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THE ENTERTAINMENT COMPUTER TRADE WEEKLY

Monday July 15th 1996

Warner to sell off games arm

Time Warner's dedicated games division is to be sold off, *CTW* can reveal.

After more than 18 months of regularly changing its name and strategy, the giant US media conglomerate has decided that it will listen to all offers for its global Warner Interactive business, which has offices in the US, UK, France, Germany and Australia.

Negotiations are already significantly advanced with at least one prospective purchaser from outside the industry. A deal could plausibly go through as early as mid-August, with the new owner picking up everything except the Warner name.

Warner Interactive expects sales of over $50 million this year, more than half coming from its Warner Interactive International operation based in London, which oversees all business outside the US.

Rumours have been circulating about Time Warner's intentions in the games market for some time. A lack of cohesion has been apparent, with the Warner Interactive arm having an almost minuscule corporate presence in the US — where its ultimate HQ is run in New York by CEO Paul Vidick.

Time Warner has four other US-based interactive software businesses, namely Warner Bros. Interactive (movie and TV show licensing), Time Warner Electronic Publishing (edutainment and Internet software), Accolade (a part-owned games developer and publisher) and Inscape (a wholly-owned developer).

CTW understands that Time Warner may also look to sell off Inscape and its Accolade stake, whilst WBI will continue its licensing activity with other games publishers and TWEP surviving as it reports to the autonomous print publishing side of the group, rather than the entertainment side.

Warner Interactive officials were remaining cagey about the future when contacted by *CTW* last week, but both Vidick and international boss Tony Adams admitted that the parent company had taken a broad strategic decision to concentrate on its core movie and music business.

Vidick said that any possibility of a sale is "all very preliminary" whilst insisting that the future of the business remained secure, in that Time Warner would dispose of it carefully and in a complete form.

"In no way does this reflect the business performance of Warner Interactive or the interactive industry as a whole," reiterated Adams.

"The move has been made in full consultation with the Warner Interactive management team, who have every confidence in the future of the business on the basis that all the scheduled releases will proceed as planned. Our excellent relationship with our development partners will continue to provide us with an ongoing range of quality titles."

Adams also diffused rumours that he may be leaving the company, adding that he expected all 65 WII staff (40 in UK) to stay with the company when it is sold off and 'business as usual' to prevail both before and after.

WARNER INTERACTIVE

"In no way does this reflect the business performance of Warner Interactive or the interactive industry as a whole."

Tony Adams
Managing Director
Warner Interactive International

Certainly, considering the quality of Warner Interactive's alliances with developers — which include UK firms The Bitmap Brothers and Sensible Software — and the fact that some eighteen months of effort should at last start to come to fruition over the next six months or so, there should be no shortage of interest in the business.

The firm has over 20 SKUs due to appear before Christmas across PC CD-ROM, Saturn and PlayStation — including *Chaos Engine 2, Return Fire, Pitball, Trash-It, Creatures* and potential blockbuster *Z.*

"It's a perfect acquisition for somebody who wants to walk straight into the business," said one industry analyst. "In fact, if you look at all the software businesses that Warner has got or is involved in, this has by far the best catalogue and potential."

● In an unrelated move, Warner Interactive's publishing director Tom Watson has left the company to join hot ticket Cambridge-based software company Auto-Nomy, which is bringing an 'intelligent search system' for the Internet to market later this year. He joins former Sega Europe and BSkyB man Simon Morris, who recently joined as marketing director.

EVER-CHANGING MOODS

March 1994
Time Warner completes the purchase of coin-op firm Atari Games, having previously owned 80 per cent. It then incorporates the Tengen brand (which publishes Atari Games titles on console formats) into its previously PC and Mac-specialist Time Warner Interactive division.

September 1994
Warner Music Group acquires UK games publisher Renegade, setting up Warner Interactive Entertainment — gaining rights to games from The Bitmap Brothers and Sensible Software. The intention is to operate independently of Time Warner Interactive.

October 1995
The two dedicated games divisions, Warner Interactive Entertainment and Time Warner Interactive, merge. The TWI name is retained and the business is centralised in London, with Tony Adams heading up all international business. WIE's managing director David Evans and general manager Andrew Chorzelski are made redundant.

April 1996
Following the sale of the US coin-op business (trading as Time Warner Interactive) to Williams, the games publishing arm duly changes its name from TWI to Warner Interactive, becoming Warner Interactive International in Europe and Australia.

July 1996
Time Warner decides to sell off Warner Interactive International and may also dispose of wholly-owned Inscape and 50 per cent-owned Accolade in the US. Time Warner Electronic Publishing, which sells in Europe via Philips, and licensing operation Warner Bros. Interactive are unaffected.

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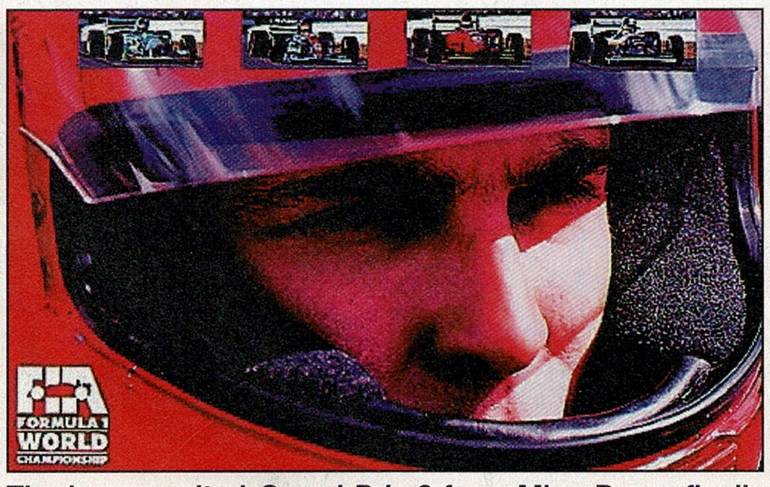
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With this issue: CTW Europe



The long-awaited *Grand Prix 2* from MicroProse finally ships on Friday (July 19th). The PC CD-ROM blockbuster has achieved initial orders across Europe of nearly 300,000 units, and has taken two years to develop.

STOP PRESS:

Zomba Music moves in

Pinnacle's parent firm has been acquired by music giant The Zomba Group.

Lambourne Productions, owner of Pinnacle Software and Gauntlet Entertainment, as well as Pinnacle Records, has been purchased by The Zomba Group, which has taken a 75 per cent stake in Lambourne's owner Windsong International.

Lambourne's management team of Steve Mason and Sean Sullivan will continue on long-term service contracts, along with its subsidiaries' bosses including Peter Sleeman and Pete Rezon.

Our Price snubs Saturn

Our Price is revamping its games strategy — and has snubbed the Sega Saturn.

The giant music chain's new games blueprint follows a complete review of its business. Having previously stocked only 16-bit software in some 160 stores, Our Price is now concentrating on PlayStation and PC CD-ROM formats in 73 outlets, with a view to rolling out the new formula to up to another 100 stores by the end of the year.

A 'select range' of cartridge titles will also be stocked, while the chain has also opted to support hardware for the first time, offering the PlayStation plus *Ridge Racer* at a promotional price of £199 for a limited period to launch the new initiative. Saturn hardware and software, however, is not on the firm's current agenda.

"We stocked both PC CD-ROM and PlayStation formats in a couple of Our Price stores over Christmas and the trial proved a great success," said Joe McNicholas, senior games and multimedia product manager for the Virgin Our Price group.



OUR PRICE: New games strategy excludes Saturn

"While we will stock a limited amount of 16-bit titles, we have decided to focus our attention on the two formats that are showing the greatest potential. For the time being, we will not be stocking Saturn."

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EDITORIAL
01462 442472 (UK)
+44 1462 442472 (International)
editorial@ctw.co.uk

Editor: Stuart Dinsey
Deputy Editor: Lisa Foster
Editorial Assistant: Rachel Hutton
Contributing Editor: Dave Roberts
Multimedia Editor: Christina Erskine
US Correspondent: Colin Campbell
Contributors: John Bennett, Stuart Campbell, John Davison, Ronnie Dungan, Les Ellis, Tim Green, Ian Lynch, Guy Sneesby, Phil South, Andy Stout, Mat Toor
Photographer: Nic Cooper

CTW Europe Newsdesk:
+44 1462 442483
editorial@ctw.co.uk

ADVERTISING
01462 442471 (UK)
+44 1462 442471 (International)
Advertising Manager: Russell Beadle
Deputy Ad Manager: Alexandra Jarvis

PRODUCTION & ADMINISTRATION
01462 442470 (UK)
+44 1462 442470 (International)
Publisher/Managing Director: Tom Stock
Operations Manager: Lesley Hunt
Accounts Manager: Suki Kang
Credit Controller: Michael Mason
Production Manager: Pete Minney
Production Assistant: Lynn Tarrant

CIRCULATION
01462 442486 (UK)
+44 1462 442486 (International)
Subscriptions Manager: Yvonne Mackintosh

CTW is circulated free to all independent UK retailers whose primary business is the sale of interactive entertainment and home office computer products. Retailers with secondary interests in these markets may qualify for a reduced subscription rate.

