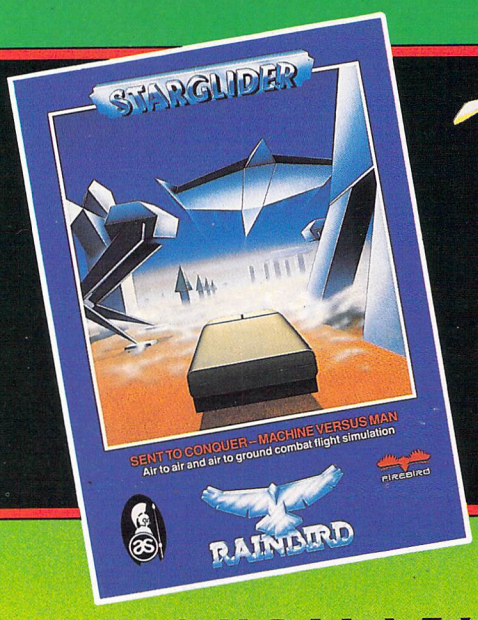
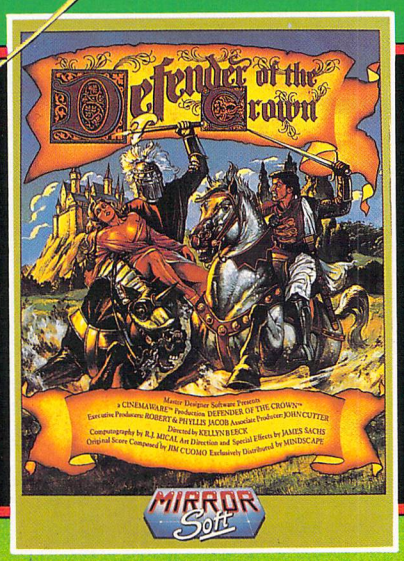
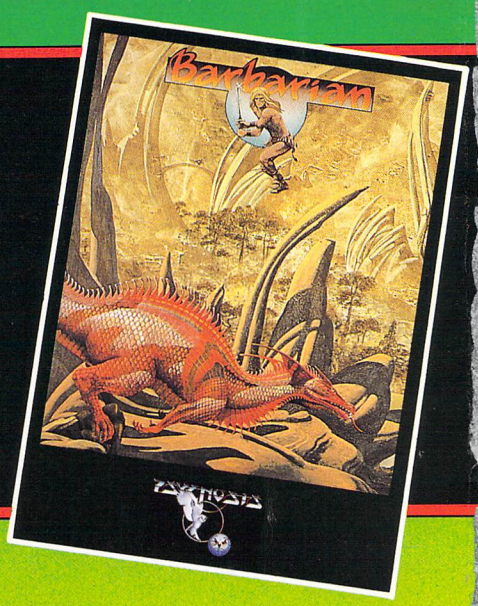
VOLUME · 1







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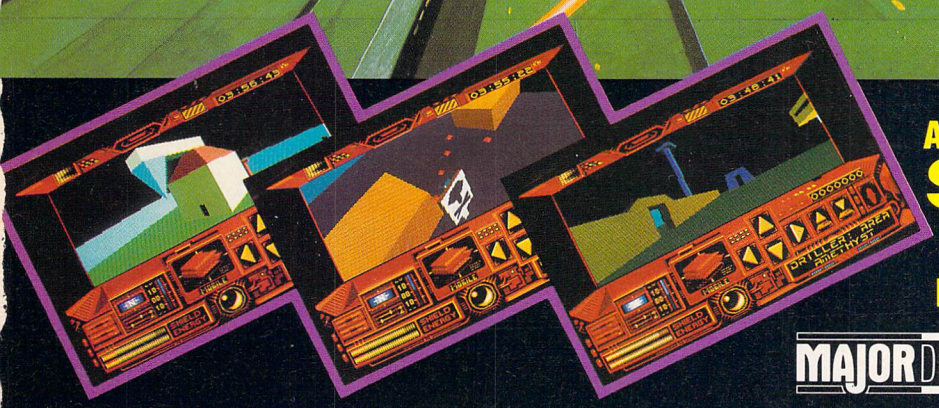

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Vol. 3 No. 4 November 1988

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Published by:
Database Publications Ltd,
Europa House, Adlington Park,
Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

ABC 28,424 January-June 1988
ISSN 0952-3006

Subscription rates for
12 issues, post free:
£19 UK
£27 Europe (incl. Eire)
£42 Overseas (airmail)

Writing for Atari ST User: Articles and programs relating to the Atari ST are welcome. Articles should preferably be typed or computer-printed, using double spacing. Unsolicited manuscripts, discs etc, should be accompanied by a self addressed stamped envelope, otherwise their return cannot be guaranteed. Unless agreed otherwise, material is accepted on an all rights basis.

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News trade distribution: Europress Sales and Distribution Limited, Unit 1, Burgess Road, Ivyhouse Lane, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4NR. Tel: 0424 430422.

Database Publications is a division of Europress Ltd

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MORE FOR YOUR BINDER . . .

Part 4 of The Complete Atari ST. **This increasingly popular illustrated pull-out, which comes free with *Atari ST User*, is rapidly building up into the definitive guide to the working and uses of this powerful micro.**

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- **Mixing colours and hues on the ST's palette.**
- **The differing plots of text adventures.**
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- **Finding and curing common hardware faults.**

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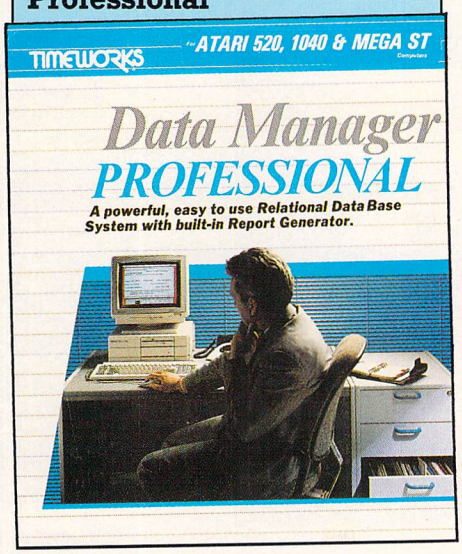

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Atari ST Hard Disk Systems

- High performance hard disk drives for Atari ST and Mega ST computers
- DMA and SCSI connectors for daisy-chaining additional devices
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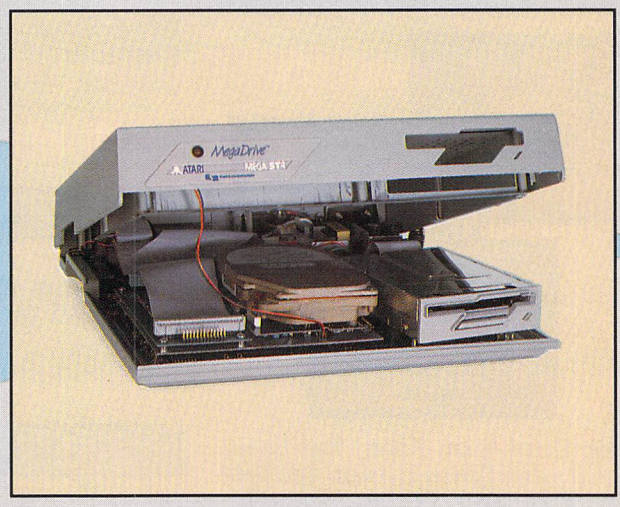
- High speed DMA data transfer
- Fast RLL drive — 28ms access time
- Leaves DMA and 68000 port free for other peripherals



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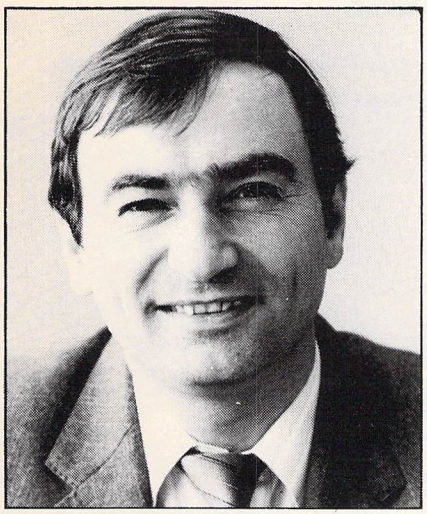
Atari airlift to meet demand for Christmas



Bob Gleadow: Sales are doubled

ATARI has organised an extraordinary airlift to help meet the demand for STs at Christmas.

Managing director Bob Gleadow revealed his plans to *Atari ST User* in an exclusive interview during the PC Show.

"We've doubled our hardware sales over last year", he said. "And we're currently selling more than 10,000 STs a month.

"It's obviously going to be a record Christmas for us. We're not sure we can satisfy the orders entirely – but we're determined to come close.

"Rather than trust to luck we are making special arrangements to meet demand from the Christmas market. This includes bringing in 4,000 machines by air in addition to our normal supplies".

Gleadow gave *Atari ST User* a personally conducted tour of Atari World – the biggest single exhibit at the PC Show.

Its large and noisy games arcade, music centre and extensive business system displays were crowded throughout the show.

More good news from Gleadow on the ST front was that the 520STFM will cost only £299 while stocks last.

And the machine will be bundled with more than £450 worth of entertainment and business software – 21 top games and the Organiser suite from Triangle Publishing – in an ST Super Pack at a cost of only £399.

Price of the 1040ST – £499 – won't change, but a TV modulator is now included as standard.

At the top end of Atari's range, the Inmos T800-20 based transputer workstation was on view with a price tag below £5,000. Supplies will start to flow in December.

For a full report on the ST scene at the PC Show turn to Page 12.

Modems have American touch

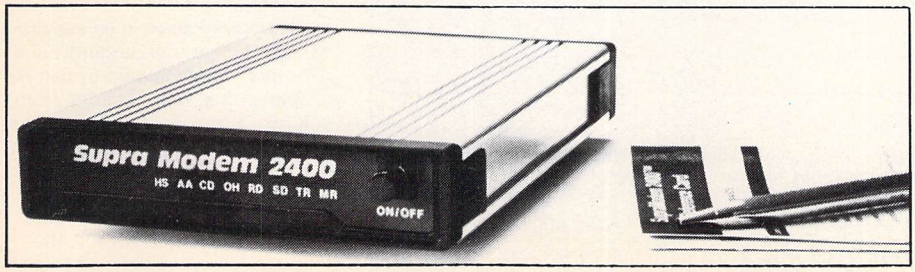
COMMUNICATIONS hardware with an American accent is on offer from Frontier Software – UK distributor of the Supra range of products.

The latest addition to the range is a European version of the SupraModem 2400, one of the most popular modems available in the States. The 2400 offers asynchronous operation at 300, 1200 and 2400 baud, auto answer and dial (pulse or tone) and has a programmable volume speaker for monitoring call progress.

Other features include facilities to store phone numbers and user configurations easily. Price £199.95.

Also available from Frontier (0423 67140) is a new 120Mb hard disc drive for the Atari ST range.

The SupraDrive, priced at £1,699.95, completes the Supra range of drives – 20Mb, 30Mb 60Mb and 195Mb models have been available for some time.



Treasure hunt marks launch of big adventure

ATARI users have been invited to take part in a treasure hunt to find the secret hiding place of a £5,000 replica of the legendary Holy Grail.

The nationwide quest has been organised by Mandarin Software (0625 878888) to mark the launch of Lancelot – a graphic adventure game based on the legend of King Arthur.

Hand-crafted from sterling silver, and gilded inside with 22 carat gold, the 7in high goblet is encrusted with semi-precious stones. It is hidden at a secret location somewhere in the UK.

To find the prize, entrants will have to survive a two-stage contest based on clues contained in the new three-adventure Lancelot package.

Contest creator and Arthurian expert Pete Austin said: "All people need to do is study the Lancelot game carefully and the clues – plus their answers – will become obvious". Price £19.95.

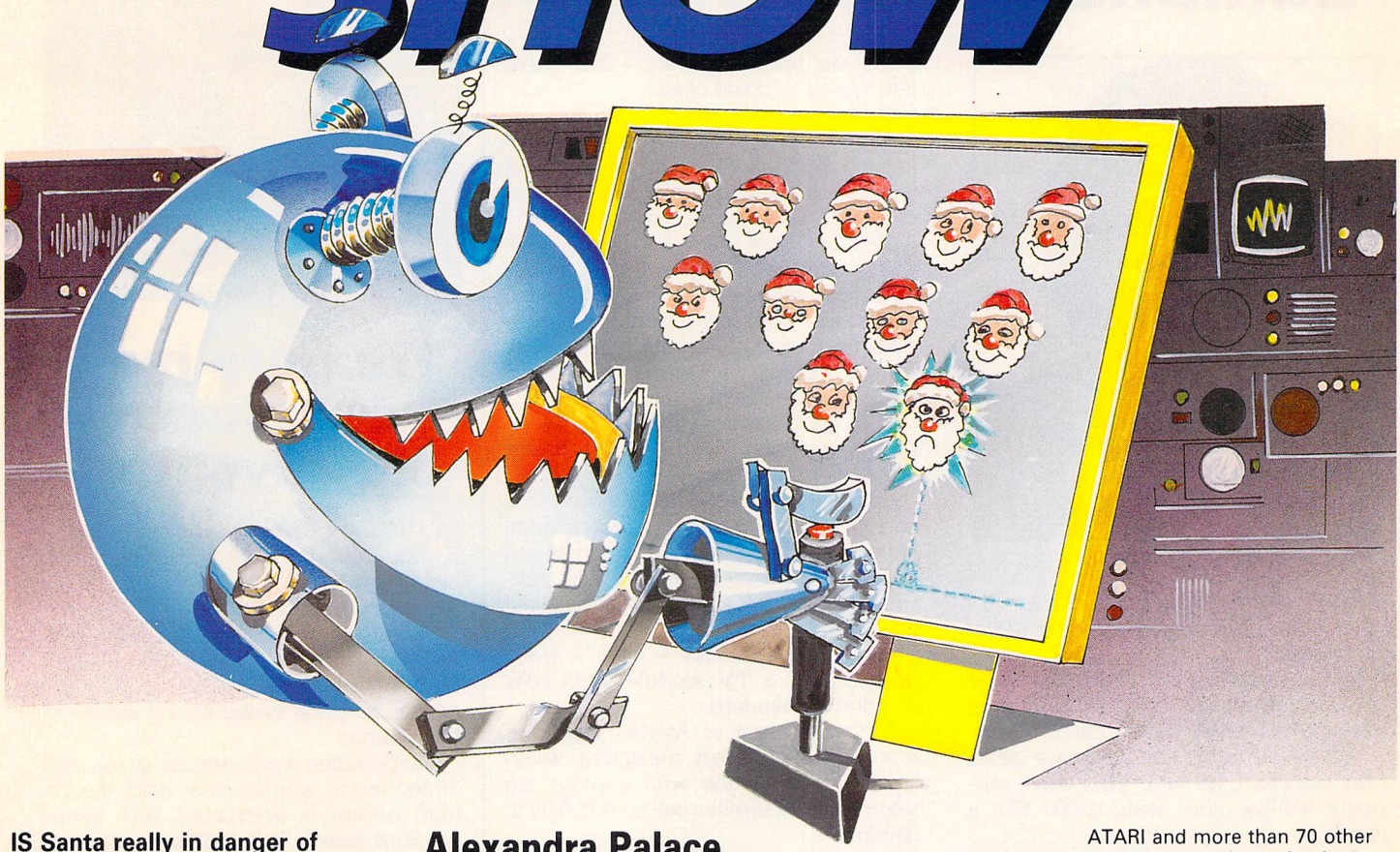
Virgin moves into 16 bit

THE Virgin Publishing empire continues to expand into the 16 bit sector.

Following the acquisition of a controlling stake in Mastertronic – and therefore Melbourne House – it has signed an agreement with Sega Enterprises of Japan.

The three-year deal allows Virgin (01-727 8070) to market Sega's Videogame hardware and software products in the UK, France and Germany.

ATARI CHRISTMAS SHOW



IS Santa really in danger of being zapped this year?

That question won't be answered until the Atari Christmas Show, when all that's new in software scenarios comes to light.

The theme for the show is Atari in entertainment – and that means games, games and more games for you to see and try!

- ★ Join Ocean, US Gold, Tynesoft and Mastertronic in a specially constructed workshop new to the show. Get their expert advice on your own games every morning – with 'hints and tips' sessions from the leading software houses' programming specialists every afternoon.
- ★ Play Double Dragon from Mastertronic in our Big Game Contest – highest score wins a major prize.

And there's even more!

- ★ A spectacular Atari Games Arcade.
- ★ The latest chart entries to try before you buy.
- ★ The chance to choose your Christmas presents from hundreds of bargain offers.

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DATABASE EXHIBITIONS

ATARI and more than 70 other exhibitors are determined to make this the most fascinating show ever held.

No matter which Atari machine you use – or whether your interests lie in entertainment or more serious computer activities – you'll find just what you are looking for. Plus a few exciting things you didn't even know existed.

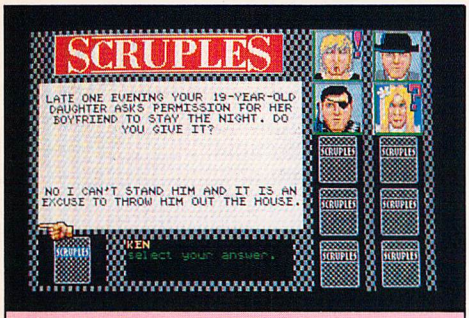
All the leading companies in the Atari market will be out in force to demonstrate the latest breakthroughs – from the most startling of software through to the most innovative of add-ons.

It all adds up to a cracking start to your best Christmas ever.

HOW TO GET THERE

Alexandra Palace is so easy to reach by car, rail, underground or bus. It has its own British Rail station, just nine minutes from King's Cross, and there's a free bus service shuttling between the station and show every 10 minutes.

● If you're travelling by road, Alexandra Palace is only 15 minutes from Junction 25 on the M25. Car parking is free.



Scruples: The prize for 50 runners-up

Winner heads for America's city of dreams

NEW York, America's "city of dreams", has been the goal for many millions of Europeans during the last 200 years, and from the number of entries the June/July competition in *Atari ST User* attracted, it still fires the imagination.

The first prize in the £4,000 competition was a flight for two to New York, plus three nights in the New York Hilton and £200 spending money. That goes to G.M. Dew of Bridgewater, Somerset, whose entry was the first correct one out of the sack.

Thousands of other readers also correctly answered the eight questions concerning New York, and there were also 110 runners up prizes to be won.

Each of the following will be receiving a copy of Virgin's Scruples for the ST:

M. Bublik, Hazel Grove; J. Elson, Boscastle; P. Coates, Rufford; U. Shimrun, Holland; I. Milne, West Germany; I. Pearce, Leicester; J. Ball, Walkley; A. Curwen, Aberystwyth; T. Stallard, Tamworth; C. Tucker, London; I. Etheridge, Leeds; I. Nourse, Ebbw Vale; A. Ekers, York; M. Leary, Heathfield; J. Fleck, Plymouth; C. Fox, Swansea; N. Scott, London; M. Smith, London; R. McKimmie, London; O. Hansen, Denmark; L. Ocesca, Ilford; K. Vancutsem, Beaconsfield; M. Hall, Consett; C. James, Chatteris; D. Wilton, Worksop; B. van der Pol, The Netherlands; M. Dack, Norwich; J. Austin, Bolton; J. Brewis, Banbury; V. Haynes, Colby; S. Cotter, Wrexham; R. Brown, Richmond; B. Wollerton, Lincoln;R. Bilboe, East Malling; D. Einig, Maghull; G. Francis, Winchester; M. Cole, Nottingham; G. Cameron, London; P. Weiss, London; P. Byrne, Dublin; D. Hodgson, Shildon; M. Makesoone, The Netherlands; J. Kiely, Dublin; C. Neale, Blackpool; S. Skjelvan, Norway; I. Riley, Burton-on-Trent; J. Harris, Richmond; T. Zatko, Maidstone; and E. Stephens, Newton Abbot.

Fifty copies of Scrabble De Luxe will be winging their way to: J. Singer, West Germany; K. Dear, Shirley; P. Lynggaard, Denmark; B. Chan, Burnley; N. Landat, Huyton; L. O'Neil, Orrell; M. Saunders, Prescot; M. Toogood, Waterlooville; S. Dawkins, Rutland; W. Maarse, The Netherlands; N. Todd, Poole; Ormond, Dyfed; J. Northan, Middlesborough; U. Johnson, Sweden; G. Watson, Poole; E. Brovig, Norway; L. Zatko, Maidstone; M. Michel, Jersey; S. Walker, Milton Keynes; J. Stanforth, Muenchen; R. Moris, Lancing; R. Lindsay, Glasgow; J. Walton, Gosport; N. Mathias, Dereham; P. Lee, Pinner; M. Douglas, Northampton; S. Raper, Bath; K. McGready, Catterick; M. Anwar, Walthamstow; M. Lewis, Peebles; P. Temple, Maastricht; D. Goulsbra, Horley; M. Kinloch, Tadley; D. Stanford, Kinross; N. Physick, Gravesend; K. Pugh, Hinckley; P. Knight, Ashton; H. Faris, Yugoslavia; N. Hay, Bristol; S. Maxwell, St Helier; J. Taylor, St Ives; J. Howard, Birchwood; J. Hooley, Long Eaton; W. Hayes, Banbridge; P. Davies, Liverpool; K. Lloyd, Caernarfon; R. Byrne, Clapham; D. Boyes, Rufforth; M. West, Loughborough; and J. Golding, Hitchin.

And another 10 people will each receive a copy of the original Scrabble Board Game: R. Jennings, Stanway; K. Creasey, Leicester; J. Wilton, Chichester; T. Johnson, Bingley; C. Donohue, Woolton; J. Noche, London; C. Briggs, Woking; S. Halliwell, Rochdale; K. Andersom, Edinburgh; and P. Stimson, Bedfordshire.

ST DESIGNS WILL COVER YOUR WALL

A YOUNG freelance designer working from a studio in London's Docklands has taken the Atari ST into the world of textile design.

Using an Atari 520ST colour system and Mirrorsoft's Art Director, Martin Brown spent six months building a portfolio of original fabric and wallpaper designs.

The hard work paid off – the designs have been favourably received by major companies, even though many of them use computerised design systems costing a great deal more than an ST.

Art Director was particularly appropriate for the creative work, offering as it does the ability to duplicate patterns of any size and use those patterns as paintbrushes, and to select subtle gradations of colour. Available from Mirrorsoft (01-377 4837) Art Director is now bundled with its sister program Film Director at the special reduced price of £49.99.

Atari gets organised with games Christmas Pack

NEWCOMERS to the Atari ST will have a chance to get themselves organised at the same time as they're enjoying a Chistmas diet of games.

For included in Atari's special Christmas Pack currently bundled with the ST is Triangle's personal productivity package, ST-Organiser – the only non-games software selected.

It's a notable coup for Triangle ((01-436 5536) and follows the company's success with PC-Organiser which is bundled with Amstrad's portable PPC.

The ST-Organiser is a fully integrated package running under Gem and comprises a word processor, spreadsheet, cardfile, diary/alarm and autodialling.

The software is also available to existing Atari ST users, priced at £49.95, and Triangle promises that other business-oriented products are in the pipeline.

Top slot for new ST Basic

ONLY seven days after its recent launch, STOS – The Games Creator burst into the Gallup Top 10 chart at number one.

The new Basic language for the ST, which is marketed under the Mandarin label, dislodged Firebird's Virus from premier position in the hotly contested Atari ST sector.

"We anticipated that STOS would be a runaway bestseller – but not quite as quickly as this", commented Mandarin's Chris Payne.

Developed by French programming team Jawx International of Paris, STOS went on public display for the first time at the Personal Computer Show.

Competing against the cream of the latest software wave, it was reported to be one of the hottest selling products.

"There was nothing else to touch it", said Mike Jones of Software Express, one of several companies to feature STOS on their stands.

"Everyone who arrived seemed to have heard of it. It's a fantastic package and the price is right. I only wish it was my product".

Similar sentiments were echoed by John Hambly of SDL, the biggest distributor in the Atari market. "We bought a lot and sold a lot", he said.

Already a number of software houses are using STOS to create the next generation of games. Leading French company

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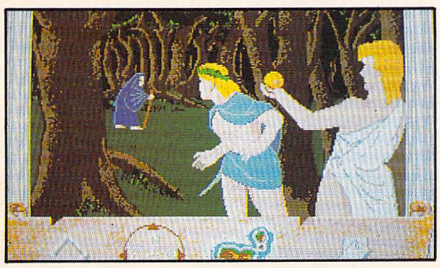
◀ *From Page 9*

Ubi Soft is using it to develop its latest mega title – Skate Ball – and has two further STOS-based games in the pipeline.

Still in France, the ancient Greek legend of Perseus and Andromeda is being reworked by Coktel Vision. This is the first commercial game to be released written entirely in STOS Basic, and while the story may be ancient, this new graphic adventure bears all the hallmarks of the new language.

Fully animated sequences and the ability to work on both mono and colour monitors are just two of the features which demonstrate the flexibility of STOS as a games creator.



Perseus and Andromeda: First commercial game written entirely in STOS

Among UK companies now using STOS as a development tool is Capital Software, which will be redesigning its digital soundsampler with STOS. The company previously produced games programs for Software Ltd and Prism Leisure and is also well known for developing a freeze-frame system for the ST.

Enigma Variations is also currently using STOS to develop ideas for a game based around the character of Gilbert, a monster featured in the Saturday morning TV series Get Fresh. The game follows Gilbert's attempt to leave his home planet of Dril for Earth. To do this he must try and find various parts with which to build a spaceship.

However, his fellow Drilians try to prevent his departure as this will give away the secret whereabouts of their home. Before they will allow him to leave Gilbert must win a series of contests which – like his character – are quite disgusting and include a spitting competition. The game will be out just before Christmas on the Atari ST, Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amiga.

Enigma Variations is a new company formed by Richard Naylor, previously software manager for Domark, and Mark Greenshields, a professional programmer of five years' standing. Mark is best known as the author of titles such as Bombo, Hades Nebular, Split Personality and more recently, 19.

They intend to specialise in products with small licenses and already have two more games in the pipeline and several follow-ups based on the Gilbert theme.

Heading for Journey's end

DEPARTING for once from its successful line of text-only brain twisters, Infocom has ventured into "a whole new realm of entertainment software" – Role-Play chronicles.

The concept comes from Zork Trilogy co-author Marc Blank, and the first title is Journey – which even he has some difficulty in describing.

"It's neither an interactive fiction title with multiple characters, nor is it a role playing game with text – it is a true welding of the two game types into a novel form of its own", he said.

The bare bones of the adventure involve guiding a party of travellers on a quest to defeat the evil which has invaded the land.

And although the player controls the actions of the party, characters can act independently as they solve puzzles, overcome obstacles and explore unknown lands.

Journey – complete with more than 100 illustrations and theme music – should be available for the Atari ST in early 1989.

Line still open

ROBTEK might be a name of the past, but the company's products are still available from the liquidators, Levy Gee, who will also deal with any queries regarding orders in progess. The telephone number remains unchanged: 01-847 4457.

Looking for best sellers at Atari's Christmas Show

OPPORTUNITY is knocking for the next generation of Atari games writers.

It will arrive in the form of a brand new feature area at the Atari Christmas Show – a Games Workshop.

For the first time budding authors are being invited to bring in their programs to be assessed by the UK's leading software houses.

US Gold, Ocean, Mastertronic/Virgin and Tynesoft will all have representatives on hand each morning during the show which runs from November 25 to 27 in the West Hall, Alexandra Palace.

The expert panel will comment on each game brought in and will consider marketing any exceptional programs that come to light. "Who knows, perhaps we'll find our next bestseller there", says US Gold's Charles Cecil.

Each afternoon during the show, the Atari Games Workshop will become the venue for regular "hints and tips" sessions involving the household names in entertainment software.

And for those people whose only interest in games is playing them, a Big Game High Score Contest will be open to all visitors.

Featuring Double Dragon, the ST version of the arcade game of the year from Melbourne House, the free competition will offer a major prize for the eventual winner.

LINKS SPEED SOFTWARE

WITH the availability of data transfer links between the ST and Z88, there is much interest in the latest software for the Cambridge Computer laptop.

Spell-Master from Computer Concepts (0442 63933) is a £59 easy-to-use text editor with integrated 60,000 word spelling checker. Text files created using Pipedream can be loaded into the text editor and spelling checked using the quick-edit facility.

On a smaller scale, Wordchip from Harvester Information Systems (01-831 2331) contains 30,000 words and costs £49.95. Also from Harvester comes Data Organiser for simple record keeping, price £39.95.

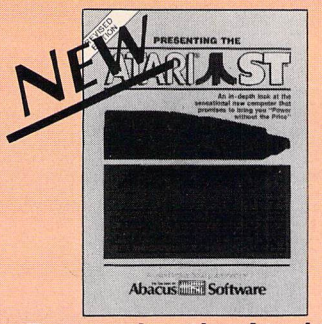
Due for release at the end of the year, priced £69, zBase database from Wordmongers (0296 437878) has a fast search facility plus the ability to index data and output files for further processing of business applications such as sales order processing and stocktaking.

Three-in-one adventuring

THE first adventure game – and start of a planned series – from Psygnosis (051-207 0825) is Chrono-Quest, a three disc package written by French development house Infomedia. The quest begins in 1920 with the discovery of a murder and the need to find a time machine the player must use. Price £29.95.

Atari ST Reference Books from Abacus Software

You Can Count On



Presenting the Atari ST

A detailed summary of the capabilities and features of the Atari ST for new and intending users.

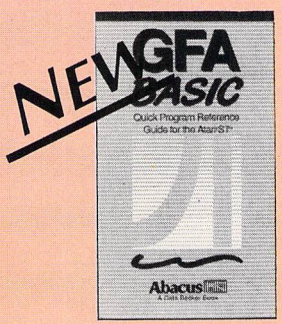
The first section covers what a computer operating system does and why the Atari ST is truly user-friendly, and includes a brief discussion of the software included with the ST system. The second section describes in greater detail the actual components and operating system, from the 68000 processor to the GEM interface.

BKAB 980 179 pages **£12.95**

The Atari ST for Beginners

With its icon-based operating system the ST is ideal for a beginner, although many aspects of the ST can be confusing to the first-time computer user. This informative book will help you learn the essentials of the Atari ST without problems. Topics include: Set-Up and connection, TOS< GEM and application programs, introductions to BASIC and LOGO programming, and a glossary of computer terms. Full of ideas for putting your Atari ST to work.

BKAB 525 203 pages **£12.95**



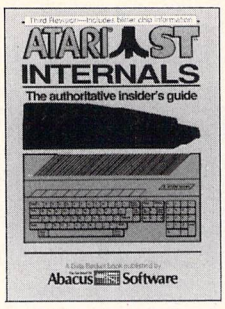
GFA BASIC

Quick Program Reference Guide for the Atari ST.

The GFA BASIC Quick Program Reference Guide is a powerful tool for programmers using one of the most popular BASIC interpreters for the Atari ST.

Designed for the intermediate and advanced level programmer, its easy-to-read, easy-to-locate organization finds commands, their uses and parameters in a flash. With its clear alphabetical listing, Quick Index and compact format, the GFA BASIC Quick Program Reference Guide is truly instant information at your fingertips.

BKAB 555 214 pages **£9.95**

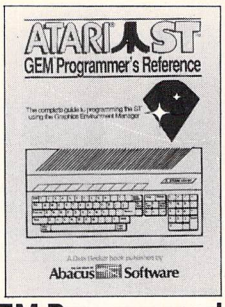


ST Internals

(Formerly Anatomy of the Atari ST)

An essential guide to the insider's information on the ST. Written for the programmer wanting a thorough, complete description of the inner workings of Atari's outstanding ST computers. Detailed descriptions of graphics and sound chips, hardware, the Centronics and RS-232 ports, GEM, important system addresses and much more. Included is a commented BIOS assembly listing. This reference work is a required addition to your ST library.
Third printing.

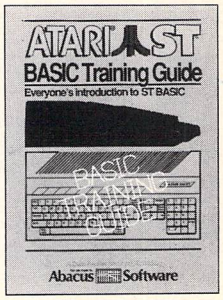
BKAB 450 446 pages **£14.95**



GEM Programmer's Reference

An indispensable guide for the serious ST programmer needing detailed information on GEM. Written especially for the Atari ST, it has an easy-to-follow format. Covers choosing the right programming language, introduction to C and assembly languages; a study of the Editor, C-compiler, Assembler & Linker; programming the Virtual Device Interface (VDI); Application Environment Services (AES); Graphics Device Operating System (GDOS), and interfacing to TOS. Many example programs, Cross-referenced VDI/AES calls.

BKAB 470 412 pages **£14.95**



ST BASIC Training Guide

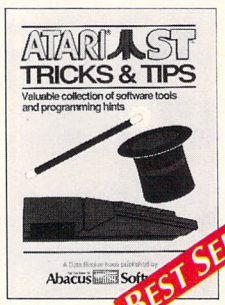
An educational, well-written introduction to Atari ST BASIC. You'll learn to program your ST quickly with the BASIC commands, problem analysis, and algorithms presented in the first few chapters. Quizzes throughout the book help you learn to think in BASIC while you get a practical grounding in the language at the same time. Topics include data-flow and program flowcharts, menus, multi-dimensional arrays, sort routines, file management, BASIC under GEM, advanced programming techniques, and much more.

BKAB 485 312 pages **£12.95**

Introduction to MIDI Programming

Your ST's built-in Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) lets you control any MIDI-equipped digital synthesizer – and the results can be phenomenal! This book covers the fundamentals of MIDI operation on the ST–how a synthesizer is actually interfaced with the ST's MIDI ports. Includes C source-code listings for comprehensive MIDI editor, driver and animated player for any of the Casio CZ series, etc. Written by the authors of XLENT Software's ST Music Box™ package.

BKAB 520 250 pages **£14.95**

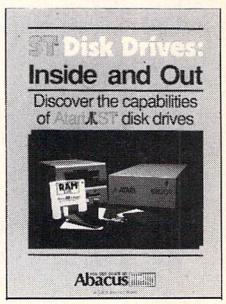


BEST SELLER

Tricks & Tips

Fantastic collection of ST program tools and techniques for the ST. Programs include a super-fast RAM disk; time-saving print spooler; colour print hardcopy; plotter output hardcopy; accessories construction - all of these programs and more are included in the price of the book! Learn how to create brilliant graphics, use the VDISYS commands, and master the powerful GEM applications. Refine your BASIC, assembler and C programs with advanced programming techniques.

BKAB 455 260 pages **£14.95**



ST Disk Drives: Inside and Out

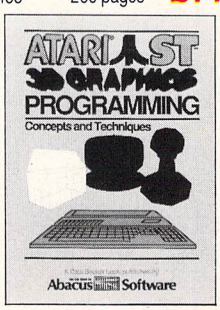
The definitive guide to the ST disk drives, including the Atari ST Hard disk. This exhaustive volume not only covers files, file structures and data management, but details both the programming and technical aspects of the floppy drives; hard drive and RAM disk. Includes program listings for several full-length utilities and programming tools that allow you to further explore the capabilities of these drives.

BKAB 445 375 pages **£16.95**

ST Machine Language

Learn 68000 machine and assembly language to make the fullest use of your ST. Takes a systematic approach in presenting number systems, logical operations and bit manipulation; use of registers, structure and details of the 68000 instruction set and the ST system routines; explains the functions of the editor, assembler, linker, etc. Contains many sample programs.

BKAB 465 280 pages **£14.95**



3-D Graphics

Teaches ultra-fast 3-D graphics techniques in 68000 machine language. Axial rotation, zooming and shading of 3-D objects. Learn the mathematics and data structures behind 3-D graphics. Topics include transformation and projection of one dimensional figures to 3-D, hidden line removal, shading, introduction to 3-D CAD. Complete with 3-D patternmaker and animator.

BKAB 550 351 pages **£16.95**

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THE PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW

Tony Leah reports on what this year's PC Show had to offer for the Atari ST owner

BY the end of the year every TV owner in the country will have been exposed to Atari products, thanks to a £2 million advertising campaign.

Visitors to Earls Court for the PC Show have already had a preview. Although set well back from the front-of-house, the three-section Atari stand was difficult to miss. Its tented style would have made Colonel Gadhaffi feel at home, while its bustling interior seemed to please both trade and end users alike.

Atari boss Bob Gleadow was much in evidence, chatting eagerly about rising ST sales and announcing, among other things, that there would be 110 Atari Games Centres in place by the New Year.

The ST more than held its own among the games consoles and transputer workstations. Most of the action seemed to centre on ST products from Atari itself and the many third party suppliers who added their special brand of atmosphere to the stand.

There was also plenty for the ST user in both the business and leisure sections of this massive, well attended show...

Serious stuff

ELECTRIC Distribution (0954 61258) was busy demonstrating its new ST spreadsheet LDW Power. The Lotus 1-2-3 work-alike package has 300 commands, 80 functions and costs £79.95. The firm also launched 1st Word Plus version 3.0 for the ST. It has a host of new features and enhancements for faster, more professional word processing.

Amateur and professional software writers were to be seen buzzing around Mandarin Software (0625 878888) for a glimpse of the revolutionary new Basic games' language STOS in action.

From the crack French programmers at Jawx International, STOS – priced £29.95 – provides ST games authors with a vast range of new facilities. A whole new generation of STOS-inspired games are now forecast.

Microdeal (0726 68020) introduced C-Breeze – "the most advanced editor available for the C programmer on the Atari ST". The gem-based program combines the qualities of a sophisticated text editor with advanced commands for editing C source code and direct access to the compiler and its utilities. Price £24.95.

Modem Marketing (0733 230240) announced availability of the Easi Talk package for the ST in a version configured for use with Dataphone products. The amended software now runs with either the Demon II or Designer modem. Price £26.

Cameron UK (01-499 7517) was showing its £299 mouse-like Handy Scanner and promising it will have an ST version of its £590 flat-bed Personal A4 Scanner out soon.

Mini Office from Database Software (0625 878888) received its ST baptism. Two £29.95 modules – spreadsheet and communications – were launched, with word processor, database and business graphics promised soon.

"Not only is it cheaper than anything else on the ST market, it is also technically more advanced – providing all the features ST users will appreciate", said Michael Meakin, head of Database Software.

Hugh Symons Distribution (0202 745744) had an Atari ST running Passport Master Tracks Pro sequencing software.

Another musical exhibitor was Eidersoft (0372 67282) with new and enhanced digital sampling software and accessories for the ST. The latest version of Pro Sound Designer costs £64.95.

Still under development, Mouse Music is a complete digital sampling system for professionals and serious amateurs. It will cost £179.

HiSoft (0525 718181) was launching FTL Modula-2 Developer, claimed to be the first complete Modula-2 development system for the ST, at £99.95. Also demonstrated was Turbo ST for accelerated program screen output, price £39.95.

Ladbroke Computing demonstrated an £89 image scanner for the ST which fits the print head of most dot matrix printers.

Documents are fed through the printer for scanning and digitising.

Entertainment software

THE battle for supremacy in the Christmas games' market could once again be fought out between Ocean and US Gold, occupants of the two biggest, brassiest and noisiest stands in the Leisure Hall at Earls Court.

"We've been number one at Christmas for the past two years with Gauntlet and Outrun and we intend to be there again with Thunder Blade – the most popular coin-op in Europe this year", said US Gold sales boss, Geoff Brown.

"This will be backed up by Summer Games, LED Storm from Capcom and many others". The many others include – take a deep breath – Realm of the Trolls, Joan of Arc, Starball, Tiger Road, Last Duel, Human Killing Machine, Black Tiger and Forgotten World.

"We've made a big swing toward the 16 bit market in order to fully exploit all the computers on the scene now", Brown added. "We've signed an agreement with Epic guaranteeing another year of top class entertainment, and we've obtained two big licences at the show which we'll be giving details of at a later date".

Across the aisle, Ocean sales manager Paul Patterson said: "Last year people laughed when we said we'd have five games in the top 10 – but we did it. "This year we're aiming to fill the top five places, and we can do it with the likes of Batman, Rambo III, Dragon Ninja, Robocop, Operation Wolf and Wec Le Mans" – all available for the ST at £19.95.

"We've just had one of the best years ever, thanks to concentrating on quality product. We've now got an in-house programming staff of 40, including graphics and music experts – Robocop had a team of 10 to itself – most of whom have been with us two years or more.

"These days we're looking for around 100,000 sales for everything we produce".

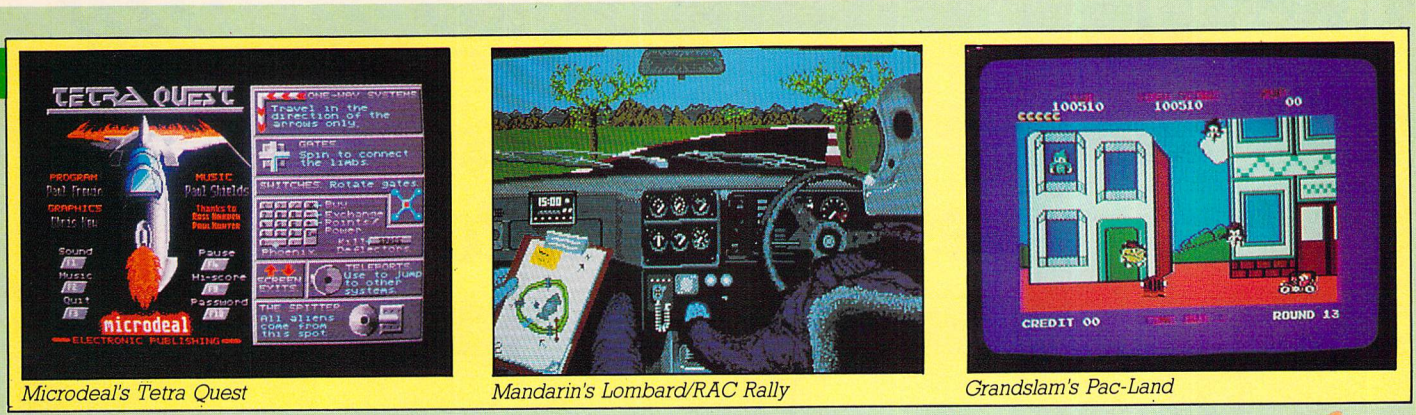
Ocean (061-832 6633) and US Gold (021-356 3388) won't have things their own way, however. They can expect plenty of competition from Telecomsoft's Rainbird and Firebird labels (01-379 6755).

Due from Rainbird this month are Fish! and Verminator, with Weird Dreams and Déjà Vu II: Lost in Los Angeles "coming soon" – priced £24.99 each.

Hot on the heels of Elite, Firebird's November release will be Blazing Barrels by Icom Simulations, price £19.99, with Savage, written and programmed by Probe Software, to follow.

Hewson (0235 832939) also previewed a strong all-action Christmas line-up for the ST in Exolon, Stormlord and Astaroth – all priced £19.99 – plus Kalashnikov, JMP and The Eliminator which are due out early in the new year.

The new Imageworks label from Mirrorsoft (01-377 4645) fulfilled its promises to stretch the ST with sophisticated games. On view were air combat simulator Sky Chase and abstract puzzle game



Microdeal's Tetra Quest | *Mandarin's Lombard/RAC Rally* | *Grandslam's Pac-Land*

Bombuzal, price £19.99, plus Fernandez Must Die and Speedball, price £24.99.

Cinemaware from Mirrorsoft to follow Defender of the Crown includes Lords of the Rising Sun and TV Sports Football.

Dungeon Master enthusiasts were pleased to hear that Chaos Strikes Back – a five level add-on – and Dungeon Master II are in the pipeline from FTL.

Other Mirrorsoft ST projects include Bismark and Theatre Europe, priced £24.99, plus Firezone, Final Frontier, Sorcerer Lord and Harpoon – all from strategy specialists PSS.

And Mirrorsoft will be releasing an ST version of Falcon AT, the award-winning fighter plane simulation from US publisher Spectrum Holobyte.

Mandarin Software (0625 878888) has made a determined entry into the ST entertainment marketplace with Lancelot and Lombard/RAC Rally, priced £19.95 each. Tri-adventure Lancelot is based on the Arthurian legend – there's a chance here to win a £5,000 replica of the Holy Grail – while Lombard/RAC Rally is bang up-to-date, faithfully recreating the gruelling cross-country journey of a 300bph Ford Sierra RS Cosworth.

Microdeal (0726 68020) showed its innovative space adventure Jug, along with the forthcoming Tetra Quest – a galactic challenge by Paul Frewin – and an arcade game based on the film Frightnight. Prices £19.95.

Christmas offering from Prism Leisure (01-804 8100) is The Kristal – not cheap at £29.95, but the three-disc science fiction odyssey programmed by Fission Chip Software is already being hailed as "the game of the decade". It has 60 screens, 75 animated sprites, 150-frame sword fights, and even a musical soundtrack narrated by Patrick Moore.

Prism also previewed Hyperforce, a 32-level space race, price £19.99, which is due for release in February.

Grandslam (01-247 6434) launched its 1-4 player board game conversion Espionage and ST versions of the Namco coin-op classics Pac-Mania and Pac-Land, all priced £19.95. Also due before Christmas is Dandy – The Computer Game.

Big Apple (01-368 5545) recreated downtown Manhattan on its stand to present its first ST product Oops!, an addictive strategy maze game priced £19.95. Other autumn releases previewed were The Fools Errand and Harrier Strike Mission II. Due early next year are Lasertrain, Thud Ridge and Greased Lightnin'.

Pride of place on the Novagen Software stand went to an entertaining demonstration of Paul Woakes' progress on his 16 bit blockbuster Damocles, sequel to Mercenary and due out for Christmas. Novagen (021-449 9516) provided further interest with an arcade machine playing last year's hit Backlash. The Intec machine has been developed by East Midlands Leisure using ST technology.

The firm's new label Quantum Design has been two years in gestation. Show visitors saw its first ST title, arcade action Transfighter, due out this month.

Because they'd worked so hard preparing pre-Christmas releases, the programmers at Domark (01-947 5622) were rewarded by a visit from Margaret Thatcher. But it was only the Spitting Image version of the Prime Minister, there to publicise Domark's latest licence.

"The game will be no-holds barred enjoyment", promised Domark boss Dominic Wheatley. "Walking Circles are programming and are working very closely with our technical people and also, very importantly, with the Spitting Image scriptwriters.

"It's a marvellous opportunity for Domark and I'm thrilled we have the opportunity to market such a title in the busiest selling season of the year. It really is completely brilliant".

Domark was also previewing a number of other entertainment products due for launch before the end of the year. They included The Computer Maniac's Diary, Return of the Jedi – last in the Star Wars trilogy – Live and Let Die and Genus II – Trivial Pursuit.

Colossus Chess X for the ST was launched by CDS Software (0302 21134). Play and graphics of this latest version of the 8 bit best-seller have been completely redesigned.

Simulations specialist MicroProse (0666 54326) was promising ST versions of Kennedy Approach and Pirates in time for Christmas.

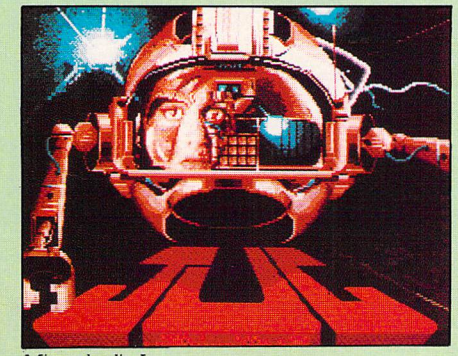
There was a first public showing by Level 9 (0344 487597) of Ingrid's Back, price £19.95, the satirical animated sequel to Gnome Ranger.

Another new 16 bit publisher – Software Horizons (01-348 4577) – launched commando mission Veteran, space fantasy Luxor and action quest Mafdet, priced £14.95.

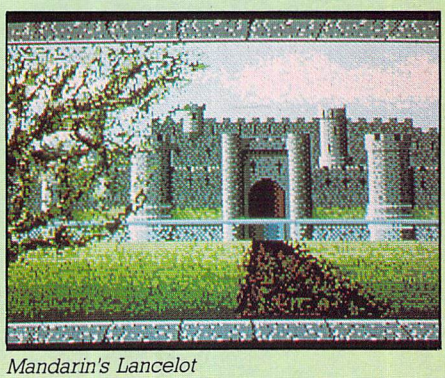
Electra Software (0865 54195) scored a hit this summer with its first release Better Dead Than Alien. Previewed at the show were its next two ST projects – Sleeping Gods Lie and Time, both demonstrating superb animated graphics.

David Martin, boss of Martech (0323 768456) was urging visitors to "grab that joystick and take to the skies" with Supercobra helicopter attack simulation Hellfire. "Added to Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix it's far and away our strongest Atari ST autumn line-up to date", said Martin.

Three new joysticks for the ST from Konix (0495 350101) made their debuts. The £14.99 ergonomic Navigator was described by Konix director Sandra Holloway as "the best joystick we've produced – it's also the best looking joystick ever". The £12.99 Predator is operated by micro switches, and the more traditional Megablaster costs £6.99.



Microdeal's Jug



Mandarin's Lancelot

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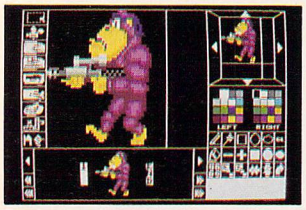
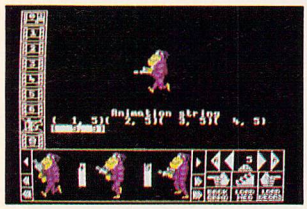
STOS

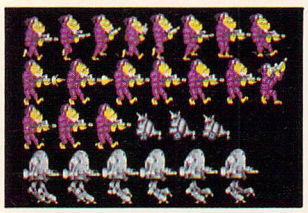
The Game Creator



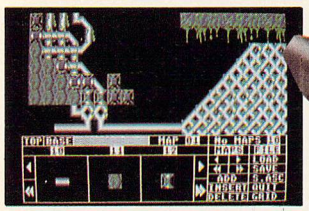
Design sprites using the powerful sprite editor



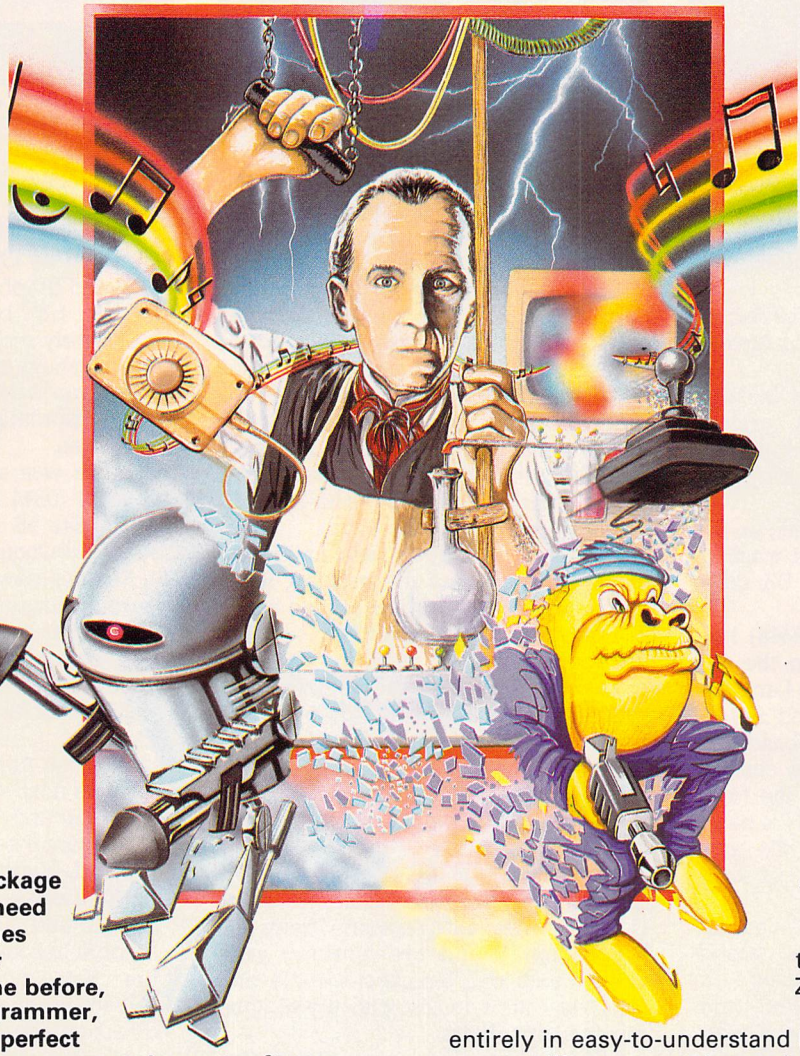
Set the sprites in motion with the animator section

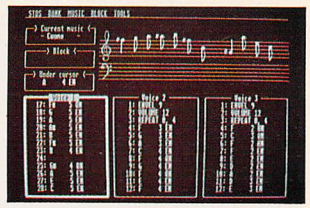


Choose from a range of example sprites included with STOS

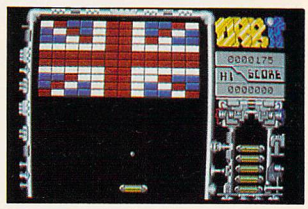


Produce a layout for each screen with the room designer



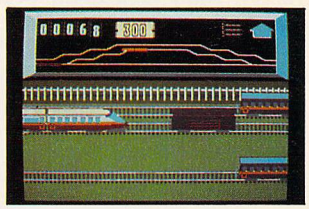


Create dynamic sound effects and compose a suitable score



Construct devious screens in the feature-packed Orbit game

Draw the flight paths of the attacking aliens in Zoltar



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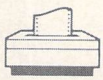

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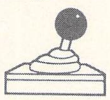

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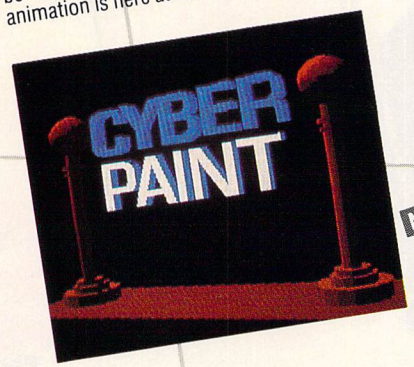
Animation isn't limited to simple cartoon-style movements, either. Cyber Paint has a range of special effects to resize, distort, move, and superimpose entire screens, so you can produce sophisticated video effects just like the ones on television — and the only studio you need is your ST.

Whether you use Cyber Paint on its own or with other Cyber products, you'll be amazed at the results. Professional animation is here at last!



CYBER CONTROL

CYBER CONTROL is an easy to use, BASIC-like programming language specially designed to work with Cyber Studio. It enhances CAD-3D 2.0 with a host of new features. There are two new cameras, free to move around or through your 3D creations. Movable, multi-layered Cyber Paint blocks for colourful cel animations. And the power to create complex curved objects, using spline generation techniques. Together they let you animate complex objects you never thought possible — like a skeleton doing backflips!

Cyber Control is an independent desk accessory, so it's always ready for use from CAD-3D 2.0, or any other GEM program.

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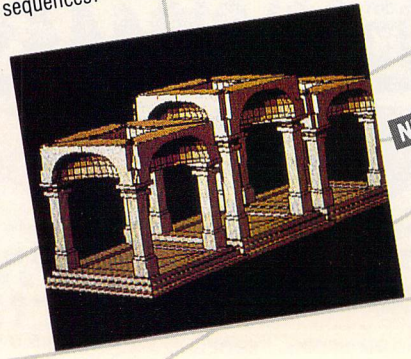
CYBER STUDIO combines STEREO CAD-3D 2.0, a three-dimensional design program, with CYBERMATE, a powerful animation control language. Together they transform your Atari ST and turn your ideas into realistic 3D moving images.

STEREO CAD-3D 2.0 allows you to create your own 3D objects and scenes — quickly and easily! Use the built-in 3D primitives to shape your ideas, then add more detail with CAD-3D 2.0's tools, combining several objects to build up more complex shapes. Add the final touch with subtle lighting effects and that's it — from starting point to starship in a matter of minutes!

CYBERMATE is an animation control language designed specifically for use with CAD-3D 2.0. Cybermate's interpreter allows you to combine standard Forth commands with specialised display control statements, to build up smooth, fast animation sequences.



3D DEVELOPER'S DISK

The 3D DEVELOPER'S DISK opens up a "pipeline" into Cyber Studio, allowing you to create your own 3D applications, without the need for specialised 3D mathematic knowledge.

3D PLOTTER & PRINTER DRIVERS

A library of drivers for use with Cyber Studio, supporting Hewlett-Packard pen plotters (and compatibles), plus Gemini, Star, Epson, Okidata, NEC, Panasonic and C Itoh matrix printers.

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Two packs of spectacular 3D fonts in a variety of styles and effects. Use them in your Cyber animations or design your own 3D greeting cards, logos, or letterheads. Plus, added bonuses: Tom Hudson's SUPER EXTRUDER TOOL, used to create these fonts, in pack 1; and multicoloured 3D clip art in pack 2.

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Want to get right in with the action on your Cyber screen? Well, now you can! The amazing STEREOTEK glasses give you a startling insight to your creations, with a true stereoscopic view. Includes cartridge interface unit, stereo desk accessory, animation and slide show, complete developer's instructions, and source code.

G.I.S.T.

G.I.S.T. is a powerful GEM-based sound laboratory for use in designing, editing, and playing sound effects. Used as part of the Cyber series, it allows you to incorporate sound effects into your Cyber Studio and Cyber Control animations.

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Start with Cyber Studio, mainstay of the Cyber Series, then add other Cyber products, each with their own exciting features, to build a powerful library of programs capable of breathing even more life into your Cyber creations. Everything from sound effects to a specialised animation control language. It's just what your ST's been waiting for!

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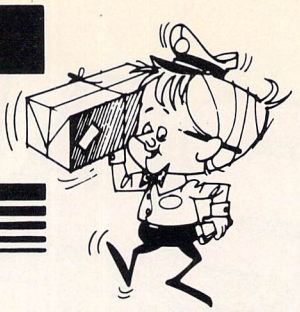

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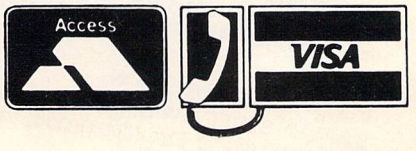

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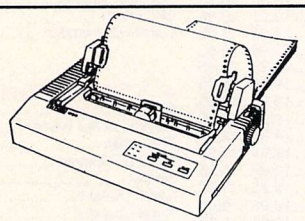

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Read it out aloud

Nic Outterside looks at a speech synthesised spelling program for primary aged children

WE are probably all aware of the small but growing array of good educational programs available for the ST. Now I find myself assessing a second spelling package for primary children in almost as many months. Is this bordering on proliferation?

B. Spell by B. Ware Software is similar in many respects to Spellbook, which was reviewed in the September 1988 issue of *Atari ST User*. It is an exclusively mouse-driven program allowing your child to spell simple words from a grid of lower case letters. This ameliorates the almost embedded problem of young children being alienated from micros because of their upper case keyboards.

B. Spell is published with a concise six page manual in simple packaging. This all helps to keep the price at the bargain end of the software market. This is important as such packages, by their very nature, are transient and may well have served their purpose after only a couple of weeks of use with any particular child. The manual is especially useful as it includes a clear flow diagram/program tree to make using the program simplicity itself.

Boot up the disc and you will be greeted with a cheerful "Hello" and the choice of operating the program at a level suitable for five and six-year-olds or for seven and eight year olds. Making either choice clears the screen, and a colourful alphabet grid appears above which is a correction box, a bold question mark and a chequered flag.

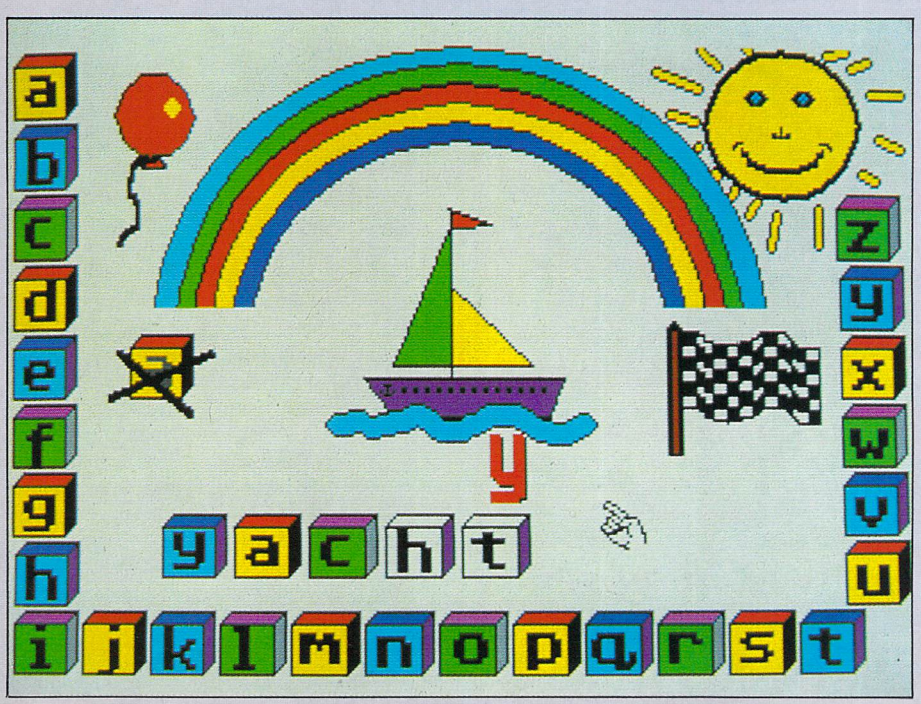
At the younger age level you select an initial letter with the pointer and click on the left mouse button. A picture which begins with the selected letter is displayed with its correct spelling. Your child can then copy the spelling by clicking against the correct letters in the alphabet grid. As each letter is selected its phonically correct short sound is replicated through the speech synthesiser, thus coupling spelling with phonic sounding.

Alternatively you can click against the large question mark and a word is chosen randomly by the program. Such a facility overcomes the problem of a child using the program in a rote manner and nullifying much of its educational purpose.

Relaxed style

Used at the older age level the program works in a similar way, but each picture is displayed without its spelling. You must clearly then attempt to spell the word correctly without the help given to the younger child. Correct spellings at either level are rewarded by a complimentary "well done" and a short nursery rhyme tune. Incorrect attempts are marked by the word "wrong", and you are shown the correct spelling and allowed another go at spelling the word correctly.

No effort is made at scoring the number of correct spellings made by your child, so the software can be used in a relaxed manner with less able children. The graphics are bold and simplistic and quite adequate for this type of application.



Phonic approach

However, I do have a few criticisms concerning some of the program content. By using speech sythesis the programmers are obviously aiming at a phonic approach to spelling. This is all very good with words like cup, dog, egg, nut and sun, but the inclusion of words such as yacht and watch into such a scheme seems educationally risky. I would have preferred a consistent list of simple three and four letter words with perhaps yarn and well substituted for the aforementioned interlopers.

A bank of only 26 words seems insufficient for a spelling package, as repetition will leave your child with a well spelt but limited vocabulary. However, B.Ware tells me that it is now marketing a compatible construction kit to enable you to enter words and pictures of your own choice. The potential use of B. Spell then seems limitless.

The only other annoyance I found was the similarity of pronounciation in the program of the letters m and n. They are almost indistinguishable, which could lead to a few problems in usage.

B. Spell can be freely backed-up, which enhances its use within the educational field. This is especially important when you consider that if used within a classroom as many as 10 STs may be in use at the same time. This clearly puts it in the category of super-bargain.

That being said, B. Spell will probably find its true use in the home, where it can be used to support school-based learning. Despite my reservations, this is a useful little addition – though not quite in the same league as Spellbook – to the ST's educational library, and one not beyond the reach of many pockets.

FACT FILE

Product: B. Spell
Price: £14.95
Supplier: B. Ware, 19 Southfield Road, Hinkley, Leicestershire LE10 1UA.
Tel: 0455 613377

POINTS FOR:
Good use of a software speech sythesiser.
Very easy to use.

AGAINST:
Inconsistent word content and a very small word bank.

ATARI STAR USER GAME

ELITE

Product: Elite
Price: £24.95
Supplier: Firebird, 74 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PS.
Tel: 01-631 5373

IT'S here at last on the ST – the most requested 8 bit game conversion of all. I am of course, referring to Elite, and it has taken almost three years for it to be released. Can a four-year-old game that has its origins on a 32k 8-bit BBC Micro measure up to today's 16-bit mega-games on the ST? The answer to that must be a resounding Yes.

Superficially, Elite bears some resemblance to Starglider II – Star Game in last month's *Atari ST User* – and comparisons will inevitably have to be made. The game is set in the distant future, way out in deep space, with your space ship Cobra docked at a space station above the planet Lave. Your legal status is clean, your rating harmless, you have fuel for seven light years and 100 credits in your pocket.

Selecting Buy from a menu at the bottom of the screen using the mouse brings up a screen displaying the items for sale on Lave's open market. There is food, liquor, computers, machinery, gold, guns, slaves, drugs and so on. By each item is the quantity for sale and the price per tonne, kilogramme or gramme. Here you can fill your cargo hold using your 100 credits.

Having spent up, selecting Local from the menu brings up a local star chart and you can select a planet within travelling distance of Lave. Selecting Planet gives you a brief report on its occupants, economy, government, technology level and population.

Selecting Launch then ejects you into space and here the game becomes a 3D flight simulator. With the growing planet Lave in front and the diminishing space station behind – you can select views in front, behind, left and right – you hyperspace to your chosen planet.

You end up quite some distance from your destination and must fly towards it, but fortunately you can jump most of the way. Once at the planet you must locate the space station using the on-screen scanner and fly towards it.

Once there, locate the entrance and fly into the slowly rotating station, matching its rotation by spinning your ship round in perfect time. This is a tricky manoeuvre which takes time to master, but fortunately an automatic docking computer is available if you can afford it.

Once docked you can examine the planet's market prices – which will be different to Lave – and hopefully make a a profit on the items you bought at your last stop. Here the trading aspect comes in, as you must travel the galaxy visiting planets and trading between them.

What is cheap on an agricultural planet – for instance, food – will be expensive on an industrial world so there's a profit to be made buying items where the price is low and selling them where the price is high.

Unfortunately, the space lanes are also frequented by pirates and aliens, and some of the planets themselves are downright unfriendly, and don't take too kindly to visitors. Here the combat element takes a bow, as you must battle in space with all manner of alien ships hell-bent on highjacking your cargo.

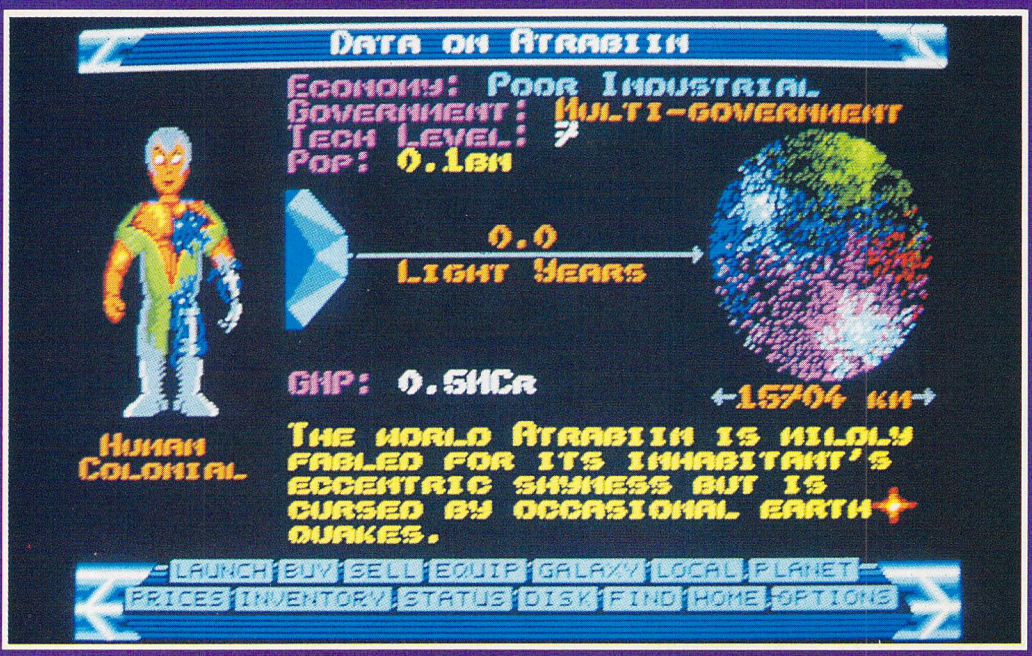
The action takes place in 3D in a window which occupies the major part of the screen. Immediately below it is a scanner – like a 3D radar – in the middle, missile banks, power meters and so on. Your controls are rotate left and right, nose up and down, accelerate and brake. You initially have a pulse laser and three homing missiles on board.

These weapons aren't too good, so your priorities early in the game will be to make enough money to buy better lasers, an ECM for detonating homing missiles, an energy unit for replenishing shields and so on. There's quite an armoury available.

Apart from making lots of money and improving your ship's specifications, you can traffic in drugs and shoot up the local police patrolling around the space stations. This will boost your legal status up to Fugitive. Every battle you win in space will add to your rating, which starts off as harmless, and ranges through average, dangerous and finally Elite – the ultimate goal.

You need to blast an enormous number of ships to reach this last level, and it will take an expert at least 50 hours or more, and a novice may take two or three times longer. In fact many will never make it. Fortunately, you can save your position whenever you are docked at a space station, and this is a good insurance policy in case you get highjacked by Thargoids in hyperspace or ambushed by pirates.

Six months ago the graphics would



Consulting the data banks on a planet

Another Thargoid bites the dust

have been rated as the best around. Now however, they are merely good, and aren't quite up to the standard of say, Starglider 2. The sound is only average, with a musical introduction and zaps and explosions during the game.

Where this game scores most points is on playability and addictiveness.

It's hard to get into, but once you've mastered the controls of your Cobra it becomes like a drug and it's difficult to stop playing.

If you've played one of the other incarnations of Elite on an 8 bit micro you'll love this one. And if you haven't, buy this and just see what you've been missing – it's one of the classic games that will run and run.

Roland Waddilove

Sound	7
Graphics	9
Playability	10
Value for money	9
Overall	9

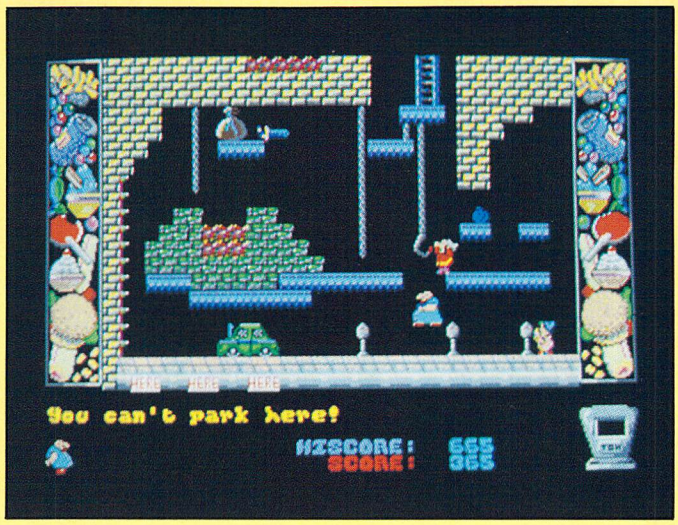
SECOND Sight

What a brilliant game. I loved the 3D wireframe version on the old BBC Micro, but this 3D solid version is stunning. The controls are the same and I was immediately at home, trading, blasting, baiting the police and generally living the life of a pirate among the star systems. This classic game must be on everyone's Christmas shopping list. Don't miss it.

Andy Richards

A fat chance

Program: Chubby Gristle
Price: £19.99
Supplier: Grand Slam Entertainments, 12-18 Paul Street, London EC2A 4JS.
Tel: 01-247 6434



CHUBBY Gristle is an extremely large and overweight car park attendant. He despises his job but does manage to find some solace in two things: Shouting – "You can't park there!" – and eating.

Your task is to aid Chubby as he gorges his way through 20 screens of gluttony. Chubby must put on as much weight as possible to avoid a fate worse than death – the health farm.

Once the grotesque little man has finished his day's work he returns home to Mrs Gristle for a celebratory steak and kidney pie and to produce lots of little Grislets – Grand Slam's words not mine.

In his time Chubby has made all sorts of gruesome enemies and these nasties are determined to stop him from achieving his goal. Contact with any of these removes one of his three lives.

This is a very simple platform game with all the normal jumps, leaps, objects to collect – dustbins, barrels and the like – and adversaries to avoid. Chubby works for Sainsbellys: The title screen sums up the game and is accompanied by some dreadful music.

Chubby Gristle looks like an old Spectrum game, and bears more than a passing resemblance to Jet Set Willy. The graphics are colourful but extremely small and badly defined. There is a certain amount of humour, but it didn't raise much of a smile in my household.

Indeed the gameplay is exceptionally over-difficult making it frustrating and annoying rather than enjoyable and amusing. Chubby Gristle tastes of an 8 bit title which has been rehashed for the ST. And at the price it is an expensive way to discover platform games. To my mind it falls flat on its face.

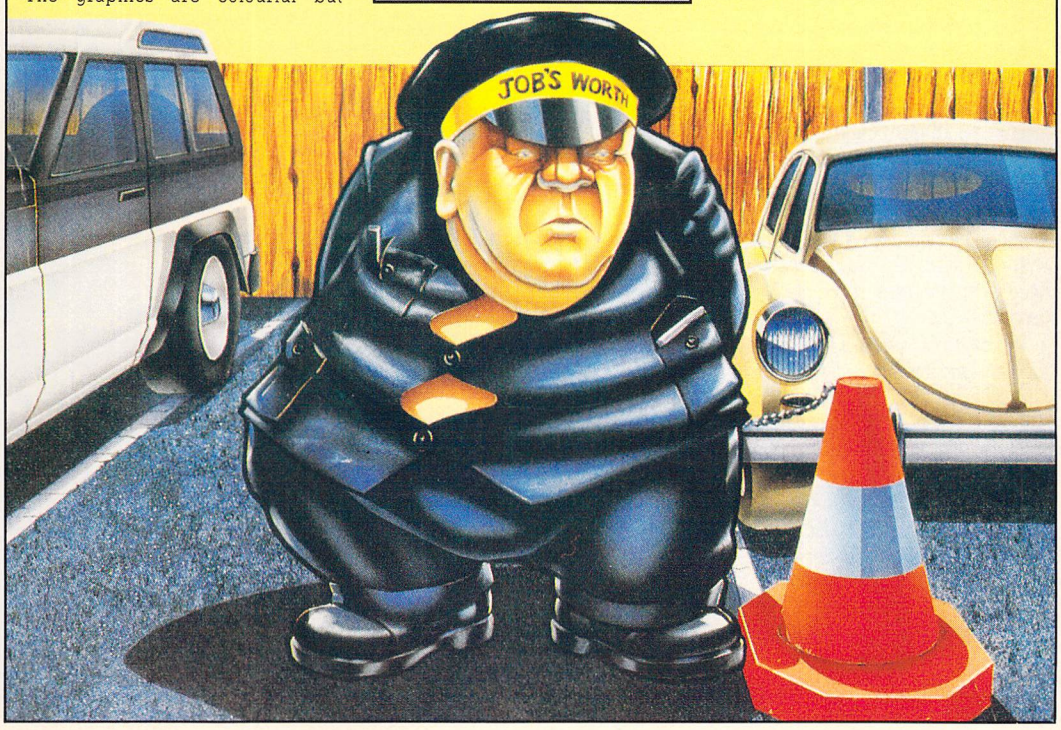
Robert Swan

Sound	3
Graphics	6
Playability	6
Value for money	4
Overall	5

SECOND Sight

This game reminds me of the good old days of the ZX Spectrum and ladders and levels. If you long for the simplicity of this Jet Set Willy/ Manic Miner type of arcade game then you'll love this 16 bit version. However, it hardly stretches the ST to its limit, and technically is quite simple.

Andy Richards



Chilly quest

Program: Beyond the Ice Palace
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Elite Systems, Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6RX
Tel: 0543 414188

USUAL stuff here. Evil torching the forest, Good having a hard time, ancient and wise spirits bless a sacred arrow and shoot it into the air. Whoever picks it up has to descend into the bowels of somewhere Beyond the Ice Palace, and sort out the mess.

Anyway, you start off with a choice of three weapons, a dagger, ball and chain and a sword, before leaping down a hole to begin the adventure.

Superficially Ice Palace resembles Barbarian from Psygnosis, in that the action takes place underground, with some teasing traps, well designed scenery and hordes of monsters. However, Ice Palace scores on account of having excellent true horizontal and vertical scrolling. The monsters tend to come thicker and faster, while the traps are thinner on the ground.

The object is simply to wander along searching for the exit to the next level. Acknowledging that Ice Palace is a tough game you have been provided with nine lives, and believe me you'll need most of them to reach the end of level one.

The different weapons are useful in different circumstances, but at certain points there is no choice but to collect a dagger and end up fighting the worst thing the level has to offer with the most feeble of weapons.

To help you out in those tricky situations are Spirits of the Forest who will sacrifice themselves to weaken the opposition. Usually such help is too late, so it is essential to memorise where the bad news is posted and summon a spirit as soon as you get there.

At the end of the first level, a series of vertically moving platforms is where all those lives start to disappear. Not only are you chased on to the platforms by a spirit, but airborne enemies await, and the roof of the platform is ready to spike you. Even if you overcome this difficulty then a centipede-like creature is ready to pounce, and that's only the first level, it gets harder from then on.

A forgettable jingle warbles away in the background, while routine effects accompany the main action, so it's fair to say that full use of your ST isn't being made in this department.

Still, Ice Palace is entertaining joystick fodder, and a quest worth undertaking.

Mark Luckham

Sound	*6*
Graphics	*8*
Playability	*7*
Value for money	*7*
Overall	*7*

SECOND Sight

The inherent ideas in this game may be rather hackneyed, but the development and on-screen action are excellent. There is a certain addictiveness to this adventure which had me hooked to my ST for hours on end.

There are plenty of puzzles to solve, and nasties to slaughter so there's no time to stop and catch your breath. I recommend it.

Nic Outterside

No surrender

Program: Street Fighter
Price: £19.95
Supplier: US Gold, 2/3 Holford Way, Birmingham B6 7AX
Tel: 021 356 3388

STREET Fighter looks as if it should be a great game, with well drawn characters and realistic moves. Unfortunately the real guts of Street Fighter, the combat itself, is too repetitive, monotonous and eventually rather boring.

You have the choice of visiting any of four countries: Japan, China, USA or England. If you can battle your way through all four you get to go to Thailand as well. In each country the local muggers are out to get you.

In England a head-butting mohican tries his best to rearrange your hair-do. Knocking him out in a best-of-three contest brings you into conflict with an iron bar wielding thug. Another win here gives you the chance to gain bonus points by karate chopping a stack of concrete blocks, gauging the force of your blow by a rapidly fluctuating sliding scale.

Then it's on to more bashing and dodging, as you draw on your repertoire of 16 joystick-controlled moves to defeat some of the more anti-social elements of the five countries.

There is a sort of two player option which allows the two players to fight it out for the right to go on to confront the world's thugs. Why there is no actual two-player combat option I don't know as it would have been a worthwhile extra.

As far as computer games go, I am not that hot on this type of martial arts fight game. However, I surprised myself by defeating six fighters on the trot at my first attempt. I was even more surprised when, on only my second go at the game, I beat 11 of my 12 opponents, only just losing out against the last one, in the deciding third round.