CTW is also distributed on a subscription basis to companies and individuals deemed to be operating within the interactive entertainment and home office industry. Inclusion on the mailing list is entirely at the discretion of the publisher, whose decision will be final and absolute.

UK £80 Europe £150
Rest of the world £250

Discounted rates for multiple subscription are negotiable

CTW
The only trade publication servicing the whole of the UK interactive entertainment and home computer marketplace, with quality subscription-based readership throughout the rest of the world.

With a controlled circulation of 6,500 it covers the entire UK retail sector, reaching all specialist outlets and multiple chain buyers — from electrical and toy multiples to mail order catalogues, small computer independents and video rental dealers.

CTW EUROPE
On the first Monday of each month, all subscribers to *CTW* receive a dedicated *CTW* European supplement. This concentrates on non-UK events in the interactive entertainment business, with news, features, market research and specialist advertising.
For more information, or to supply editorial material, call:
Stuart Dinsey +44 1462 442483
editorial@ctw.co.uk

FAX
01462 442489 (UK)
+44 1462 442489 (International)

Published by *CTW* (Hitchin) Ltd, Troopers Yard, 23 Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England SG5 1JW

Lithographic origination, printing and dispatch by The Manson Group, 4 Maxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. Tel: 01442 247251

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NEWS

Hease out, but IDG nixes MBO talk

IDG Media's leisure computing division has reacted fiercely to suggestions that a management buy-out from its giant US parent is on the cards.

Despite various rumours about the future of some of its titles, staff and the operation as a whole, IDG's Macclesfield business has strongly denied that any major changes are on the cards, reiterating its strong position within the IDG worldwide set-up.

"We have had a difficult transition from Europress to IDG," admitted sales and marketing director Steve Darragh. "But what the rest of the industry often forgets is how strong IDG is worldwide and in markets other than the leisure sector.

"We enjoy being part of such a large organisation as IDG. I know from my experience at Europress how hard it is to compete with the likes of Future and Emap, and it makes things easier being part of this worldwide group."

IDG Media has, however, witnessed changes within its senior management structure in the UK, with the departure last week of former country manager Richard Hease who has left 'to pursue other business interests'.

The restructuring sees Ian Bloomfield continue to head up the Macclesfield operation, with Guy Eaton and Kitt Gould now responsible for the key *MacWorld* and *PC Advisor* titles in London. All three will report directly to the US.

IDG Media has also refuted rumours that *Amiga Action* is about to close. Following the departure of erstwhile editor Paul Roundell, Steve McNally has taken up the reigns, with the firm claiming that the magazine will continue to be published while it is still profitable to do so.

"Eventually, it will probably be absorbed into *Amiga Computing* which we believe probably has a longer life, but it will keep going for the next four or five issues at least," said Darragh.

● Meanwhile, after a two month break, multi-format games title *GamePro* is scheduled for a September revival. A one-shot *PC GamePro Quake* special featuring the complete solution to the *Doom* follow-up, plus a cover CD, has just hit the newsstands priced at £2.99.



STAYING PUT: IDG Media's Macclesfield-based games titles

Animations AIMS for City

Digital Animations, the Glasgow-based games developer, is planning a flotation later this month.

Handled by adviser Ernst & Young and stockbroker Tilney & Co., Digital Animations intends to raise around £1.9 million by moving onto the City's Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

The firm already has a strong PC CD-ROM development programme mapped out for the next three years — including a deal with Eidos to develop *Steel Legions* for release later this year — and will be using the cash raised to establish a research and development unit for exploration of future broadband cable and digital satellite delivery platforms.

"The flotation will enhance the profile and status of Digital Animations and provide the cash resources to enable the company to invest in additional technical personnel, develop the next generation of computer games and invest in new capital equipment," commented the firm's chairman Derek Douglas.

"I believe that Digital Animations has the technical expertise in 3D graphics, animation and software engineering skills to exploit the fast growing interactive entertainment market."

● Former Mindscape boss Geoff Heath has joined the firm as non-executive director.

Titus joins Gauntlet

New leisure software sales and marketing outfit Gauntlet has signed its second exclusive label.

Having already picked up the distribution rights to all Maxis product in the UK, the Milton Keynes outfit has now replicated that deal with a resurgent Titus.

The news comes as Titus looks to increase its profile within the UK games market, having recently announced both price cuts across its new 16-bit SNES and Mega Drive line-up and a licence to develop for Nintendo 64.

"After lengthy discussions with Gauntlet, Titus are confident that this is the right course of action for them to take," said the firm's managing director John Williams.

"Gauntlet are the only company able to provide not only distribution, but also a very capable sales team. They provide the full service we need."

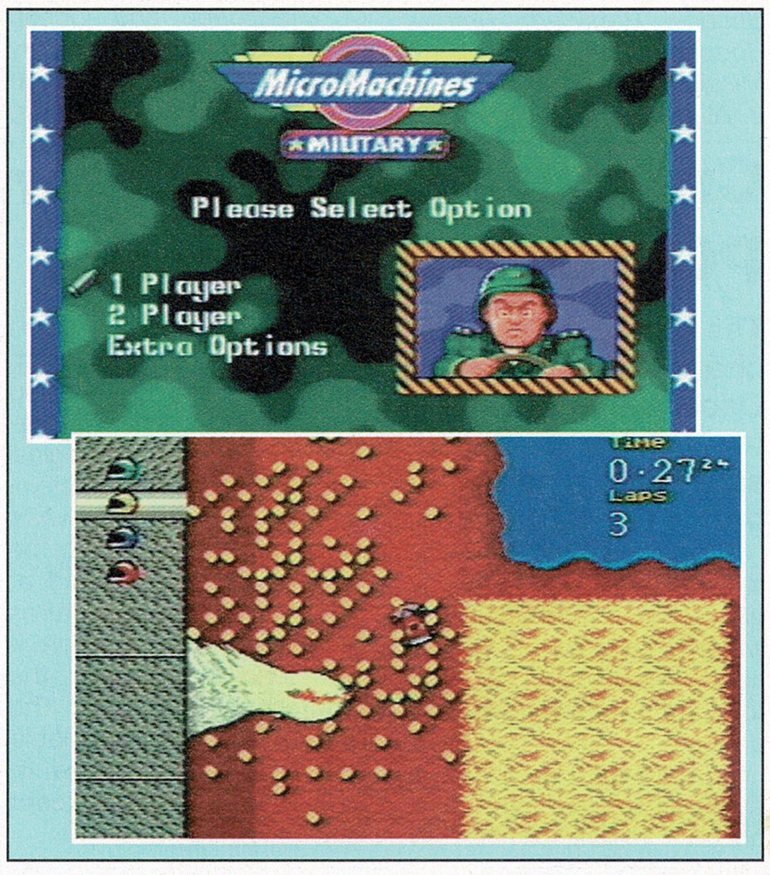
Coders march out of 16-bit

Codemasters' third *Micro Machines* title, due later this year, will be its final release on the Mega Drive format.

Micro Machines Military will feature new tracks set in outdoor battlegrounds, plus two different styles of play. Over 30 levels offer racing for up to eight players, now with weapons, while the new Micro Machines Battle Arenas focus more on the attack and defence style of military manoeuvres where racers bump or use weapons to push their opponents over the edge of the arenas.

Micro Machines Military is being designed and developed by Codemasters and Supersonic Software and will be published on a four-player J-Cartridge including an NVR memory chip in November. Retail price will be £44.99.

"*Micro Machines Military* may be Codemasters' last original product development for the Sega Mega Drive, but it's not a final cash-in-quick product — it's a completely new development," said Codemasters' marketing director Richard Eddy.



MICRO MACHINES: Exploding onto Mega Drive in November

"Even though we have *Micro Machines 3* on PlayStation, *Military* is not being overshadowed; it'll be backed with a full-scale marketing campaign throughout Europe and that buzz you get when playing a new *Micro Machines* game is there and it's bigger than ever."

Future drops remaining cart-specific monthly

Future Publishing is closing SNES title *Super Play,* as the firm looks to focus on the new 32-bit and 64-bit consoles.

Launched in October 1993, *Super Play* was the Bath publisher's last remaining title dedicated to a 16-bit format, with *Sega Power* these days concentrating on the Saturn and *Total* already focusing sharply on Nintendo 64.

Multi-format title *GamesMaster,* meanwhile, boasts strong coverage of 32-bit consoles and PC, although it will continue to cover new Mega Drive and SNES releases.

The September issue of *Super Play,* out this week, will be the last, with editor Alison Harper moving over to Future's new consumer electronics launch *T3.*

"The problem we had with *Super Play* is that it's a magazine dedicated to the SNES, and that market has dropped at a very high rate recently," publisher Dave Roberts told *CTW.* "Our research has shown that the *Official PlayStation Magazine* is picking up a lot of former *Super Play* readers, as these more mature consumers move on and upgrade to a 32-bit machine, so that is where we are focusing our energies."