That says more about the ease of the game than my skill as a street fighter. It was just too easy, even with the somewhat unresponsive controls. Pushing the fire button for a kick or a punch did not have an immediate reaction on the screen there was a noticeable and annoying delay.

After the first couple of fights the novelty wore off and I really couldn't imagine going back very often. If I spend £20 on a game I want something that is going to hold its attraction for some time. Unfortunately I found Street Fighter wearing a bit thin after half an hour.

Hardened fight freaks may get more out of this than I did, especially if playing against friends where a competitive spirit may lift the game a little more out of the ordinary. But, for all its visual appeal, I really can't recommend it.

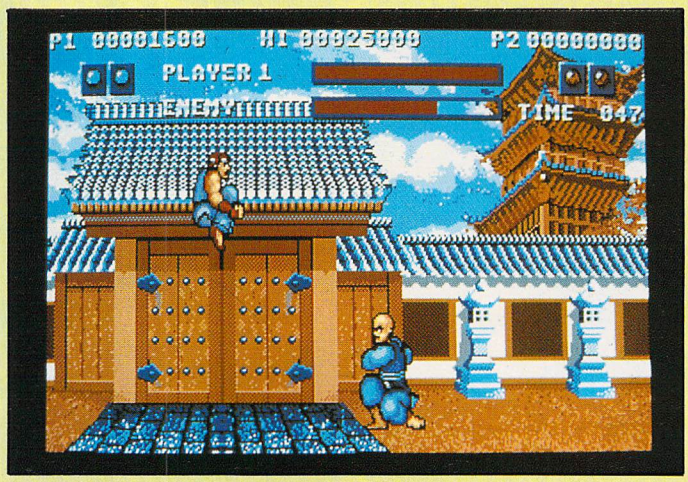
Niels Reynolds

Sound	*5*
Graphics	*7*
Playability	*6*
Value for money	*6*
Overall	*6*

SECOND Sight

This is definitely my type of game. I long ago packed in practising real karate and now often while away the time letting sprites take the punishment for me. This is one of the best simulations I have seen, though a bit on the easy side. Recommended.

Nic Outterside



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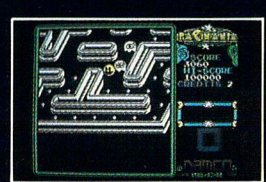
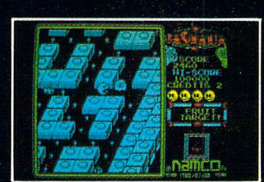
Screenshots taken from ATARI ST.





Screenshots taken from SPECTRUM

Triangular yawn

Program: Bermuda Project
Price: £24.99
Supplier: Mirrorsoft, Maxwell House, 74 Worship Street, London. EC2A 2EN
Tel: 01-377 4644

ACCORDING to Arthur C. Clarke, the disappearances of ships and planes in the Bermuda triangle are mysteries of a Zeroeth kind. They can usually be explained as perfectly commonplace tragedies. Indeed, it is a tribute to the Florida coastguards that there are so few disappearances in this busy shipping area.

Yet this has not stopped multitudinous science-fiction books, films and now computer games being written on the extra-dimensional factor which supposedly operates within the Bermuda triangle.

Bermuda Project purports to be an adventure but is essentially nothing more than an excuse for a three dimensional arcade-type game. Success is based on the speed of mouse manoeuvre than on any cerebral gymnastics.

This package is presented on two single-sided discs. The first features an impressive loading screen depicting an airliner which mysteriously bursts into flames and crashes on a desert island within the Bermuda triangle. The loading disc also produces a stunning piece of filmatic musical score which helps set the atmosphere.

You must now insert disc two which carries the main program and data files. Quite soon your screen shows a three dimensional image of part of the desert island.

You play the role of the surviving hero, who is displayed as a fairly crude sprite, standing next to a burning crashed airliner. Movement and all commands are entered by mouse. The obvious initial move is to examine the cockpit, where you discover a dead pilot and an acute smell of aviation fuel.

You must put out the flames if you are to retrieve anything useful from the crashed aircraft. After much searching, by rolling the mouse across the desktop I discovered a bucket and shovel. I attempted to fill the bucket with sand which I could in turn use as a fire extinguisher.

It was only after a series of failures I discovered that the required action was to quickly fill the bucket with water from the river before returning to the plane. Surely the author knows that water and petrol fires don't mix?

In any event this action is almost impossible as you must activate a window using the left and right mouse buttons in order to EXAMINE, GET, DROP, USE, ATTACH or DETACH anything in the game.

This slows down your movements and by the time you return to the plane you will find that the heat from the flames has sealed all entrances to the cabin or fuselage. Such dependence upon speed of reactions puts Bermuda Project firmly into the category of arcade game.

Options such as Save, Load, Status and New are also accessed by awkward mouse button pressing and holding via the text window. Further exploration leads you to discover a carefully guarded village, two river inlets and a few dead bodies as well as an abandoned jeep full of goodies.

Entry to the village is a major obstacle, but once achieved your true problems really begin. Your goal is to escape from this wretched place by sea or air, but first you must do some gold prospecting, listen carefully to a tape message, practise voodoo and explore a pyramid or two, among many other tasks.

There appears to be little logical sequence to the game, and it is only after much experimentation that progress can be made. There are a number of neat chaining puzzles, but again success is determined by mouse dexterity and not by logical thought processes.

And constant saving to disc is essential after any tricky operation if you are to stand any chance of upward mobility within this game.

The scrolling island landscape is quite cleverly displayed, but simplistic, and sprite movement is clean and smooth. The screen changes colour as you move from temperate landscape through jungle to dense tropical forest. Natural features such as rocks and trees are shown as fairly unimpressive icons. I have seen much more realistic graphic representation on the ST, and far better implementation of the

Apocalypse now!

Program: Fire and Forget
Price: £24.95
Supplier: Titus/Entertainment International, Unit 4 Stannets, Laidon North Trade Centre, Basildon, Essex SS15 6DG.
Tel: 01-385 7622

GLANCING down at the global display you recognise the unmistakable signs of impending doom. The increasing number of large scale conflicts is threatening to panic the superpowers into a nuclear encounter from which none of us will survive. Sat behind the wheel of the most awesome war machine the world has ever known, you are the last hope of mankind. Now where have I heard this all before?

Fire and forget is like Out Run with Rambo in the driving seat. There are three levels of play and six battles to quell per level. The battles may be attempted in any order by selecting a location from a full-screen global map. The backdrops are similar – a change of colour scheme is used to indicate desert, snow, or lush vegetation.

You have a limited amount of fuel with which to make your run between two checkpoints – this is used at a constant rate, irrespective of the speed at which you are travelling, so drive as quickly as possible. Fuel wasted through inopportune encounters with land mines, boulders and tank traps can be replaced by driving over blue or green cones. Thunder Master, your car, is armed with a limitless supply of frighteningly powerful tetranuclear propulsion missiles. The age-old technique of blasting everything that moves and zapping everything that doesn't works well with Fire and Forget. Fortunately, your fuel reserves are missile-proof.

In addition to immobile hazards the enemy also utilises the more common vehicles of war. On numerous occasions I went blasting round a corner and came face to face with an entire tank battalion. Even worse than the tanks are the helicopter gunships – the Thunder Master is defenceless against airborne attack.

Just as the enemy is about to take advantage of your aerial vulnerability you call up Thunder Cloud. With the help of a second player, and preferably a second joystick, you can pilot a small but vicious fighter craft that hovers just above Thunder Master. Player two controls altitude and left and right movements, but the Thunder Cloud's velocity is tied to that of the ground vehicle.

The game's graphics are big, colourful, and animated at break neck speed. Similarly the sound effects are of a very high quality – with sampled explosions and missile effects throughout. One final feature specially for the poseurs is the saveable high score table.

Playing Fire and Forget is a superb

SECOND Sight

Superb loading screen with a beautiful musical score, but that is as far as I would go to recommend this game. The action is awkward and graphics are not particularly good. It may suit a few hacks, but there are much better examples on the same theme available elsewhere.

Jayne West

arcade-adventure idea.

There are some good ideas present within Bermuda Project, but it suffers from lack of real development and can become quite boring. I'm afraid that frustration set in as I played and my mind wandered to other more pleasurable games awaiting review.

Surely some kind of keyboard usage is imperative in a game like this, if only to add flexibilty and curb the boredom factor.

I would recommend it only to the die-hard arcade-adventure fanatics, and even they may be disappointed.

Nic Outterside

Sound	8
Graphics	5
Playability	6
Value for money	4
Overall	5

SECOND Sight

Somewhere lurking within all of us is that killer instinct to blast everything that moves. Fire and Forget has that ability to tap the dark side of our psyche and ensure we feel guilty to no one. Put the children to bed, give your spouse a box of chocolates, close the study door, and fire and forget like there's no tomorrow.

Nic Outterside

way of escaping the pressures of school or work – just sit down, disengage your brain, and let instinct take over. If you have to think then you're dead, just hone the reflexes and go for it!

Jon Revis

Sound	8
Graphics	8
Playability	9
Value for money	7
Overall	8

Chocks away!

Program: Spitfire 40
Price: £24.99
Supplier: Mirrorsoft, Athene House, 66 Shoe Lane, London EC4P 7AB.
Tel: 01-377 4645

THIS latest release from Mirrorsoft provides an opportunity to fly one of the most famous aircraft of all time, the Spitfire. You are offered three flying modes: Demonstration, simulation and game. The first speaks for itself; it gives you a quick idea of the features and graphical qualities of the game before you try it out.

Simulation mode provides two options – practice or combat. In the former you are placed in the cockpit at the take-off point on the runway and allowed to try your hand at taking off, flying and landing.

Combat is similar to practice except you are assigned a mission to complete. The instructions tell you the number, distance, height and bearing of the enemy aircraft. Game mode provides a fighter or bomber option. Whichever you select, you'll immediately find yourself flying at 10,000 feet with enemy craft close by.

The enemy will be flying a Messerschmitt Bf109E if the fighter option is selected or a Junkers JU 87 (Stuka) or a Heinkel HE 111 if bomber was chosen.

The action is viewed from the cockpit of your Spitfire. The display is two screens high and you can scroll it up and down or toggle between the two by pressing the spacebar.

The top half of the two-screen display is the view through the window while the lower half shows the instrument panel. You can play using the joystick and keyboard or keyboard only.

You can call up a map of SE England which will show the current position of you and the enemy. The map can be zoomed in and out, and scrolled when enlarged. The level of ground detail can be changed, from no objects seen ranging through some to all objects visible.

The graphics showing the interior of the Spitfire are rather good and there are some deft touches, like the pilot's log at the opening and ending of each mission. What lets the game down is feeble sound, boring scenery, the usual lack of detail and the rather slow and jerky movement of the display. Response to keyboard control is not all that hot, either.

This is a shame, because at first sight this looked a pretty good simulation. If the whole thing could have been zipped up a little, Spitfire 40 would have been a joy to play.

Bob Chappell

SECOND Sight

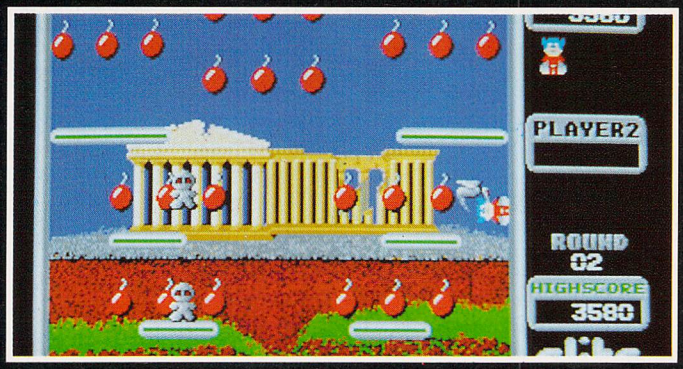
Although it is competently programmed, as a flight simulator it is overshadowed by Flight Simulator II, and as a combat game, Carrier Command leaves it standing. However, enthusiasts will like it, as the cockpit graphics are excellent and the game does keep up the interest.

Andy Richards

Sound	3
Graphics	7
Playability	6
Value for money	6
Overall	6

Bombs away

Program: Bombjack
Price: £19.99
Supplier: Elite, Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 6RX
Tel: 0543 414188



COIN-OP conversions for the ST are coming thick and fast: Elite's timing for Bombjack may be a bit out, because the arcade original first appeared a couple of years ago. Indeed, the game has already appeared on all the 8 bit machines, and topped the charts on its original release. This makes you wonder how many people will feel like paying top prices for a game which would now look good in the budget market, but which doesn't perhaps justify a £20 price tag.

It's a simple, cute little game which compares favourably with recent titles such as Firebird's Bubble Bobble, but which doesn't offer the graphic sophistication of, say, Out Run or Roadblasters. If you like this sort of Pac Man derivative, you'll overlook the limitations.

The minimal plot finds you, the hero Jack, leaping around colourful screens attempting to defuse stacks of bombs. The nicely-drawn backgrounds show landmarks such as the Sphinx, the Parthenon and a Germanic castle, while the bombs lie on platforms scattered in different patterns around each screen. The early screens can be completed in a few seconds – the later ones demand precise timing, concentration and careful planning of your route.

Your spring-heeled boots allow you to make a cross between a leap and a flight into the air, collecting the bombs as you fly. Once a bomb's fuse starts to burn you get a 200 point bonus for catching it before it goes off – fuses burn faster and faster as the game progresses. Spinning tokens fall from the top of the screen, and catching them gives you a points bonus, or freezes your enemies, allowing you to catch them Pac Man-style for extra points.

Your enemies include flapping reptile-birds, spinning saucers, spacemen, and objects that look like something you'd regret finding at the bottom of a Chinese meal. Each type behaves in a different way, some following you intelligently, others floating around.

Each time you collide with an enemy you lose one of your three lives and start again, falling from the centre of the screen. Fortunately, the bombs you've cleared don't reappear. Your enemies, though, move faster and become more numerous.

Though the sound effects are nothing to write home about – they're not sampled, and consist simply of bleeps and bangs – there's a nice running theme tune which can be switched off if you run out of patience.

There's also a two-player mode and a decent loading screen; apart from that there's little to say about Bombjack that couldn't be said about any platforms and ladders game. Bombjack is good fun but won't make you leap with excitement.

Chris Jenkins

SECOND Sight

This strikes me as a good coin-op conversion of the platform and ladders type game. Plenty of variety and the graphics are quite good, but the sound could have been more highly developed.

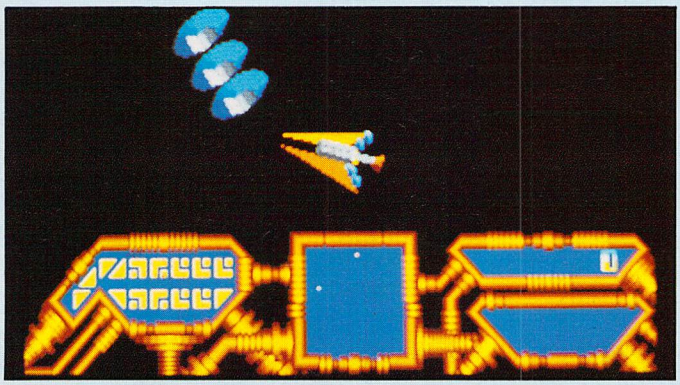
Lots of fun if you like this kind of thing. Try it and see, though I could think of better ways of spending £20.

Nic Outterside

Sound	5
Graphics	5
Playability	6
Value for money	4
Overall	5

Lost in space

Program: Whirligig
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Firebird, 64-76 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PS.
Tel: 01-631 5373



FINDING the proverbial needle in a haystack is a piece of cake in comparison to what lies in store for the players of Whirligig. Somewhere in over four billion zones (Eignspaces) there are five perfect solids. Locate these and you've won the game. Firebird has calculated that it would take more than 8171 years of continuous play if you spent just one minute in each zone.

Eignspaces are isolated pockets of time and space, which may contain fuel and weapon depots, and one or more stargates. The stargates are your exits to further eignspace zones. Whatever else they contain, they will always harbour a plentiful supply of alien vessels.

Most commands in Whirligig are issued using the mouse. If you remember the trouble you had when you first played Starglider then you'll have some idea of what's in store with Whirligig.

Sideways motions of the mouse initiate clockwise and anticlockwise rotations of your ship. Push the mouse forwards to accelerate, backwards to brake. Simple isn't it? I spent the first 10 minutes spiralling through the galaxy.

All objects are solid in appearance and spin gracefully through three dimensions with the greatest of ease. The large scale of the spacecraft means that your view is restricted to the immediate vicinity of your ship. When an alien vessel flies on-screen you have only a fraction of a second in which to loose a missile, especially if the vessel is on a collision course for your ship.

Fortunately, all your missiles are of the homing variety – unfortunately, they're not very sophisticated. A missile will lock on to the first available target, and if there is no other ship on the screen then you can kiss your asteroids goodbye. In cases of extreme panic you can eject chaff to confuse incoming missiles, or even to destroy enemy ships.

Providing you can successfully guide your ship into one of the rotating stargates you will find yourself suspended in gatespace. While in this limbo you can study a chart of the eignspace zone you are about to enter – this details the positions of all stargates and depots in the zone. Each stargate is labelled with the number of the eignspace zone to which it leads, and the display also notes what facilities are available in that zone.

Whirligig has no save game option, but its 12 lives provide sufficient duration to prevent premature termination being too much of a problem.

If you want an arcade game with a touch of originality, cracking sound and graphics, and skill requirement of 10 out of 10, then look no further – Whirligig has got them all.

James Riddell

SECOND Sight

I enjoyed this. If you are looking for a space-age alien blaster with an infinite variety of screens and action then look no further. It may take some time to get used to controlling your craft, but the effort will be well rewarded by hours of enjoyment, and you'll keep coming back for more.

Nic Outterside

Sound	8
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Value for money	7
Overall	8

VERMINATOR

Atari ST screen shots.

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Once you've made a bob or two, visit the local hardware store and buy the latest in sophisticated equipment, specially designed to combat the meanest of meanies. If you run a bit short, a quick visit to the bank might do the trick. You can even pop into the local casino for a flutter.

Oh, there's one other thing. If you're really hard up for gear, you could always pay the mob a visit but remember, if you don't pay 'em back pronto, they'll send round the boys.

Verminator with over 250 colourful locations, superb sound effects and graphics. Quite simply the most fun you'll ever have in a tree.

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Atari ST £24.99

The ultimate shoot-'em-up

Program: Better Dead Than Alien
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Electra, 16b Worcester Place, Oxford OX1 2JW.
Tel: 0865 54195

SOMETIME during the summer of 1977 I was lured away from my college's pinball machine to a weird and wonderful arcade contraption on which my pals were playing a strange game called Space Invaders. After three days of almost continuous play I was addicted, and thereafter was rarely separated from my new hobby.

I have since watched the development of Space Invaders on various arcade coin-ops and home micros and been both amazed and disappointed at some of the end results.

However, here at last is Better Dead Than Alien, the ultimate Space Invaders game to blast out all other pretenders to that crown. The game comes in unpretentious packaging resembling somewhat a cross between a DC comic and the delight of my childhood, The Eagle. The documentation is brief but adequate enough to get you started in this epic shoot-'em-up.

Boot the disc and the loading screen displays a film advert showing Brad Zoom starring in Better Dead Than Alien coupled with Brain Eaters from the Purple Planet. You are then presented with a menu from which you can choose a one or two player game and an input option to alter keyboard, mouse or joystick settings. All such decisions are simplistic and almost idiot-proof.

Click on Start the Slaughter, the practice level emerges on screen and you can begin your quest to save civilisation as you know it. Zap those aliens like there is no tomorrow. Blast away two formations of invaders and you will face either a meteor storm or a giant hideous alien who seems bent on your destruction.

If you succeed at this level you will automatically proceed to the next and meet more of the same type of thing, moving faster and firing larger and more deadly photons.

The varied graphics are smooth, colourful and more than adequate for this type of game. Meanwhile the sound effects are unpreposing and quite clever – just listen to that digitised cackle as you fail against yet another fleet of aggressors.

There are 22 levels in all, ranging from A Doddle to That's It, which I found far too difficult to play. They can be accessed either by progression through the ranks or directly by secret passwords given as you complete each stage. You will be asked to shoot against giant prawns from another world, alien squibs and extra-terrestrial potatoes among

Program: Platoon
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Ocean, 6 Central Street, Manchester M2 5NS.
Tel: 061-832 6633

A GAME of the film, Platoon draws obvious comparison to Predator, with a similar theme. Included as a freebie with Platoon is a short audio tape by Smokey Robinson, The Tracks of my Tears. The sound quality was awful – had it been recorded underwater? Anyway, on with the game.

Lost deep in the bowels of the Vietnamese jungle, your platoon is now only five strong. You have a number of missions to fulfil in order to reach the end of the game safely. These objectives divide play into six separate sections.

Sections one and two deal with the jungle and village, while section three has you floundering in a flooded underground tunnel system. Leaving the tunnels you gain access to the bunker in level four, only to have to battle through more jungle again in section five on the way to the final section, a supposedly safe area.

The status of the platoon can be checked at any time. Each man has a limited amount of ammunition, hand grenades and fitness. Fitness is determined by the number of hits sustained in combat – four hits and the man is dead. A bullet counts as one hit, but falling over a booby trapped trip wire will kill you outright.

The platoon can be wiped out even before you are massacred by the Viet Cong's fire power if you let your morale level dwindle. This goes down each time you sustain a hit or you shoot an unarmed Vietnamese villager, but is increased when you collect food and medical supplies.

Although you have potentially 20 lives, you'll need lightning reflexes to survive for very long. Attackers usually

many other nasties from above.

There are some excellent and quite novel developments in this mega-game. The invader is at its weakest when its eyes glow putrid green. If you blast a greeny it will release a power capsule which can be picked up by your ship. This can recharge your power supply – beware that without energy you are helpless – or boost your fire power.

The control panel at the right of the display screen indicates eight icons which represent destructivity intensifiers. Depending upon which one is lit when you blast that green nasty will decide which enhancement you are going to be blessed with. These vary from scatter-bolt lasers and radiation sickness inducing neutron bombs to clone ships and force field protection.

There is never a dull moment as you blast away at level after level of marauding aliens. If you are in need of a rest between shoot-outs just press Escape and sit back and view the animated digitised screen of the five programmers who brought this marvel to your ST.

Better Dead Than Alien was developed as a trivial product by Electra, but soon took shape as a master-blaster which looks certain to grab one of the top slots in game of the year.

Go out and get it today, before those brain eaters from another planet come and get you.

Nic Outterside

SECOND Sight

This is not just another space invader type game but a lot more besides. I doubt if you will find a better development of the same theme on any home micro. The variation between the levels is outstanding. Better Dead Than Alien is an essential buy for any self-respecting arcade addict.

Jayne West

Sound	*7*
Graphics	*9*
Playability	*10*
Value for money	*10*
Overall	*9*

come from left or right, but can also leap down from the trees or appear from hidden foxholes. Barely visible trip wires also pose a serious hazard. Most of the jungle scenery looks very similar, so to find your way to objects and exits, map making is necessary – and difficult too when you're under constant attack.

The game itself is well paced and addictive and the instruction manual is nicely presented. It describes the scenario and details each section clearly, outlining a clear objective for the level and offering useful hints and tips. These go far enough to give encouragement and incentive to carry on, without making the game too easy.

A decent joysick makes a lot of difference to your scores, and my old Atari stick lost out heavily to a newer micro switched job. You will often have to pay dearly for a split second delay.

The graphics are on a par with those in Predator, though the action is slightly faster, and the game is all the better for it. Sound effects are pretty good too and can be toggled on or off, as can the music.

I liked Platoon, there seemed to be more going on than I've seen in some similar games – a better story line, more variety and more thought to the sheer playability of the game. The instructions are of a standard rarely seen and the package as a whole has a quality feel to it.

If you have good reflexes and a lot of staying power, Platoon shouldn't disappoint.

Niels Reynolds

SECOND Sight

Products based on the Vietnam war seem to have infiltrated our culture in quite an insidious way. Platoon is another such item, but don't let that detract from the game's playability. It has that extra something that sets it apart from most other shoot-out games. A soldier's life in Nam was no picnic and this game isn't easy either.

Nic Outterside

Sound	*7*
Graphics	*7*
Playability	*8*
Value for money	*8*
Overall	*8*

Daydream or nightmare?

Program: The Great Giana Sisters
Price: £19.95
Supplier: US Gold, 2/3 Holford Way, Birmingham B6 7AX
Tel: 021-356 3388

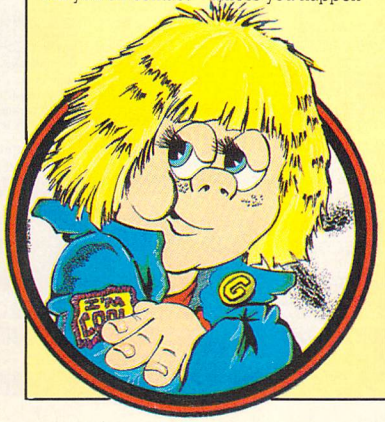
THE Great Giana Sisters from US Gold is a traditional, single-minded, no-nonsense platform game. The blurb on the back of the inlay card explains that Giana has a dream in which she finds herself in a mysterious world, full of unexplainable buildings, grottos and deserted castles, inhabited by frightening and hideous creatures.

To make matters worse she can't leave unless she can find the Magic Huge Diamond. Despite reassurances that no-one will have experienced situations like Giana, I am sure you will have seen it all before.

Giana starts her quest for the rather unimaginatively titled Magic Huge Diamond, strolling from left to right. Throughout her travels she can collect points from various items strewn about the screen. As she gets part way across the screen, the background landscape flips past and there is no going back. This means that any missed bonus collectables are gone forever.

Points are not the only thing to be picked up. Stamina can be increased, the ability to smash rocks can be acquired and dreambubbles thrown to deal with aggressive nasties. Bombs can be used to blast all hostile creatures from the screen, clocks utilised to freeze time and water drops used against fire hazards.

The game is divided into relatively small sections and each has to be completed within a time limit. Bonus points are earned for the amount of time left as the level is completed. The frightening and hideous creatures which are out to hinder your progress are actually rather cute, though they do kill you on contact – unless you happen to jump on their heads first.



The Great Giana Sisters really has nothing new to offer, but that can be said of a large percentage of games these days. What it does provide is an entertaining one or two player game, with some nice little extras thrown in.

Humorous touches like Giana's hair being zapped into a spikey punk style on contact with a fire wheel help to make the game less anonymous. The graphics are by no means exceptional, but certainly don't disgrace the ST and sound too is OK. I particularly enjoyed the introductory music.

The movement and pace of the game are good and I liked the way in which direction could be changed in mid jump – very handy while trying to negotiate a landing on a tiny pinnacle. The Great Giana Sisters isn't going to set the world on fire, but it should help while away a few dull and dismal Autumn evenings.

Niels Reynolds

SECOND Sight

An interesting idea but at the end of the day there is nothing here that you haven't seen before. However, sectionalisation within the game, maintains interest: The graphics are good and the sound enjoyable.

Definitely a month for platform games and this is probably the best among them.

Nic Outterside

Sound	*7*
Graphics	*7*
Playability	*8*
Value for money	*7*
Overall	*7*

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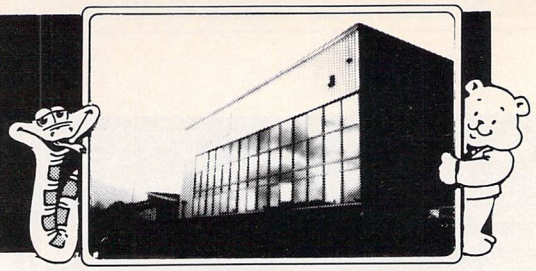

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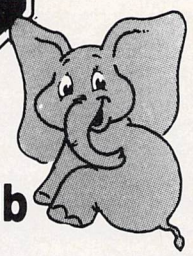

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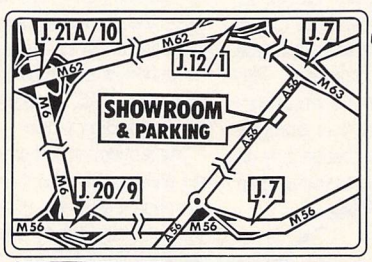

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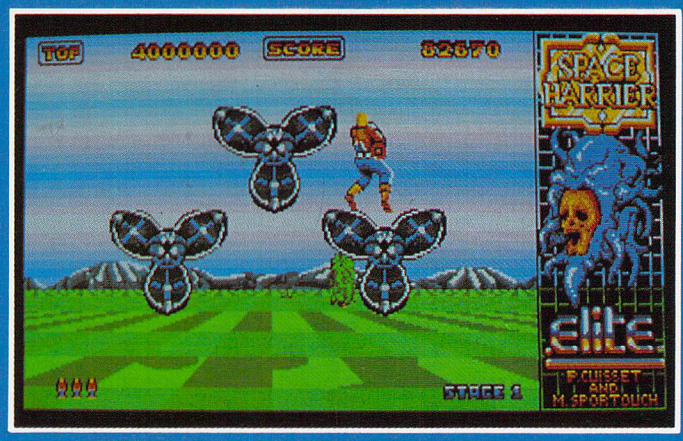
Spacewar stunner

Program: Space Harrier
Price: £19.99
Supplier: Elite Systems, Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, Staffordshire.
Tel: 0543 414188



ANYONE who has been anywhere near an amusement arcade in the past few years must surely have heard of Space Harrier. This game had a seat fitted to an hydraulic arm in juxtaposition to the video screen. As you moved the little figure on the screen, the arm moved your seat along with it, producing the nearest thing yet to being there.

After nearly a two-year wait, the game – minus the hydraulics – has finally arrived on the ST. Was it worth the wait? Well, that depends on how much you liked the original coin-op version.

Graphically, Space Harrier is far ahead of its rival arcade games. The images coming at you range from superbly-drawn trees, shrubs and boulders to amazing huge granite heads and obelisks as well as a fair range of beautifully executed nasty creatures.

To be honest, the graphics can hardly be faulted, though I would have liked to have seen some animation of the player character when he is flying. He looks very odd just hanging there, but not as odd as some of the scenery. For instance, level three consists mainly of giant mushrooms or toadstools – mycology was never my strong point – zooming towards you.

Musically, too, Space Harrier is ahead of the field. The music is not technically excellent, nor is it particularly spectacular – where it excels is that it complements the game perfectly. Rather than grating on I found that this tune simply seemed to fade away as I played. In short, the music stayed in the background during the game, and tended not to distract me too much from the blasting.

Space Harrier consists of 16 levels, each with its own character, colours and graphics, and each more difficult than the last. There is a great variety of nasties to be dealt with, as well as the odd friend to be found – at level 10 you meet a cute dragon on which you can ride off into the sunset.

The game has gorgeous graphics and unobtrusive music to boot. The digitised screams and growls also work very well, though the voice saying "Get Ready" sounds as though it was spoken through a handkerchief down a bad telephone line by someone who didn't want to be recognised.

In short, this is a straightforward shoot-'em-up, but with some of the best graphics that I have seen in an ST arcade game. This must surely go down as one of the all time great conversions, despite the lack of a hydraulic arm.

Roy Stead

SECOND Sight

Hang on to your seat, you're in for a bumpy ride with this one. What! No hydraulic arm? Still, it's just as good as the coin-op without it. Superb graphics, original sound and addictive game-play – what more can I say? You'll be hard pressed to find a more faithful conversion of an arcade classic.

Nic Outterside

Sound	7
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Value for money	7
Overall	7

Computer chaos

Program: Killdozers
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Lankhor/Active, Greyhound House, 16 Greyhound Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8NX.
Tel: 01-385 7622

REMEMBER that old film called KillDozer? The one where an alien takes control of a bulldozer and the machine goes around killing innocent bystanders? All in the best possible taste, of course.

The game, bears no relation whatsoever to that film. Except that it too stars a rampaging machine. The idea is that a super computer has gone mad and started producing weapons with which to take over the world. You, as the planet's finest upstanding citizen, have been asked to save the day by fighting your way through six levels, each consisting of 26 rooms, until you reach Unicom – the mad machine itself.

At this point, just kill it. Simple, really. Incidentally, precisely why the game should be called Killdozers completely escapes me. You are not driving a bulldozer – you're driving a tank – and the enemy are largely gelatinous blobs and tanks. Not a bulldozer in sight.

However, leaving that point aside for the moment, Killdozers features a role-playing sort of technique, whereby you select one of four tanks at the start of play. Each has characteristics like armour rating, speed, hitpoints and so on which affect your performance in a fight.

Another feature of the game is the range of three weapons which are available at any time – simple missiles, absorbers which take energy from your enemy, and armour piercing warheads.

The problem with Killdozers is, quite simply, that it is boring. There's not a lot to do, and that's done over and over again. Just wander over 26 screens, find an engineer, get to the exit then do the whole thing all over again.

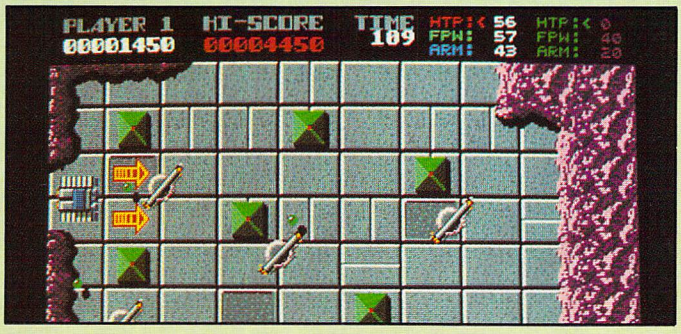
Graphically it's not too impressive either, with simple square-shaped sprites drawn in a style reminiscent of Gauntlet, though without the excitement even the ST version had to offer.

Sonically too Killdozers fails to captivate, producing a few decent effects, but these digitised sounds are repeated to an annoying degree. Five seconds of music repeated 120 times does not constitute a 10-minute soundtrack.

Even given the Construction Set which allows you to design your own levels, Killdozers is uninteresting.

As an adventure, it's not adventurous and it lacks the thrill of the chase, which every arcade game needs. Even mappers will find it dull as there are no decent mazes. Give this one a miss – by, say, 10 miles. Please, Lankhor, no sequels.

Roy Stead



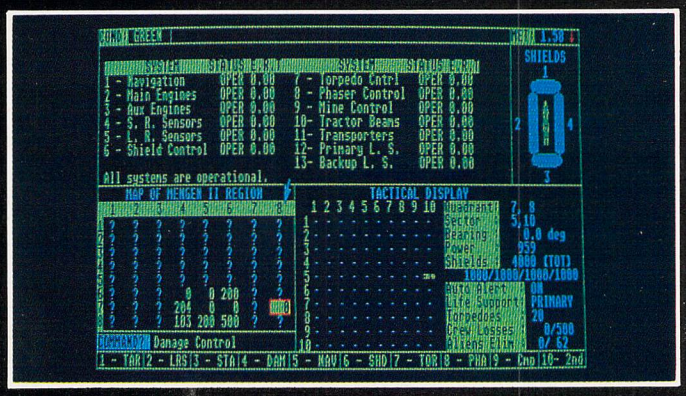
SECOND Sight

I'm beginning to go to sleep, it seems to be one bore after another this month, thank goodness for Elite! Killdozers is a bit of a drag in terms of variety of gameplay, but there are more than 150 screens to plough through and you can construct your own. Not the most breathtaking game I've come across and that's an understatement.

Nic Outterside

Sound	5
Graphics	5
Playability	4
Value for money	3
Overall	4

Program: Star Fleet One
Price: £24.95
Supplier: Interstel/Electronic Arts, Langley Business Centre, 11-49 Station Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8YN.
Tel: 0753 49442



To boldly go...

STAR Fleet One is, I am told, a popular program in the United States. The reason for this popularity escaped me when I first loaded the game, confronted as I was by a mass of text in what seemed initially to be a badly-presented version of the old favourite Star Trek.

Then, looking in the box, I found to my amazement three slim volumes, totalling 200 pages of instructions and hints.

Star Trek, for the uninitiated, consisted of making your way around a grid – usually eight by eight or 10 by 10 – and destroying any Klingons around by using photon torpedoes and/or phasers, which may be replenished at starbases.

Star Fleet One is based on this old game, but takes its ideas far further – adding the menace of the evil Zaldrons, whose ships possess invisibility screens.

Other additions include a fairly comprehensive command system which permits access to deep-space probes, mines, transporters, tractor beams, internal security systems and, of course, the obligatory shields, phasers, torpedoes and sophisticated navigation computer.

At the touch of a button you can access details on nearby alien ships or your own vessel, as well as the status of any starbases you have encountered.

The most significant bolt-on, however, has to be the complex hierarchy at Star Fleet. As you complete more and more missions, your permanent service record is updated to take note of promotions, medals and any other awards earned.

In this manner you are able to advance from raw recruit to the lofty status of Admiral, though this progression through 10 ranks may take quite some time.

Where Star Fleet One is a great disappointment is in the graphics – there are none. The box promises "Full colour battle animation", but the only animation consists of crude character-block movement of tiny spacecraft. The sound, too, consists of little more than beeps.

Star Fleet One is an absorbing game. Don't be put off by first appearances. Though lacking sonically and graphically, it is amazingly addictive and will no doubt sell steadily if not dramatically.

The programmer's distinctive humour – a Krellan secret weapon is revealed as the outpourings of their ship's sewerage plant – and attention to minute details – the ship's engineer spends many battles frantically attempting to drain every last drop of power from various systems, cursing as he patches up the shields control system yet again – help add to the realism of the game.

This realism would not be particularly well served by use of graphics unless these were of Carrier Command standard, but the sound could definitely do with a revamp.

At £24.95, Star Fleet One is competing directly with Carrier Command and adventures from Infocom, Sierra and Magnetic Scrolls. Perhaps against such competition it pales in comparison.

However Star Fleet One is an addictive romp through the galaxy, but insist on trying it out on a higher level. Use the name MANAGER and password FLEET then try the game on level four or five before parting with your cash.

Roy Stead

SECOND Sight

This is definitely an addictive game and has a number of commendable points. However,it is a bit of a disappointment as graphics and sound are poor in comparison with contemporaries of the same ilk. It definitely seems over-priced to me. Try before you buy.

Nic Outterside

Sound	4
Graphics	4
Playability	8
Value for money	5
Overall	5

Very old favourite

Program: Revenge II
Price: £9.99
Supplier: Mastertronic, 8-10 Paul Street, London EC2A 4JH.
Tel: 01-377 8411

REMEMBER the dawn of the computer age, when Sinclair ruled the Earth and people thought Space Invaders was a pretty neat game? Well around that time there was a program called The Attack of the Mutant Camels, a highly successful piece of code quickly followed up by The Revenge of the Mutant Camels.

Since then the technology, and man's taste, have both become more sophisticated, so why has Mastertronic released Revenge II, the most outdated and overpriced game that I have encountered in a long time?

The disc inlay card supplies background information about Earth, the evil Zzyaxians, and the unlikely heroes – the 90 foot tall, neutronium-shielded, laser spitting camels.

Revenge II is fought over a total of 100 waves – these are selected by moving a cursor around a 10 x 10 grid. You are not allowed access to every square at the beginning of the game. Starting at the top left corner, you may proceed horizontally or vertically, fighting one wave at a time.

To the right of the wave select grid there is a list of options that relate to your attack or defence capabilities. Shields one and two double and treble the number of hits required to destroy your camel.

Yo Yo arms your beast with ammunition that comes whizzing back towards you when it reaches the screen edge, which quite often is more of a nuisance than an advantage.

Giant increases the size of your bullets until they resemble gobstoppers – highly recommended if you're a lousy shot. The final bullets are of the smart variety, and these home in on the first available target.

The unfortunate thing about all of the options is the fact that they have to be paid for. Credits are awarded for each wave successfully completed, so you'll have to do some fighting armed only with the bare essentials.

Dropping out of hyperspace on wave one I was greeted by the less than impressive image of a camel plodding across an Egyptian scene. The next thing I knew, I was being dive bombed by hearts.