As the firm increasingly concentrates on the next generation consoles with its existing titles such as *OPM* and *PlayStation Power,* Future is also currently looking at launching a dedicated Nintendo 64 magazine, possibly as early as this year. The August issue of *Super Play* included a *Hyper Play* supplement which will possibly evolve into a monthly magazine in its own right.

"We are looking at launching a Nintendo 64 magazine," confirmed Roberts.

"When it will happen is all dependent on when we get confirmation of the European launch. It could be before Christmas or just after."



NEWS

EXTRA

Merit sponsors F1 team at British Grand Prix



Merit Studios sponsored the TWR Arrows team at the British Grand Prix this weekend (Sunday July 14th). With the firm's logo splashed on the team's two cars, Merit Studios says that the exercise was aimed at broadening the appeal of the computer games industry as a whole, as well as giving the firm itself plenty of coverage. So a big thank you is in order from all of us.

Blockbuster rolls out games rental offer

Video rental giant Blockbuster next week kicks off a major promotion on games, offering consumers the chance to rent any title and get another free. The special offer runs until September 1st, but excludes £3.49 and £4.00 titles.

Microsoft snaps up Electric Gravity

Microsoft has bought US firm Electric Gravity Inc., the creator **of the Internet Gaming Zone**, one of the most popular games sites on the Internet. The Internet Gaming Zone features classic games such as bridge, chess, spades and draughts, with log-ins currently registering at over 30,000 each week. "We believe that gaming across the Internet is a new and exciting area for the games industry and by combining Electric Gravity's expertise in this field with our game development team, we will be one of the big players in this emerging market," commented Microsoft's games product manager Stephen McGill.

Micrografx draws new deal with Gem

Micrografx has signed a deal with Gem, giving the Harlow firm distribution rights to the graphics software specialist's full range of products, including professional programs such as *ABC Graphics Suite* and *Visual Reality 2.0,* plus consumer titles such as *Crayola Art Studio, Hallmark Connections Card Studio* and *Windows Draw 4.0.*
Product Info: Call Gem on 01279 822800.

ASA clears 'hard bastards' Sony ad

The ASA has highlighted further complaints about advertising in the computer and games market, including a consumer objection to a recent Sony ad placed in the specialist press which featured the strapline 'You know those hard bastards from the arcade? They're coming round to your place'. The complainant apparently objected to the use of offensive language, particularly because it appeared in a magazine read by children. But the ASA did not uphold the complaint, stating that most readers would not be offended by it. Meanwhile, Emap Computing has been asked to change a directory listing following a complaint from Ziff-Davis.

The Sun goes on-line

Following the launch of *The Sun Screensaver and Calendar* earlier this month, Internet lads can now access Page 3 girls on the web. *CTW* reader Joanne Guest, plus Kathy Lloyd, Linda Lusardi, Sam Fox and many more 'stunnas' can all be found doing their thing at www.the-sun.co.uk.

MERCHANDISING UPDATE

CTW/ISM have £50 worth of software to give away in an exclusive promotion to independent dealers. The catch is having to complete the wordsearch below to reveal the missing title.

Everyone who phones or faxes their answer to ISM will receive a POS pack and free entry into the prize draw.

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THE Games goes Direct

Exclusive Nintendo distributor THE Games is ramping up its support for the indie retail sector with a new dedicated telemarketing division.

Based at THE Games' offices in Eastleigh, the Nintendo Direct department will be in daily contact with independent retailers, taking orders and offering the latest information on promotions and new initiatives.

Nintendo Direct is being headed up by newly appointed trade marketing manager Andy Yates, who, along with two additional dedicated staff, will work closely with the five-strong trade marketing department.

"We now have a dedicated division which allows us to properly look after retailers, and build proper relationships with them," THE Games' Alex Fitzgibbons told *CTW.*

"Along with our new publication *Nintendo News,* we have proved that we now have a real emphasis on building relationships with retailers, and not just our bigger customers, but with the smaller independents, too."

All Nintendo product is distributed by THE Games, with the multiples also being serviced direct from the Eastleigh offices.

● *The Nintendo Direct hotline can be contacted on 0990 000064.*



STACKS OF IDEAS: THE Games is beefing up its support to retail

Empire builds its CD budget range

Empire is the latest publisher to offer a 'super budget' range, with single and double CD packs hitting retail this month.

Having achieved considerable success with its compilation titles, Empire this week kicks off a major push on re-published software with the release of six catalogue titles, plus four double packs.

Retailing at £4.99 each, the single CD titles include *Elite Plus, Pacific Islands, Shadow President, Empire Soccer, Campaign 1 + Mission Disk* and *Campaign 2.* At the same price are the double packs *Cool Croc Twins/Magic Boy, Volfied/ Pipemania, Twilight 2000/ Space 1889* and *Megatraveller 1/2.*

Empire will be supporting the new range will a full line-up of POS material, including flyers, brochures and posters.

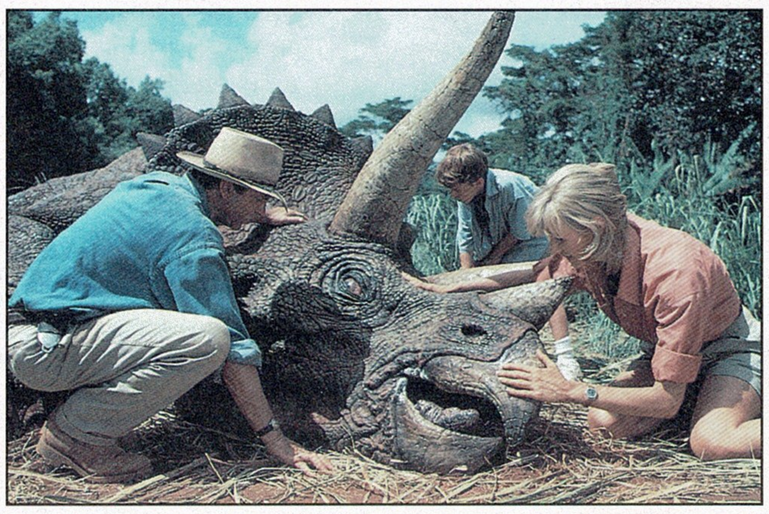
Empire joins a growing band of publishers offering CD-ROM titles at 'super budget' prices. While the success of budget brands such as Virgin's White Label and EA's CD-ROM Classics continues at retail, the likes of Mindscape and Ocean have proved that a healthy market for older products at the £5 price point also exists.

Creature Comforts for PC CD-ROM learners

The Creature Comforts characters created by Oscar-winning animator Nick Parks are now starring in a new children's CD-ROM title.

Developed by SkillsWare, the graphical adventure game *Frank and the Kilowatts* is targeted at children aged 7-14 years old and aims to help them understand the dangers of electricity. Featuring Frank the Tortoise, plus other characters from the popular Creature Comforts TV commercials, the game includes over 50 levels, with SkillsWare having worked closely with Aardman Animations to maintain the original personalities of the characters.

Frank and the Kilowatts has been designed to be used at both home and at school with several features included to help the parent or teacher track the progress of the child. The PC CD-ROM title is available now with a retail price of £19.99, while an Acorn version is also planned.



The sequel to *Jurassic Park* looks set to be the event movie of 1997 and movie studio MCA Universal is already signing up lucrative licensing deals. DreamWorks Interactive and Sega have jointly gained the computer and video game rights, with Hasbro handling toy spin-offs. *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, directed by Steven Spielberg, will open next summer.

Labs expands range with a double Blast

Multimedia specialist Creative Labs has launched two new comms packages for the home PC user.

Following the launch of its high-end products ShareVision and Phone Blaster last year, the firm has now expanded its line-up to include the Internet Blaster, a 'mass market' Internet package, and the Modem Blaster Voice.

With an expected street price of around £149, the Internet Blaster comprises a 28.8/V34 data/fax modem, plus a range of software, including *Microsoft Internet Explorer, WebPhone* from NetSpeak, *HoTMetaL Light,* which enables the user to create Web pages, *SuperFax* from Pacific Image and CompuServe software.

Meanwhile, priced at £199, the Modem Voice Blaster also enables users to use their PC to answer or make telephone calls, with fax and voicemail capabilities. Software featured includes *Pacific Image Super Voice,* data communication facilities combined with a mini Bulletin Board system, *Microsoft Phone* and CompuServe software.

"Two factors are driving the rising consumer demand for PC communications products," said communications brand manager Tony Bowers. "Firstly the Internet, which is currently the single largest reason for consumers adopting a modem for their PC; and secondly, the rising proportion of people who are either self-employed or teleworking and require a fully integrated communications solution."

7th Level and BMG venture to aid retail

7th Level has joined forces with BMG to offer a new field support service for retail.

A new merchandising team called Street Level will exclusively represent both companies, providing dealers with a wide range of marketing support materials, including window displays, production information and POS promotions.

"This relationship enables 7th Level and BMG Interactive to share resources and ensure our nationwide network of dealers is given the highest standard of merchandising support," said 7th Level's sales director Paul Crisp.

Vulcan hits the street

The Amiga specialist Vulcan Software is returning to retail after a year's absence from the High Street.

Best known for its *Valhalla* series, the firm withdrew its products from retail in July last year, blaming a lack of support from distribution for its decision. Having spent the past year selling direct to consumers through its mail order service, the firm is now rolling out its MiniSeries range of titles to the trade next month.

With prices ranging from £12.99 to £17.99, the line-up includes *Valhalla 1,2* and *3, Timekeepers* and *Hillsea Lido.* In addition a further three titles — *BOGRats, JetPilot* and *Valhalla 4* will be released over the next few months.

"We had a lot of retailers asking for our products, which is why we have now decided to relaunch the range to the trade," Vulcan Software's director Paul Carrington explained to *CTW.*

"We withdrew our products from retail because we had no support from distribution. We are not going back completely now; this is an experiment and we will still supply direct to consumers via our mail order service. But the demand from retail for more Amiga product has led to us supplying the trade again."



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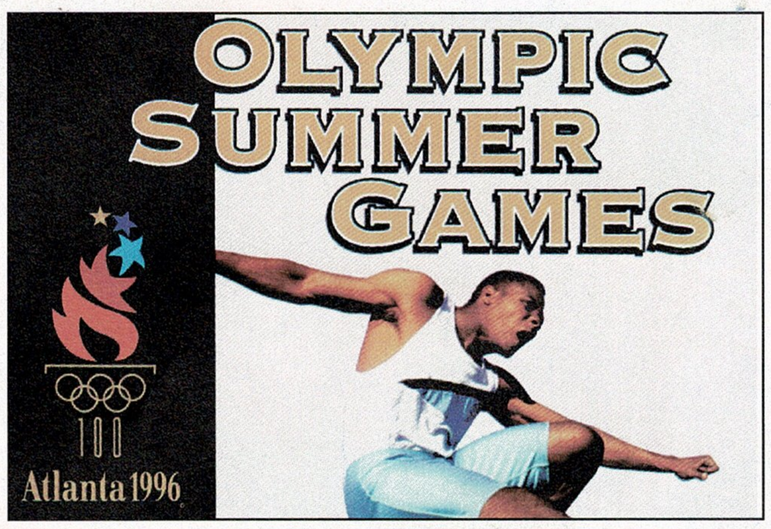
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COUNTERPOINT

Price Check

	Track & Field PlayStation	Gunship PlayStation	Toshinden 2 PlayStation	Olympic Games Mega Drive
HMV Brighton	£44.99	£44.99	£44.99	£29.99
Virgin Liverpool	£44.99	£44.99	£44.99	£34.99
E. Boutique Thurrock	£44.99	£44.99	£44.99	£39.99
Game Birmingham	£44.99	£44.99	£44.99	£34.99
Toys R Us Hull	£43.87	£43.87	£43.87	£29.87

Price Check is a brief survey of current retail prices. All information was collected on Friday July 5th 1996



OLYMPIC GAMES: £10 cheaper in HMV than EB

SELL-THROUGH CHART — ALL FORMATS HMV

	Title	Label	Formats
1	*Fade to Black*	EA	PlayStation
2	*Int. Track & Field*	Konami	PlayStation
3	*Wing Comm. 3 Classics*	EA	PC CD-ROM
4	*Space Hulk VOTBA*	EA	PlayStation
5	*Settlers 2*	Blue Byte	PC CD-ROM
6	*Theme Park Classics*	EA	PC CD-ROM
7	*Duke Nukem 3D*	US Gold	PC CD-ROM
8	*Ridge Racer Revolution*	Namco	PlayStation
9	*Monty Python: Holy Grail*	7th Level	PC CD-ROM
10	*Civilization 2*	MicroProse	PC CD-ROM

WHOLESALE CHART — SEGA MEGADRIVE CENTRESOFT

	Title	Label
1	*Ency. of Space and the Universe*	Dorling Kindersley
2	*Panzer General*	Mindscape
3	*Encarta '96*	Microsoft
4	*Alone in the Dark 3*	Infogrames
5	*Peter Rabbit & Benjamin Bunny*	Mindscape
6	*Prisoner of Ice*	Infogrames
7	*Alone in the Dark 1*	Infogrames
8	*Wordstuff*	Centregold
9	*Peter Rabbit's Number Garden*	Mindscape
10	*The Cat Came Back*	Centregold

EDUTAINMENT/REFERENCE RELEASES

Title	Publisher	Formats
Math Blaster Junior Maths and thinking skills program for 4-7 years	ABLAC	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Fisher Price Read & Play Library Six storybooks for 4-7 years	ABLAC	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Fisher Price Great Adv. Pirate Ship Children's thinking skills program	ABLAC	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Survival Mysteries of Nature Interactive nature documentary	Anglia Multimedia	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Blinky Bill's Ghost Cave Children's educational title for ages 3+	Anglia Multimedia	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Media Factor Mammals Educational title	Andromeda/Koch	PC CD-ROM
Freddie Fish Children's program	Electronic Arts/Koch	PC CD-ROM
Unexplained Sci-fi documentary	FlagTower/Koch	PC CD-ROM
Fuzzy and Floppy Children's edutainment title	MIP/Koch	PC CD-ROM, Mac CD
Realtime French/Spanish Language tutorials	MIP/Koch	PC CD-ROM
LandDesigner 3D Garden design program	Sierra On-Line	PC CD-ROM

This is a selection of the new releases in the reference and edutainment market. To be included please fax your release schedules to Lisa Foster on 01462 442489 or call 01462 442472.

Talking Shop

Graham Weir
Mega Mix Entertainment, Lutterworth

"One thing we have noticed recently is that we've stopped having so many enquiries for the Nintendo 64. I think that people now realise that it's not going to be here this year and so are looking at other systems. I've had quite a few customers who have decided to go for a PlayStation instead, although some have said that they may well buy a Nintendo machine as well when that arrives. Nintendo is definitely going to lose out by not launching in Europe this year.

The PlayStation has been going very well for us, particularly since the price cut. *Gunship* has been one of the best sellers recently and we've had a lot of enquiries about *F1,* so that should do well, too, when it's released.

One thing that customers have complained about, though, is the price of the games. They think that because they're CDs, they should be cheaper. There is especially a problem when they see a game like *FIFA '96,* which was originally priced at £45, now selling for around £29. The customers want to know why it wasn't that price to start with."

To be considered for inclusion in Talking Shop, contact Lisa Foster on 01462 442472.

On the Road

John Mitchell
District Sales Manager, Ingram Micro Consumer

"Everybody knows that PCs help with spreadsheets and various other business related matters. However the features which interest any customer thinking of purchasing a PC are also of interest to us here at Ingram Micro. And during this summer, there is one interest area that outweighs all others — photography.

Photo manipulation will be the next big thing to hit retail, with Kodak bringing out their new digital cameras, and other products such as *Corel PhotoPaint* allowing you to enhance your photos. Hauppage Win TV brings video moving images and still images to your screen and scanners like Logitek's PageScan colour allow manipulation. This all adds up to limitless options within this field.

In addition, we're finding that sales for Timex's Data Watch are building up. This simple-to-use product really is the leading edge of today's market."

To be considered for inclusion in On the Road, contact Lisa Foster on 01462 442472.

MEDIA

GAMES PRESS GUIDE

Capcom's Resident Evil and an import version of Super Mario 64 scorch in with full marks from Maximum. Actually, most titles have fared pretty well this week...



TITLE	VERSION	MAGAZINE	SCORE	REVIEWER'S COMMENT
Super Mario 64 Nintendo (import)	Nintendo 64	*Maximum*	5/5	"This game is the best thing we've played in years."
Resident Evil VIE/Capcom	PlayStation	*Maximum*	5/5	"Words alone cannot convey the excellence of this Capcom title."
Fade To Black EA	PlayStation	*PlayStation Power*	9/10	"Games of this quality don't come around too often."
Sampras Ext. Tennis Codemasters	PlayStation	*PlayStation Power*	8/10	"It's playable, addictive and plenty of fun."
Starfighter 3000 Telstar	Saturn	*Mean Machines Sega*	80%	"It's not groundbreaking, but it is well worth a look."
Olympic Soccer US Gold	Saturn	*Mean Machines Sega*	92%	"This is the most playable football game for the Saturn."
Worms Ocean/Team 17	Mega Drive	*Mean Machines Sega*	79%	"A late night pub classic."
Return Fire Warner Interactive	PlayStation	*PlayStation Plus*	91%	"A superb game to have your mates over for — and then slaughter them."
Olympic Soccer US Gold	PlayStation	*PlayStation Plus*	93%	"Overall this is the greatest new footy title."
Blazing Dragons BMG	PlayStation	*PlayStation Plus*	87%	"This is a sound enough adventure."
Valhalla 3 Vulcan Software	Amiga	*Amiga Format*	51%	"This is no fun."
Argonaut's Holiday Sony	PlayStation	*C&VG*	4/5	"It's got a strange addictiveness."
Grand Prix 2 MicroProse	PC CD-ROM	*C&VG*	4/5	"This comes very highly recommended."
Rise 2 Acclaim	Saturn	*Sega Power*	59%	"Better than the first one, but still not worth buying."
Striker Acclaim	Saturn	*Sega Power*	89%	"An instantly appealing and fun game."
Tintin Infogrames	Mega Drive	*Sega Power*	80%	"Pretty fine."