For the next seven waves the camel lumbered onwards against various backgrounds doing battle against the most ridiculous of household objects – toothbrushes, toothpaste, Y-fronts, letters, telephone boxes, telephones, floppy discs ... the list is endless. Whatever happened to the Zzyaxians?

Mastertronic has built up a hard-earned reputation for producing top quality budget games for a large variety of home computers. Revenge II is very much a budget quality program.

Carol Barrow

SECOND Sight

I can't make my mind up about this one. It's either brilliant or a load of dingos, I'm not sure which. But I keep coming back to it for another go, so it can't be all bad.

It is quite different to any other game on the market, so if you are looking for an unusual challenge this may just be your cup of tea.

Andy Richards

Sound	5
Graphics	6
Playability	4
Value for money	6
Overall	4

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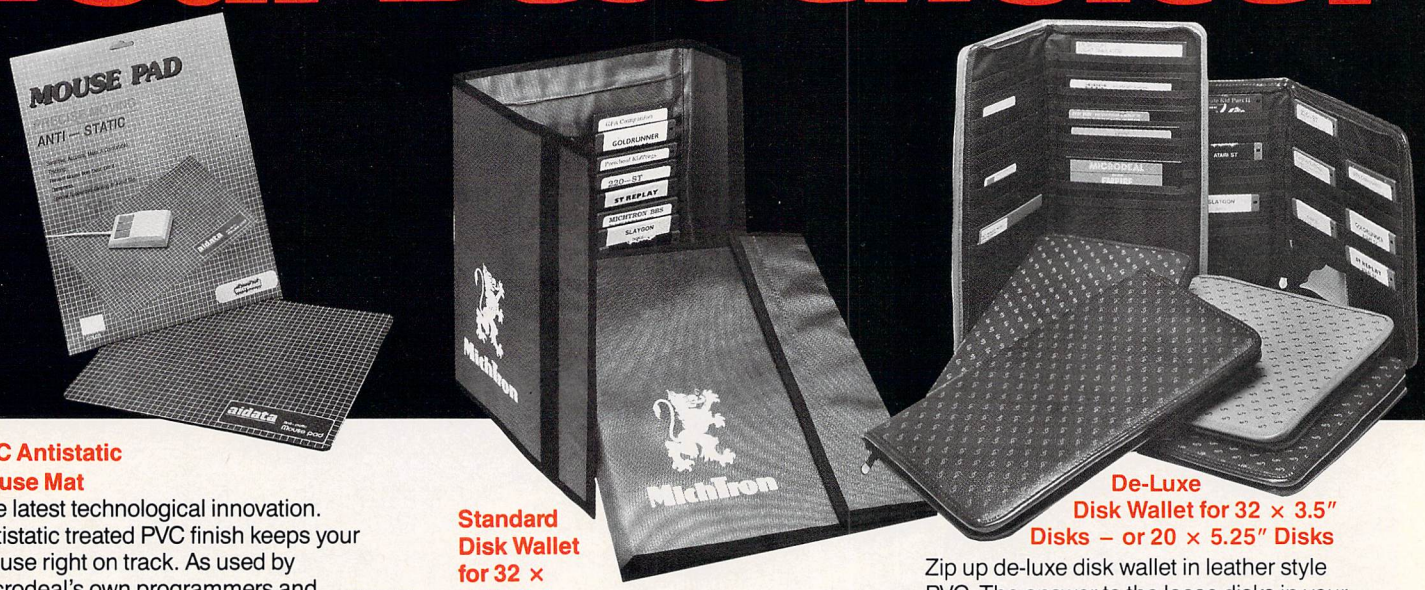

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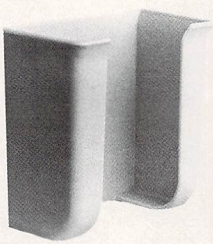

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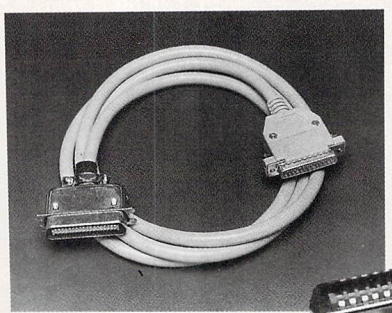

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The ST in education

Our resident educational expert, Nic Outterside, investigates the growing influence of the ST in British education

THE ST is suddenly taking the education market by storm. That is the impression I have gained after almost four weeks of thorough investigative journalism into the role the ST is playing within this country's schools.

A domain which until now has been the almost total prerogative of Nimbus and BBC-badged micros is being invaded seriously by the Atari ST. There have been outstanding results and distinct improvements to the computer-based learning strategy of schools and colleges.

In the vanguard invasion is the computer distribution company SDL, a small band of dedicated county education advisers and perhaps surprisingly – considering their record in marketing their own products – Atari UK. As a result of their efforts the ST is replacing the BBC Micro as the main computer used in schools in these education authorities: West Midlands, Norfolk, Kent and Essex as well as most London boroughs.

It is also being increasingly used in many other counties alongside more traditional 8 bit micros. It is making major inroads into British universities, polytechnics and colleges of further education, including University College London, Trent Polytechnic and the London School of Music.

Even traditionally conservative authorities such as Hereford and Worcester are giving multiple units of £700 – the distribution based on school role size – for schools to buy machines other than the BBC Micro.

A cautious estimate says between 7,000 and 10,000 STs are now installed in places of education, ranging from special schools to training centres for the police and the armed forces. Couple this with the fact that more and more institutions are also opting for Atari PCs and Corinth packages to cater for their administration needs, and the picture starts to take shape.

In Cumbria the ST has been taken on as a chief medium for teaching music. The senior music adviser for that county, Mike McNully, says around a further 20 STs will be bought this year and the trend is positive and definitely upwards. Currently driving drum machines, keyboards and other Midi packages, the Atari micro is getting rave feedback from Cumbria's schools.

In Shropshire the ST has become the standard micro in every county secondary school and is now being transported into the primary and tertiary sectors. Andy McKeown, county advisory teacher for Information Technology there, is responsible for ousting the BBC Micro

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ATARI ST USER April 1988

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Configuration	configure most features to your own preferences of line. delete line, block or box
Dictionaries	add/delete words to/from supplied dictionary. Create additional specialised dictionaries.
Disc utilities	copy files, erase, rename, type, create directory, change directory, remove directory, catalogue files
Exec files	store sequences of commands in files for easy use
File conversion	flexible file conversion utility for other WP files
Find & replace	very powerful and fast with many options. All or part of text, forwards/backwards, whole word or part, wildcards, case specific or not, nth occurrence, find control codes, single key for next find/reverse direction
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Formatting	format paragraph, block or whole text, centre line, word wrap on/off, right justify on/off
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Help	edit and command help available on-screen
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Quick dictionary	dictionary held in memory is very fast
Ruler lines	any number of ruler lines to define document layout. unlimited line width. define left/right margins and any number of normal/decimal tab stops
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Time and date	set time and date, use within document
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from the county's schools – in a few schools this has been total – and replacing it with the technically superior 16 bit ST.

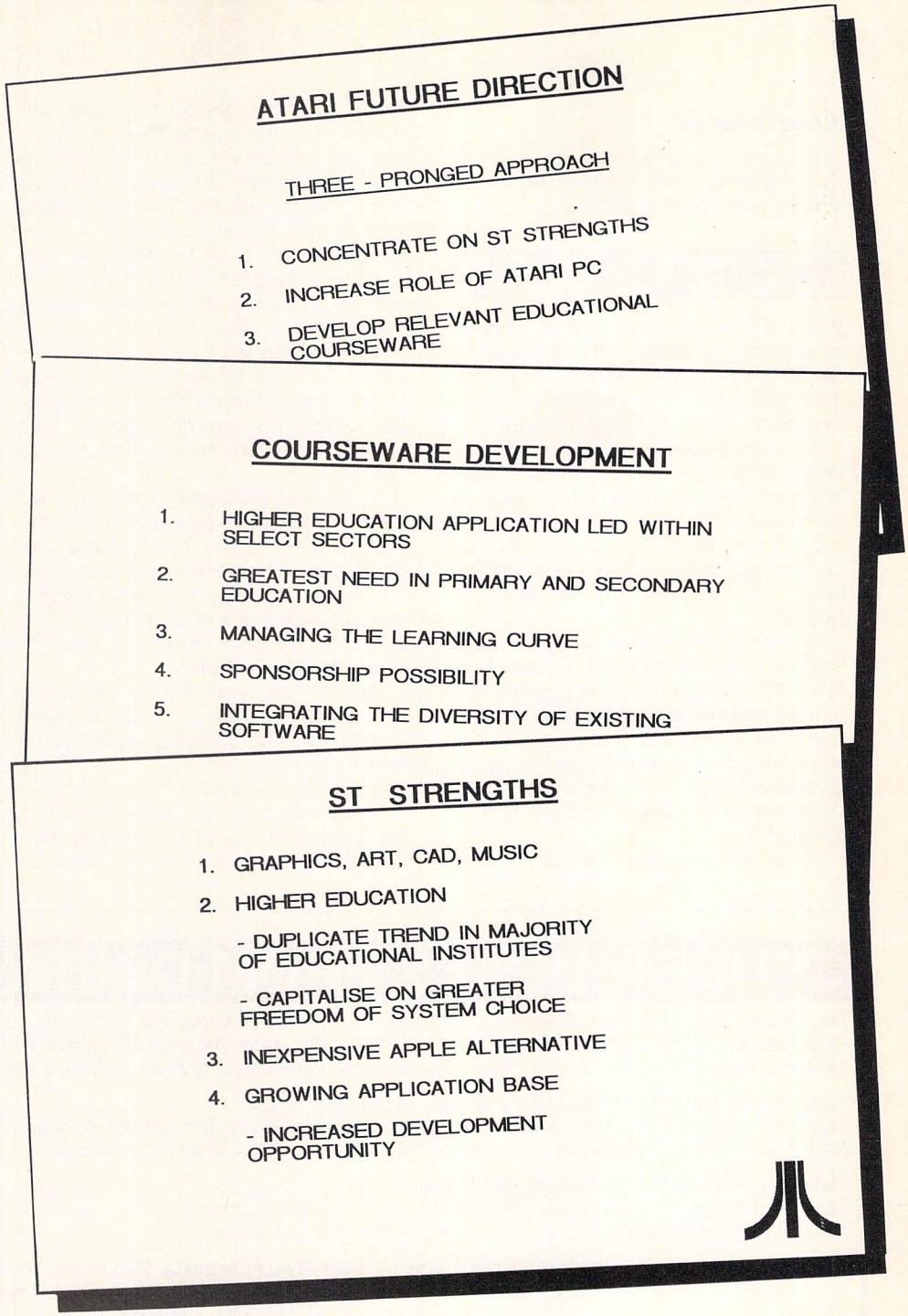
In early 1987 Shropshire had to decide whether to upgrade their old BBC Model B micros for the Master Compact version, wait for the launch of Acorn's much vaunted 32 bit Archimedes, or change to a new brand of computer technology.

Since he first saw a 520ST at the Desktop Publishing show in 1986, Andy was impressed at the machine's versatility and power and realised the potential of the Gem environment in education. He was able to influence decisions at the highest level and when the decision was made Shropshire judged that neither of the new Acorn machines could provide total compatibility with the old model B, and consequently opted for a change of direction.

STs are now being used by the county's schools in all subject areas. In particular the micro's strengths in computer-aided design, desktop publishing and music are being fully exploited by use of some excellent software.

Art and drama departments are creating kinetic animation from scratch using 520STFMs, and one secondary art department has bought five STs for its sole use in design work. Science and English faculties are utilising DTP software within many aspects of course work from first to sixth years, while CDT departments are applying CAD packages wholesale at GCSE level.

Primary school usage envelops the teaching of mathematics, geography, simple anatomy, history and art. However, the number of STs in primary schools is still small, but this will soon change if Shropshire is a good barometer of the country at large.



Policy guidelines resulting from the Atari forum

Developing serious software

Bill Owen, national sales manager for SDL, says Silica Shop Education Division is currently investing tens of thousands of pounds into software development. Atari and SDL are identifying areas of need then attempting to create the software to meet them. Much of their own activity is concerned with importing the best software from the Continent and translating it into English.

Many of these titles come from France, West Germany and The Netherlands. Bill recently showed me six excellent programs from a Dutch firm, Atacom. These dealt with shape and colour recognition, addition, numbers, anatomy and topography. The instructions were still in Dutch, but the quality of the product shone through and I look forward to seeing them released for the British market next month.

Robin Kimberley, the proprietor of Softstuff, is now sponsored by SDL to produce programs for the primary sector and has already released the excellent Spellbook – reviewed in the September 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* – Words and Pictures and the outstanding Things to do with Words.

TVEI adviser for East Anglia Gordon Selvage acts as educational consultant to Mirrorsoft as well as promoting the ST within his education authority. His developments are responsible for Mirrorsoft winning the DTP national awards this year.

Following the almost unparalleled success of Pro-24 and Masterscore in British universities and colleges, Guy Pearson of Evenlode Soundworks has prepared a marvellous piece of software for release this month.

Titled Pro-24E, this adaptation of the famous Midi sequencing program has been specially written for use in primary and secondary schools. It is available complete with coursework and should prove to be a popular utility for many music departments.

Meanwhile at York University's Music Technology Department Andy Hunt has developed and produced a utility for music making and live performance called Midigrid. This is now to be marketed by the Composers' Desk Top Project.

Connected to the ST's Midi system, this

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application can be tailored for use with handicapped people either at home or in a training establishment.

The state of play

When SDL organised an exhibition of educational products and suppliers for the ST market it was supported by Atari itself and acted as a window on to the expanding world of the ST in education.

Art and graphics packages such as Degas Elite, Easy Draw 2, Gemlock and Imagine's Digitiser were all on display as examples of quality software being actively used in schools. Canvas CAD has been tested in Shropshire and is now set to be taken up by many Art and CDT faculties.

In Music, it was evident that Steinberg's Pro-24v3 and Masterscore, Hybrid Arts' EZ-Track Plus and EZ-Score Plus are being widely used. Meanwhile, the Casio keyboard and Windsynth are taking the place of instruments such as the piano, glockenspiel, horn and trumpet in music departments the length and breadth of the land.

All of the excellent Timeworks programs are now being distributed with courseware for use in English, mathematics, economics and book-keeping courses. Comms and database packages are in high demand by many secondary schools and tertiary colleges as their applications become beneficial to both teaching and administration. Science software is emerging slowly, being chiefly aimed at the university sector.

Atari underlined its intention to take education on the ST seriously by holding an Education Forum at which educational and computing experts, together with existing Atari users, engaged in a two day think tank.

The business systems marketing manager for Atari UK, d'Este du Plessis, said "Atari wanted to see exactly what was being done with its machines in the educational environment, and one of the purposes of the forum was to generate a flow of information and provide a pool for cross-fertilisation of ideas".

She went on to say that the forum was "a brainstorming session containing some interesting lateral thinking – particularly from Andy McKeown".

She feels that the forum was a springboard for more to come from Atari, which supports a policy to develop software specifically for education purposes rather than convert existing programs from 8 bit machines.

Subsequently a series of policy guidelines have been released outlining development strategy and three are reproduced here.

The future?

While government ESG grants exist for counties to buy Nimbus and BBC Micros, the ST will face an uphill struggle if it is to establish itself seriously in schools and colleges on a nationwide basis.

However, MSC money which has become available through TVEI and YTS schemes, has no such limitations of use and it is primarily through this door that the ST is advancing.

Polytechnics, universities, private schools and training centres have traditionally opted for their own preferences and will continue to do so. It is where such freedom exists that the ST can be seen to succeed. However, the pioneering work of Shropshire LEA, SDL's software development programme and the MESU training of advisory teachers at Warwick and Cambridge University is providing a leading light for the ST in state education.

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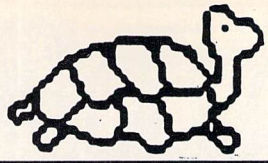

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ADVENTURES

Brillig lends a hand in solving problems for fantasy fans

Good clean fun with Sud and Mud

ANOTHER month has flown past and it's time once again to clear the cave of drunken Orcs and partying dragons and get down to your letters.

First off, thanks to all the readers who pointed out my error with the one-armed bandit in Space Quest. What I thought I had to do was somehow to cause a crash in the fruit machine's system and, as a result, thereby receive the jackpot.

What I now know I should have done is to keep betting away until I had won 250 buckazoids – then, and only then, would the machine foul up. It seems I had the cart before the horse, as it were.

Last month I pondered whether that adventurer par excellence R.G.B. Marshall of Congleton would be the first in with a solution to Corruption. Silly me, I could have saved myself the effort of wondering – he was! R.G.B. has now turned his attentions to Deja Vu – that should take him all of two hours.

This man finishes adventures quicker than I can polish off my morning champagne and cornflakes.

Catching up on some of my earlier correspondence, Julian Abram of Walsall requested help with Hollywood Hijinx, while a band of adventurers from Manchester – Jason Murphy, Darren Evans, Steve Killick and Reg Ritchie needed assistance with a whole heap of adventures. For them and others, succour is provided in this month's Hints and Tips.

From Ishoj in Denmark, Ib Rasmussen writes to say that he has been working on a multi-user dungeon (Mud) type program for several months now. Ib thinks that a single-user dungeon must be a Sud, but says it doesn't have quite the right ring to it. Cleaner maybe, but not as appealing.

Like many others, Ib first became interested in Mud when he heard about Essex University's program, and has since decided to write his own version on an ST using a hard disc, Lattice C and Devpac. Of course, you need more than a single micro to play Mud, and the problem was to find a cheap but effective way of linking several micros together. Ib's solution was use ICK-Link, a no-nonsense two-machine interface for home micros.

He then built a simple multiplexer which plugs into the parallel port and allows up to eight machines to be connected simultaneously. Although limited to five or six metres cable length, and not the world's fastest network, the system is sufficient for running a text-based Mud.

He has designed it as an interpreter/database system with the dungeon forming the database and the C program acting as the data interpreter. The program has already grown to over 100k of C code.

It is possible that Ib may eventually place the program in the public domain. Whatever the outcome, I'm sure you'll

Turn to Page 46 ▶

HINTS AND TIPS

HOLLYWOOD HIJINX

What do you do if you cannot open the hatch in the shelter?

● Light the match and candle, lift the left end of the plank, pull the chain, burn the rope then stand on the right end of the plank.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY

What am I supposed to do about the girl in the bath?

● Give her the apple.

Where can you find the inflatable doll?

● Try looking in the closet in the bedroom near the rooftop garden.

KNIGHT ORC

Where is the keycard?

● In the mousehole in the South bedroom. First catch your mouse then use the eye to peep into the hole.

BEYOND ZORK

Need the jewel from the idol?

● Attack the baby Hungus (you rotter) then run to the idol. When the mother Hungus follows she will weigh down the bottom, allowing you to go up and get the jewel. What happens after that requires the Eversion spell.

How do I get rid of the organ grinder?

● Give him the chest.

POLICE QUEST

Bikers in Wino Willy's threatening you?

● Use your nightstick on them.

What do I do with Sweetcheeks?

● Take her to room 204 and phone for a taxi.

How can I play cards?

● Ask Woody about the card game.

JINXTER

Can't catch the mouse?

● In the kitchen, set the trap with the cheese. Go away and return later.

◀ From Page 45

agree that he has embarked on an impressive and fascinating project. Who knows, some of us may one day be enjoying the fruits of his labours.

My thanks to Leon Sanderson of Yeoville, South Africa, and Lucien Oppler of London for their tips on Phantasie III. Next month I'll pass on to you some of their expert advice. Appreciation also to Jonathan Capener from Keele for his tips on Kings Quest 1-3, Space Quest II and Leisure Suit Larry.

Police Quest is causing Oliver Barclay of Shoreham – and one or two others – some difficulty while Enzo Ciaffarafa from Bradford would welcome advice on Jinxter. Your wish is my command.

For players like Simeon Berwick of Ipswich who are still wrestling with The Pawn, may I refer you to a full solution to this adventure serialised in the March, April and May 1988 issues of *Atari ST User*?

To M. Scholes of Huddersfield, I suggest that you point at the shadows after shining the light at them – the dragon is a bit shortsighted and will eat you unless you point him in the right direction.

Mouseventure is a very appropriate term, coined by Kirk Ruebotham of Runcorn, to describe games like Mortville Manor and Deja Vu where the mouse, rather than the keyboard, is used for input. Kirk is fully in favour of such adventures, believing that when measured against games that rely on typed commands, mouseventures come out top in speed, ease of use and reduction in frustration caused by the program failing to understand you.

Kirk makes some telling points against traditional adventures, but what do other readers think of mouseventures? Write in and air your opinion. Kirk has also provided some much-needed tips on Mortville Manor which I greatly appreciate – more on those MM tips in a future issue.

I'll be here again next month – same dungeon, same time. Until then, keep your water pouch full and your matches dry.

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ALACK and alas! Princess Sylphani has just discovered that her dad, the Caliph of Damaron, has been turned into a falcon. Even worse, the Black Prince and his minions from hell are on the march and are threatening to take over the kingdom unless something can be done. Sinbad to the rescue!

Cinemaware's latest release for the ST follows the style and presentation of its earlier game, Defender of the Crown, containing elements of arcade action, combat, strategy and character interaction.

Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon is a large game and is supplied on three discs – unless you have a 1Mb machine and/or two disc drives, a frustrating amount of disc swapping is necessary. The whole game is joystick driven as there is no keyboard or mouse option.

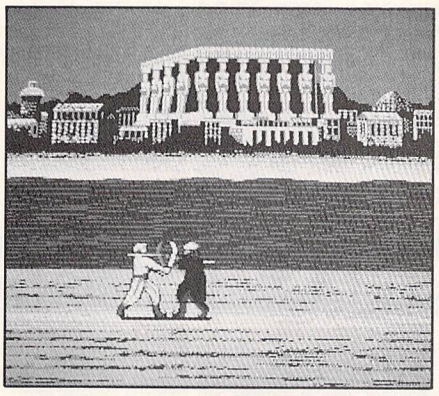
Once you've booted up, leave the title and credits sequence to run its course and you'll be treated to a demonstration of the background to the game. This scene setting is not mentioned in the documentation, but I recommend you have a look at it as it contains some stunning graphics. In fact, the graphics are probably the best feature of Sinbad.

One of the main screens, which is where the action starts, shows Sinbad looking at a signpost that has several destinations attached to it. Positioning the pointer over one of the signs and pressing the fire button brings up a piece of narrative and then shows the selected destination, which sometimes turns out to be no more than another signpost.

In Sinbad's belt is a magical stone and a map. Both items can be brought up as large pictures by clicking on them. The picture of the stone serves two purposes – to give an indication of elapsed time and to call up a war chart. This chart is made up of a number of hexagons and shows the position and strength of your own and the enemy's troops.

Your troop units can "move" one hexagon at a time, and battle commences when one unit lands on a hexagon occupied by the enemy. You need to keep calling up this chart to see the progress of the battle.

Since you'll be doing a lot of travelling,



including sailing the high seas, the map – which can be magnified – is simply a device to let you see the layout of the land. The stone and map are also accessible when Sinbad is on board his ship.

Further elements of strategy and luck come into play in the selection of destinations and the division of your men into recruiting party and crew. The former may gain you a few new crew members, but they may lose even more in the process. Similarly, many of the islands are uninhabited and a visit to them is a waste of precious time – you need to study the map carefully.

During his travels, Sinbad may meet hostile forces. Such an encounter usually takes the form of a simplistic, side-on view swordfight. The graphical quality and animation are probably the weakest parts of the game. Other action sequences are more arcade-oriented.

For example, during a storm at sea, you must steer Sinbad's ship through the rocks. When on land, you might be attacked by a nasty flying creature called a Pteranoxos and must try to shoot it down using only a limited supply of arrows. Elsewhere, an earthquake may have Sinbad running and jumping for his life.

Other tasks include plucking one of the eyes from each of three idols and, armed with only a sling, contesting a battle with a Cyclops.

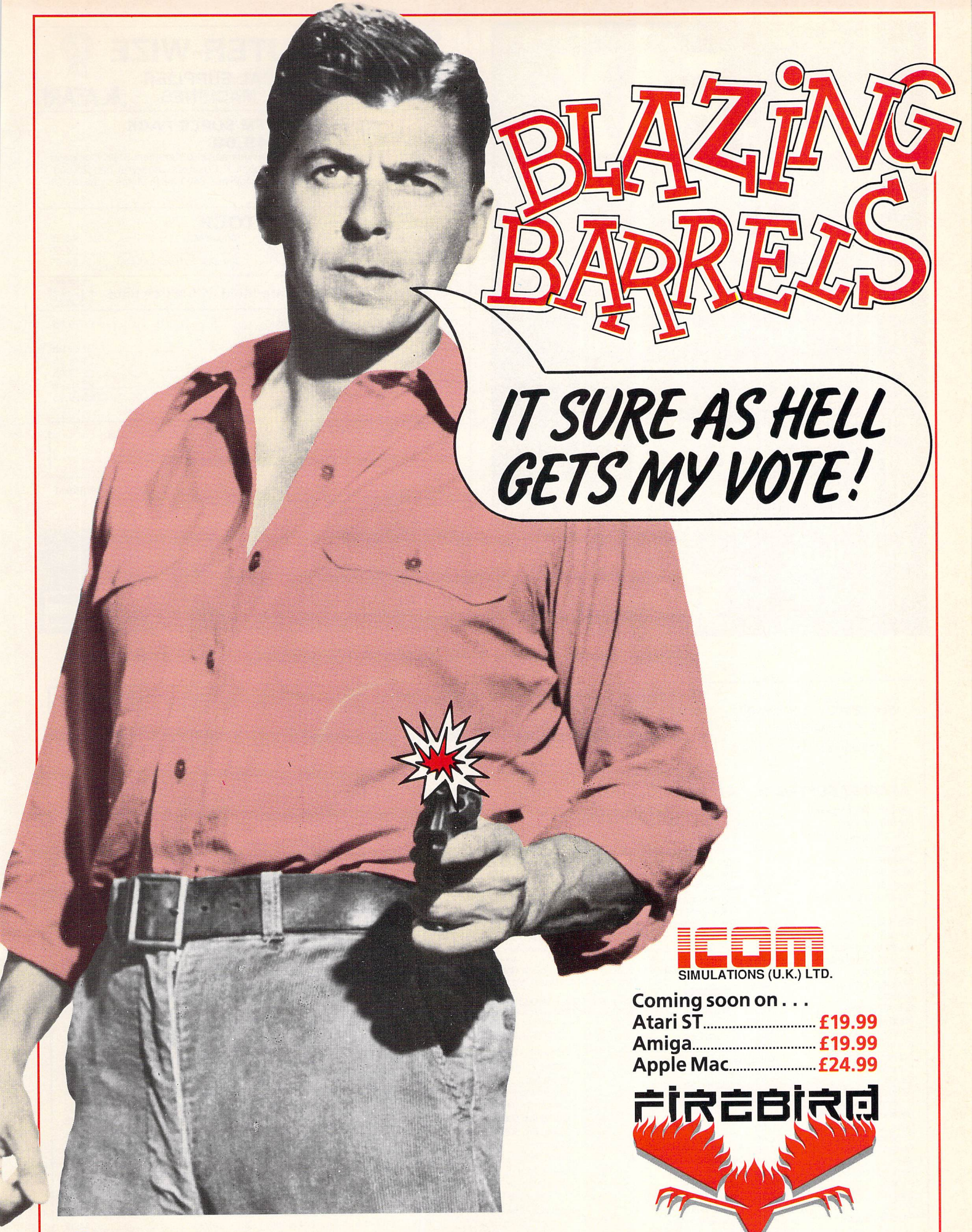
By far the most impressive part of the game is when Sinbad converses with some of the characters he meets. These include the beautiful, mysterious and seductive Libitina, Iris the old gypsy, the genie and the shaman. The full-size, animated pictures of the faces of the characters are superb. Conversations are carried out by selecting from a list of statements and responses – unfortunately, the dialogue is rather disrupted by the need to keep swapping discs.

Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon is a bit of a curate's egg. The sound consists only of some rather ordinary music and a few crude spot effects. Fortunately the music can be turned off from within the program. Some of the graphics are excellent, some unremarkable, and what little animation there is does not impress. The disc swapping is an absolute pain.

On the plus side, this is a big game and the combination of arcade, strategy, interaction and mystery certainly means that there is something in it for everyone.

Bob Chappell

Sound	***4***
Graphics	***7***
Playability	***6***
Value for money	***7***
Overall	***7***



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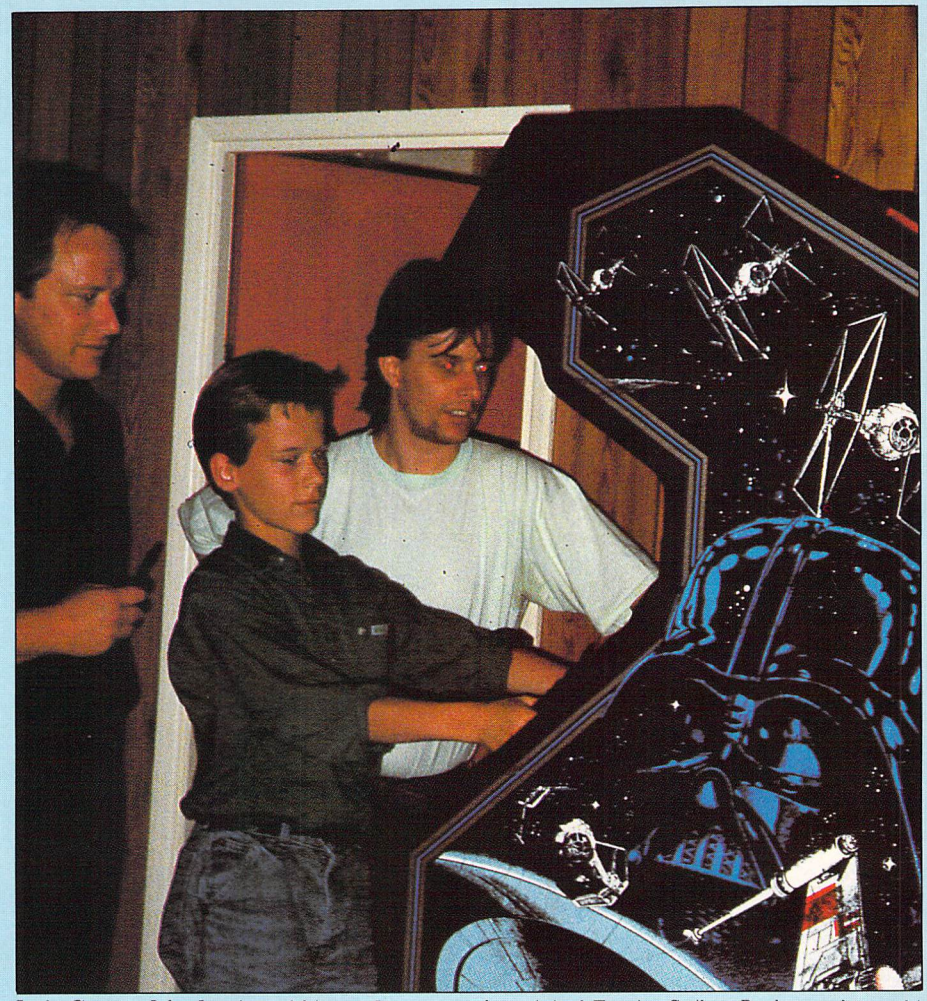
Pam Turnbull visits Vektor Grafix, the authors of Domark's latest arcade hit, The Empire Strikes Back



Andy Craven, John Lewis and his son Jon try out the original Empire Strikes Back arcade machine

Into the ??? dimension

CLOSE by the railway in busy downtown Leeds you will find a converted warehouse which now houses among its tenants two software companies renowned for 3D graphics. One, Real Time, has been around for many years now, its latest release being Carrier Command.

Literally just around the corner you will find Vektor Grafix, the company founded by Andy Craven and Danny Gallagher in May 1987, though Danny has now moved and is at present working on some Ocean releases. The company has based its reputation on two arcade conversions – Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back.

Conversions are full of pitfalls due to copyright and comparison problems, but the tie up with Domark proved to be very successful. Indeed as Andy now admits, Domark took a risk with this relatively unknown company when it appeared with a program named Imperial Assault in a BBC Micro format. Yet the similarity to the Star Wars arcade game and the already written 3D system convinced them, and Andy and Danny were given eight weeks to produce a finished version.

The ST version was programmed by West German Jurgen Freudrich who worked with Vektor Grafix for two weeks, and the interchange of ideas proved very useful to both parties.

What makes Vektor Grafix stand out is its 3D system which is unique and has been rewritten twice since the original Star Wars days. This system affects totally how the company is run and programs are written.

The success of Star Wars saw Vektor Grafix negotiating the contract to convert The Empire Strikes Back, but this time on all formats and this across-the-range package is also a company speciality.

The arcade machine of Empire stands in the lobby and it is amazing to realise that the walkers are only about five per cent slower on the ST version than on the arcade which has a complete chip for that section.

Andy Craven, who was once a professional musician, became interested in computers after the birth of his first child, Terry. The hobby took over and he was soon lecturing in Leeds College of Building. His interest in computers is as much in serious software as in the games market.

This is where he met Danny, and from here they created Vektor Grafix. Andy now has a new partner in John Lewis who works primarily on the marketing and commercial side of the company.

Andy does not believe in importing programmers from other localities, and most vacancies are advertised in the local press. One reason is his dislike of the prima donna complex which some programmers acquire. The company's longest serving programmer, Kieren Gultniks, joined them soon after they started and at 17 is one of their greatest assets.

The 3D system is the pivot, as each new programmer must learn it and is responsible for updating and maintaining it. They now have been joined by George Ivanow, Derek Austin, Bill Pullan and latest recruit Ian Martin of Ace, Ace 2 and Skyrunner fame. Indeed Ian is the only programmer with a track record.

The recruitment policy is unique to Vektor. Should you wish to join them – and they are looking for new programmers at present – be prepared to

Turn to Page 50 ▶

◀ From Page 49

work with their proven system and on less money than you now earn. You must also be enthusiastic. Prove yourself, and you will earn your place in this very relaxed company.

The atmosphere is informal and there is no nine to five syndrome, but don't be fooled. Deadlines are the lifeblood of any software house and Vektor Grafix takes its responsibilities and reputation for reliability very seriously.

Both John and Andy believe the programmers are important as creative and innovative people and deserve respect and credit. Decisions are taken in consultation with all the programmers, though John can see this very personal form of dealing becoming more impersonal as the company expands.

Empire is the basis for two new companies developed through Vektor Grafix – Musix and Sprytz. The former uses Midi, Steinberg and an ST at present in a feasibility study to provide scores and sound for Vektor and other companies, and support for games on all formats using a system similar in concept to the 3D/PDS. Look out for a demo of this at the PC Show, which Sean Connoran is now preparing.

Future plans

Not willing to become totally reliant on the 3D side of the market they plan to be able to provide you with any sprite you require – 3D, multi-scrolling, or isometric, again using a system which will present a professional and reliable product on all machines.

John and Andy went in force to the CES show and were met by overwhelming enthusiasm and interest in their 3D system and ideas for the future – so much so that they convinced Dave Coch of Activision and are about to work solely with Mediagenic in the UK to produce four games over the next 12 months.

Only two of the game concepts are under discussion at present: The first has a variety of working titles – Tornado, Bomber or USAF. Indeed it was their demo of a 3D Tornado aircraft which so impressed the Chicago show. Little can be said about this at present, but it promises to be an international 3D flight simulator which should be something very special. It has convinced both John and Andy to learn to fly themselves as well as trying out the RAF's own flight simulators.

The second game is still at the specification stage. You could call it a World War III simulator, but this would be to simplify the concept. At present the idea allows you to be an active fly on the wall in the battlezone, in a tank, submarine or aircraft, the White House or military HQ.

Both Andy and John see these products as fitting well into the games market which is becoming more discerning from year to year.

They will not be writing Return of the Jedi also due out this year. As this is not primarily a 3D game, Concept in Liverpool will be responsible for the programming. So for the present at least, Empire is the end of Vektor Grafix' tie with Domark.

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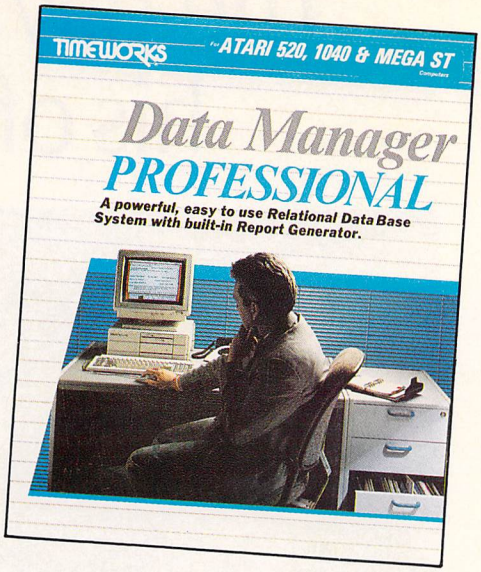


Database deluxe

David Davenport tries out a powerful and versatile new relational database manager from Timeworks

IN the August 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* I reviewed Timeworks' Data Manager database management package. My overall impression of the program was a good one, but I felt that the lack of relational capability across several files might eventually become restrictive for a really ambitious user.

It seems Timeworks was thinking pretty much along the same lines, because it has now released Data Manager Professional, which has all the power of its forerunner but with some advanced relational functions added.

It is, in fact, a separate program in its own right, rather than an enhanced version of the original Data Manager, as the name suggests. It runs on either a colour or monochrome monitor on any ST. The basic principles of operation are essentially the same in both programs, but their user interfaces are quite different.

Modular design

Data Manager Professional's basic structure comprises three main sections – a definition module for creating new databases, a maintenance module for the upkeep and use of those already in existence, and a powerful report generator for compiling customised data reports from one or more of your database files.

These are linked by a fourth interfacing program, which also allows you to set the overall program configuration most suited to you. Here you can choose a default disc drive and give specific details and control codes relevant to how your printer works.

DMP is geared up to allow you to work with a hard disc, so if you have one it's at this point that you'd install it. It's then just a question of choosing Define, Maintain or Report, and off you go.

DMP can be operated almost completely under mouse control through the pull-down menu system, although the majority of common operations can just as easily be carried out through the keyboard's function keys; it's really just a matter of personal preference.

The main keyboard function keys are shown in a panel across the bottom of the screen for reference. With data input in particular it's often better to stick to the keyboard, rather than constantly chop and change.

Once the program is running you can change the colours of the desktop and their shade. Once you have a data file loaded you can alter the colour of data names, the colour of record field names, and their typestyles – in fact the whole screen display can be customised with a few key presses. There's also a Help menu, providing online help text on all the main program functions for new users.

Setting up a database with DMP is as easy as falling off a log. There's an excellent little addition to the main body of the manual called the Quick-Start Minimanual, which soon gets you familiar with the program's general mode of operation and takes you through the important processes of setting up and interrogating a simple database.