All games featured in the Games Press Guide are chosen at random

ON AIR...

Week ending July 6th 1996

Most TV & radio review mentions:

Hardware: Nintendo 64 — **1**

Software: *WipeOut 2097* — **2**

Total TV & radio review mentions (All games products):

This week: **33** Last week: **54**

Comment

Sports games, mainly Konami's best-selling *Track & Field* and new tennis title *Pete Sampras Extreme*, were the most covered interactive entertainment products last week.

Missed It?

The Biz (Channel One, July 30th) featured an interview with one of the stars of the new *Voyeur 2* game. If you didn't see it, you're either not paying attention or don't have cable.

Supplied by Media Research. All broadcast games coverage is available for purchase. Tel: 0171 731 2020 Fax: 0171 731 1100.

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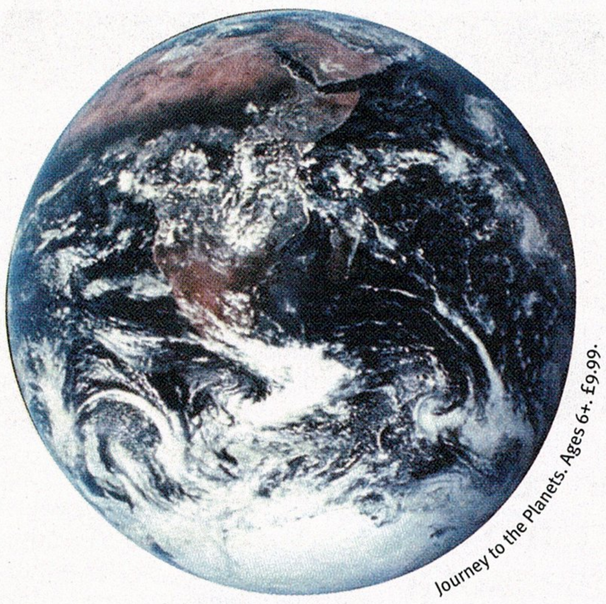
MEDIA NEWS

Erstwhile marketing manager at **Paragon Publishing,** Michael Robinson has now taken up the newly created role of circulation marketing manager at the Bournemouth firm. Working with distributors Seymour and Worldwide, Robinson will be aiming to increase the presence of Paragon's titles throughout the UK.

Former editor of ***PC Powerplay,*** Rob Smith has left behind Macclesfield for the California sun, having been appointed reviews editor on IDG's ***PC Games***.

The Electronic Telegraph was recently awarded the 'Just for the Yell of it' prize for the web site that keeps users coming back for more. The award comes from YELL, the Yellow Pages' on-line guide, acknowledging the best and most innovative creators of UK web sites.

The September issue of **IDG Media's** *PSX Pro* will be published in an increased A4 size. Advertisers should call 01625 878888 for further information.



Journey to the Planets. Ages 6+. £9.99.



Colours and Shapes with Hickory. Ages 3-6. £9.99.



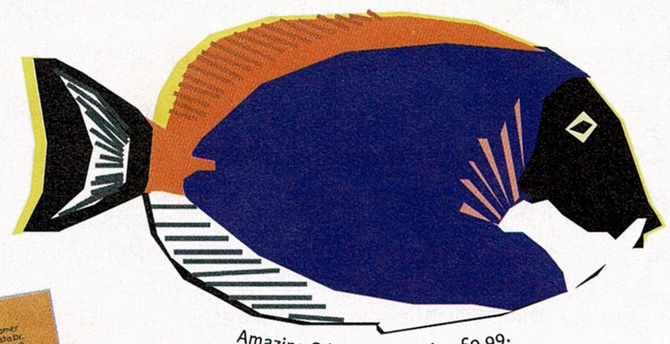
Science Shop with Monker. Ages 6-8. £9.99.



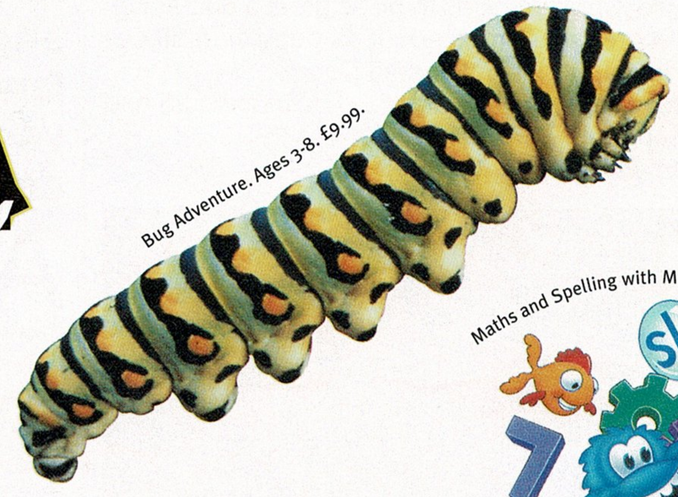
Lost and Found vol 2. Ages 4-9. £9.99



Amazing Greeting Cards. Ages 6 +. £9.99.



Amazing Stickers. Ages 6 +. £9.99.



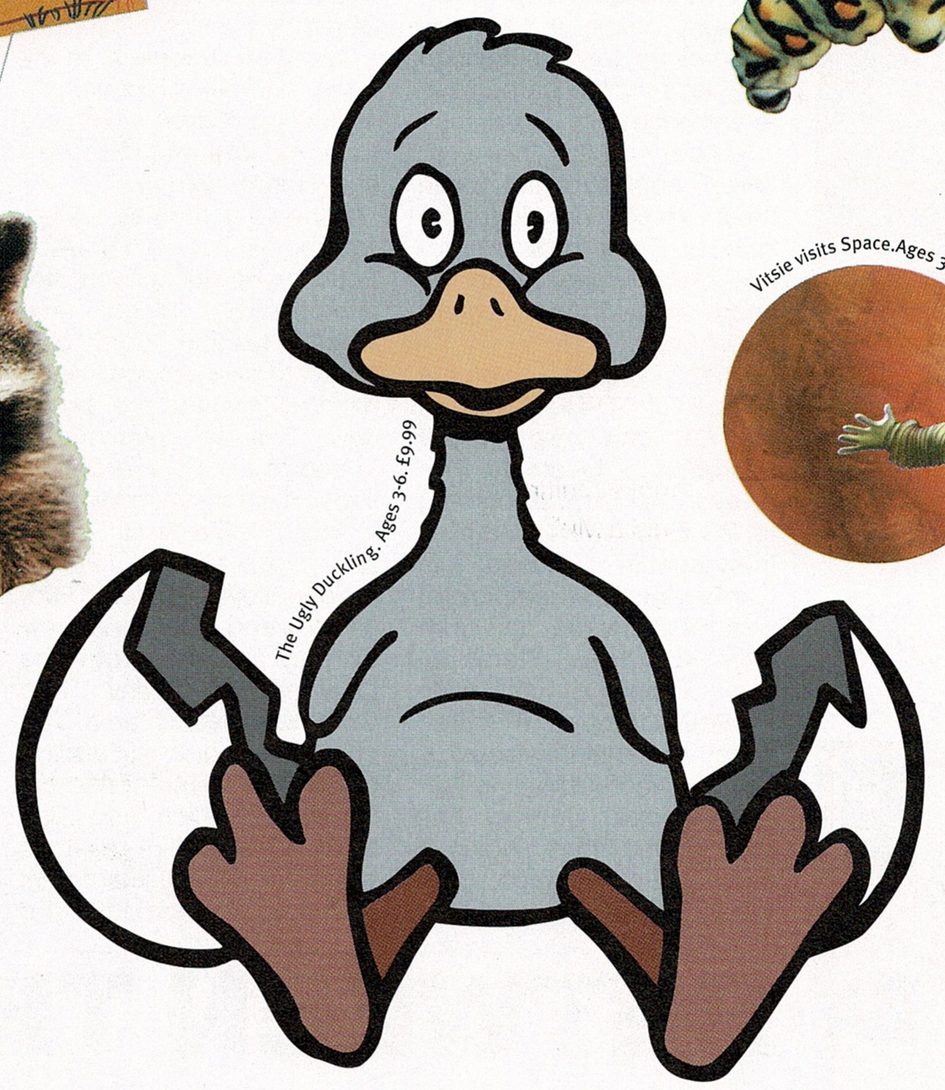
Bug Adventure. Ages 3-8. £9.99.



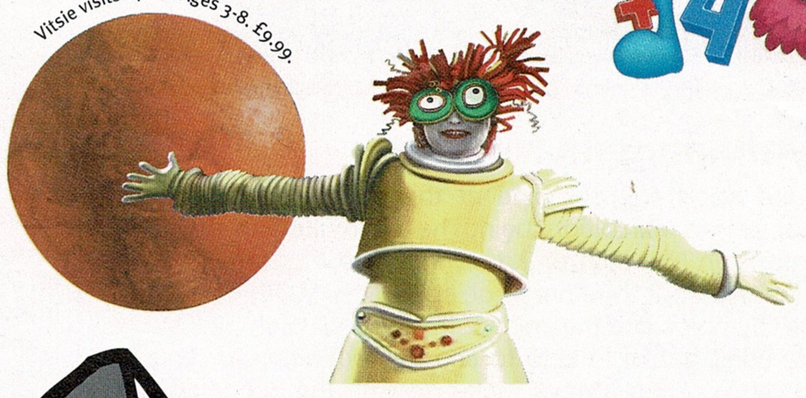
Dandy Dinosaurs. Ages 3-6. £9.99



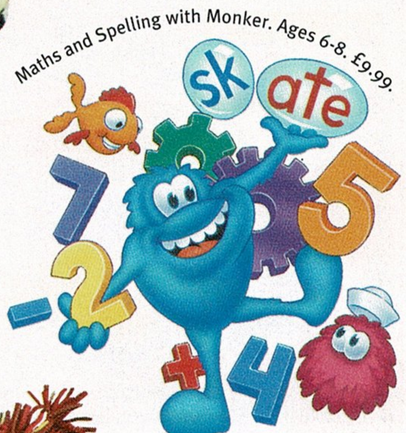
Kid's Zoo.Ages 3-7. £9.99.



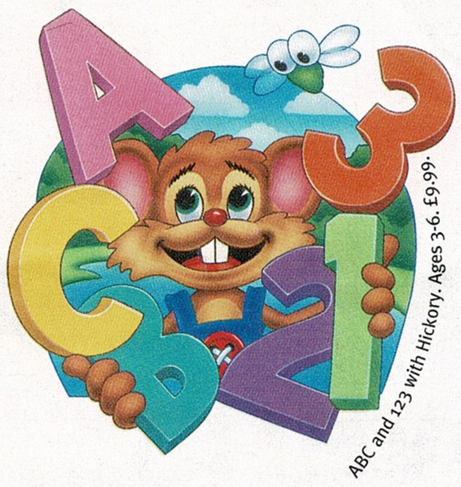
The Ugly Duckling. Ages 3-6. £9.99



Vitsie visits Space.Ages 3-8. £9.99.



Maths and Spelling with Monker. Ages 6-8. £9.99.



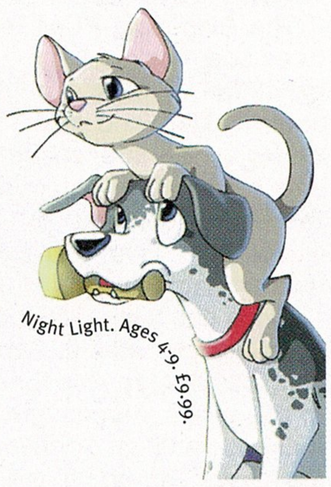
ABC and 123 with Hickory. Ages 3-6. £9.99.



The Legends of Oz. Ages 4-8. £9.99



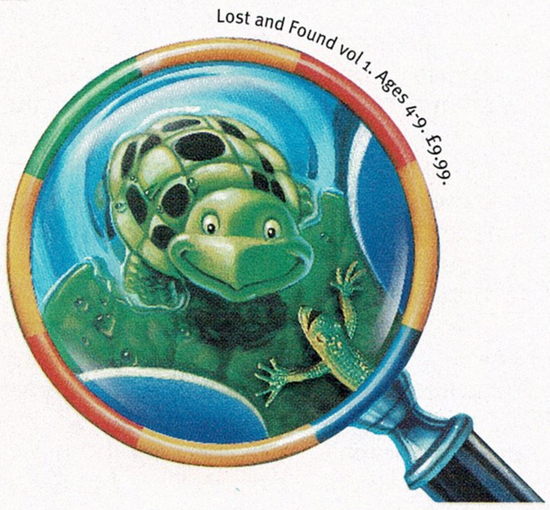
Cool Crafts. Ages 5-8. £9.99.



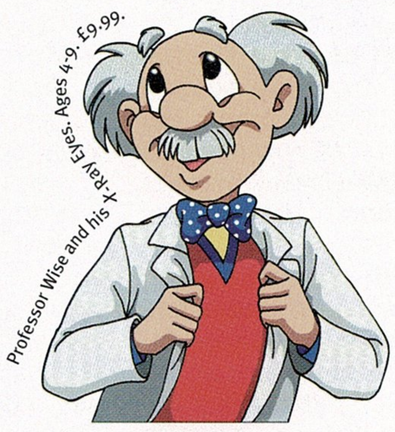
Night Light. Ages 4-9. £9.99.



Monster Lab. Ages 4-9. £9.99.



Lost and Found vol 1. Ages 4-9. £9.99.



X-Ray Eyes. Ages 4-9. £9.99.

Professor Wise and his



Bible Time Fun. Ages 4-12. £9.99.



Vitsie visits the Ocean. Ages 3-8. £9.99.

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OmniMedia

THE BEST OF ENTERTAINMENT IN EVERY CASE

REPORTAGE

Mogz follow Dogz

After the success of *Dogz,* the desktop 'pet' that users can train and look after in *Windows,* Mindscape is set to release *Catz* in September. As with *Dogz, Catz* enables you to choose a 'virtual kitten' and then to adopt. It will learn amusing tricks, play and sleep in its home on your main desktop screen.

Along the same lines as Activision's ten year old *Little Computer People, Catz* promises to be as great a distraction as *Dogz* and will probably prove about as popular in offices up and down the country as networked *Doom.*

Catz is due for release for *Windows 3.1, Windows 95* and Apple Mac in September this year at just £14.99.

● *Mindscape: 01444 246333.*

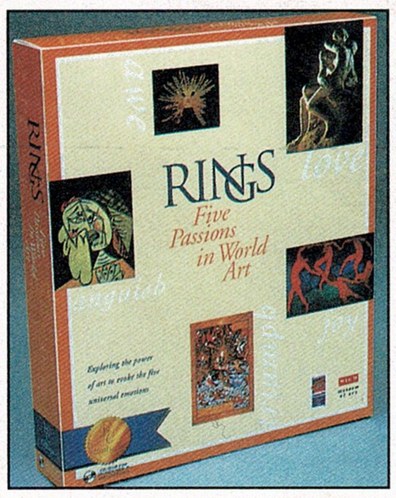


CATZ: Coughing up hair-balls near you this September

Olympian gain for Maxis

Art and sport will combine at the Atlanta Olympics with *Rings,* an art exhibition being held simultaneously at the Atlanta High Museum of Art. *Rings: Five Passions in World Art* has been put together to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Olympics and the spirit of the Modern Olympic Games. If you can't get to Atlanta to see the exhibition for yourself however, you can always make do with the accompanying PC CD-ROM of the same name.

The *Rings* CD-ROM features over 100 paintings, sculptures and masks from the art exhibition, plus original audio, video and text. The works of art are sectioned into the five emotional themes addressed by the exhibition: love; anguish; awe; triumph, and joy.



MAXIS: Olympic art on CD-ROM

Rings has been developed by Calliope Media, which was also responsible for one of this year's more enigmatic multimedia titles, *ScruTiny in the Great Round.* It will be published in Europe by Maxis.

● *Maxis: 0171 505 1500.*

The people's choice

You'll know you've 'arrived' when you're included in one of Debrett's reference books. The 227-year old publisher updates *Debrett's Peerage* every five years and brings out *People of Today* every year. The qualifications for making it into the Peerage are self-explanatory; to be included in *People of Today* you need to be a leader in your chosen field.

"Be it business, sport, entertainment or whatever. We try to include information on anyone currently making a name for themselves," explains editor Jonathan Parker.

The published volume of *People of Today* is thus a pretty hefty tome. Much more convenient to carry around and look things up in is the brand new CD-ROM version, which contains five million words in total, and has a quick and useful search engine to enable you to find the people you're interested in.

"One of the limits of the book is that you have to know the name of the person you look up, but with the CD you can find people by any criteria — place of birth, dates, or whatever — because of the search engine," says Martin Windle, Debrett's CD manager. This, he reckons, is particularly useful for people such as lawyers, journalists, PR and business managers, who use it to look up clients and prospective clients and contacts.

This first CD edition of *People of Today* consists only of text, but Windle says the company would be interested in including pictures and multimedia trimmings in future editions. As to whether the *Peerage* itself will be put on to CD, he is less sure. The *Peerage* is updated once every five years, the last time being in 1995. The year 2000 is a mite too far ahead to plan for, apparently.

● *Available on PC CD-ROM. Call Debrett's on 0171 736 6524 for more information.*

CTW's multimedia section is edited by Christina Erskine. She can be contacted directly on 0181 446 4813. Any product information and materials should also be sent to CTW, Troopers Yard, 23 Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1JW.

This week, CTW's multimedia editor Christina Erskine takes a closer look at SoftKey — one of the unsung heroes of affordable productivity and lifestyle software. There are also news updates on Maxis' latest affiliate label, Mindscape's Dogz follow-up and a CD-ROM version of Debretts, no less. Plus, of course, the fortnightly round-up of specialist press reviews of key products...