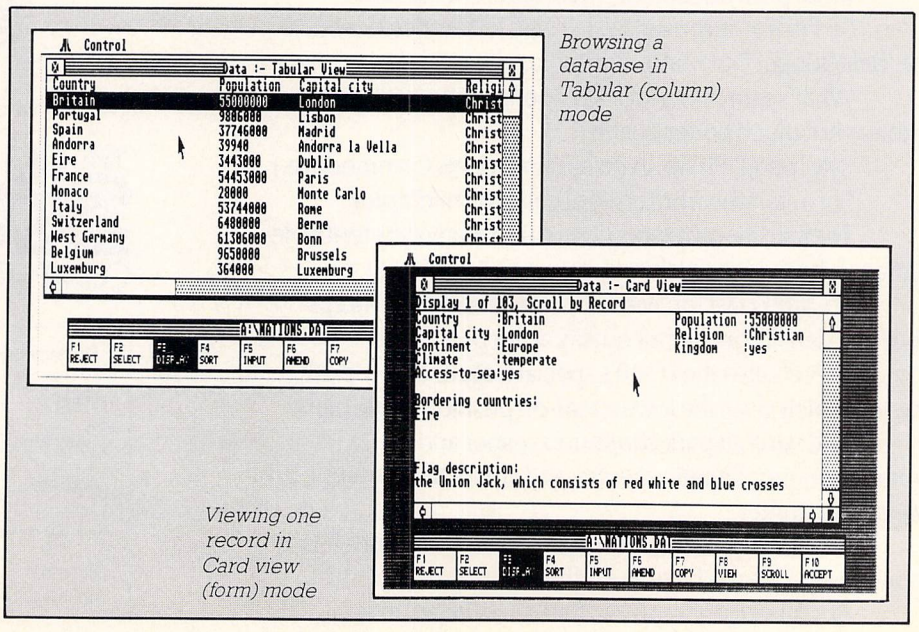
Data types

There are five basic field types: Numbers, text, blocks, classes and dates. Number fields are very flexible and may contain decimal points – they are real numerical fields, in that they can be used by the program in calculations.

Text fields consist of strings of alphanumeric characters, but can only be up to one line in length, whereas block fields can contain several lines, as is necessary for making general comments in a record.

Class variables can only be used for fields for which there is a finite set of possible values in the database, defined by you. This may seem odd, but it is often the case that such fields exist in your databases and you don't even realise it.

For instance, imagine a database of artwork in which each record has a field indicating whether the artwork is a drawing, a photograph or a painting. You could set up a text field and in every record fill it with the word Drawing, Photo or Painting, but this would take up a lot of unnecessary space overall in a database



Browsing a database in Tabular (column) mode

Viewing one record in Card view (form) mode

of perhaps several thousand records.

This is where a class field would be most practical. Providing the artwork can only fall into one of the three categories mentioned, you could just set up a class field with the three known artwork types as the classes, and the three values need only ever be stored once.

Each database record would then only require a special marker to be set to one of three values, rather than the whole text strings, saving valuable storage space. The other advantage is that when you are searching on a class field, the program knows which alternatives to offer you to choose from.

The last field type supported by Data Manager Professional is date fields, which are proper date fields in that they can be used to sort records into date order. You can decide which date format you prefer when you first configure the system.

A particularly helpful feature offered for use with date fields is the ability to type just a hash sign, at which point the program will automatically fill the field with today's date, as set each time the program is run.

So to set up a new database, just choose Define from the initial menu presented when the program starts up, and you will be presented with a resizeable window in the middle of the screen. Inside this window you can now start to lay out a typical record from your proposed database, as you would want it to appear for input purposes.

Mouse control

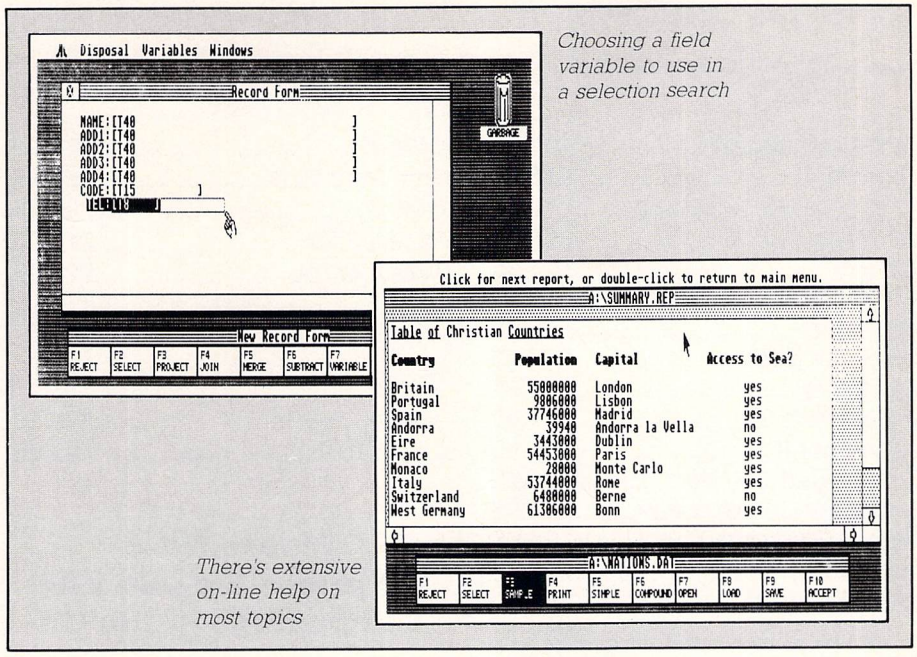
Practically all of this design stage can be carried out using just the mouse, including the positioning of the fields within the window and stretching them visually to suitable lengths.

Particularly impressive is the facility to delete fields or insert new ones at any point in a record. You can even alter record formats after data has been entered into the database, subject to a few restrictions which are still very permissive. This degree of flexibility is something usually only found in the most expensive professional packages.

If at any time during the set-up process you get something seriously wrong, or offer invalid input, the program will respond with an error message, but unlike those found in many packages, DMP's are jargon free and aimed at the layman. They are clear, concise and informative, telling you not only what's wrong, but also how to put it right again.

Once you've set up your record format you should save it to disc, then you can go straight on to entering data through the Maintain module of DMP. Data entry mode presents you with the record format you have designed, but you are free to enter and amend data as you wish.

Here again the data validation is excellent, so that it is impossible to enter the wrong kind of data into a field, and if you do foul up it's easy to retrace your steps and put things right – the sign of a well thought out program.



Choosing a field variable to use in a selection search

There's extensive on-line help on most topics

There are various built-in input aids too to help you save time on long update sessions. For example, pressing F7 will copy the contents of a record card on to the next record, and entering a hash into a date field will automatically set the field to the current date.

The hallmarks of a really useful database are power, flexibility and ease of use in its search facilities, and this is an area where DMP does itself proud. While in View mode you can scroll through the entire database record by record by just clicking on the scroll bars down the sides of the main working window, or equally easily move backwards and forwards using the keyboard cursor keys.

You can also switch from form mode into column mode at the press of a function key, whereby fields are displayed as columns, and a record therefore becomes one long line across – and often extending beyond – the width of the working window. This mode is best suited to those occasions when you wish to browse quickly through a database for something you could not easily pin down using any of the built-in search facilities, since it lets you scroll through records a screenful at a time.

To carry out a search by selection DMP first requires you to set up a selection rule. This means choosing a field to search on from those available, picking a relation, then specifying the actual value to be tested for in the search.

When this involves classes you are presented with all the possible class values to pick from, as defined by yourself when you set up the database.

The operators available for searches are extensive – *is* (=), *is not* (!=), *before* (<), *after* (>), *up to and including* (<=), *including and after* (>=), *includes* ([]), and *does not include* (][) – and they can be linked together into multiple conditions involving several files with the logical operators AND and OR. And if you can't find what you want with that little lot, it's almost certainly not there!

Instant editing

During a browse or search you are also simultaneously in edit mode, in that any record can be amended or deleted at the press of a key. This typifies Data Manager Professional's straightforward and unfettered approach to routine tasks – after all, there's a 50-50 chance that when you're looking up a record the intention is to amend it, so why should you have to enter a separate editing routine to do so?

Most database systems do still require this though, probably because of the rigidly structured way most programs are designed, each function having its own separate set of routines.

DMP's editing facilities go much further than single record editing though. There is a Search and Replace function that lets you change all occurrences of a string within a record, either automatically or selectively, although it won't work with number, class or date fields because of their special format.

There's even a special facility for making global changes across all records in the database or a selected subset of them – a particularly powerful operation that may be essential sometimes but should be used with caution.

For anyone wanting occasionally to compile simple statistical information from their databases there's also a Stat-

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Access

◀ *From Page 53*

istics feature. It will provide a brief statistical summary on any variable (field) either across the whole database, or on any subset currently selected, giving specific totals as well as the smallest, largest, and average values recorded.

Data is very rarely useful in the order it was recorded in, and consequently DMP also provides powerful sorting routines. They are ram-based and very fast, and allow you to sort records on any field into either increasing or decreasing order.

Multi-level sorts – sorts within sorts – are possible too on keyed fields, simply by repeating a sort on an already sorted data set, starting with the innermost field variable. Sorting provides an easy way of clearing the garbage from your database every so often by making duplicated data more obvious, and there's even a built-in routine within the sorter to strip out exact duplicates after a sort.

Relational power

The most attractive features of Data Manager Professional for experienced, heavy users of databases will almost certainly be its relational file handling capabilities. These allow you to work on more than one file at once to produce concordances, draw more general across-the-board statistics and conclusions based on data from several files, and either expand or streamline your data files whenever this would be helpful.

The five relational operations DMP offers are:

● Projection and Selection: These are both ways of streamlining a database to produce another which is more relevant to a particular task in certain specific areas. You can load one database then from it project a second which contains just some of the fields of the first. The selection process lets you create a second database containing only certain records from the first.

● Merging and Joining: These are facilities for linking two files together, but in different ways. To merge two files they must have exactly the same record format, and the merge will add the two lots of records together to form one larger database.

Joining on the other hand does not require an identical record format. When two files are joined, every record from the first file is compared with every record from the second, and whenever a pair is found to match (according to a selection rule you specify), a new record is made which holds all the data from both the originals. Again a third file is created to hold all the joined records.

● Subtraction: This involves removing the contents of one file from another, or to put it simply, if *a b c d* and *e* were records, in files represented by bracketed sets, then subtraction works like this:

```
(a b c d e) - (b c) = (a d e)
```

A third file *(a d e)* is made, but neither *(a b c d e)* nor *(b c)* are affected by this.

The define module has a further macro facility, which allows you to speed up long drawn out relational operations. The command sequence is stored on disc, and can be reloaded for playback whenever the sequence next requires to be executed. So by any standards, DMP's relational features are quite advanced.

Having your data accessible at the press of a few keys is very handy for one-off references, but for it to be of any use to anybody else in your organisation for regular consultation or decision making purposes – or yourself for that matter when you're away from your micro – you must be able to produce hard copies of your information in a clear, organised and usable format. This is where a report generator comes in.

Report generation

DMP's bult-in report generator is a particularly powerful and flexible one, and works just like a word processing mail merger in most respects. The difference is that the report contents are drawn from information in your database fields rather than a straight mailing list.

In other words, you design a customised report form to include just the information you require from each of your records, with each report field being a variable that's bound to a specified database field. During the report generation process these fields are automatically replaced by the contents of their corresponding fields from records in the database. It's data merging, to coin a phrase.

The data need not necessarily be used in its raw form either: Numerical fields can be used in calculation formulae within a report form so the results of the calculations appear in the final report. This enables you to produce powerful intelligent reports including averages, totals, amounts due, statistical information, and so on.

In fact special automatic facilities are available for inserting means and cumulative totals at regular intervals throughout a report. Page numbers can also be inserted wherever you need them, as can the current date at the time a report is run off.

The generator has a broad enough range of features to allow you to actually produce mail merged letters in bulk relative to information held in your database. There's a special facility for use in this context, which does calculations on the contents of date fields to work out time periods in days, so you can produce letters containing phrases like: "It is now 60 days since your account payments fell overdue, so we must inform you...".

You're not limited to reporting across the whole of your database when producing reports, because you can select a subset of records first from within the Report module, using compound search criteria in exactly the same way as you can in the Maintain module.

For the actual design stage of a report DMP provides a word processor–like environment within a window just as it does for laying out record forms within the database proper, and again virtually everything can be done entirely under mouse control. There are also special block copy, paste and delete functions which work by dragging a rubber band box round areas within the working window.

Any field can be justified to the left,

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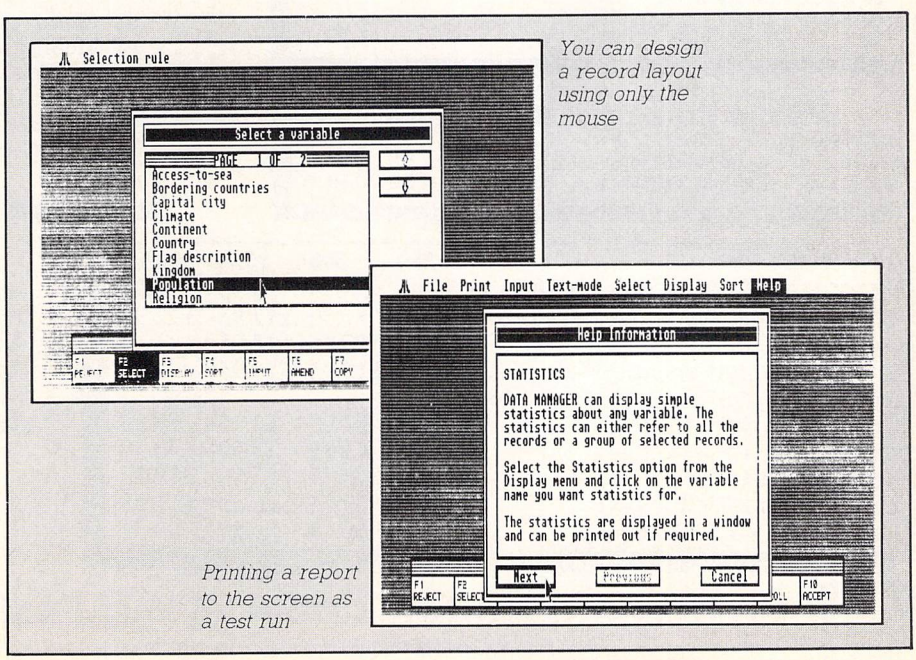

You can design a record layout using only the mouse

Printing a report to the screen as a test run

◀ *From Page 55*

right, or centre, and the report editor also provides a clever system of insertable anchor points to aid in standardising layouts.

When the report is being filled with actual data these anchor points turn into spaces whose horizontal position is fixed, so that if an expression is placed between two of them it will always occupy the same position irrespective of its length or that of any other expressions.

And for added clarity you can also choose to have certain parts of a report in different typestyles by inserting control codes in the appropriate places.

Test runs

Once you think you've got your layout exactly as you want it, you can go for a trial run by using the program's special facility to print a report to the screen. This makes for big savings on paper and – more importantly – time, allowing you to fine tune a report quickly, since you nip straight back into edit mode after a trial run.

Then once you know it's working as planned you can save the format to disc as a file with a .REP filename extension, to be reloaded whenever you need it. Reports can also be printed to disc as Ascii files for possible later reference, or perhaps to be polished up further in some way using the dedicated facilities of a word processor, or possibly even a spreadsheet where numerical information is concerned.

As for interfacing with other software generally, Data Manager Professional will allow database files to be imported and exported in standard Ascii format, so you needn't retype all the data you might already have stored using another package.

If you have the Timeworks' original Data Manager ST program and wish to upgrade, you should be able to make a smooth and painless transition thanks to CONVERT.APP, a dedicated utility, which Timeworks has included with DMP especially for this purpose. It seems that this time they thought of everything.

Conclusions

All in all, Data Manager Professional is an excellent package. It has real power for serious applications, full relational capability, superb reporting facilities, and manages to achieve all this while still remaining extremely easy to use. Within a business context it would make a very competent decision support tool.

The manual is well thought out, comprehensive, well indexed, professionally presented, and has an easy to follow beginner's section that gets you to grips with the package in hours rather than days.

And at under £70 it's outstanding value for money, so I'd have no reservations in recommending it strongly to anyone looking for a powerful, all-round database manager for the ST.

FACT FILE

Product: Data Manager Professional
Price: £69.95
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HEAD COACH v3

On the field 220lb blocks of concrete-on-legs collide, while a small man in a suit paces the touchline stroking his chin. He's the Head Coach. He has more tactical skill in his little finger than the MCC can muster in the entire club. Third down and 9, he signals to his quarterback. The quarterback takes the snap back into the pocket, dummies to his star running back, wheels to the right skirting two defenders, motions to throw to his rightside wide receiver and then swings his pass back over the pack to his open Tight End. He catches and makes another five yards before being grounded. An eleven yard gain and another first down, thanks to 2 hours of rehearsal the previous Thursday afternoon. The crowd cheer the quarterback but the head coach knows that his Right Guard really deserves the credit. This is American Football, Chess with mobile human pieces.

It's your first season as a Head Coach in the NFL and you face two pre-season games. You must give as many of your 45 players a run out to see how they've come through the close season. Through these matches and the time spent at training camp you must devise your game plan to face your first NFL game. Over the next 16 games you will meet the likes of the Chicago Bears, the Washington Redskins, the Dallas Cowboys, the LA Raiders (hiss). Each game will need a new plan to exploit the weaknesses and nullify the strengths of such teams, and in the game you will probe their defense and try to stifle their offense. Success over these 16 matches will put you into the playoffs and in sight of the Superbowl. Failure will give you the best of the college draft, which will allow you to make up for the deficiencies you must by now have discovered in your side. Providing of course that the club keeps you on . . .

Let us be straight , Head coach v3 is NOT an arcade game. It's a sophisticated game based on American Football. For those who already understand something about the game, it's a chance to find out just how much they really know. For those to whom the game appeals but is something of a mystery, then Head Coach v3 is the ideal way to find out what the game is all about. In the match itself, you have a choice of 27 offensive plays and 21 defensive plays, and so you can bias your plays to suit the skills of your squad and negate those of the opposition. The training camp will give you an insight into the current performance of your players, even checking their speed in 40 yard sprints. There's only one thing that can prevent your team from eventually achieving a Superbowl place; YOU! But we warn you, this game is addictive!

"World of Soccer" and "Head Coach v3" are published by QUALSOFT at £17.50 and £19.95 respectively.

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C what's new

The latest version of Mark Williams C is one of the most powerful and flexible systems available but it does have a few irritating faults, says our C expert Stephen Hill

OVER the past few years a number of approaches have been devised by software houses in an attempt to create the perfect programming environment. The easiest option has always been to provide a list of commands which allow you to control the various features of the package directly from the keyboard.

Typical examples of this technique can be found in operating systems such as MSdos and Unix, and interpreted languages like Forth. Another popular alternative has been to enable you to manipulate all the different components of the system from an arrangement of simple on-screen menus. As the ST comes complete with the Gem graphics environment, this approach has been adopted for the majority of programming languages available for these machines.

This has been especially true of compiled languages such as C, which usually revolve around an easy to use Gem-based workbench program. There are, however, a number of inherent disadvantages in these Wimp environments. What you gain in user friendliness, you generally lose in terms of flexibilty.

So if you want to do something really unorthodox you may well be forced to leave the workbench completely and access the compiler directly.

In addition, some people find that the Gem graphics create an irritating barrier between them and the programming language they are trying to use. Now Mark Williams has given such people a viable alternative by producing a new version of their impressive C development package for the Atari ST.

Installing MWC

Mark Williams C (MWC) comes on five single sided discs containing a Unix-compatible command interpreter along with many of the more useful Unix utilities like Make and Egrep. The package also includes a number of welcome extras such as a disc librarian, a resource construction set and an effective 68000 assembler.

Before using MWC you are strongly advised to create working copies of each of the program discs. To that end a useful program has been supplied on disc four which automates this procedure completely.

Most users will now need to tailor the system to their specific configuration with the Install program. If you are restricted to a single drive you can, however, omit this step. You must then create a resettable ram disc using a utility called RDY.

This is necessary because the complete development system takes over a megabyte of memory, though the package does run quite happily on an unexpanded 520ST. It is, therefore, recommended that you keep all your source programs in a ram disc, even if you're using MWC on something relatively powerful such as a 1040ST.

When you have installed this device, you inform the rest of the package of its existence by modifying a special configuration file known as Profile. If you think this procedure sounds rather complicated, you would be right.

I was delighted to be able to get the whole thing working within about four hours, although this did include a lot of time flicking through the manual. Compared to the procedures required by Laser C or Metacomco C – reviewed in the September 1988 and August 1987 issues respectively of *Atari ST User* – which took less than an hour, I found the process both time consuming and incredibly tedious.

The Unix-like shell

Once you've managed to install the package you can enter the command interpreter MSH which forms the centre of the development system. MSH is based on a Unix-like operating system called Coherent, and provides an excellent subset of the standard Unix commands.

Invariably your feelings toward MSH will depend on your opinion of Unix. I must admit that I did not start this review as one of Unix's greatest fans, as I've always regarded it as being rather too unwieldy for use on a micro.

As I learned more about it, however, I rapidly started to appreciate the flexibility which forms much of its appeal. It's probably easiest to consider MSH as a programming language in its own right, designed to give you complete control over the many options provided by the development system.

To that end, it supports a range of powerful facilities including device redirection and user defined procedures. You can also place a list of MSH instruc-

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```
int lim;
char s[];
{
        int c, i;
        for ( i=0; (c=getchar())!=EOF && c!='\n'; ++i )
                if (  i<lim-1 )
                        s[i] = c;
        if ( c == '\n' )
                s[i++] = c;
        if ( i<lim-1)
                s[i] = '\0';
        else
                s[lim-1]='\0';
        return(i);
}