Softly SoftKey

Few firms have got their catalogue and pricing correct enough to be able to lead a major supermarket into the land of multimedia, but that's just one of the feats of a very big company with a low profile that probably doesn't do it justice...

As a number of traditional publishers move into the multimedia market touting high production values and high development costs, a gap has opened up for suppliers to offer less sophisticated titles at low prices.

These days, however, 'less sophisticated' can mean something along the lines of *Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia,* or the image manipulation program *Photofinish.*

The largest volume shipper of CD-ROM titles in the US last year wasn't Microsoft, or Electronic Arts or even Acclaim. According to PC Data, it was SoftKey International. Based in Cambridge, USA, employing over 400 people and with over 400 titles Stateside, this company has risen stealthily through a stated policy of continual acquisition and aggressive pricing.

In Europe, SoftKey has around 250 titles, which it sells mainly through conventional outlets such as Dixons and PC World and a growing number of supermarkets. It's also looking at petrol stations, after finding this a successful channel in Germany.

The firm supplies many retail channels direct with its 40-title carousels, which are then updated and refreshed every three months.

Formed in 1994 as a three way merger between SoftKey Software Products, WordStar International, once the world's leading word processor developer, and Spinnaker Software, the brand new SoftKey International turned to the PC multimedia sector almost straightaway.

Aris Multimedia was acquired early on, Future Vision followed in July 1995, and the end of last year saw SoftKey acquiring both The Learning Company and Compton's New Media. The company paid $558m in cash for The Learning Company, which had also been a target in previous years for Sierra, Electronic Arts, and, in particular, for Broderbund — which had offered $555m for the specialist educational software publisher.

Over here, SoftKey is generally better known for its clip-art, *PC Paintbrush, Infopedia* and *ArtRageous,* the last of which are fruits of the Future Vision purchase. It sells its titles in six ranges. The Key range is devoted to re-published titles, generally sourced from third parties — SoftKey itself likens this process to publishing books in paperback — and priced at £29.99 RRP. *WinTutor 95* and *Key Greeting Card Designer* come under this banner. Key Kids deals with children's entertainment at £12.99 — and doesn't include any titles from The Learning Company, which are currently in the process of being localised and re-packaged for sale under a separate label.

The Platinum range comprises 70 CD-ROM titles priced at £12.99 and packaged simply in a jewel case. It includes a number of reference and productivity titles, including Attica's *World War II Encyclopaedia.* Even themed compendium CDs in the Power Pack range only cost £19.99.

"If you take the music CD price point, that's between £9.99 and £14.99. People are used to paying that, so rational thinking says that most CD-ROM titles should be £9.99. At £9.99, you're catering for a mass market, then you can have some higher content, higher priced product at £39.99," says sales and marketing director Charles Tarlton.

Indeed, this is the nearest SoftKey gets to more traditional multimedia pricing in its £30+ Premium brand, which comprises Future Vision titles, *PC Paintbrush* and *Photofinish,* as well as multimedia products such as *Leonardo the Inventor, Infopedia* and *ArtRageous.*❑

● *SoftKey 0181 789 2000.*



KEY CUTS: Pricing is crucial

BETWEEN THE COVERS...

Perhaps it's the school holidays, perhaps many publishers are saving up their big lifestyle titles for the busy autumn season, but this month the emphasis with new releases and magazine coverage swings firmly towards the younger PC user.

As in the games market, there are new characters being dreamed up by developers and designers all the time, but in the children's market, there's also a wealth of classic, much-loved stories to draw upon.

If there's a perception that Dorling Kindersley is especially good at addressing children, then it's borne out by the reviews being given to its two current releases, *My First Amazing World Explorer* and the *Children's Dictionary.* Both of these are packed with detail and spot animations, featuring the DK signature white backgrounds. And the narrators all have British accents, which will gladden the hearts of parents even more.

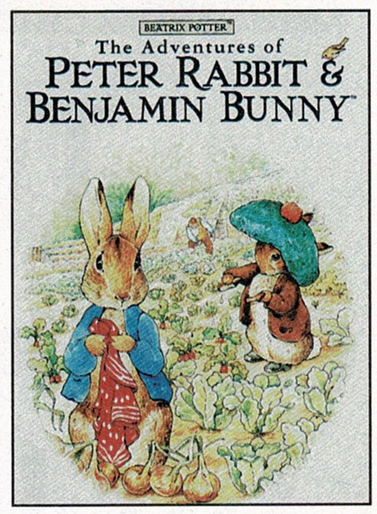
The Children's Dictionary is narrower in focus, but its lively animations and variety of ways to access information found favour with the reviewers. "Really stylish," said *PC Home,* "good design just oozes from every screen." *PC Guide* pointed out that the program wasn't as much fun as *World Explorer,* but added that they thought "it's probably of more long-term value."

Oxford University Press is a new entrant into this market and has two programs doing the rounds at the moment, *Winnie the Witch* and *Dragons! Winnie the Witch* has been particularly well-received. "The gorgeous animation, slapstick humour and half-decent story give this title considerable charm," said *PC Answers. CD-ROM Magazine* also praised the tale: "The story is engaging and is of the kind that children like to hear again and again." The choice of Sandi Toksvig as narrator was commended by just about everyone.

Dragons! hasn't fared quite so well. The reviewers all enjoyed the inventive animations and cartoon-like graphic style ("So clever it's amusing for both kids and parents!" — *PC Guide*), but worried about the content. Well, poetry appreciation is a bit of a departure for CD-ROMs, and *Dragons!,* despite the monsters and the caverns, is mainly concerned with poems and songs.

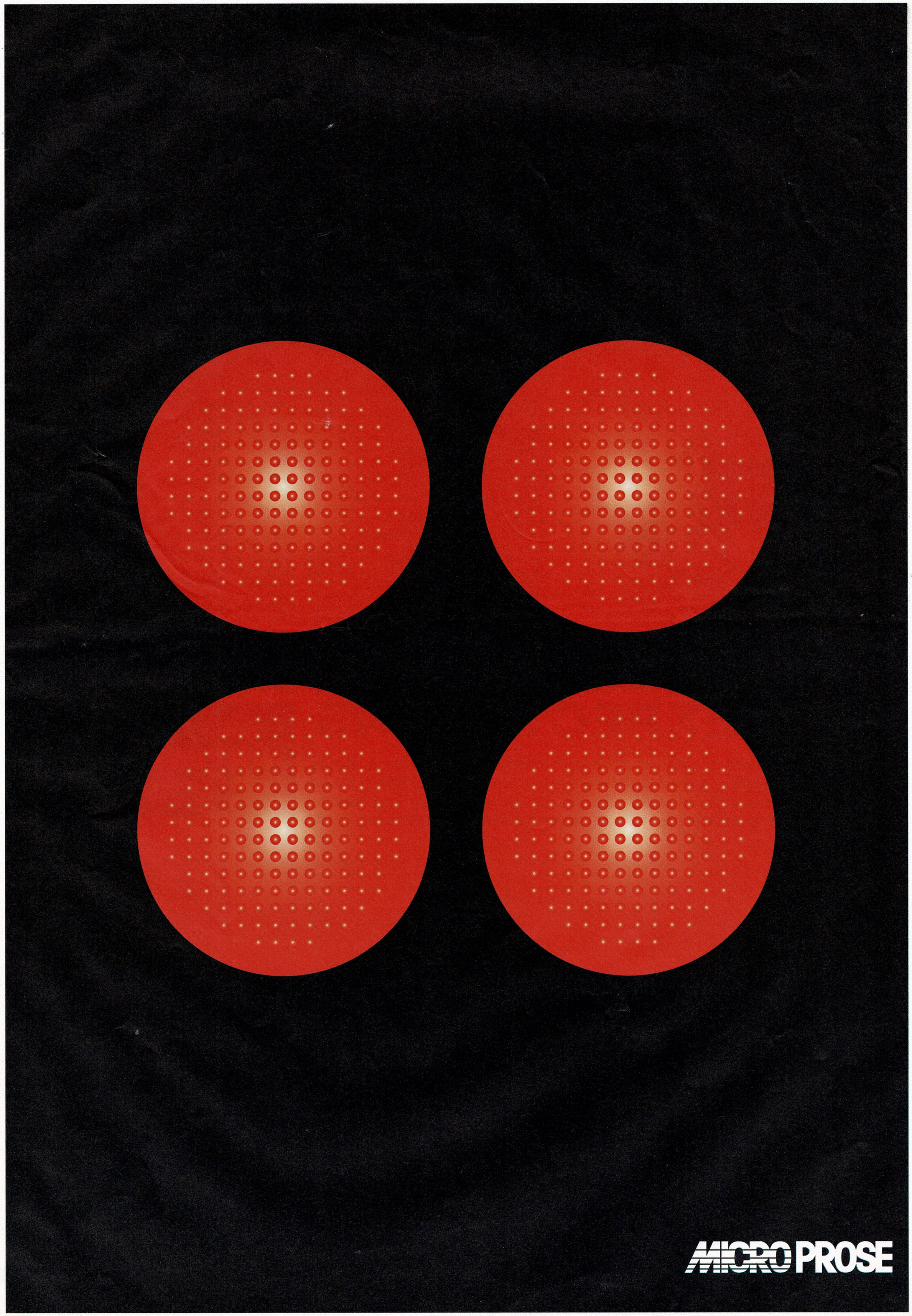
The concern seems to be that "there really isn't enough actual content here to keep children coming back for more", as *CD-ROM Magazine* put it.