copy(maxchar,s,d)
char s[], d[];
int maxchar;
{
        int i;
        for ( i=0; i<maxchar && (d[i]=s[i])!='\0'; ++i ) ;
}
-- ST MicroEMACS 1.8 -- ex1_14.c -- File: a:\ex1_14.c ------
```

Editing a file with Micro Emacs

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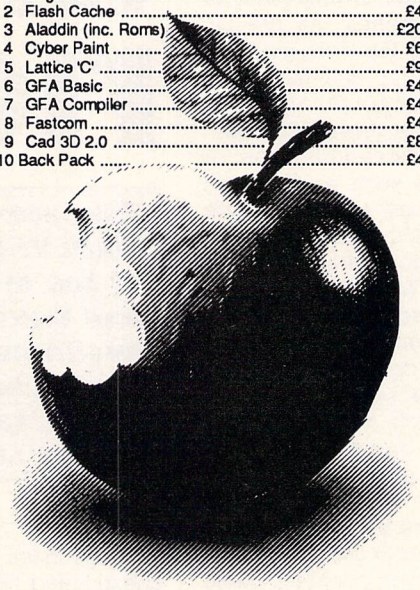

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tions in a batch file and then execute them at any time directly from the keyboard.

Another important aspect of the language is the inclusion of a small but useful set of control structures. In my opinion these add a whole new dimension to the process of program development. I also liked the History feature which enabled you to recall any of the last few commands and then re-execute them by pressing a couple of keys.

Testing, testing

Testing your routines couldn't be easier, as any Tos-based program can be executed straight from the shell simply by typing its name. You can also run Gem programs from MSH by preceding them with the command gem, although this did occasionally crash the computer when the memory was particularly tight.

One minor irritation is that there are no facilities for genuine screen editing. Rather than being able to jump around the screen using the arrow keys, you were in fact limited to simple line editing using Delete and Backspace. It's also worth noting that, like Unix, most commands are in lower case. This occasionally caused some confusion when the Caps Lock key was inadvertently pressed, as the interpreter repeatedly rejected anything subseqently entered.

In order to cram a Unix-like shell into the ST, Mark Williams has been forced to supply most of the standard utilities on a separate disc. Unless you have either a hard disc, or plenty of memory, this will invariably slow down the entire system considerably, and would be a major annoyance to many people, especially those restricted to a single drive.

Overall I found MSH to be potentially very useful, but rather slow in its execution. It was also fairly complicated, and unless you have previous experience of Unix it would take a considerable amount of effort to completely familiarise yourself with this system.

Certainly on a Mega ST it is excellent as you can hold all the many utilities in a large ram disc and access them at any time practically instantaneously. The system also inevitably exhibits dramatic speed improvements when used in conjunction with a hard disc.

The compiler

The C compiler itself incorporates an impressive range of options ranging from Peephole optimisation to the ability to choose between relative and absolute addressing for your object programs. Most of the common C functions are supported along with several modern extensions such as void and enumerated types.

Normally the compiler is called from within the MSH environment using the cc command. This loads and runs the various segments of the compiler and then calls the linker to create an executable program. The cc command is relatively intelligent and allows you to compile whole lists of programs using a single line.

If that wasn't enough, you can also compile object files, C source files, and 68000 assembly language programs in the same operation. These will be sent to the various components of the system and will be combined into one large program automatically by the linker.

In addition, there's a special option to allow you to generate a C program as a file of assembly language statements. This can be modified by hand to optimise

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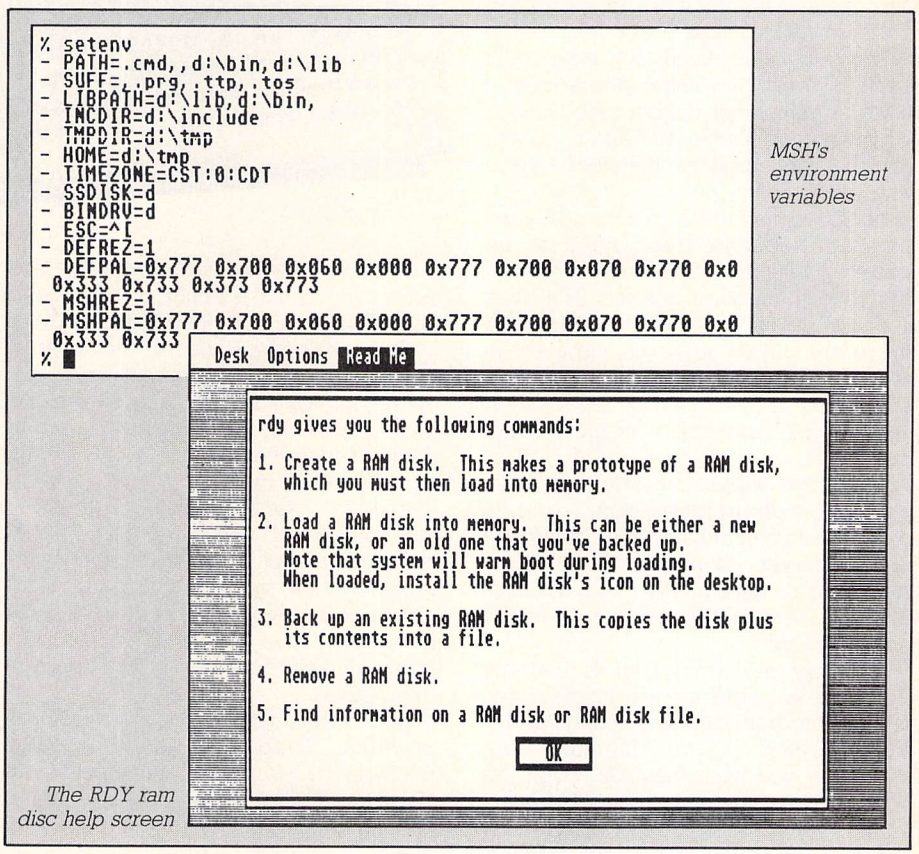
MINI EDITOR

The editor supplied with this package is a cut down version of the Emacs editor and is called Micro Emacs or ME. It can be loaded at any time directly from MSH, and is the sort of editor which relies entirely on the keyboard and makes no real concessions to the inexperienced user.

To my eyes it looks very old fashioned indeed with most commands being executed using complicated control key combinations. In terms of raw power it scores reasonably well with a comprehensive set of commands ranging from the usual search and replace to a powerful macro facility. You can also edit several files simultaneously using up to 11 separate windows. Other features include a crude form of auto-indent, and the ability to call up any of the MSH commands without having to leave the editor.

While none of this is exactly Earth shattering stuff, once you get used to the control sequences, the editor is more than adequate for most purposes, and certainly no worse than many others I've used.

Incidentally, it is important to realise that ME was written completely in Mark Williams' C. The entire source code has been supplied on one of the discs, and this enables you to readily customise the editor precisely to your own needs.



MSH's environment variables

The RDY ram disc help screen

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critical sections and then assembled into an executable program.

Gem programmers will be pleased to note that the compiler includes full support for all the standard Gem libraries. Unlike some of its competitors, Mark Williams has provided a simple option to allow you to create your own Gem desktop accessories. A full worked example of this can be found in the documentation supplied with the package.

Unfortunately, the compiler and linker together occupy more than 500k of memory. This means that although you can just about squeeze a working copy of the system on to a single disc, you are forced to omit most of the include files and all of the Gem libraries.

Compiler and linker

Any users of the package on a standard 520 must therefore place all their source files on a ram disc, and then repeatedly swap between the linker and compiler discs. If you've got double sided drives the situation is slightly better, as you can place all the compiler and linker files on a single disc.

As the compiler is split into several different sections, these need to be loaded one after another every time a program is compiled. As the ST's discs are notoriously slow, the compiler therefore takes several minutes to compile even the smallest of C programs. Compared to the speed of Laser C this level of performance was most unimpressive.

The linker supplied with the package uses its own unique format and is therefore incompatible with anything else on the market. Having said that, it does appear to do its job fairly well, although like the rest of the system it wasn't especially fast.

My only real complaint is that the floating point libraries are not included into the program as a default and need to be specified in the command line whenever you want them. Although this does tend to reduce the size of some of your routines, it is still depressingly easy to forget this option completely, and then be forced to tediously relink the entire program all over again.

I'm delighted to say that MW have supplied an excellent resource construction program as an integral part of the system. In many respects this is undoubtedly one of the best of its kind I've seen.

Among its unique features is the ability to create resource files using either a powerful Gem-based graphic environment, or directly from a file of simple text commands. RSC files can be converted easily from one format to another, which allows you to make minor corrections to an RSC file using any standard text editor.

The only real problem I encountered was one of speed. Some of the drawing operations appeared to take eons to be performed. I also found the pixels used in the icon editor very difficult to see on my high resolution monitor.

Another potentially useful utility is the assembly level debugger, DB. This is really only capable of debugging programs with a significant assembly language component, as it has no facilities for viewing the original C source program alongside its assembly language translation.

Mark Williams promises a version of its powerful CSD source level debugger for the ST in the near future, although this will only be available separately for an additional charge, possibly in the region of £60.

The documentation supplied with the package is split into two sections. The first provides you with a simple tutorial to introduce the editor, shell and Make utilities respectively. This appears to be both well written and easy to understand.

Unfortunately, it doesn't really go into enough detail for you to rely on it totally, and you therefore need to dip into the Lexicon. This makes up the bulk of the manual, and consists of a list of articles in alphabetical order describing the actions of the system's components.

Although this is fairly comprehensive, and includes large entries on the AES and VDI libraries, I still have a number of minor misgivings with this approach. I found that when searching for a specific piece of information I often ended up desperately flicking back and forth through the manual from entry to entry to no avail.

AND IN CONCLUSION

On paper, Mark Williams C appears to be extremely impressive indeed as it supplies you with practically everything you could conceivably need for serious development work on the ST. The only real difficulty lies in the fact that the implementers appear to have assumed that any genuine user of the package will have either a hard disc or more than a megabyte of memory.

Considering that Mark Williams also produces a range of C compilers for a variety of other machines, this is not a completely unwarranted assumption, as hard discs are now relatively inexpensive for computers like the IBM PC. Unfortunately the price of hard discs for the ST takes them beyond the reach of the majority of users.

In my opinion many people would find the overall performance of this package a little disappointing, particularly on a 1040ST. Mark Williams C will work quite happily on a standard 520, but in practice you might be generally far better off looking elsewhere, as you would be limited in the size and the number of the programs you could compile.

Despite these problems, the package does have a great deal of potential, especially if you have access to a hard disc.

It's certainly not the easiest system to get into, and unless you are already conversant with Unix and Emacs, it would be wise to allow at least a week to familiarise yourself with the package before attempting to use it in any serious way.

In many respects, however, this is undoubtedly one of the most flexible and powerful C development systems currently on the market, and you could easily find that the extra effort would be more than amply repaid.

I don't think the system is at all suitable for casual users of the language, but for anyone wishing to write large C-based applications on an ST, Mark Williams may well have provided an ideal solution.

FACT FILE

Product: Mark Williams C
Price: £129
Supplier: Electric Distribution, 8 Green Street, Willingham, Cambridgeshire CB4 5JA.
Tel: 0954 61258

POINTS FOR:
Very powerful, flexible and comprehensive system. Good resource construction kit.

AGAINST:
Lots of disc swapping with a 520ST – better with more memory and double sided drives. Complex Unix-like shell takes time to master.

COMPETITORS REVIEWED:
Lattice C, August 1987.
Laser C, September 1988.

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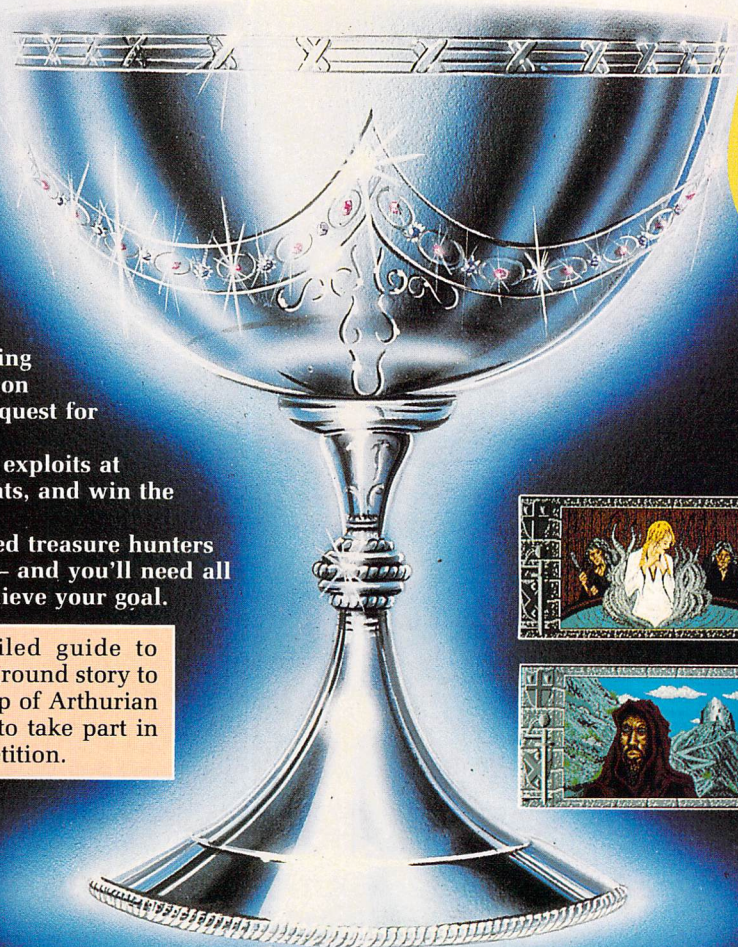

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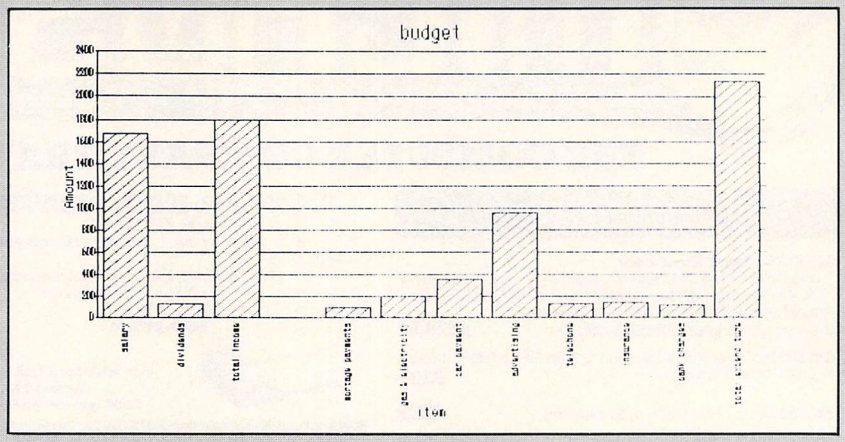
What is a spreadsheet?

BRIEFLY, a spreadsheet is an electronic tabulated worksheet that can be tailored to produce and monitor cashflows, profit and loss accounts and even help to balance your cheque book. A spreadsheet can also be used to classify and calculate non-monetary arithmetic data, such as examination scores.

The sheet is made up of a large number of cells – spaces – organised as rows and columns, containing numbers, text or calculations defined by the user. When one of the cells is changed it is reflected in the state of the others so it is easy to predict the outcome of certain circumstances, like sales or bank balances and so on.



Vertical bar graph of part of the budget spreadsheet

Teaching an old dog new tricks

Mark Smiddy evaluates Timeworks' Swiftcalc and asks if it still sets the standard

A LOT of water has passed under the bridge since Timeworks first introduced its Swiftcalc spreadsheet for the ST. Since then at least four rivals have appeared to compete in a very crowded marketplace. Masterplan and the Lotus 1-2-3 clone VIP, are two that spring to mind.

Still, Timeworks has a reputation for producing good quality software, and maybe the old dog has learnt a few new tricks.

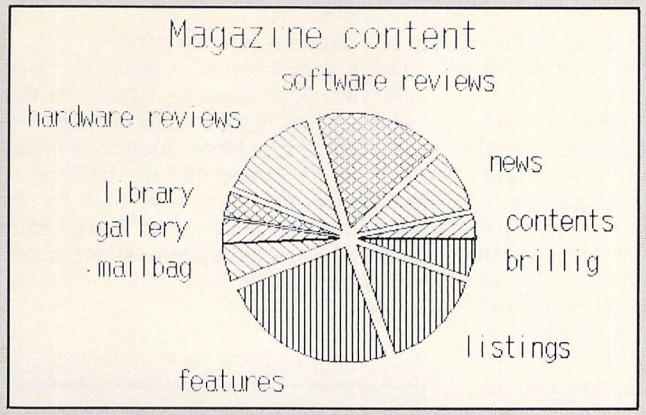
Swiftcalc is supplied on two discs and is accompanied by a 170 page manual. It provides normal spreadsheet operations – global formatting, merging and extracting functions, file transfer to graph drawing facilities, plus extensions for financial, scientific, trigonometric and simple database functions.

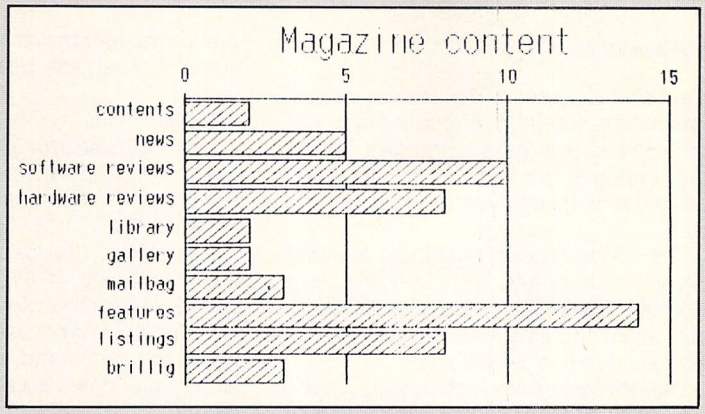
It can even be integrated with Data Manager and Word Writer to produce impressive looking reports and documents.

At startup the screen is divided into seven columns and 17 rows with seven drop-down menus. This gives a better overall default spread on screen than Masterplan's 9 by 13 spread. In fact the screen is well laid out and clearer than average, lacking the clutter of some later rivals.

Swiftcalc offers the option to widen the columns to accommodate various data and thereby alter the sheet's entire operating appearance. The bottom two lines of the display give information such as the current cell – which is also clearly highlighted, its contents and a memory jogger of which button to press.

You can assign names to cells – for instance, Sales can refer to cell A17. This is done using the rather strange /name





Swiftcalc can use its spreadsheet and graphics functions to cope with non-monetary data

command. A pull-down set of Help screens is particularly useful while getting to grips with some of the more unique aspects of Swiftcalc's usage.

Current cell contents are not shown in editable form, the designers opting for a clearer, if unfamiliar arrangement showing the contents to be empty, numeric, text or calculation. This can be an annoyance while designing the initial sheet, but once again saves clutter when you come to use it.

When it comes to the crunch, though, spreadsheets are serious business applications, so anything to make the task of, say, financial forecasting easier is essential. It is in this major area where Swiftcalc scores well over many of its rivals with a nice set of monetary analysis functions – enough to keep most bookkeeping systems well up to date.

There's even set of simple maths and basic statistical functions, in addition to the usual simple arithmetic facilities should you require them.

Unusually for this sort of application, Swiftcalc is small, at least by ST standards – less than 190k. This compares with more than 250k for say, Masterplan. The advantage is that it runs quite comfortably in 512k, unlike some of its contempories which run out of memory after entering just a few formulae.

This economy has been gained at the expense of the graphics and sideways printing features, which are contained as separate modules on a second disc. Although this may sound rather clumsy, it works quite well in practice – provided you remember to create the relevant graph or print file before exiting, since these programs cannot read spreadsheet data directly.

In fact, the graphics and printing modules are what separates Swiftcalc from the rest of the field. Sheets can be printed from within the program, but this facility is limited to the width of the paper. With the sideways printing module it's possible to print out sheets hundreds of columns wide should you wish to do so.

Quite apart from that, the graphics module is very powerful, although it does suffer from being a little difficult to get to grips with. However, with a little practice it is possible to create some very impressive graphical analyses of your data.

> ***"If you really need an integrated system on a budget, it is worth a closer look"***

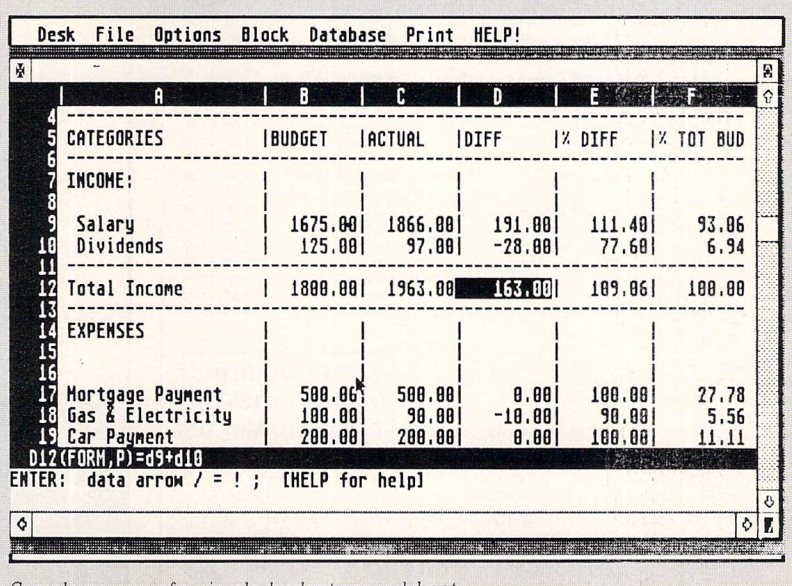
The graphical analysis functions incorporate a wide range of symbols, signs and graph types. The program supports horizontal or vertical bar graphs, overlay graphs, histograms and pie charts among many.

Swiftcalc is powerful and malleable when it comes to toggling between entering data on the graph, changing graph style and drawing it on screen or to printer. This provides you with the flexibility to change data or graph type to suit the representation required.

The graphs can also be operated in a number of colours and hatching styles. It is therefore nice to know that Swiftcalc can be run on colour medium or monochrome high resolution monitors. While these facilities may not quite match up to the pliability of Glentop's superb Graphic Sheet, they outperform many of Swiftcalc's closer rivals.

Sadly, for all of its good points, Swiftcalc does suffer a few hang-ups. Its worst feature is its slow speed. It makes extensive use of Gem and appears to have been coded entirely in an early version of Lattice C, where a smattering of assembler could have speeded response

Turn to Page 78 ▶



Sample screen of a simple budget spreadsheet

◀ *From Page 77*

in several key areas. This is most noticeable when scrolling through the sheet using the cursor keys – the key repeat often means the screen shoots past unavoidably, though you soon get used to this.

The update speed is nothing to write home about either, although this is a problem from which many such packages suffer. By their very nature spreadsheets can never be truly fast.

The second major omission is Gem's drag feature. More recent packages like Masterplan use this facility to highlight a block of two or more cells for copying, deleting and so on. In Swiftcalc, dragging merely results in the screen scrolling around the sheet. You must define blocks of cells by their cell addresses – for instance A5:E22 – something I found tedious and prone to error.

Perhaps the strangest feature of all is the use of slash commands – there are 20 in all, accessed by pressing / plus a letter. It's not unusual on other micros, but I doubt their usefulness in a Gem environment, since they're ambiguous at the very least. Besides which all of the functions covered are directly accessible from the pull-down menus, as well as a combination of Alternate plus the appropriate letter.

In many ways – though inferior in itself – Digita's Digicalc makes greater use of the keyboard, which in turn makes access and handling much quicker. It appears that the Swiftcalc programmers have opted for the Gem environment, but failed to use it to its best effect. There have been some awkward moments, as I decided whether to use a function key, an alternate command, a / command or simply pull down a menu option with the mouse.

Swiftcalc is well supported by its manual – as you would expect from Timeworks – especially the excellent reference section. The manual covers everything from getting to know Gem to generating graphics from data resource. However, I feel that a function keystrip and easy view reference card would have been a valuable addition. This would ease the gradient of the learning curve as you get to know the package.

The function key definitions, odd alternate commands and formula and extended commands are perplexing at first. They would have been made more user friendly if they were also available on a separate reference card.

In the end, I feel a lot could be done with Swiftcalc to improve it, however this is unlikely now in view of the competition. In its favour is a large, friendly manual, excellent packaging and the back-up of the Timeworks company. It is by no means the best or the worst. If you really need an integrated system, on a budget, it is worth a closer look.

FACT FILE

Product: Swiftcalc
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POINTS FOR:
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UNBEATABLE PRICES

Busting into the protection racket

Steve Baker examines some of the methods used to counteract software piracy, and suggests constructive alternatives that are fairer to honest users

LET me say at the outset that this article does not set out to tell would-be pirates how to break the law. Rather it is a tale of an arms race between pirate and publisher. And it is interesting to note how we, the honest computer users, suffer at each and every stage. Let me tell you a story ...

I have a copy of Hacker II – quite an interesting game – and of course, copy-protected. The instructions suggest that having a printer on line during play would be of some advantage.

My printer is an Epson MX-80 and you need to use the Atari control panel to configure it. Hacker didn't have a copy of the control panel desk accessory on the disc, so, having checked that it had enough space, I copied the accessory software on to the Hacker disc. To my horror I discovered that all the other files on the disc vanished as soon as I did this and the game wouldn't load any more.

When I tried to take the game back to the shop I was accused of having bought it and copied it before bringing the original back and reclaiming my money.

I was furious, and being a bit of a programming enthusiast decided to write a program that would let me make backups of all my games in case this happened again. I failed. Why I failed makes for an interesting tale, as I'm about to explain.

There are many ways in which software publishers seek to protect their "intellectual property" rights, most of which fall into one of several broad categories:

Logical dongles

A dongle is a small chunk of circuitry that plugs into the computer somewhere – usually the cartridge or printer port – and is provided with a piece of software. When the program is started up, it checks to make sure the dongle is plugged in. If not, it reminds the user and bombs out.

The disadvantages of the dongle are that the cost of a chunk of custom hardware must be added to the price of the software. Sometimes this hardware is incredibly crude – just a length of wire inside a normal printer connector that forces one of the pins of the printer port to a zero state. The software checks that this pin is pulled low to detect the presence of the dongle.

Devices of this nature are relatively easy for the electronically-minded pirate to duplicate, so are fast going out of style in favour of so-called active dongles.

An active dongle is a small logic circuit that accepts one or more code words sent to it and responds with a different set of codes. The software knows what the rule is for generating the result and so can check that each code word is replied to correctly. This sort of device can be almost impossible to fake.

The advantages of dongles to the consumer is that the disc containing the software can be copied freely, the code may be put on to hard disc and if you use the same sort of machine at home and at work you can take the dongle from one machine to the other and run the software on any one machine at any time.

The big disadvantage is that the cost of the dongle will certainly raise the cost of the product by a few pounds, and because you can usually only have one dongle plugged in at any one time, there is much dongle-swapping when switching from one program to another.

This constitutes a serious restriction on computers with multi-tasking capabilities if you want to run two or more dongle-protected programs at the same time.

By far the most common sort of copy protection is the so-called uncopyable disc, and the way these work is often very subtle.

The first copy-protected discs on other computers used simple tricks like hidden files. Each file on the Atari has some flag bits associated with it, including a read-only bit that you can change using the

Show Info menu from the desktop.

One of these bits sets the file as hidden, but on the ST this doesn't stop it from being copied by picking the A disc icon up from the desktop and dropping it on to the icon for disc B.

This is because this command copies the individual tracks and sectors of the source disc on to the corresponding tracks and sectors of the destination disc, and thus makes an exact clone – hidden files and all.

The reason that discs can be made uncopyable at all is that the ST operating system only knows about tracks 0-79 and sectors 1-9 on either one or two sides of the disc.

This brings me to the next sneaky trick, which was to rely on the fact that disc drives, although only rated at 80 tracks, can in fact read and write one or two more. So the software publisher had only to put some vital information on track 81, let's say, and the operating system would fail to copy that data. Consequently the resulting disc wouldn't work.

This turned out to be a real pain because some early 520STFMs have third-party drives that can't go past track 79, and so sometimes fail to run older games protected in this way. A better trick had to be found.

Another property of disc drives is that they vary somewhat in rotational speed and this determines how much data can be packed on to a single track. Standard ST discs have nine sectors of 512 bytes each on every track, but provided the drive is functioning well it can easily hold 10 sectors. So all the software publisher has to do is leave some vital information on sector 10 and it won't get copied.

All of this works really well against the naive or ill-equipped pirate, but already there are public domain programs to let you format and copy discs with 10 sectors and 81 or more tracks. (In fact if you can get hold of one of these you can increase the amount of data you can store on a disc by 10-12 per cent – highly recommended). Another stage in the arms race begins.

To understand the next trick, you need to know a bit more about disc formats. On each physical track of a floppy disc is written not just your data, but also a small header record in front of each disc sector. This contains the track and sector number, the side number and the length of the following sector.

Misleading

Interestingly though it is quite possible to write "lies" into this header. For example, the third sector on the second track could be formatted with a header record that proclaims it to be the eighth sector of the tenth track.

The operating system will never find this bogus sector, because whenever it makes the drive read physical track number two, it also tells the disc controller chip that the data is headed with a track two header, and the hardware simply ignores the misnamed sector. Whenever the controller is looking for sector eight, track 10, the drive heads are sitting over track 10 and the bogus sector is still not seen.

In addition, it is quite possible for software publishers to leave out sectors altogether, number sectors with values like 234 (way out of the normal range of sector numbers), the side number can be set to silly values and the sector length can be reduced or increased.

When you try to copy such a disc, the ST just complains about corrupt discs, missing data and so forth. The game, of course, knows where sectors are missing and does not attempt to read them – it may even check to make sure they are missing – and knows where to look for mis-labelled sectors. To copy a disc like this you would need a program to seek out those hidden sectors.

If you wanted to search out the hidden sectors you could try the READ SECTOR command – but if you don't know what to search for you'll still be more or less down to trial and error.

There are 720 sectors on a single-sided disc, and each one could be labelled in many false ways. The ST's disc drive is controlled by a chip called a WD1772. This controller chip uses one byte each for track, sector and side information, giving a possible 17 million ways to number each sector. At 1/10th second per sector it could take you about 40 years to deduce what was on the disc!

There are ways to reduce this search time considerably, by using a command called READ TRACK on the WD1772. This reads both the data and the header records, and with some considerable programming effort you can produce a tool to find out what all the false sectors are labelled and thus read them. So is this a way to pirate discs? Well it might have been – but the arms race continues ...

Once you have worked out what is on a disc you need to create another one exactly the same – with the same false sectors – so you have to write a special formatting program. It would have to create the false sector headers and then copy the data from the original disc into them.

Restriction

Formatting a disc entails telling the disc controller what the pattern of headers and data is, and what information to write into the headers, and the only way to write to the header fields is by formatting.

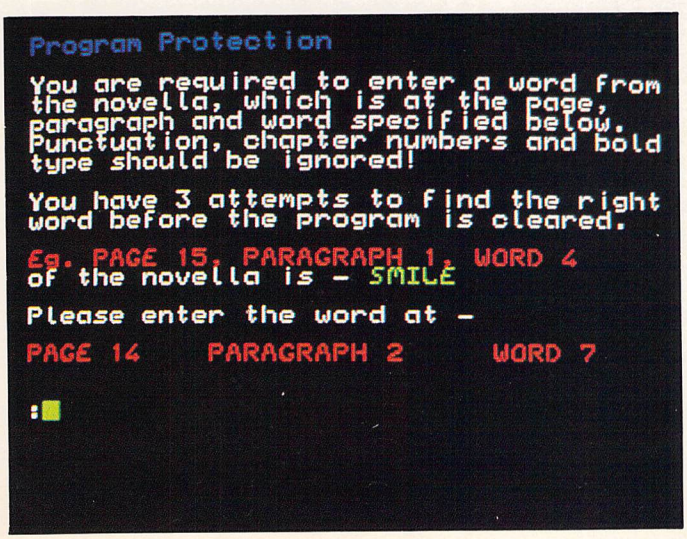
The interesting wrinkle here is that the WD1772 treats data values in the range 245 to 255 specially when formatting, and uses them internally to determine which format data is to build a header and which to build a data area. This means you simply cannot write data in this range on to the disc during formatting.

If the publisher formats his discs on something that doesn't use the WD1772 controller chip this restriction may be removed, so that he can make header records with track and sector numbers in the range 245 to 255 in the certain knowledge that no Atari ST formatted disc can possibly duplicate it!

To my mind this is an insurmountable problem to the pirate unless he is determined enough to build a custom disc interface with some other disc controller chip in it.

The latest dirty trick that I have seen is to embed things that look like sector headers in the body of the data part of a sector. This fools many copying programs into creating extra sectors that there is no room for on the track. The arms race is obviously still going strong.

Another ingenious technique I have



The protection system used in Rainbird's Starglider 2

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◀ *From Page 81*

heard of, but never seen, is to burn a microscopic hole in the disc with a laser. The sector hit by the hole becomes corrupted, and the software checks for this by first reformatting that track, then writing to the affected area, then re-reading it.

If that sector comes out still corrupt the odds are that this is the original disc because the same re-format, re-write, read technique on a copied disc would result in the sector being OK. I sincerely hope this protection method is never used on ST software, because there is strong evidence that the sharp edge of the laser hole can damage disc heads.

All forms of copy protected discs are a real pain in the neck – you can't back them up, you can't run the software from a hard disc, and they eventually wear out.

A determined campaign in the US led in the main by Jerry Pournelle has resulted in the virtual elimination of copy protection in IBM PC software. Jerry simply said that he would stop buying software that was copy protected – if everyone does this the publishers will stop doing it overnight. Perhaps we need a similar campaign in the UK.

Does this mean that I want the pirate to have a free hand? Far from it. I am a professional programmer myself and would hate to see my hard work ripped off by some miserly pirate. But I believe there are at least three ways to minimise the costs of piracy.

Purple prose

Firstly provide a code card, which is a sheet of paper provided with the packaging of the program that has a large grid of apparently random characters printed on it. When booted, the software prints a row and column number at random and asks the user to type in the character from the card at that grid location. If you get it right the program runs, otherwise it bombs out.

The card is printed in low-contrast colours on some vividly coloured paper to make it un-photocopyable. This system is provided in the Dizzy Wizard game for example, and seems to work well. I have not found a photocopier that would produce more than a grey mess when trying to copy the purple ink from the dark red cardboard.

Secondly you could use the large amount of text in the mini-novel that comes with most quality games these days. Simply ask the user to type in a word from a specified page and line each time the game starts. Assuming you ask for one of a large range of words, the pirate would be forced to photocopy the entire book in order to be able to run the game.

The nicest alternative though is to make the game so cheap, or the packaging, posters, mini-novels and accessories sufficiently desirable to make the game worth buying in its own right. Perhaps many pirates would still copy the game – but you have to ask yourself whether they would have bought it if they couldn't copy it?

The really great thing about key cards and suchlike is that the programs can be backed up, run from hard disc, moved on to double-sided discs to save disc swapping in two-disc games and so on and so on.

These methods leave the user with infinitely more flexibility as well as insurance against master disc corruption.

I could cope with budget software for the Spectrum corrupting on me when it cost less than £2 a go, but with budget ST software at around the £10 mark, and most serious business packages costing upwards of £30, I do get very resentful. So please software publishers, give it a try.

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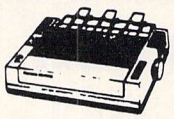

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Off to see the Wizard

Neils Reynolds on the story behind Shades, the fast-growing multi-user game

Neil Newell, Easy Rider

DEEP in the wooded wilds of Southern England, far beyond the Stockbroker Belt where no Yuppie has ever ventured, lives a mysterious being who has created a strange and mystical land. He is the Arch Wizard Hazeii – adopting the name of Neil Newell for everyday use – and the land is Shades.

No longer a figment of his imagination, Shades has been made accessible to any mere mortal who has the use of a telling bone, a modem and who is enrolled in the fabled society of MicroLink/Telecom Gold or Micronet.

The Arch-Wizard first became interested in multi-user adventures when he encountered the original MUD game running on a mainframe at Essex University.

However, he soon felt that the game could be improved in many areas, and what started as a hobby was soon taking up all his time. So it was that the Land of Shades came into being and mild-mannered Neil Newell became Hazeii, Arch Wizard.

Shades is a vast sprawling landscape where lost souls, knights, wolves, witches and wizards prowl looking for treasure or trouble – or both. You create your own personality within the game, travelling through the mysterious kingdom, forging alliances and fighting battles in your quest for treasure.

You strive to work your way through 13 ranks of Innocents, Soothsayers, Necromancers and Warlocks until you attain the rank of Wizard or Witch – depending on your inclination.

In this true multi-user game, other travellers you meet in Shades may be computer generated, but are more likely to be insomniacs attached to a telephone line anywhere in the country. The character you are talking with could be your next door neighbour or a lighthouse keeper in the Orkneys – players have been known to log on from Europe and even New Zealand.

There is no denying the party atmosphere of Shades. Even those who are not accomplished adventurers can enjoy the game, talking to other players, acting out fantasies or just getting used to the game at their own pace. Help can be asked of fellow travellers, but then you are never sure whether their advice can be relied upon...

There is much on offer to serious adventurers too with brain-curdling problems to solve, a whole babble of beasties and nasty characters to deal with and promotions to achieve – by fair means or foul.

So the adventure does not become too crowded and all players have a good opportunity at treasure-grabbing, up to 16 independent games can be running at one time and you can choose which of them to join.

You are also told who is playing in which game, so that if you have an especially good relationship with another player – or a vendetta to pursue – you can join it, if there's room.

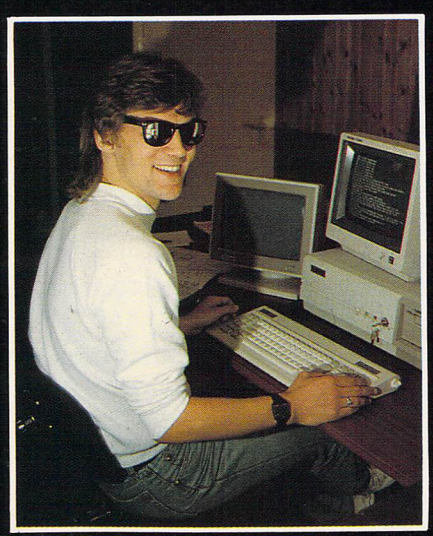
Starting out is made easy for the novice by a special introduction area. This leads you into the game with a full information centre about the Land of Shades. Progressing through this you eventually arrive in the Land proper and your quest begins.

Shades currently has a user base of more than 6,000 players. Of these only 40 have achieved the ultimate rank of Wizard – they are given special powers and privileges so they can then directly affect the game themselves.

Indeed, even the all-powerful Hazeii himself treads the paths of the Land (sometimes invisibly) and his wrath is said to be terrible if roused by those with ideas above their station.

The fantasy is constantly under development and new locations are currently being designed and built into the game as the Arch Wizard concocts ever more fiendish devices to entrap the unwary travellers in the Land of Shades.

Shades is available on:
MicroLink/T.Gold..... key >Shades
*Micronet/Prestel.....key *Shades#*



Neil Newell, Arch Wizard

NEW FROM ROMANTIC ROBOT

MULTIFACE ONE, the MULTIpurpose interFACE, was a sensation when originally released for the ZX Spectrum four years ago. MULTIFACE TWO, for the Amstrad CPC range, followed 2 years later — same pattern, same success. Now the time has come for the MULTIFACE ST — the BIG brother to the MULTIFACE family. Same pattern? Yes, and with even more facilities! So, what can MULTIFACE ST do to make an ATARI ST owner's life so much easier?

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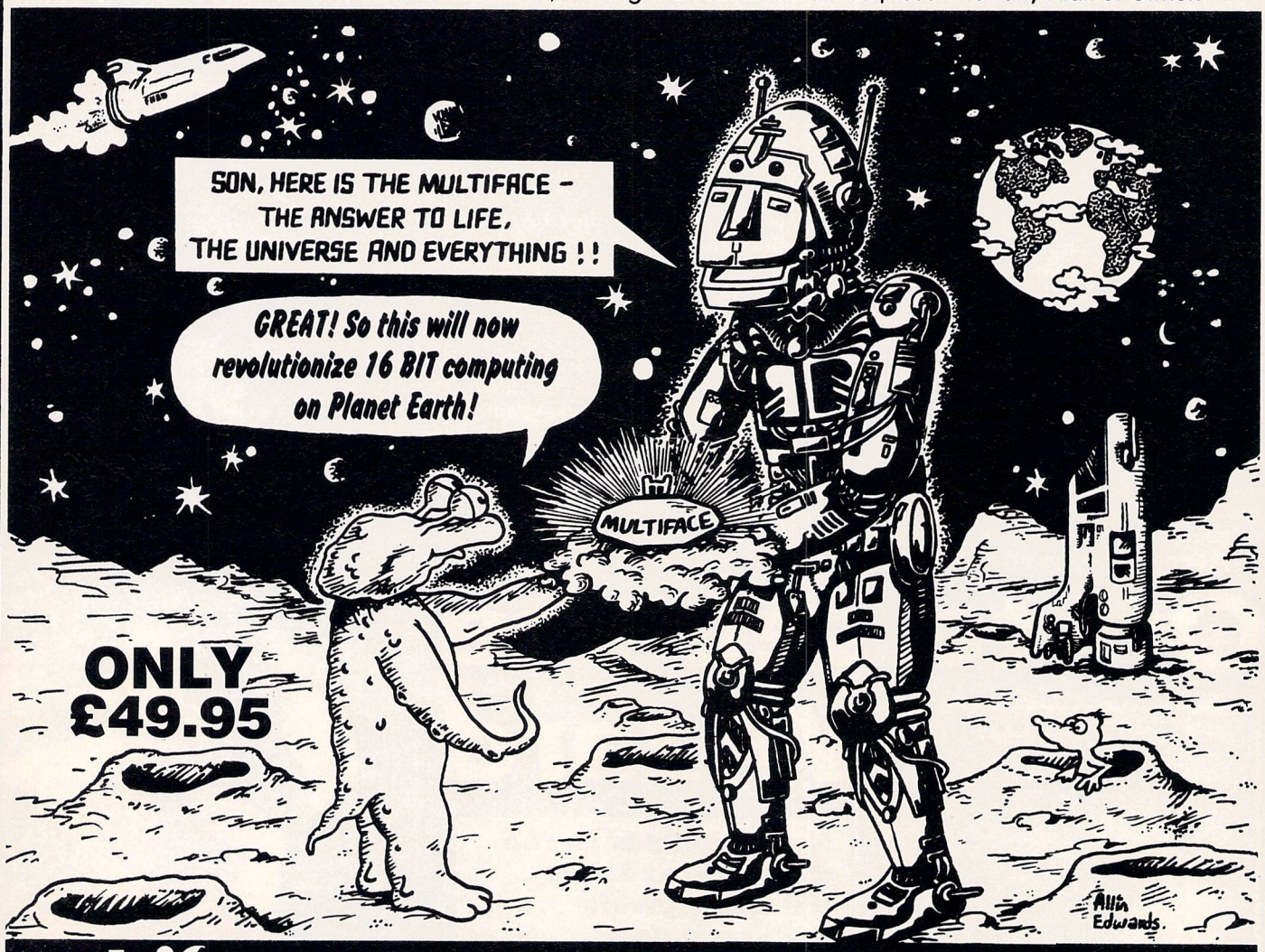
Being a hardware device, 'a magic box' MULTIFACE can back-up whatever you wish, as many times as you wish. HOWEVER, to prevent any piracy, which is illegal, the MULTIFACE MUST be attached to run programs it saved! MULTIFACE will be available from November 1988, making it an ideal Christmas present for any Atari ST owner!



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The truth about TELEX

How much does it cost to go on Telex?

You could go the conventional way and buy a dedicated Telex machine. The cheapest will cost you £1,604 (the Whisper), the dearest £2,892 (the Cheetah). You will also need a separate telephone line, costing £101 to install, plus £404 a year rental. That's a total outlay over the first year of a minimum of £2,109. (All prices include VAT.)

Or you could do what more and more Atari ST users are doing – use your computer to double as a Telex machine. And just use your ordinary telephone!

How do I turn my Atari ST into a Telex machine?

All you need is a modem and appropriate communications software (see the advertisements in this issue), a telephone, and a subscription to *MicroLink*.

Telex is just one of a growing number of services available to Atari ST users on *MicroLink*. With MicroLink you can also read the news as it happens, go teleshopping, create your own closed user group, send telemessages and electronic mail right round the world, download free programs directly into your micro . . . and much more.

But why use Telex?

Because it's a standard means of instant communication between businesses. Today there are 150,000 Telex machines in use in Britain – and more than 2 million worldwide. Telex dramatically speeds up business communications – it's just as quick as using the phone but far more efficient, because you have a hard copy of every "conversation" for your records.

But there's a big bonus you get when you use *MicroLink* for Telex that the conventional way doesn't offer.

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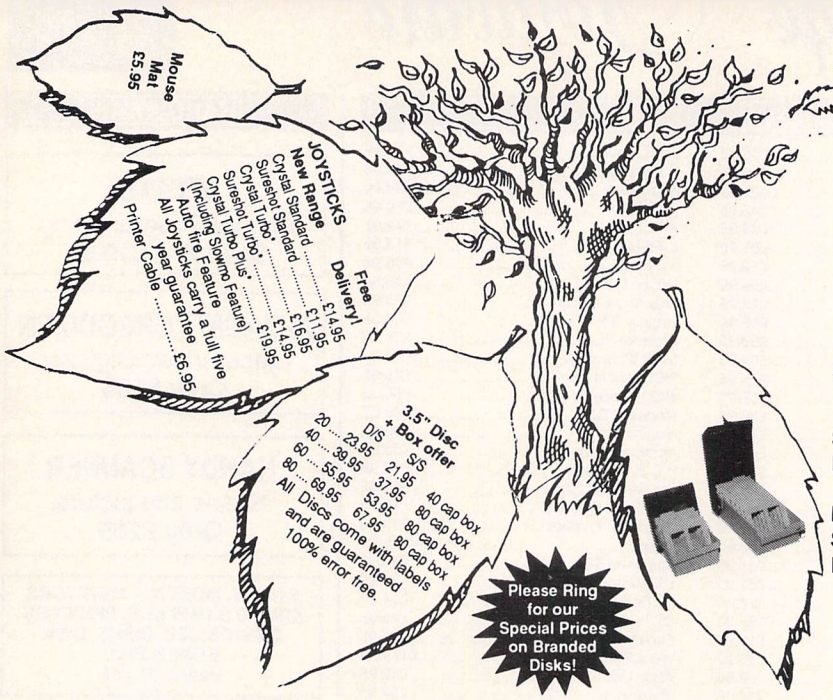

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MUG THE INDEPENDENT MicroLink User Group NEWSLETTER

Online Magic

ANOTHER new service for MicroLink subscribers is the Shades multi-user game. It's similar to standard computer adventure games, where the player wanders a fantasy land killing gnomes, gathering treasure and rescuing maidens, but with the added advantage that the user can talk, co-operate with or slay other players. By dint of determined playing, people can build up points and status in the game, acquiring skills and magic as they go.

And as it's available from many other Telecom Gold systems, there can be some strange characters about.

Strike? What strike?

AS the rest of the country got used to empty doormats during the recent postal strikes, MicroLink and its users were making the most of the situation. Electronic communications, quicker than snail mail at the best of times, came into its own.

Three things happened to enhance this. Firstly, the allocation of personal telex numbers is well underway. Before this, all telex users had to share a communal number with their mailbox ID being quoted – non-standard and prone to confusion. Now they can have an individual number with their own answerback code, enabling them to use MicroLink exactly as they would a telex machine. There have been some delays in the introduction of this service, but the users say it's worth the wait.

Secondly, there's a bounty of £10 payable to any MicroLink subscriber who recruits a new user. There's quite an opportunity here for any latent salespersons – it doesn't take long to set up a demonstration at work or home, and everyone knows that electronic mail (email) really gets going when all your friends are on it.

Lastly, MicroLink has announced the availability of a fax service for all subscribers and offers the chance to send text from a computer to up to 50 fax machines simultaneously. At the moment, there's no mention of fax reception or graphics, but the technology's there.

MUG meetings

TALKING of strange characters, the first of what promises to be many meetings was finally arranged between regular MicroLink bulletin board users. It was interesting to put faces to regular correspondents, and the conversation flowed freely into the night, unhindered by connect charges or telephone bills.

More are planned, most in London but with some interest being shown in more northerly venues. Everyone who attended the first agreed it was a success, and some of the later events will probably go down in MicroLink folklore.

As mentioned in previous news pages, the best way to find out when the next one will happen is to ask on the CHATTER or MUG sections of the MicroLink bulletin board (key BB at the > prompt), or send a message to MAG95816. As it doesn't take long to arrange such things by electronic mail, and as anyone can suggest a time and place, out-of-town MicroLinkers who would like to take the opportunity to meet some fellow users are welcome to mention that they're passing through London. We'll do our best to be there!

Show business

MICROLINK was at the recent PC Show in Earl's Court, London, sharing a stand with several other tentacles of the Database empire. As well as the chance this afforded for users to meet some of the MicroLink officials, the hot news from the various new product launches was available on the system within hours of it happening. Subscribers were among the first people in the UK to read a detailed account of the many new Amstrad computers, followed up by information gathered from Amstrad technical staff themselves.

People at the show also took advantage of the computers and modems liberally sprinkled about the place to post items of news on the bulletin board, which gave those who couldn't (or didn't want to) go the chance to find out what was happening and get questions relayed to the exhibitors. Useful, and organised entirely by subscribers. Hopefully the exercise will be repeated at future computer (and maybe more general interest) events.

Bits...

BY special arrangement with MicroLink and Telecom Gold, a business sent a telex to 2,500 addresses in only three goes: Two of 1,000 addresses and one of 500. This might well be a record, and certainly beats typing the thing in thousands of times on a conventional machine....

★ ★ ★

FOR those not totally converted to the pleasures of the modem and with a memory capable of remembering the days when there was a reliable postal service MicroLink now offers an online postage rate calculator. By keying in the weight of a package and the class (first, second, surface or airmail), the cost of postage can be obtained. Since at that point the user is logged on to MicroLink anyway, it is a simple matter to also send an Email message to the recipient warning him that sometime in the next six months a package will arrive...

Patter of tiny hooves

IN another attempt to bring the entire range of human activity to the keyboard, MicroLink is offering various information services to the data-hungry. For the sports fan who is not satiated by the meagre coverage of the Olympics on television, newspaper and radio, a link to a computer in Seoul provides results as they happen. There could well be a serious use here, for people who want to record results in computer-readable form.

Turfnet should be a more durable service. It provides accurate tips and data on form for those who enjoy a flutter on the horses. MicroLink is quick to point out that the information available in this way is 24 hours ahead of that published in the sports pages of the national press, and consequently better able to cope with weather changes or equine sickness.

Suggestions of material for inclusion in the MUG Newsletter should be sent to Rupert Goodwins on MAG95816

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Others call their pools programs ultimate, we call ours **"THE" POOLS PROGRAM**

There were and still are a couple of pool programs for the Atari ST that guarantee to you performance better than chance (?) or promise to you power? to forecast the pools the way you want. Others are asking you for disk for free demos while weeks are going by and you are missing your chance for a dividend. Nevertheless **POOLS-SYSTEM** still remains the only one in the market that delivers the goods. Lets have a look at some facts. **FACT,** user friendly and still the only one that does not require you to be some kind of a football expert or hot shot system analyser. **FACT,** POOLS-SYSTEM is the only one that performed even slightly during the difficult & unpredictable Australian season. **FACT, 13/8/88,** 4 aways out of the recommended first 6. 10 homes out of the recommended first 15. **20/8/88,** start of the English season, the system trapped 9 out of the 14 score draws & all 4 no score draws. **27/8/88,** 9 out of the 12 score draws & 3 out of the 6 no score draws. 4 homes out of the recommended first 6. **3/9/88,** 6 homes out of the recommended first 7, 4 aways out of the recommended 6, 5 out of the 7 score draws & 2 out out of the 3 no score draws. 40 correct results out of the 58 possible. **FACT,** all forecasted printouts available at any time for any checks. So do not waste your time with any other programs or systems. They are not going to entertain your hopes or wishes. And to top all the facts, we guarantee that **POOLS-SYSTEM** performs better than any other pools program in the market on any computer, because we **GUARANTEE** to you that using the **POOLSBUSTER IN COOPERATION WITH POOLS-PLANNER YOU ARE GOING TO WIN THE POOLS MORE THAN ONCE A YEAR.**

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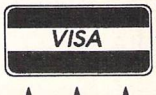


MUSIC ON THE ST

SST from Sonus and Master Tracks Junior from Passport are put under the microscope

Midi without

AFTER the last couple of months' worth of heavy artillery – score-writers and the like – let's get back to basics and look at a couple of budget-priced sequencers.

There are two kinds of inexpensive sequencer – ones designed down to a price and ones cut down from a price. The first kind includes Super Conductor – reviewed way back in the June 1987 issue of *Atari ST User* – although that also has lots of features you'd expect to find in more expensive software.

The second kind of package includes the two programs under the hammer today. Both SST and Master Tracks Junior are cut down versions of pro-level sequencers: MasterPiece (£150) in the case of SST and Master Tracks Pro (£250) in the case of Master Tracks Junior.

What is so intriguing about cut-down programs is to see what has actually been cut out. In most cases it tends to be Midi frills and icing and you often get a large bulk of the parent program.

Super Sequencer ST

SST has 24 Tracks – MasterPiece has 32 – which you can chain into 18 sequences – 24 with MasterPiece – to form a finished song. If you like to work with lots of small sections you may find this restrictive, but other than having fewer tracks, SST works in virtually the same way as MasterPiece.

Both programs use dongles and both manuals are very good, in fact they're almost identical.

The programs work rather like a super tape recorder with Record, Playback, Fast Forward and Rewind Controls. Operation is easy and, as with many sequencers, recording is heavily biased towards real-time input.

You can record in step-time but this involves entering a note and advancing the clock counter which is not ideal although it's a better system than some.

So what do you get with MasterPiece that you don't get with SST? Well, all their screens are similar but when you pull down a few SST menus you'll notice that some options are missing and a few have reduced facilities.

You can't load and save configuration settings which allow you to set up default options to suit your way of working. There are no Set-ups (a Program Change and Midi Volume setting for each channel normally sent at the start of playback) and you can't Append or Ditto (copy to itself) a track although you can still Append a Sequence.

I liked the Scale Velocity option in MasterPiece which lets you program Diminuendos and Crescendos. There is a Level Velocity option, however, which lets you set all volume data to the same value.

SST's Transpose can only transpose a complete Track while MasterPiece lets you transpose single notes or a specified group of them. Quantise is missing Alignment and Tolerance settings which help retain the feel, and in the Filter menu most options are either filtered or not. In MasterPiece you can set a range of values, and because they aren't so complex, these features are easier to use in SST.

MasterPiece has a Clock On Hold function which lets you start a track with a rest and it lets you name cue points which could be useful – names are always better than numbers. Much of this exotica can be very useful under certain circumstances, but if you didn't know about them you probably wouldn't miss them.

The only other feature to mention is the event editor. It's a powerful utility, but it comes on a separate disc although the editor supplied with both programs is identical. To do any editing you must save your music file, boot the editor and load the file into it. I prefer to edit as I go, but this arrangement makes it more practical to write now, edit later.

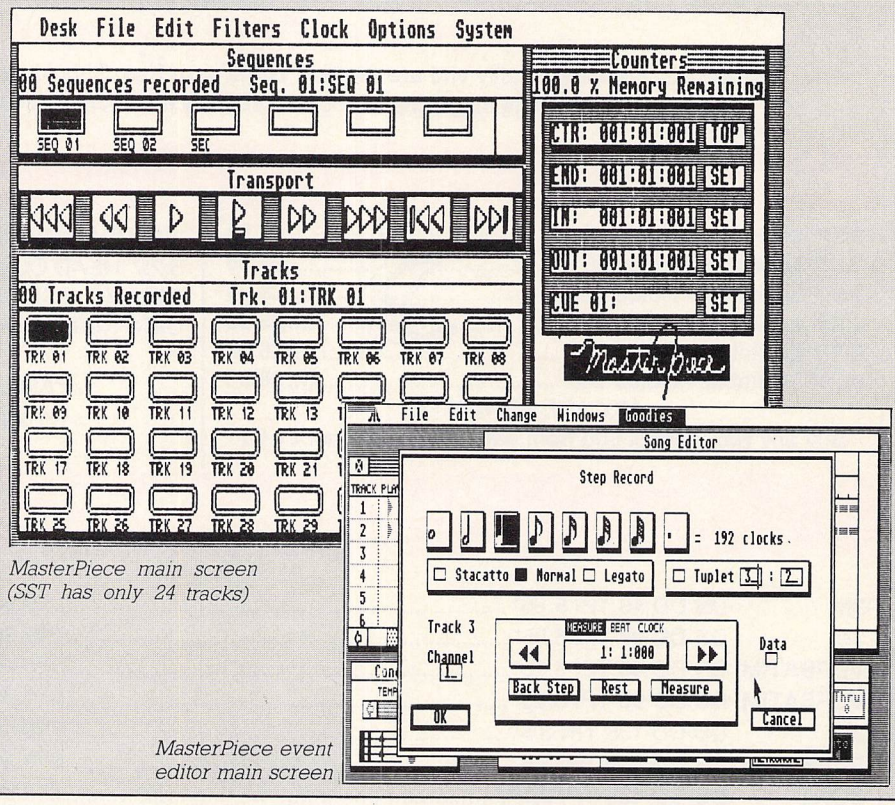
Latest developments on the ST music scene

I HAVE noticed quite a few magazines featuring reviews of ST Replay and Pro Sound Designer over the past few months. We reviewed these way back in the July 1987 issue of *Atari ST User*. I mention this as a lead-in to news of the latest product from the ST Replay team.

It's an up-market sampler containing entirely new hardware and software. It will feature 10 bit sampling with 12 bit output. If that sounds odd it's so it can play back four samples at once without any loss of resolution. Sampling rates will be up to 50kHz with oversampling at 35 to 40kHz.

It will have full editing facilities, including the much-loved 3D waveforms that look like a relief map of the Pennines, and feature software switchable filters and a pitch shifter. It will support Midi, too.

Distribution will likely be through Microdeal again and the price will



MasterPiece main screen (SST has only 24 tracks)

MasterPiece event editor main screen

probably be around the £250 mark. It should be nearing completion.

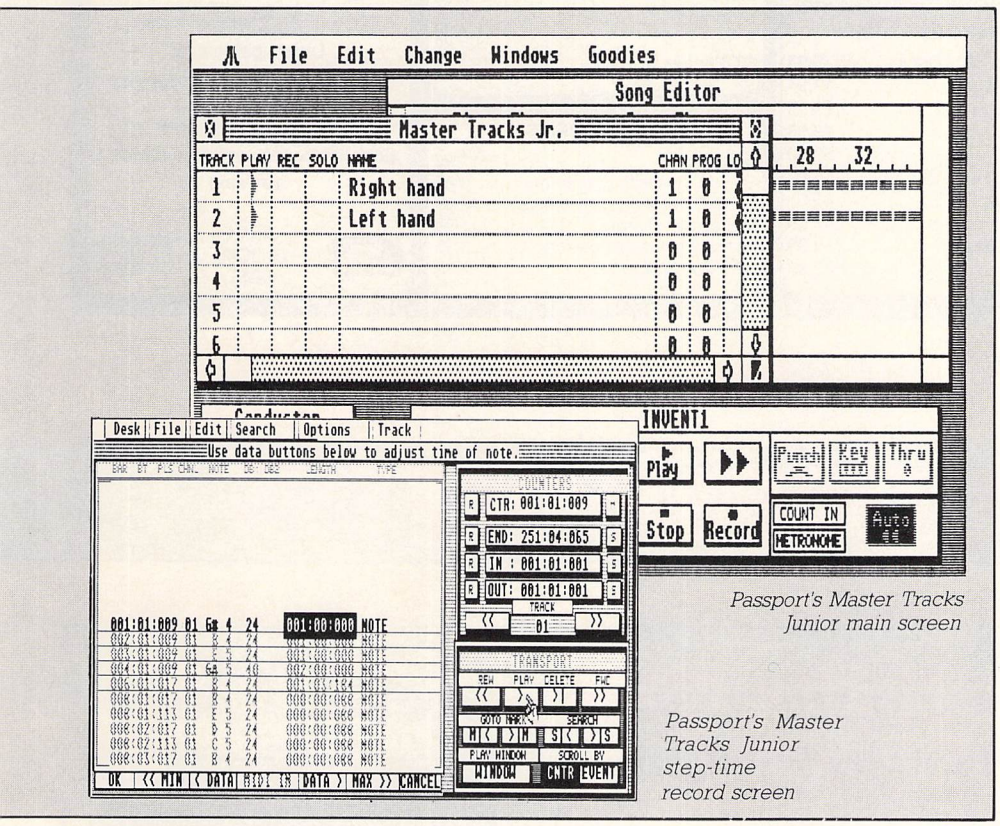
Further to the Notator review in the October 1988 issue of *Atari ST User*, Sound Technology informs me that it now supports the Midi file format and is compatible with the Lynex sampler. A laser printer-compatible version should be available soon along with a dual dongle for Notator and Xalyser, C-Lab's DX Editor Program.

New from Syndromic Music is the arrival of Genwave 12 (£229.95), an editor for samplers which support the Midi dump standard. The Sound Filer programs for the Akai S900 and S700/X7000 now includes FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) and offers 128 harmonics x 128 records with variable frequency and time length displays.

Finally, the most surprising news of the month – there's nothing new to report from MCM! But wait till next month ...

the frills

By IAN WAUGH



Passport's Master Tracks Junior main screen

Passport's Master Tracks Junior step-time record screen

Master Tracks Junior

Like SST, Junior is very similar to its parent program. It has lost none of its 64 Tracks, and lets you record on multiple channels at the same time. It, too, uses a tape recorder-based method of operation which is real-time biased, but its step-time input is better than average. It involves clicking on a note duration and then playing a note on your Midi keyboard.

Master Tracks Pro incorporates a grid editor on which you can edit the notes as well as events which would have been nice in Junior.

The program uses four windows – Sequencer, Song Editor, Conductor and Transport – which can be resized and positioned anywhere on the screen.

The Song Editor window shows the tracks as individual bars. Junior has a theoretical capacity of 9,999 bars per track and although, theoretically, it can only store one song, you could store songs beginning at bars 1, 1,000, 2,000 and so on.

Bars can be inserted, deleted, cut, pasted, copied and mixed allowing you to construct a song from a number of patterns as well as in a linear tape recorder fashion. Pattern-based sequencing is used in sequencers such as Super Conductor and Iconix, and has many devotees.

Tempo changes are programmed in the Conductor window. They can effect the whole song or just individual bars allowing to program rallentandos and accelerandos.

Master Tracks Pro has a SysEx Librarian for storing system exclusive data such as synthesiser voices. It also has graphic controller editing. Junior lacks both of these.

While the bar editing facilities of Junior are excellent, it has no event editor (Pro has its graphic editor). This is one of the major omissions and, I suppose, had it been included there would have been little inducement to go for the Pro.

Conclusion

Operationally, Junior is more graphically appealing than SST and the division of tracks into bars really helps you find your way around your music. It also supports the standard Midi file format which seems to be catching on – unofficial or not. However, it doesn't have an event editor.

SST is slightly more numerically based and doesn't support the Midi file format, but it does have an excellent event editor even though it must be loaded separately. The package however, is complete and includes two Midi cables.

As MasterPiece is only £51 it may be worth looking at that, too, in order to get more Midi frills. Sonus say that in America orders for SST are far ahead of those for Masterpiece.

If you're considering buying a budget-priced sequencer you must decide, first of all, if you can do without the extra facilities. Then decide whether you prefer a graphic or numeric method of operating and whether or not an event editor is important.

On a value for money basis both sequencers score 10 out of 10.

FACT FILE

Product: SST
Price: £99
Supplier: Sonus International Ltd, P.O. Box 18, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 4BP.
Tel: 0734 792699.

POINTS FOR:
Easy to use. Has a good event editor.

AGAINST:
The event editor is not integrated and it doesn't support Midi file format.

FACT FILE

Product: Master Tracks Junior
Price: £99
Supplier: MCMXCIX, 9 Hatton Street, London, NW8.
Tel: 01-724 4104/01 and 01-258 3454.

POINTS FOR:
Easy to use. Has 64 Tracks, and supports Midi file standard.

AGAINST:
It hasn't got an event editor.

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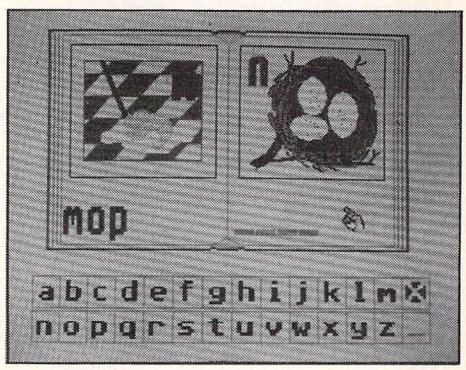

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More efficient communications

Marcus Adams looks at the new budget-priced MicroLink Multi-speed communications pack

THE hardware interface between any two computers linked by a telephone line is called a modem – an acronym for MOdulator DEModulator. And because of the complexities involved, the better the modem the easier inter-computer communication becomes.

Essentially, three standards are used in the UK under the rules laid out by British Telecom. They define the speed – baud rate – at which information is passed between remote terminals over private telephone lines.

These are V21, V22 and V23. There are others in use – such as the Bell standard developed by Bell Laboratories in America, but no equipment offering these has yet received the green light from BABT, and therefore it would be illegal to use them.

The MicroLink Multi-speed Modem on the other hand is one of a handful of powerful units to have received BABT approval. At a price not beyond the reach of those in need of such equipment, this direct connect unit offers a wealth of features including all baud rates, speed-buffering, a Hayes-like command set and auto-answering.

A set of six status lights and a monitor speaker keep you well informed as to what's going on, so it could quite feasibly be used as part of a professional bulletin board system (BBS).

For basic communication the modem offers all three standards, 1200 baud full duplex, 300 baud full duplex, 1200/75 split rates for calling Prestel type systems and 75/1200 reverse mode for operating them.

In use however, much of this is invisible as the modem automatically detects the operating speed of the ST's serial port and configures itself accordingly.

If the remote service, Prestel for instance, happens to be operating using a split rate – which the ST does not support – it buffers the incoming information up to the correct speed.

In addition to these features, the unit also has its own on-board microprocessor complete with rom and non-volatile ram. This is essentially what makes it so easy to use, because it has in a sense got its own programming language with 21 commands developed from the Hayes set.

If you're one of those people who switch off as soon as programming is mentioned, don't. Most commands will be dealt with automatically by the communications software. There's even a built-in Help page in case you get stuck.

The basic command to wake up the modem is AT, meaning attention. This is followed by one or more letters and digits telling the modem what to do. For instance, to dial MicoLink 1200 baud you would use:

```
ATD 01 583 1200
```

The D stands for dial the number following. The number shown here would be used by people in the greater London area. Those in other parts of the country can save the cost of a London call by using one of 57 local access points.

The problem of dialling via a firm's exchange – when you have to wait for an outside line – can be overcome by inserting one or more commas after the initiating digit (usually 9).

While the connection is being made a small monitor speaker inside the case clicks and whistles so you can hear what's going on. If the line is unobtainable for some reason the modem replies either BUSY, NO CARRIER or NO DIALTONE, depending on the problem incurred.

In the case of the line being busy, it can re-dial the selected number up to four times automatically. For a successful connection, it replies CONNECT, CONNECT 1200 or CONNECT 75, depending on the speed of reception.

Hanging up the phone is a simple matter of typing +++ (to get the modem into local mode) and ATH, H standing for

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◀ *From Page 97*

hangup. For many BBSs this won't be necessary, because when you exit at the end of a session the host modem switches off and your modem responds NO CARRIER and hangs up anyway.

One of the neatest features of the MicroLink modem is its non-volatile number store. This makes life a lot easier, because the modem stores the name of the service alongside its number.

The internal ram can store 32 in all, and the whole list can be displayed at any time by typing ATN? Calling up one of the numbers is easy – either type its number in the list or the name of the service itself:

```
ATDN21
```

or:

```
ATD MicroLink 1200
```

An extension to the basic command set is the S or Setup registers. These non-volatile locations – 20 are documented, 15 being user-definable – set the modem's overall configuration.

Through these registers almost every aspect of the modem can be set for personal preference, from the number of automatic re-dials to the number of rings before a call is answered. At any time, a simple command switches between user settings and the factory defaults.

Of course, no matter how good the modem is it'll be useless without software, so the MicroLink package comes complete with K-Comm II. Despite the recent-sounding name, K-Comm II is now getting quite long in the tooth.

Nevertheless it does feature a user-friendly Gem interface and the ability to run as either a terminal or viewdata emulator. The viewdata side allows the ST to access Prestel and similar colour services in colour or monochrome.

However, such services are limited both in terms of response times and screen width – 40 columns maximum. Prestel has its uses when little interaction with the user is required, but when it comes to electronic mail – Email – it's a bit of a dead duck.

The same limitations do not apply to Microlink and similar services operating under BT's Telecom Gold. They offer full full duplex transmission up to 1200 baud, and a full 80 column screen width, which makes interactive Email both easy and efficient.

In this area K-Comm II comes into its own. Many other terminal emulators tend to make extensive use of Gem windows, and there's no getting away from the fact that even a full window is slightly less than 80 columns wide – assuming you don't resort to using a small font.

A more serious problem lies with the notoriously slow scroll rate. Although at worst, this means you have to wait longer for menus, messages and so on to scroll up the screen, in communications time is money.

K-Comm II neatly gets around this problem by making full use of the VT52 screen. Unlike other systems though, the menu bar is always available at the top of the screen, allowing access to all of the software's extensive range of features. This saves the messy business of having to toggle to and fro between the main screen and the command display adopted by many similar systems.

The next big headache is getting logged on to your chosen service. Doing this by hand can be a real bind, especially if you're prone to typing errors.

Most systems simply won't recognise the backspace character, even if the screen echoes it correctly. The ideal solution is, therefore, to define a preset logon sequence and replay it at the appropriate time.

K-Comm II provides this facility and more. In fact when used in conjunction with the MicroLink modem, the software can be configured to do everything from dialling the phone to entering your password.

All you have to do is specify the prompts to expect and the message to send. Once done, selecting Autologon from the Options menu does everything else for you.

That said, defining an entire logon sequence is a little foolhardy, just in case someone else gets hold of your disc and runs up a nice fat bill.

Surprisingly, autologons are the biggest problem with K-Comm II. In general I found it very difficult to get any given sequence to work properly, or indeed at all in some cases. The snag appears to be twofold – BT and the software taking equal shares of the blame.

Firstly, BT's lines aren't always as noise free as we'd like, and if the slightest glitch is echoed back to the software the logon gets completely fouled up. There's less danger of this happening at the slower baud rate, but the problem remains.

The second difficulty arises when the host computer sends a long message on startup. As in the first case, the logon goes haywire.

In addition to the basic facilities, K-Comm II features raw Ascii and Xmodem file transfer which are essential for Email, although sadly Kermit is not supported.

Documents can be prepared off line and then sent to the receiver at high speed, ready formatted. In fact this document has been prepared off line and sent direct to *Atari ST User* – over 300 miles away – via MicroLink.

This sort of remote access facility is also supported, albeit to a lesser degree, by K-Comm II. Once the computer and modem have been set up, you can access your ST at home from anywhere in the world providing you have a telephone.

Once connected, K-Comm II replays a user-defined welcome message and allows access to up and download files either as Ascii or Xmodem.

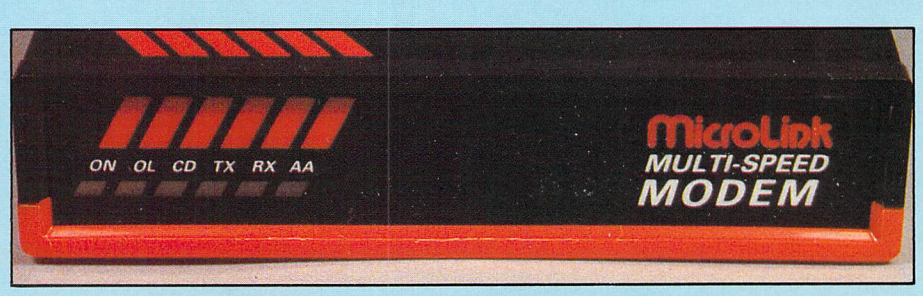
Overall the MicroLink multi-speed communications pack has to be one of the best around. The modem's manual is exemplary, with 40 pages of clearly laid out information. It begins with simple instructions to get you on line, and goes on to cover even the most complex features of operation.

Conclusion

All-in-all the pack offers unequalled value for money. MicroLink even throws in one month's free connect time, so the pack has to be considered a must for all serious users or comms enthusiasts.

However, if you find the price tag a little steep for your wallet, MicroLink offers a cheaper package which boasts essentially the same features except the 1200/1200 baud rate.

As this is most useful for transmitting files to a remote computer, unless you intend to send a fair amount of electronic mail – especially at peak times – it could be considered superfluous. The 300/300 baud rate available on the cheaper model should suffice in most instances.



FACT FILE

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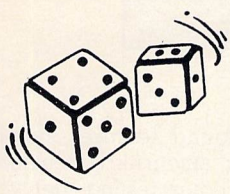

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WHEN it was first released in the UK, the West German sourced language GFA Basic met with a fair measure of acclaim for its simplicity of use and sheer speed. For an interpreted rather than compiled language this was tremendous, being faster even than Computer Concepts' Fast Basic.

Since then there has been a minor revision – Version 2 in fact – and the release of a compiler, which though increasing the speed of GFA programs didn't quite make them as fast as compiled HiSoft Basic ones.

Nine months after it was first released, Version 3 of GFA Basic has arrived. This latest incarnation provides more than 150 new commands or options, and quite astonishingly runs approximately twice as fast.

The bad news is that it isn't compatible with the compiler and if you want to load any of your existing GFA programs into the new interpreter it is necessary to first save them as Ascii files and then merge them.

The aims of this latest version are to increase the speed at which the programs run, increase the flexibility of the structured programming commands resulting in constructions such as DO ... UNTIL and LOOP ... WHILE, enable simple interrupt programming, make access to machine code or C programs easier, and most importantly, to make most of the VDI routines and AES functions available from within the language as ordinary functions.

Also, a substantial set of bit manipulation commands have been added, and in the graphic's department the A-Line graphics' routines have been implemented as straight instructions. Along the way, one or two bugs, both in the language and operating system have been overcome, and the editor has been made even more friendly. Let's start by having a close look at that. . .

Basic improvements

Mark Luckham examines the latest updated version of GFA Basic

For those not familiar with the GFA Basic editor, its operation will be a little surprising. Program entry takes place on a medium resolution 80 column screen with a colour monitor (though it does also run quite happily in monochrome), with a two line menu bar, rather than drop down menus, offering information and features.

The menu bar

The menu bar, which is accessible either by using the mouse or pressing the relevant function key, has been revised to provide the regulars of load, save, save as Ascii, merge Ascii files, print, block definition – leading into the usual block move, delete, copy and save as Ascii functions – quit, new, string, find and replace, page scrolling, flip and direct and run and an insert/overwrite toggle.

The newcomers are an on-screen clock, line number indicator – and you can jump to specified lines – caps lock indicator, keypad indicator which notifies whether the mouse or keypad is being used and an Atari symbol.

If you click on the Atari symbol the display is switched to the output screen and two drop down menus become available.

The first allows access to desk accessories, while the second offers the same loading and saving options available elsewhere, but also has a new variable indicator flag. If this is switched on, every time a new variable is entered in the editor it is queried to see whether you really want to go ahead.

On the editing screen itself there has been another welcome improvement – wraparound and right justification. It can be very irritating when examining a program listing to have half of it out of sight. This was never a great problem with the original GFA Basic, due to the fact that instructions are limited to one per line, so program lines rarely exceeded 80 characters anyway.

Also, it is possible to shorten procedures in the listing so that only their names appear. A procedure so folded, as the manual puts it, is prefixed by the > character. Naturally you can't edit a folded procedure, but it can be unfolded again, and in the shortened state make programs that much more readable.

If you combine all of these things with the new wraparound feature, syntax checking on entry, automatic indentation and loop and procedure testing, then you have an excellent code entry system.

Structured programming

GFA Basic always was very well served with branching, loop commands, procedures and functions, making structured programming quite straightforward, especially when you consider the automatic indentation of program listings.

Now, a few loose ends have been tidied up, and a real treat in the form of Basic interrupts has been implemented. IF ... THEN ... ELSE ... ENDIF is the cornerstone of branching operations. It should be noted that THEN is entirely optional, and that ELSE ... IF can be combined to produce shorter, cleaner code.

For multiple branching there's always ON x GOSUB ... GOTO y,z which will, depending on the value of x, route the program to either a procedure or label. The program flow cannot be directed to line numbers, as they do not exist in GFA

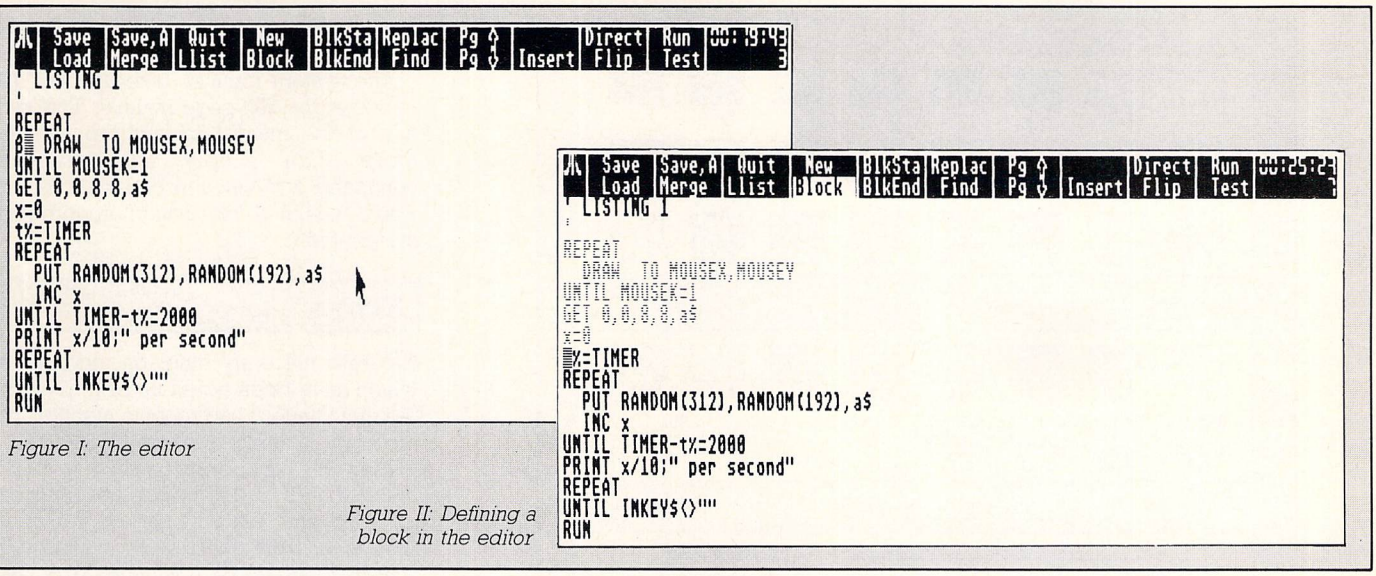


Figure I: The editor

Figure II: Defining a block in the editor

Basic. However a number followed by a colon, on a line on its own, is acceptable as a label, so if you must have some line numbers they can be achieved.

A new feature to GFA Basic is SELECT and CASE which operate on similar lines to ON ... GOTO except that multiple CASEs are used to decide a range of values on which the branching will occur after a value has been determined by the numerical expression following SELECT.

The full range of options here is SELECT x, CASE y TO z, CASE y,z.., CASE TO y, CASE y TO, DEFAULT, ENDSLECT and CONT.

The standard structures of FOR ... NEXT, REPEAT ... UNTIL, WHILE ... WEND, and DO ... LOOP have been fleshed out to provide much greater flexibility. One neat idea when using a FOR ... NEXT loop is that instead of having to stipulate a minus value in conjunction with STEP when you need the program loop to count down by one each time, a new command can be used as follows:

```
FOR x=10 DOWNTO 1
PRINT x
NEXT x
```

The additions to the DO ... LOOP range include DO ... WHILE, DO ... UNTIL, LOOP ... WHILE, and LOOP ... UNTIL. Procedures are still referred to in the slightly confusing manner of GOSUB proc(x,y..) ... PROCEDURE proc() ... RETURN.

In version two of GFA Basic the only forms of interrupt available were the unsatisfactory On Menu, and when the user interrupted a program by using the Break key. Here the programmer would then direct the program flow to an error message, or take some relevant action.

However, in this version better things are on offer, such as EVERY and AFTER. These combine with a timing variable known as ticks, which is defined in terms of two hundredths of a second. Thus, the structure EVERY 400 GOSUB proc, would execute the named procedure every two seconds.

Any interrupt so set up can also be disabled by using the STOP command, and re-enabled with the CONT command.

As can be seen, EVERY executes more than once, whereas AFTER simply executes once after a given time. A minor point to note is that the interrupt has a minimum timing of four ticks, thus reducing the timing available to units of 50ths of a second.

Graphics

Graphics are one of the ST's strongest points, so commands to make the best of them are all the more welcome. If you have done any programming you will have realised that the standard SETCOLOR command doesn't alter the value of colours 1 to 16 in the correct order. Witness now, the introduction of VSETCOLOR which does the business in the proper order.

There have been numerous additions to the range of general graphics commands, some of them minor like BOUNDARY which simply adds borders to spheres and rectangles, some of them complex like the A-line routines, and some of them simply revisions or expansions such as DEFTEXT which now enables you to switch between fonts.

All the usual commands are there, to draw lines, points, circles, ellipses, and boxes, and to have them solid or pattern filled, with rounded edges where appropriate, ANDed, ORed or XORed with the background.

If you have any interest in Logo then you will rejoice to see a number of commands for manipulating the turtle, such as forward, reverse, angled directions, as well as pen up and down.

To help keep track of the so called turtle – or pointer – a variation on DRAW has been implemented. DRAW(x), where x is a number 1 to 5, provides information as to the state of the pointer. This includes x,y positions, angle in degrees, x,y scale factor and pen up/down.

I stated earlier that version three of GFA Basic ran approximately twice as quickly as version two, and this would seem to be the case when you compare the times obtained by running the standard benchtests.

However, if you run a few graphics tests it is noticeable that very little happens any quicker. Only the A-Line routines and blitting commands show any significant speed increase, and these by about 40 per cent.

For instance, take the program in Figure I. This simply draws lines until the left mouse button is pressed at which point it GETs an 8 x 8 square and randomly PUTs it all over the screen. In one second, version two could PUT around 288 blocks on the screen, whereas on version three that has gone up to 411.

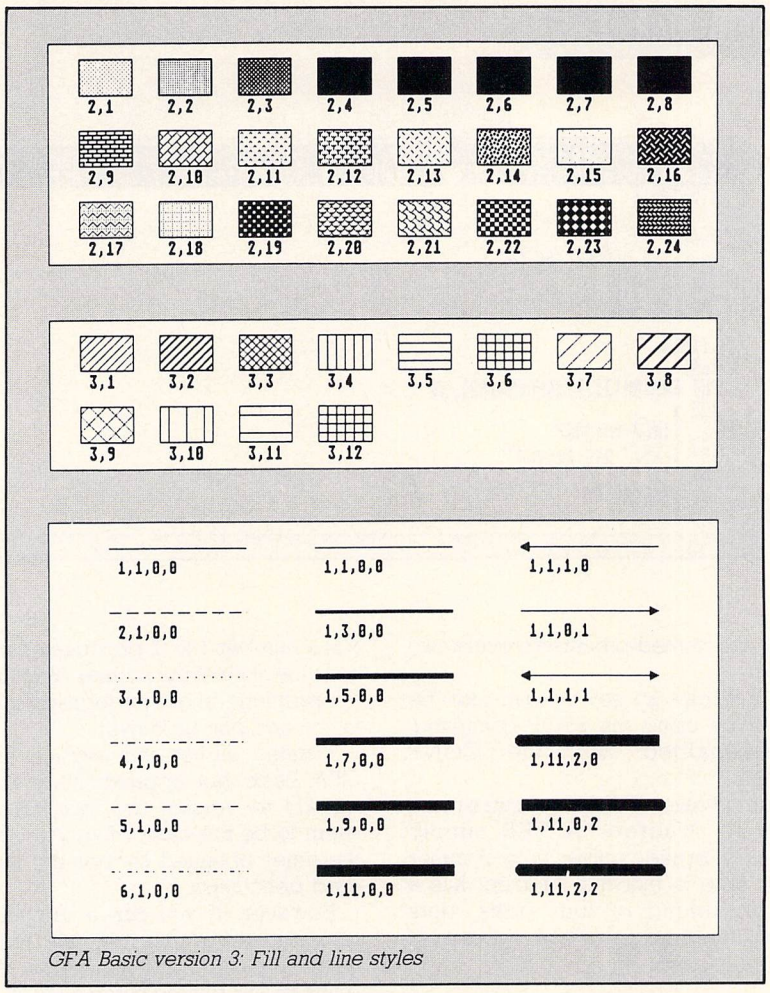
System routines

If you had to point anywhere, this is where the most dramatic changes and innovations have taken place within GFA Basic. GEMDOS, BIOS and XBIOS all allow access to the various parts of the operating system, and in fact were present in the old version of GFA Basic.

This time round, though the commands remain the same, they are much more useful thanks to the manual listing most of the actual routines, their effects and how to call them. With the Line-A routines you get ACLIP, PSET, PTST, ALINE, HLINE, ARECT, APOLY, ACHAR, and ATEXT.

Now most of these correspond to existing GFA Basic commands, but the point is, that in this form they execute considerably faster. PSET for example corresponds to PLOT, while PTST is the

Turn to Page 102 ▶



GFA Basic version 3: Fill and line styles

◀ **From Page 101**

function POINT. Others like HLINE draw horizontal lines, but have a fairly complicated syntax which unless that extra speed is needed, makes using the existing commands easier.

The VDI routines are available as seven categories of functions. Namely control, output, attribute, raster, input, inquire and escape functions. Some form of access to the VDI routines was provided before, but not on the scale of what is now available. In particular a number of VDI workstation and query functions are available, but only if you have version 1.0 or later of GDOS and a valid ASSIGN.SYS file.

Of interest to many people will be VST ... LOAD ... FONTS(x) and VST ... UNLOAD ... FONT(x) which do precisely what you would expect, as long as you remember to reserve enough memory.

Moving along there's the AES libraries of functions to consider, and a pretty big selection it is too. These include things like APPL_READ for reading bytes from an event buffer, APPL_WRITE for writing them back, the very suspect (which version of the rom you've got affects its function) APPL_TPLAY and APPL_TRECORD for recording and playing back user activities such as mouse movement and key presses.

In the event part of the library there's EVNT_KEYBD which waits for a key to be pressed and then returns a word sized value, EVNT_BUTTON for mouse clicks, EVNT_MULTI which waits for the occurrence of selected events, EVNT_MESAG for messages arriving in the event buffer, and EVNT_DCLICK to set the speed for double clicks on the mouse.

The menu library lets you display and erase menu bars, delete ticks against menu items, change text, enable and disable items and highlight them in inverse video.

The object library provides the means to define, draw and alter objects, while the form library allows such things as the manipulation of objects in dialogue boxes, reserves areas of the screen for drawing expanding or shrinking rectangles, and creates alert boxes.

If you want routines for exchanging data between different applications then go down to the scrap library. While enabling you to select a file from a displayed directory you need the file selector library. This is a pretty small library as it happens, containing only FSEL–INPUT which does the job just mentioned.

If you want to get complicated a good place to go is the window library, which basically gives you every routine for manipulating and producing windows. The other libraries which wrap up the AES are the resource and shell libraries for producing alert and dialogue boxes, and inter-application calls.

The system routines take up over 100 pages of the 500 page manual. This section of the manual in fact provides far more than simply accompanying command and function descriptions, but also a wealth of information on operating system calls.

Extras

Naturally there are other bits and pieces which have been tidied up or implemented that I haven't had room to mention, but a couple of things deserve to be listed.

First the bit operations such as BSET, BCLR, BTST, BCHG which are functions to set, reset, test and negate individual bits. SHL, SHR, ROL, ROR are used to shift or rotate while AND, OR, XOR, IMP and EQV are logic functions.

SWAP, BYTE, CARD and WORD exchange the high and low orders of a four byte value, read the lower eight bits, read the lower 16 bits, and extend a word to form a long word respectively.

The other point worthy of note is that the interpreter has changed from having 11 digit to 13 digit accuracy in maths calculations.

Conclusion

One of the few disadvantages of the new version over the previous ones is the extra memory that the new program consumes – approximately 40k. Apart from that, GFA Basic Version 3 is an entirely commendable revision of a very nice language.

Glentop will be offering a cheap upgrade service to registered existing users, while the price of £65.00 is accessible enough for those newcomers wanting to step away from the feeble Atari Basic to a fast and exciting language.

If you are interested in programming Gem, or just in using a friendly editor that doesn't get in the way, then this new version of GFA Basic can be heartily recommended.

FACT FILE

Product: GFA Basic v3
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GALLERY

THIS month's Gallery features pictures based loosely on the theme of the cat and the canary, though, as you can see, the emphasis should be on the word loosely.

From Craig Ellis of Manchester we display a stunning picture of a black panther. We have received a number of submissions from Craig and it appears that he has an innate skill for drawing all manner of animals. Watch out for more of his impressions in future pages of Gallery.

Simon Fincher of Evesham is responsible for the impressive, almost electric, picture of a parrot.

These contrast sharply with the four offerings from Verona Kellett of Victoria, Australia. Her studies of Australian flora and fauna embody a certain native warmth in the soft hues and stable nature which she employs.

If you have a work of art you would like to see exhibited on our worldwide stage why not send it on disc to Gallery.

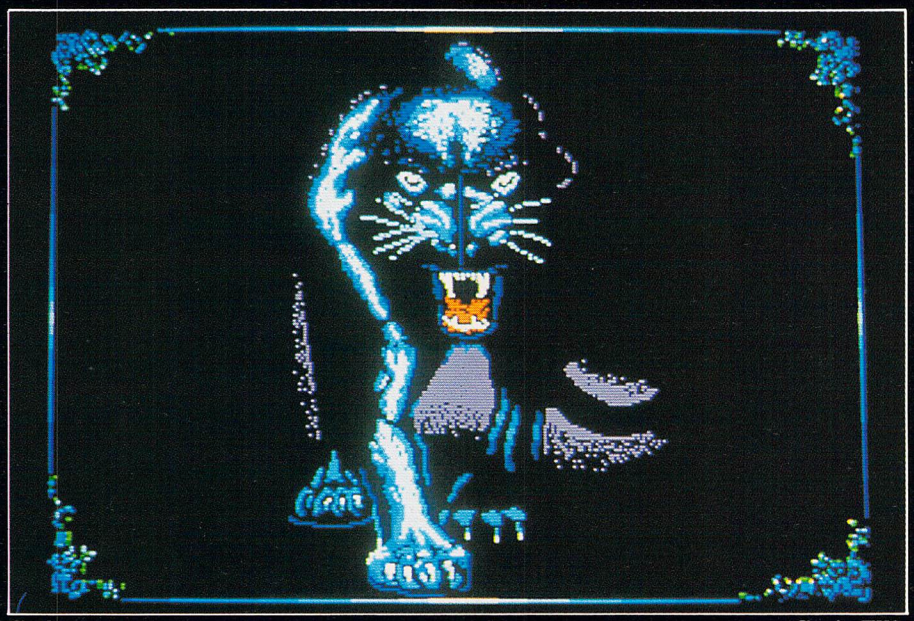
Remember though, anything you submit must be all your own work. You must own the sole copyright and provide us, in writing, with confirmation of this fact, as well as your express permission to let us publish your work.

Also tell us briefly how you went about creating your masterpiece: Which art package did you use? What inspired you? How long did it take? And so on. Please note that if you want your submissions returned you must supply us with a stamped self-addressed envelope.

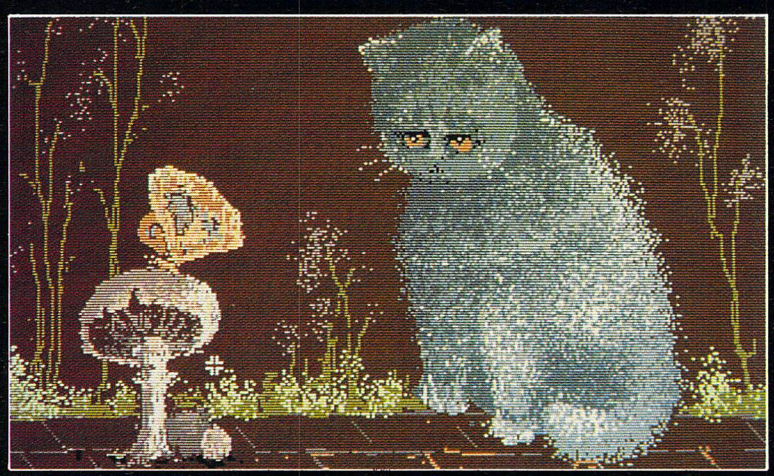
Who's a pretty boy? *Simon Fincher*

Black swan *Verona Kellett*

Rosella



Cat's eyes — *Craig Ellis*



Thomas — *Verona Kellett*

Please enclose an sae for the return of your discs. The address to send your masterpiece is:

Gallery,
Atari ST User,
Europa House,
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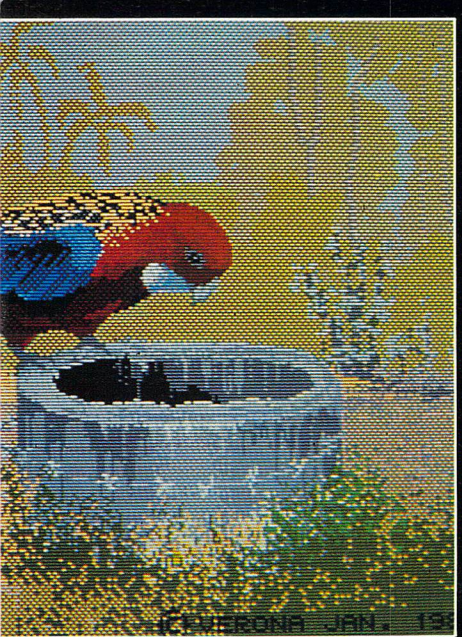
Adlington,
Macclesfield
SK10 4NP



Verona Kellet

Fantail — *Verona Kellett*

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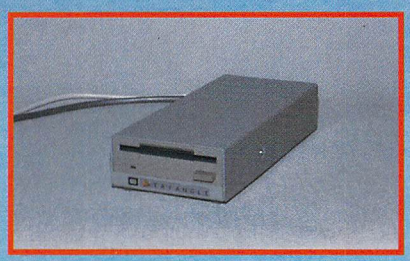

The **Power Drive** is a totally new concept in ST drives - it draws its power (0.03w) from the ST's mouse port! Double-sided Mitsubishi drive ensures top quality and reliablilty.

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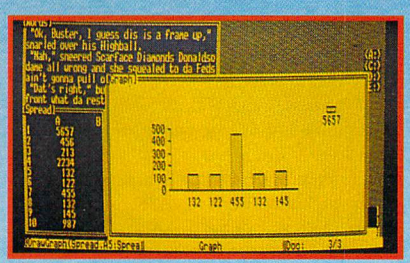
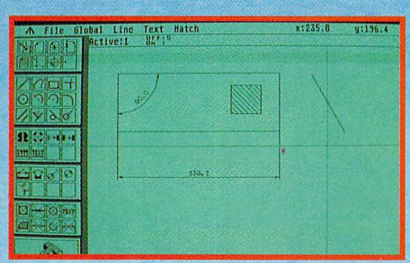


PC-Ditto, the official Euro-version direct from Avant-Garde, allows you to run almost all IBM PC software on your ST! Works in mono or colour. Microsoft mouse emulation included!

£79.95
Item Code: ST1026



Campus Draft is the entry-level version of Campus. Full 2D draughting with auto-dimensioning and symbol libraries. Includes support for Atari Laser printer & most plotters.

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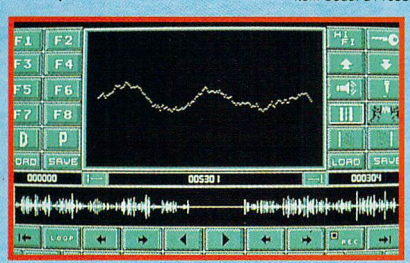

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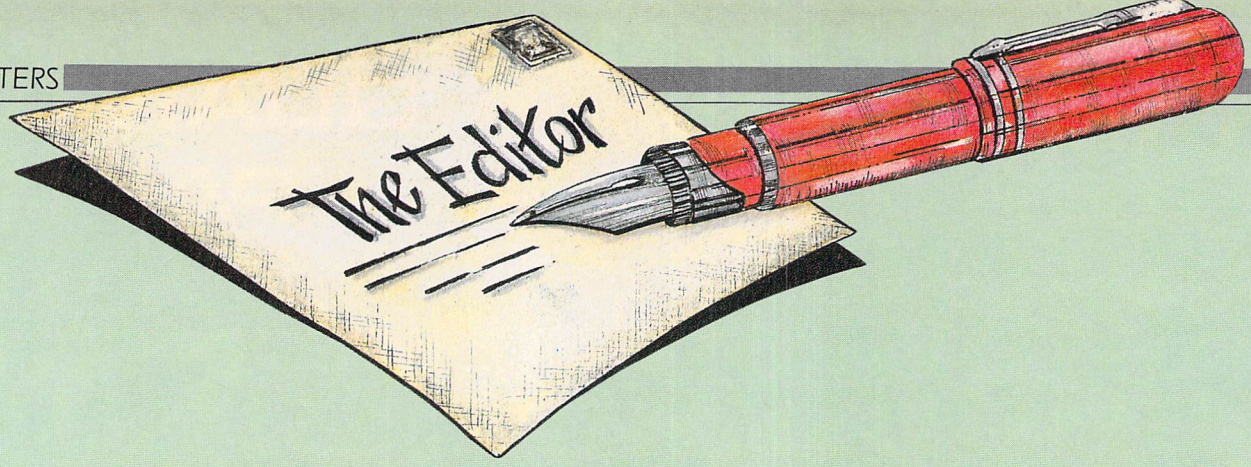

Remedial help required

I AM a serious Atari ST user and a mother of four boys. I have got into programming because there are so few good educational programs for pre-school and kindergarten children.

My two eldest children have learning difficulties which seem similar to dyslexia. The two younger boys are also probably affected by the same disability. I therefore would like to write programs which are specifically geared to their needs.

Consequently I would like to correspond with anyone interested in programming for children with learning difficulties. Any help would be appreciated. – **A. Radford, 11 Moran Close, Bayldon, New South Wales, Australia.**

● Spellbook (reviewed in the September 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* and B Spell (reviewed on Page 21 in this issue) may well help fill an immediate need. Our new series of educational articles which starts this month will also highlight some of the superb software available for children with specific learning difficulties.

In the near future we hope to dedicate an entire feature to remedial education and the ST – so keep reading. However, in the meantime if any reader can help Mrs Radford, please correspond directly with her at the above address.

Keeping score for the league

I READ with interest the letter in the August 1988 issue of Atari ST User, *from A. Watkins of Abergeeg, Gwent, as I have for the past two years been developing a program which will do everything he requires.*

It is currently written for the first division of the football league and will shortly be available for the second, third and fourth divisions. With very little modification, it could be used by Mr Watkins for his league.

The program is menu driven in that it asks you to input numbers corresponding to the teams in a menu. It asks for scores and produces a league table showing the number of games played, won, drawn and lost at home and away. There is also an additional column at the end, showing the computer's calculation – in percentage terms – of each team's chance of winning the league.

Each table is numbered as it is produced, therebye producing a useful facility for future reference should there be a dispute.

I have tried to make it as user-friendly as possible and allow you to create a new table from a printed publication if you don't have the chance to use the program from the start of the season. It also accepts the correction of any errors shown in the table, that were not noticed at the input stage. Of course, there is also a facility to save and load the most recently updated table and produce a hard copy for sending to the local newspaper.

I would be pleased to send anyone more details of this program upon receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope. – **Rod Williams, 49 High Street, Colton, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3LG.**

● Thank you very much for the information, Rod. We are sure that it will be of great benefit to A. Watkins and many other football enthusiasts.

Applause applause

AS a new Atari ST convert from the Commodore +4, I have been at a loss for any reasonable source of useful information about the Atari ST. Thus I am writing to applaud the start of your monthly pull-out sections and binder. However, I would like to suggest a few ideas for inclusion in the guide.

A listing of the start addresses of subroutines in rom and of the Atari ST Basic commands would be extremely useful. Also an index of the colour codings used in the guide would also save time as the contents grow.

Keep up the good work. – **J.W. Hooley, Long Eaton, Nottinghamshire.**

★ ★ ★

YOUR excellent publication Atari ST User *is the first magazine I have ever subscribed to on a regular basis. Having previously owned a Commodore 64, I have continued to be pleasantly surprised by the quality of the ST and your magazine.*

I recently took advantage of your subscription offer which contained the free PD discs, but was disappointed to find that all the programs in the Basic file were full of errors. It seems that the version of ST Basic that came bundled with my machine is different from that used for the PD programs.

How can I find out which version of ST Basic I have? – **Neal King, Highgate, London.**

● While it is always nice to receive plaudits from readers concerning the quality of *Atari ST User*, we naturally also enjoy constructive criticism and the chance to answer readers' questions. We have noted J.W. Hooley's suggestions and may implement them in the near future.

Readers can discover which version of ST Basic they have by loading it and then pulling down the About ST Basic option from the menu. If the copyright date is 1985 you have the old version of Basic, but if it is 1987, you own the new version.

The vast majority of public domain software was written for the old version of Basic and the new version won't run the listings. Any good ST dealer should be able to supply the old version of ST Basic.

Astronomical error

I WAS interested to see your magazine on sale in Canada. As an ex-astronomer, I was particularly interested in your article on Skyplot in the July issue of Atari ST User. *However, on your contents page you committed the gravest error known to astronomers; you referred to this astronomical package as being astrological.*

Fortunately this was not repeated in the article itself, but there was one other error. You mentioned conjunction as being an astrological term. Well, I suppose it is, but it is also a genuine astronomical term, as is opposition, but I think I've given you enough of that.

Incidently, before moving to Canada, I worked in the Royal Greenwich Observatory. While there, I had on occasion to

Each month we'll select a letter of the month – and the sender will receive the program which our reviewers have rated *Atari ST User* Star game. This month, reader, R. Alexander will receive Elite, which is reviewed on Page 22.

Letters on every subject of interest to Atari ST users are welcome. Send them to: The Editor, Atari ST User, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

Star Game for a Star Letter

Anyone for cricket?

WHY is our national game, cricket, so rarely implemented on micro computers? I remember three pretty dire versions of cricket written for the Sinclair Spectrum, the best of which was CRL's Test Match.

Can you imagine what 16 bit technology and 512k of memory could do for cricket simulation? In fact it might be the only way to beat the West Indies! There must be a programmer out there who is also a cricket fan. For the love of Botham, where is he/she? A decent cricket simulation would be greeted with wild enthusiasm by ST owners.

The basic rules and structure of cricket would translate easily enough to computer code, although integrating credible gameplay with realistic graphics might prove tricky. So please will someone fill this glaring gap in the 16 bit marketplace and restore some national pride at the same time. – **R. Alexander, London.**

● We couldn't agree more that a good cricket game for the ST would sell very well. Maybe your letter may give a software company just the inspiration it needs to produce such a program. Owzat!

deal with public enquiries about astronomical events. Some of these concerned items covered by Skyplot, so I wish it every success. – **Mark White, Toronto, Canada.**

● It's always pleasant to know that our magazine reaches all corners of the globe. Thank you for your observations which we have duly noted. We'll try not to make the same mistakes again.

DIPping the switches

I AM sure you can help me with this easy to solve problem. I have an Atari 520ST and a Panasonic KX-PI081 printer which are connected with a centronic cable. I have tried to use the printer drivers which come with 1st Word, but the printer puts extra blank lines into the text.

I have altered the DIP switches as follows: SW1: on, SW2: off, SW3: off, SW4: off, SW5: on, SW6: on, SW7: off, and SW8: on.

This was recommended in the manual which came with the printer, but such changes seem to have little effect. – **Jack Winter, Silkeborg, Denmark.**

● By a stroke of luck we happen to use Panasonic KX-PI081 printers here in the office, and have them connected to our 520 and Mega STs.

We arrange the DIP switches in the following order for all standard print-out: One, five, six and seven are all switched to the on position, while two, three, four, and eight are left off. We hope this helps with imported Danish STs and printers.

Double trouble

PC-DITTO is an amazing program with two faults. It lacks anything akin to speed and it is only supposed to run on a 1040ST. I can do nothing to alter the speed problem, but have found that it is possible to run PC-ditto on an ordinary 520STFM without any upgrades.

PC-ditto is advertised as only running on a 1040, not because of memory capacity but because it has a double sided drive. PC disc drives nowadays are 360k double sided format. Thus a single sided drive cannot read PC 3.5in discs. This problem can easily be overcome. All that is required is a friend with a 1040 or 520 with a double sided drive.

Boot-up PC-ditto on your friend's machine with a Dos disc, then type the following at prompt A>. FORMAT A:/S/1. This disc will now run on a 520ST with a single sided drive. The capacity may only be 180k but you now have genuine PC compatibility. The disc capacity can be doubled by using a PC equipped with a 3.5in drive and a formatted capacity of 720k.– **Leon Sanderson, Yeoville, South Africa.**

Getting on line

I HAVE recently acquired a Case 440/12 modem, which I have connected to my 520ST with a standard ribbon cable. What do I need in the way of software to start using my modem? I have tried using the VT52 emulator supplied with my computer but have not got anywhere with it.

I really am stuck and would appreciate any advice. – **J. Pratchett, Basingstoke, Hampshire.**

● You require a specific piece of communications terminal software in order to use your modem fully. Our pull-out guide to software in the April 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* lists some excellent communications packages at prices ranging from £19.95 to over £800.

K-Comm 2 as supplied with the Micro-Link modem is an excellent communications terminal program which we use regularly here at Europa House.

Lonely STs in Ireland

I HAVE been an ST user for nine months now and have found that there is very little support for the ST over here in Ireland. Together with a few friends I

Turn to Page 110 ▶

◀ From Page 109

have decided to start an Irish ST users group. At the moment I am compiling a newsletter and have made a collection of a lot of PD software. We aim to exchange news, views and PD software and support other lonely Irish ST users.

We are looking for Irish ST owners interested in joining our group, but we would also like to hear from anybody, anywhere else in the world.

If you are interested please send us an international reply coupon with your name and address. In return we will send you our first newsletter and details of our current public domain software. – **Mark Kinsella, Johnstown, Sea Road, Arklow, County Wicklow, Ireland.**

● We wish your group every success, Mark. We are sure that together with a monthly edition of *Atari ST User*, ST owners in Ireland will feel more in touch with everything going on in the world of the ST.

Tackling dirty drives

I AM a relative newcomer to the Atari ST, having only owned a 520STFM for little over a week. This is the first time I have come into contact with a disc drive of any sorts. I would like to know how to correctly maintain the drive heads.

I have bought a disc care cleaning kit and have used it three times. I am unsure if I am using it in the correct manner. After putting several drops of cleaning fluid on to the exposed lint-free material in the jacket of the cleaning disc, I insert it into the drive, switch on the TV and finally switch on the micro. The drive whirrs for about 30 seconds and I then remove the cleaning disc and switch off the TV and my ST. Is this procedure correct and am I cleaning my drive often enough? – **Sean Allen, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear.**

● Your cleaning procedure appears to be correct, but we are a little worried about the amount of drive cleaning you are undertaking.

Depending upon the amount of use your computer is getting, you should not be cleaning your disc drive more often than once every six months. We have never cleaned the disc drives in our STs and have never had data corruption due to dirty drive heads.

A damaged disc or poorly set drive head could result in a deposit build-up, but this instance is rare. Of greater danger to your disc drive is the prominence of strong magnetic fields or constant use of poor quality cleaning kits.

More on sex and violence

IN response to the Star letter in the September 1988 issue of Atari ST User, *I feel I would like to make a few remarks. The user group I have started is by no means intended to be a women-only affair.*

I addressed the letter to women to attempt to redress the unequal representation of women and men in computer magazines. I certainly have not turned away any enquiries from male ST users about the group.

I do not feel that separatism is the answer to sexism in software or in any walk of life, and prefer active cooperation.

The comments you made, both to myself and J.A. Harris' letters, are prime examples of the problem. You clearly rate the topic as important, giving both letters Star status, yet stating clearly that you thought it acceptable to encourage gamers to play Rambo type games because that's what the majority of users want.

Does this not smack of ascribing a role to people which they then accept as normal, when they are unaware of the alternatives?

If the topic is important enough to warrant Star Letter status, why not take the opposite line and discourage violence and sexism?

I will write no more. Instead I shall leave the floor open for others to comment, and I wait eagerly to see what they have to say. – **Sandra Vogel, Wimbledon, London.**

★ ★ ★

I HAVE read with interest the various views of your readers, concerning sexism and violence within the computer games industry. Surely if we look back into history, we will always find that the inhabitants of this planet have spent many years fighting either about religion or world domination, or for an individual to possess supreme power.

Computer games will not sell just because they are of a violent or sexist nature, but maybe some people need a fantasy world to escape into, where their violent tendencies can be given full reign without causing harm to other members of our society.

I rely on the reviews published in your excellent magazine for the graphic content and playability of games software. No amount of scantily clad females on the advertising of games would entice me to buy a product to which I would otherwise give a wide birth. – **M.A. Depear, Throcken Holt, Lincolnshire.**

★ ★ ★

I AGREE with Ms Harris' statement in the Star letter in the September 1988 issue of Atari ST User *that in assuming that most male readers and games players identify closely with a Rambo image, you are both stating what is not proven and also overlooking your part in helping shape social attitudes.*

Some of the ingredients in the Rambo image are: Violence solves problems, complicated issues can be reduced to black and white statements, fight for your country right or wrong, and label those who don't agree with you as wimps. The sum total of all this is, in fact, a coherent and to my mind, very dangerous political philosophy.

It seems to me that the appeal of good arcade games is to achieve mastery of a skilful technique over clever opponents and puzzles.

This can be presented in numerous ways, but to choose to do so in a Rambo-type setting is a deliberate, and ultimately a political choice.

It is undoubtedly the case that Rambo images have a wide appeal in our society – this makes them neither right nor acceptable, and places a responsibility on us all – especially the media – to decide whether we wish to add to these images or resist them.

Your assumption that your readers have the choice only between a Rambo and a wimp image, is an example of black and white thinking, and needs to be challenged. – **Jeremy Deane, Poole, Dorset.**

● These letters are just a sample of the dozens we have received on this topic and hopefully reflect some of the different viewpoints.

We agree that sexism and violence should not be encouraged in computer games, but as both are endemic in modern society it is difficult, if not impossible, to counter their prevalence in games software without being over radical.

We at *Atari ST User* are in the business of reporting and commenting on the best software, hardware and languages available for your computer. If we were to start taking moral stances on wider issues we would become immersed in the deep water that is the realm of other populist non-computer periodicals.

We hope that enough has now been said on this subject in our pages.

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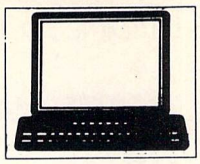

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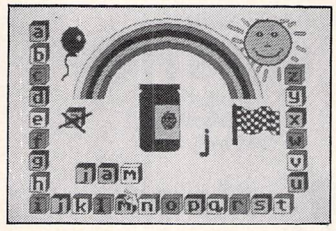

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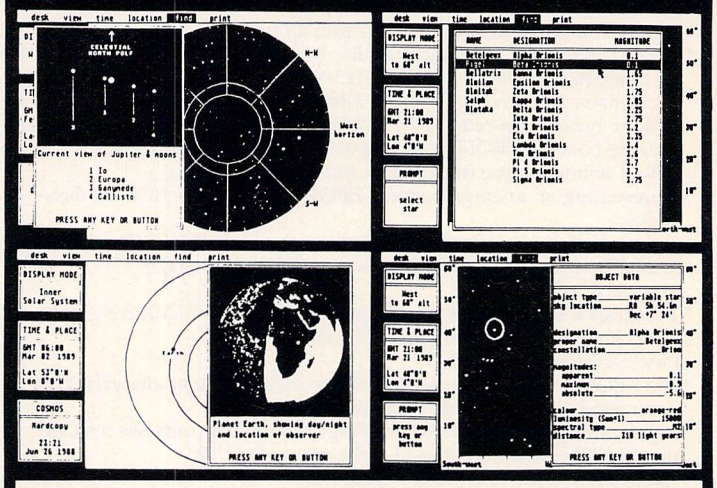

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Fingers on the button!

Mike Baxter presents an ingenious multiple choice quiz game shell written in Fast Basic

TRIVIA Test is an essentially simple but very versatile quiz generating program, and can be used purely for entertainment or as an educational utility for teaching or revision purposes. The listing given here provides the guts of the system, and all you have to provide is a set of questions and answers on any topic you choose.

Operating the program couldn't be simpler – specify a question and answer (.QA) file for the program to work with and select the duration of the game from a menu. Provided there are enough questions in the QA file, you can then instruct Trivia Test to ask just 10, 20 or 30 questions from the file.

The program will then proceed to display the questions in multiple choice format with four possible answers to pick from, labelled A, B, C and D. From there onwards, you just have to keep getting the answers right!

Make your selections by pressing the letter key corresponding to the answer you think is correct, and the program will indicate whether you have made the correct choice by ticking a mark box at the bottom right of the screen, or issuing a fat cross if you got it wrong. Whatever happens, the correct answer will flash on the screen and you'll move on to the next question.

The game completed, your score and percentage will be displayed – I've tried not to make it look like a school examination result – and you can then decide whether to play another round, load another .QA file, or quit.

Trivia Test never asks the questions or displays the possible answers in the same order twice, so you won't be able to remember that the answer to the first question for instance, is always choice B.

As for the business of designing a .QA file, it's really very simple. Using a word processor or text editor which can save files in Ascii format – such as 1st Word/1st Word Plus, Tempus, Protext, and so on – enter your questions, the more the merrier.

For every question in the file, you must supply one correct answer, and three incorrect ones. The question itself can be up to 70 characters long, with the correct answer on the next line followed by the three false answers on consecutive lines. For example:

```
Who is the president of the USA?
Ronald Reagan
Ronald McDonald
Arthur C. Clarke
Arthur Scargill
```

Be careful not to leave any blank lines between questions or at the end of the file. To make sure there are no blank spaces at the end of a file, place the cursor just after the last letter of the last word and hold down the Delete key until you're sure any additional lines or spaces have gone. If you are using 1st Word, the cursor will stop flashing when you have deleted all such spaces.

Then save your file with a .QA extension, for instance as TRIVIA.QA. This will allow the Trivia program to automatically list all the question and answer files on the disc when you run the program.

Don't worry too much about making mistakes when creating .QA files, as you won't crash the system by loading a faulty one into the program – but the questions may not make much sense.

One final note: The program will only run on a high resolution monochrome monitor, and requires at least 100k of workspace to operate properly. So don't forget to change the Show Info dialogue from Fast Basic's File menu.

Turn to Page 114 ▶

```
  10 \ Trivia  Test
  20 \ Written by Michael ANDBaxter
  30 \ (c) Atari ST User 1988
  40 \ Fast Basic
  50 \ Mono Monitor - Requires 100k
  70 ESCAPE OFF
  80 IF SCREENMODE<>2 THEN i=ALERT("[
1][ |Hi Res Only][ Sorry ]",1):END
  90 CLEAR 65535:DIM qa$(300,5),list(
4),store(300),mess&(7)
 100 l$=STRING$(26,"-")
 110 m$="[  About Trivia Test ]"
 120 m$=m$+"[ File | Load New Questio
ns \"+l$+"\ Quit ]"
 130 m$=m$+"[ Game |  Play Game \"+l$
+"\  10 Questions \"
 140 m$=m$+"  20 Questions \  30 Ques
tions \"+l$+"\  All Questions]"
 150 game=10:exit=FALSE
 170 CLOSEWIND OUTHANDLE:DELETEWIND O
UTHANDLE
 180 CLOSEWIND IMMHANDLE:DELETEWIND I
MMHANDLE
 190 FOR i=1 TO 10:CLOSEWIND SEGHANDL
E(i):DELETEWIND SEGHANDLE(i):NEXT
 210 PROCsetup_screen
 220 PROCcontrol_loop
 230 END
 250 \ Main program control loop
 260 DEFPROCcontrol_loop
 270 RELEASEMOUSE:BEGINUPDATE
 280 MENU m$:ENDUPDATE
 290 GTXTSIZE 13:GTXTEFFECTS 16
 300 GTXT 600,14,CHR$(14)+CHR$(15)
 310 GTXTSIZE 6
 320 GTXT 485,12,"TRIVIA TEST"
 330 ENABLEITEM 23,0:ENABLEITEM 40,0:
ENABLEITEM 44,0
 340 REPEAT
 350 PROCselector
 360 UNTIL button%
 370 PROCload_file
 380 PROCcheck_ammount
 390 PROCq_box
 400 PRINTTAB(6,2)"TRIVIA TEST ... Pl
ease select an option"
 410 REPEAT
 420 REPEAT:WAITMESSAGE @mess&(0):UNT
IL mess&(0)=10
 430 SWITCH mess&(4)
 440 CASE 13
 450 a$="[0][ "+CHR$(14)+CHR$(15)+" T
RIVIA TEST|"
 460 a$=a$+" | Written By Michael A.B
axter  |"
 470 a$=a$+" Atari ST User "+CHR$(189
)+" MCMLXXXVIII| ][ Continue ]"
 480 dummy=ALERT(a$,1)
 490 CASE 22
 500 PROCselector
```

◀ From Page 113

```
  510 IF button%<>FALSE THEN
  520 PROCload_file
  530 PROCcheck_ammount
  540 ENDIF
  550 CASE 24
  560 exit=TRUE
  570 CASE 39
  580 PROCdo_game
  590 a$="[0][ G A M E  O V E R! ]"
  600 a$=a$+"Out of "+STR$(game)+" Que
stions:|"
  610 a$=a$+STR$(score)+" Correct|"
  620 a$=a$+STR$(game-score)+" Wrong][
"
  630 a$=a$+STR$((score/game)*100)+"%
]"
  640 dummy=ALERT(a$,1)
  650 PROCq_box
  660 PRINTTAB(6,2)"TRIVIA TEST ... Pl
ease select an option"
  670 score=0:PRINTTAB(6,22)SPC(48)
  680 CASE 41
  690 CHECKITEM 41,1:game=10
  700 CHECKITEM 42,0:CHECKITEM 43,0:CH
ECKITEM 45,0
  710 CASE 42
  720 CHECKITEM 42,1:game=20
  730 CHECKITEM 41,0:CHECKITEM 43,0:CH
ECKITEM 45,0
  740 CASE 43
  750 CHECKITEM 43,1:game=30
  760 CHECKITEM 41,0:CHECKITEM 42,0;CH
ECKITEM 45,0
  770 CASE 45
  780 FOR i=41 TO 43:CHECKITEM i,0:NEX
T
  790 CHECKITEM 45,1:game=questions
  800 ENDSWITCH
  810 INVERTTITLE mess&(3),1
  820 UNTIL exit=TRUE
  830 ENDPROC
  850 DEFPROCload_file
  860 loop=1:file=OPENIN file$
  870 REPEAT
  880 PROCgetrecord(file)
  890 qa$(loop,1)=a$
  900 FOR g=2 TO 5:PROCgetrecord(file)
:qa$(loop,g)=a$
  910 NEXT
  920 loop=loop+1
  930 UNTIL EOF#file OR loop>300
  940 CLOSE#file:questions=loop-1
  950 ENDPROC
  970 \ INPUT procedure to strip extra
 CR byte from file
  980 DEFPROCgetrecord(handle)
  990 LOCAL dummy|
 1000 INPUT#handle,a$
 1010 dummy|=BGET#handle
 1020 ENDPROC
 1040 DEFPROCdo_game
 1050 FOR g=1 TO 300:store(g)=FALSE:NE
XT
 1060 score=0:HIDEMOUSE
 1070 FOR loop=1 TO game
 1080 dummy=RND(-SYSTIME)
 1090 REPEAT
 1100 choice=RND(questions)
 1110 UNTIL FNrnd_check
 1120 store(loop)=choice
 1130 FOR g=1 TO 4
 1140 REPEAT
 1150 rep%=FALSE
 1160 a=RND(4)
 1170 FOR i=1 TO g:IF list(i)=a THEN r
ep%=TRUE
 1180 NEXT
 1190 UNTIL rep%=FALSE
 1200 list(g)=a
 1210 NEXT
 1220 GTXTEFFECTS 1:GTXTSIZE 13:FILLC(
L 0:FILLSTYLE 2,8
 1230 PROCq_box
 1240 FILLCOL 0:BAR 520,330,612,390
 1250 LINECOL 1:PROCbox(520,330,612,39
0)
 1260 LINEWIDTH 5:LINE 524,392 TO 614,
392
 1270 LINEWIDTH 3:LINE 614,392 TO 614,
334
 1280 LINEWIDTH 1
 1290 PRINT TAB(6,2)qa$(choice,1)
 1300 TXTEFFECTS 4
 1310 PRINTTAB(5,22)"  QUESTION ";STR$
(loop);" OF ";STR$(game)
 1320 FOR g=1 TO 4
 1330 a$=qa$(choice,1+list(g))
 1340 BAR 50,46+(g*60),598,68+(g*60)
 1350 GTXT 320-((8*LEN(a$))/2),65+(g*6
0),a$
 1360 NEXT
 1370 REPEAT:k=GET AND 223:UNTIL k>64
AND k<69
 1380 k=k-64:IF qa$(choice,1+list(k))=
qa$(choice,2) THEN
 1390 PROCcorrect:BEEP:score=score+1
 1400 ELSE
 1410 PROCwrong
 1420 ENDIF
 1430 LINEWIDTH 1:PROCflash_answer
 1440 PRINTTAB(27,22)STR$(score);" cor
rect, ";STR$(loop-score);" wrong"
 1450 TXTEFFECTS 0
 1460 FOR g=1 TO 4:list(g)=FALSE:NEXT
 1470 NEXT loop:SHOWMOUSE
 1480 ENDPROC
 1500 DEFPROCsetup_screen
 1510 TXTRECT 0,16,SCREENWIDTH,SCREENH
EIGHT
 1520 GRAFRECT 0,0,SCREENWIDTH,SCREENH
EIGHT
 1530 TXTSIZE 13:CLG 0
 1540 GTXTEFFECTS 16:GTXTSIZE 21:GTXTC
OL 1
 1550 FILLSTYLE 2,4
 1560 LINECOL 1:BAR 0,0,640,400
 1570 FILLSTYLE 2,8
 1580 LINECOL 0
 1590 FOR g=1 TO 4
 1600 BAR 28,38+(g*60),612,82+(g*60)
 1610 PROCbox(30,40+(g*60),610,80+(g*6
0))
 1620 PROCbox(32,42+(g*60),608,78+(g*6
0))
 1630 GTXT 36,68+(g*60),CHR$(64+g)
 1640 NEXT
 1650 FILLCOL 0:BAR 520,330,612,390
 1660 LINECOL 1:PROCbox(520,330,612,39
0)
 1670 LINEWIDTH 5:LINE 524,392 TO 614,
392
 1680 LINEWIDTH 3:LINE 614,392 TO 614,
334
 1690 LINEWIDTH 1
 1700 TXTEFFECTS 4:PRINTTAB(4,22)SPC(5
1):TXTEFFECTS 0
 1710 LINE 31,367 TO 440,367
 1720 LINE 24,384 TO 432,384
 1730 LINE 31,367 TO 24,384
 1740 LINE 440,367 TO 432,384
 1750 ENDPROC
 1770 DEFPROCbox(x1,y1,x2,y2)
 1780 LINE x1,y1 TO x2,y1
 1790 LINE x2,y1 TO x2,y2
 1800 LINE x1,y1 TO x1,y2
 1810 LINE x2,y2 TO x1,y2
 1820 ENDPROC
 1840 \ Draw a cross
 1850 DEFPROCwrong
 1860 LINEWIDTH 4
 1870 LINE 540,340 TO 592,370:LINE 540
,370 TO 592,340
 1880 ENDPROC
 1900 \ Draw a tick
 1910 DEFPROCcorrect
 1920 LINEWIDTH 4
 1930 LINE 540,360 TO 550,370:LINE 550
,370 TO 592,340 -
 1940 ENDPROC
 1960 \ Highlight correct answer on sc
reen
 1970 DEFPROCflash_answer
 1980 LOCAL delay
 1990 FOR g=1 TO 4
 2000 IF qa$(choice,1+list(g))=qa$(cho
ice,2) THEN
 2010 GRAFMODE 3
 2020 FOR i=1 TO 8
 2030 BAR 50,46+(g*60),598,68+(g*60)
 2040 delay=TIME:REPEAT:UNTIL TIME=del
ay+100
 2050 NEXT
 2060 GRAFMODE 1
 2070 ENDIF
 2080 NEXT
 2090 ENDPROC
 2110 \ The following checks that the
next chosen question has
 2120 \ not already been used in this
particular game
 2130 DEFFNrnd_check
 2140 result=TRUE
 2150 FOR a=1 TO loop
 2160 IF store(a)=choice THEN result=F
ALSE
 2170 NEXT
 2180 =result
 2200 \ Display GEM File Selector and
clear up afterwards
 2210 \ Check for valid filename selec
tion
 2220 DEFPROCselector
 2230 pth$="A:\*.QA":file$=""
 2240 REPEAT
 2250 GRAB 0,0,SCREENWIDTH,SCREENHEIGH
T
 2260 FSELECT pth$,file$,button%
 2270 PUT 0,0,3
 2280 UNTIL (button% AND LEN(file$)) O
R button%=FALSE
 2290 ENDPROC
 2310 \ Draw the question box
 2320 DEFPROCq_box
 2330 FILLSTYLE 2,8
 2340 BAR 28,40,500,72 : LINECOL 1
 2350 PROCbox(28,40,500,72): LINEWIDTH
5
 2360 LINE 32,74  TO 502,74: LINEWIDTH
3
 2370 LINE 502,74 TO 502,44: LINEWIDTH
1
 2380 ENDPROC
 2400 \ Check how many questions have
been loaded off the disk
 2410 \ and alter menu items according
ly
 2420 DEFPROCcheck_ammount
 2430 ENABLEITEM 41,(questions>9 AND q
uestions<20)
 2440 ENABLEITEM 42,(questions>19 AND
questions<30)
 2450 ENABLEITEM 43,(questions>29 AND
questions>29)
 2460 IF questions<10 THEN
 2470 CHECKITEM 45,1:game=questions
 2480 ELSE
 2490 CHECKITEM 41,1:game=10
 2500 ENDIF
 2510 CHANGEITEM 45,"  All "+STR$(ques
tions)+" questions"
 2520 ENDPROC
```

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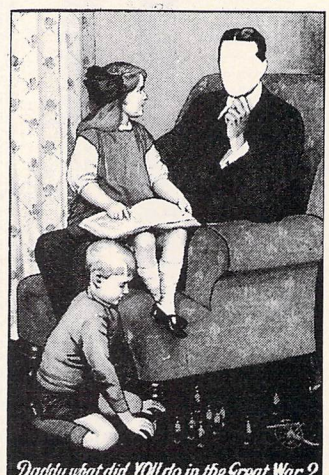

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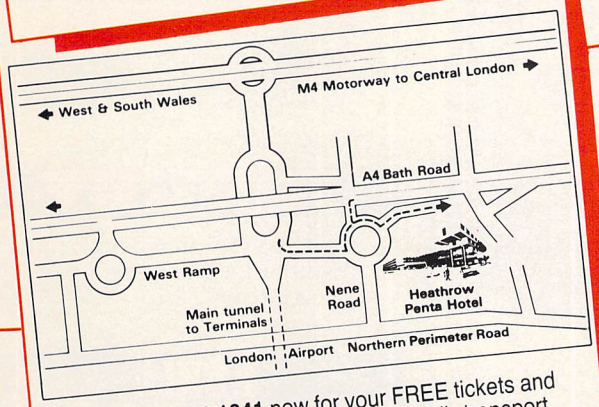

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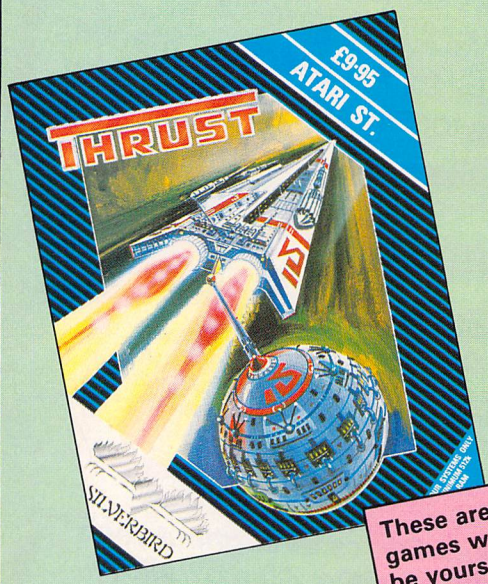

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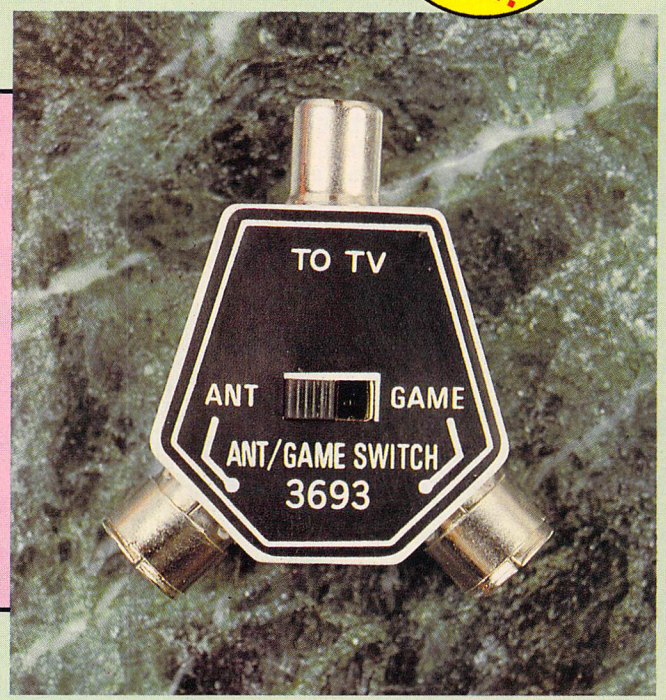

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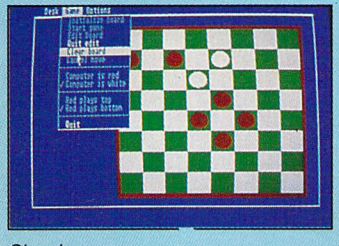

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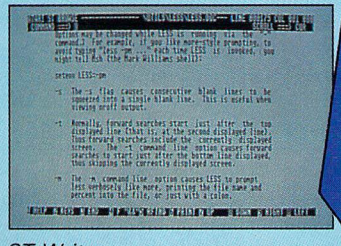

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April issue: Reviews: Captain Blood, Eco, Super Sprint, Black Lamp, Wizball, Skyrider, Solomon's Key, Bard's Tale, MCC Assembler, Protext, True Basic, A Magic digitiser, GFA Vector and Companion. Listings: Mandelbrot upgrade, custom keyboard, disc verify. Features: Gallery, adventures, product guide.

May issue: Reviews: Gem-Forth, PD Forth, Partner, Quick-List, Certificate Maker, Creator, Timeworks DTP, MasterPlan, Grafix. Features: Transputers, Music, interviews with Pete Johnson and CRL, Adventures. Listings: Dynamic relaxation, Mouse designer, prime numbers.

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August issue: Reviews: Supra Drive 10Mb floppy disc, Star LC-10 printer, Digicalc, Spectrum 512, Data Manager, Share Master, Devpac II, Workbench, Word Up, Protext, Word Writer, Thundercats, Vixen plus many more games. Features: Midi, adventures, gallery, Telecomsoft interview.

September issue: Reviews: Laser C, Spellbook, Signum 2, Ten, Protext Office, GFA Advanced programming, Computer Languages, Virus, Mindfighter, Football Manager 2, Captain America, plus many other games. Features: Midi, Adventures, Gallery, Mailbag, Weatherlink, Pull-out guide part 2.

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The following is a very small selection of the Games, Graphics packages and Demos available from ST UK. We have 248 single and 121 double sided disks in our catalogue.

SINGLE SIDED DISKS

AP50 APPLICATION 50: Beginner disk 250k text file for people who are new to the ST or are having problems with aspects of the machine i.e. RAM disks, Spoolers, Desktop Accessories etc.

GAM 1 GAME DISK 01: 14 Titles – Celest, Dragon Maze, Megaroid, Nightcrawler, Pacman, Pool, Blackjack, Connect Four, Maze, Pente, Pong, Battleships and others. Please note some of the games on this disk – Pool, Pacman, Pong etc. only work in monochrome.

GAM 2 GAME DISK 02: 4 Titles – Putput monochrome puzzle game brilliant; Ripcord, Targetgame.

GAM II GAME DISK II: 4 Titles – Azarlin full colour asteroids space invaders game – excellent shoot 'em up! Farm yard colour memory and guessing game – very very nice. Invader – colour space invaders. Bridge it! Computer version of the 'September' board game – excellent.

GAM 12 GAME DISK 12: 2 Titles – Lunar Lander colour only. Spacewar Colour and Monochrome. Both of these games are excellent.

GAM 17 GAME 17: Diamond colour only shoot 'em up game from Budgie software.

GAM 18 GAME 18: Football colour and monochrome speculation game from Budgie software.

GAM 25 GAME 25: Floyd the Droid – nice graphics in this mass shoot 'em up plus digitised sound. Labyrinth – move ball around maze, very hard to play – colour only.

GAM 26 GAME 26: Darts! by Budgie Software. Colour only.

GAM 29 GAME 29: Strip Breakout – knock out the bricks to get a picture of a naked woman . Colour only.

GAM 30 GAME 30: Quizz – Trivia game creator editor, Runners Revenge, Loderunner lookalike mono only.

GRI GRAPHICS DISK 01: 12 Titles – NEOchrome version 1, Palette, DR Doodle, Palette Setter, Doodle to Degas converter. Effects (slideshow that does effects on any NEO pics with a 'PIC' extender. Windpics (loads all the NEO 'PIC' pictures in disk and into a separate window allowing you to have all on screen at once). 3-D Designer (draw images and make them move)! Sprite designer, Shrendraw – drawing program and pascal source code, another bigger Sprite editor and Degas fonts.

GR3 GRAPHICS DISK 03: Master Painter – excellent graphics program works in ALL resolutions in NEO Degas and Doodle formats. Has multiple screens 6 on 1/2 Mb, up to 24 if enough RAM, animate between these multiple screens, all the usual tools plus rotate to any angle. Skivie – horizontal and vertical, zoom, twist, built in converter, very well laid out and designed – full GEM but this does not slow it down in the way maybe Degas Elite does. This is a truly brilliant program. Also Paintlux – a monochrome painting program in GEM and German.

GR9 GRAPHICS DISK 09: Picworks monochrome only picture manipulator GEM based Doodle, Degas, ART, Degas compressed etc. formats compatible. Manual online – very well designed and programmed – also can send and receive pictures from OG4 Version 1.1. This is not compatible with new TOS.

GR10 GRAPHICS 10: 2 Titles – Moving Construction Set – you draw up to 8 'line images' and this excellent program will move/animate from one to the next. Very good. Full GEM. Face Amimator – Allows you to move eyes, nose, mouth etc. of a face & record all the movements. Both programs are monochrome only.

DEM 51 DEMO 51: ST Tour! An excellent demo for all you New STers. The tour works in Monochrome and in Colour, and shows how to use all the features of the ST, including desktop accessories, menus, windows etc. This is very, very good.

DEM 52 DEMO 52: Ghost Busters digitised sound demo needs 1Mb of RAM but does work on the 520ST. This is a double sided disk.

DEM 53 DEMO 53: Thunderbirds digitised sound demo – excellent.

DEM 77 DEMO 77: Exceptions 4 BIG demo excellent graphics and sound – 5 hours of music and 21/4 miles of scrolling text!! Fabulous sounds and unbelievable graphics and scrolling. This is the demo to impress the doubters!! 512 colours on screen at once absolutely brilliant and all mega-mega compressed onto a single sided disk!! This is the demo . . . written by the Master of graphics and sound – TEX.

Note: For secret display press rest – Andy NOTE this does not work with new TOS. If you try to run this on a TV you may have to adjust the vertical hold.

DEM 91 DEMO 91: Amiga Demo!!!! Form the exceptions – brilliant megatron graphics demo!!!!

DOUBLE SIDED DISKS

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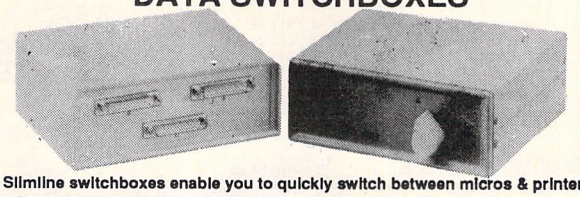

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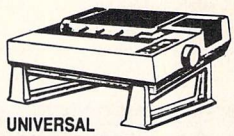

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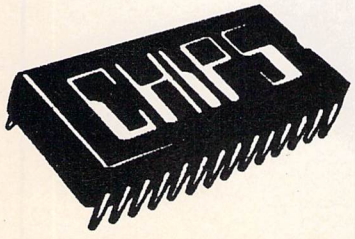

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