Finally, in a week which has seen Mindscape translate the classic *Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny* for the small screen ("Lovingly illustrated and animated" — *PC Guide*), it's good to see other almost forgotten children's characters resurrected. *The Muppets* have a CD-ROM out, *Pippi Longstocking* contributes to be "slapstick anarchy at its finest" according to *PC Guide* in her PC program, and even the *Smurfs* are back.



Bunny good show, Mindscape

Title	Peter Rabbit/ Benjamin Bunny	DK Children's Dictionary	Dragons!	My First Amazing World Explorer	Pippi Longstocking	Winnie the Witch	Teletransport Smurf
Publisher	Mindscape 01444 246333	DK 0171 836 5411	OUP 01865 267979	DK 0171 836 5411	CD Distribution 0161 477 4235	OUP 01865 267979	Infogrames 0171 738 8199
CD-ROM Mag. July 1996	—	—	2.5/5	—	—	4/5	—
PC Answers August 1996	—	—	—	—	—	85%	—
PC Guide August 1996	4/6	5/6	5/6	6/6	4/6	5/6	3/6
CD-ROM Today August 1996	—	—	2.5/5	4/5	3/5	4/5	2.5/5
PC Home August 1996	—	90%	—	93%	—	—	—


MICROPROSE

NEWS ANALYSIS: RISING DOUBTS OVER N64's PRE-CHRISTMAS ARRIVAL

DEFINITELY MAYBE

Official UK distributor THE Games is more convinced than anyone that Nintendo 64, launched last month in Japan, is a winner. But ask too many questions about launch plans and the smiles of confidence become somewhat strained. DAVE ROBERTS reports...

The European games market's great cliff-hanger of 1996 will be over within the next three weeks.

Nintendo is due to tell its subsidiaries and various distributors the launchdate for N64 by the end of July — with the big question in most people's minds being not which month, but which year.

Previously THE Games, the firm's UK distributor, has always said that the 64-bit console will arrive in the late autumn. Everyone knew that the statement could contain some calendular boundary shifting and that if, for instance, the machine was introduced during a decidedly wintry second week in December, THE could still say it delivered and be confident of a pretty quibble-free reaction.

Anytime after December 25th, however, is not late autumn. It's just late.

The doubt that many people had about any 1996 launchdate was strengthened a couple of weeks ago when a document emerged purporting to be leaked notes from a private presentation made to analysts by Nintendo's president Hiroshi Yamauchi (*CTW July 1st*). He is reported to have told the meeting that Nintendo "will not be able to introduce N64 in Europe this year".



N64: THE will get official word 'soon'

THE's managing director Dick Francis, however, insists that "I know for a fact that the decision hasn't been taken yet."

Cynics might suggest that at this stage in the year it's more likely that it has and that Nintendo hasn't got round to telling Europe yet. It's got other more important things to do like sell machines in Japan, prepare for launch in the US, get some new towels for the men's toilets at Head Office and paint over some of the lines that are getting a bit faded in NoA's car park. There Be Dragons and all that.

Francis paints a very different picture, claiming that THE is very much in the loop and that Europe is very much on the agenda.

He is also adamant that, despite the trade's perception, THE's position on the timing of the launch hasn't changed: "We'll have a definite pan-European launch-date by the end of July and that's what we've always said. There are conflicting stories being bandied about by different people and they are confusing and frustrating for everyone, but those stories have been around for months, they're nothing new.

"We've always said we believe it will be this year and we've had no information to change that belief."

Actually, what THE was saying up until very recently was that Nintendo 64 *will* be launched in 1996, not that it *believes* it will be launched in 1996. There's a difference.

And you can't help feeling that, behind the bravado, the doubts that the rest of the trade have aired so publicly have now crept into THE's private thoughts.

Hundreds & thousands

Perhaps a redefinition of the word 'launch' might help. Maybe a few thousand units sprinkled around some of the UK's more prestigious outlets would qualify — yet not detract from what many see as Nintendo's real goal of keeping Japanese and US stores and consumers happy. Fudge seems as good a word as any.

Francis concedes that whilst he still "believes" in 1996, there are no clues about quantities.

"We have," he explains, "had to consider different scenarios whereby we do one thing with X number of units and another thing with Y. If we got, say, 50,000 units in tomorrow we could sell them quite easily so there would be no point in implementing all of our plans."

Nintendo hasn't got round to telling Europe yet. It's got other more important things to do like sell machines in Japan, prepare for launch in the US, get some new towels for the men's toilets at Head Office and paint over some of the lines that are getting a bit faded in NoA's car park.

He adds that stocks of over 100,000 would make a full marketing campaign a valid exercise with a specific role to play. Any less than 100,000 and there's a danger that the machine will rather dribble in Saturn-style rather than arrive with a PlayStation-like bang.

Even with limited stocks, however, Francis is confident that tens of thousands of Nintendo 64s would have enough of a presence and make enough of an impact to deter people from buying 32-bit, "even if they do have to wait until 1997 to go to 64-bit".

The one scenario which he is adamant has not been considered is a 1997 launch.

Right now THE is finalising its strategies in areas such as pricing, marketing, design, POS and technical requirements. All the plans are being made with a pre-Christmas launch in mind.

Ultimately, however, the timing of the introduction is not in THE's hands and all its plans could be disrupted by one word ('no') from NCL over the next two weeks.

Even without the will it/won't it drama there would be enough questions to consider about the introduction of the Nintendo 64: the price of the hardware, especially in the light of Sega and Sony at £199 (or lower by Christmas); the price of the software; the amount and quality of games not called *Mario 64*; THE's ability to match the marketing muscle of Sega and Sony; PlayStation 2; Saturn 2...

As it is, THE and all of Nintendo's other European partners would love to have such simple fare on their plates. Right now, however, there's no room for any questions other than the big one. And despite what any of them say, they all know that for the next few weeks, definitely maybe's as good as it gets. ❑

RETAILER ROUNDTABLE: N64 IMPORTS

GREY EXPECTATIONS

Having grappled with a step-down transformer and universal systems converter, most leading games stores already have an import N64 hooked up to a giant monitor. But should retailers go the whole hog and look to supply those willing to come up with the cash for a Japanese model? *CTW* asked around...

It's not only the country's leading games journalists who are divided about the Nintendo 64. With the possibility of an official launch looking increasingly bleak for this year, retailers have split into two camps also: the 'wait and see' and the 'give it to me now' factions.

What to do, keep shrugging your shoulders when customers ask about it or slap an import on display and supply a few high margin units to those mad enough to pay £500-£700 a pop.

"We've got one on show and another 15 units coming in today. The people who have seen it have been amazed."

Robin Mookherji
Torc Software

"We won't do anything until we have a firm release date from Nintendo," says Chris Elvery of **John Menzies**, which is perhaps understandable given that the Scottish retail giant owns the UK's official Nintendo distributor, THE Games.

"If it comes late then that's not a problem for us, we can get products out to the stores very quickly if we need to," he adds.

Officially launched it may not be, but Nintendo 64 is the machine on everyone's lips right now, and this is only the start. "I'm sick of hearing about it," sighs of **GC Electronics**' Geoff Carr.

"Nintendo do it every time. We've got a stable market and they say 'Don't buy those other machines, wait for ours, it's far better'. Then they make us wait and wait and wait."

Carr has, so far, resisted the temptation to satisfy the early adopters in his area. "I won't be stocking it. The way forward is to make life easier for customers, not harder. Imported machines are great for people like Datel who make converters, but that's going from A to B via Z. I think the companies who are doing imports are only doing it as a token gesture."

John Anthony of **Soft Centre** agrees: "I'd rather put that sort of money into the existing consoles. We've had a few enquiries, but I very much doubt that people will pay £500 for it." The only way of finding out, of course, is by sticking one in front of them. After all, the official release date is probably six months away.

"We've sold about five so far. We're doing them at £599 with *Mario* and £699 with *Mario* and *Pilot Wings*."

Don McCabe
CHIPS

"I guarantee that a day after we decide to carry import stock, Nintendo will announce that the machine will be officially available within a week," he said, only half-joking.

Killer Mario

One retailer who has bitten the bullet and committed to stock is Robin Mookherji of **Torc Software**: "We've got one on show and another 15 units coming in today," he reveals.

"The people who have seen it have been amazed. Nintendo know how to make a good game and *Mario 64* is a killer. I can't see it coming officially before Easter '97 at the earliest, the only problem is that with the imports we'll be going several months before releases."

Don McCabe of **CHIPS** has been quick to make the most of N64, officially available or not.

"We've got one attached to a 28 inch monitor and the interest it's created has been phenomenal. Jaws are dropping to the floor," he says.

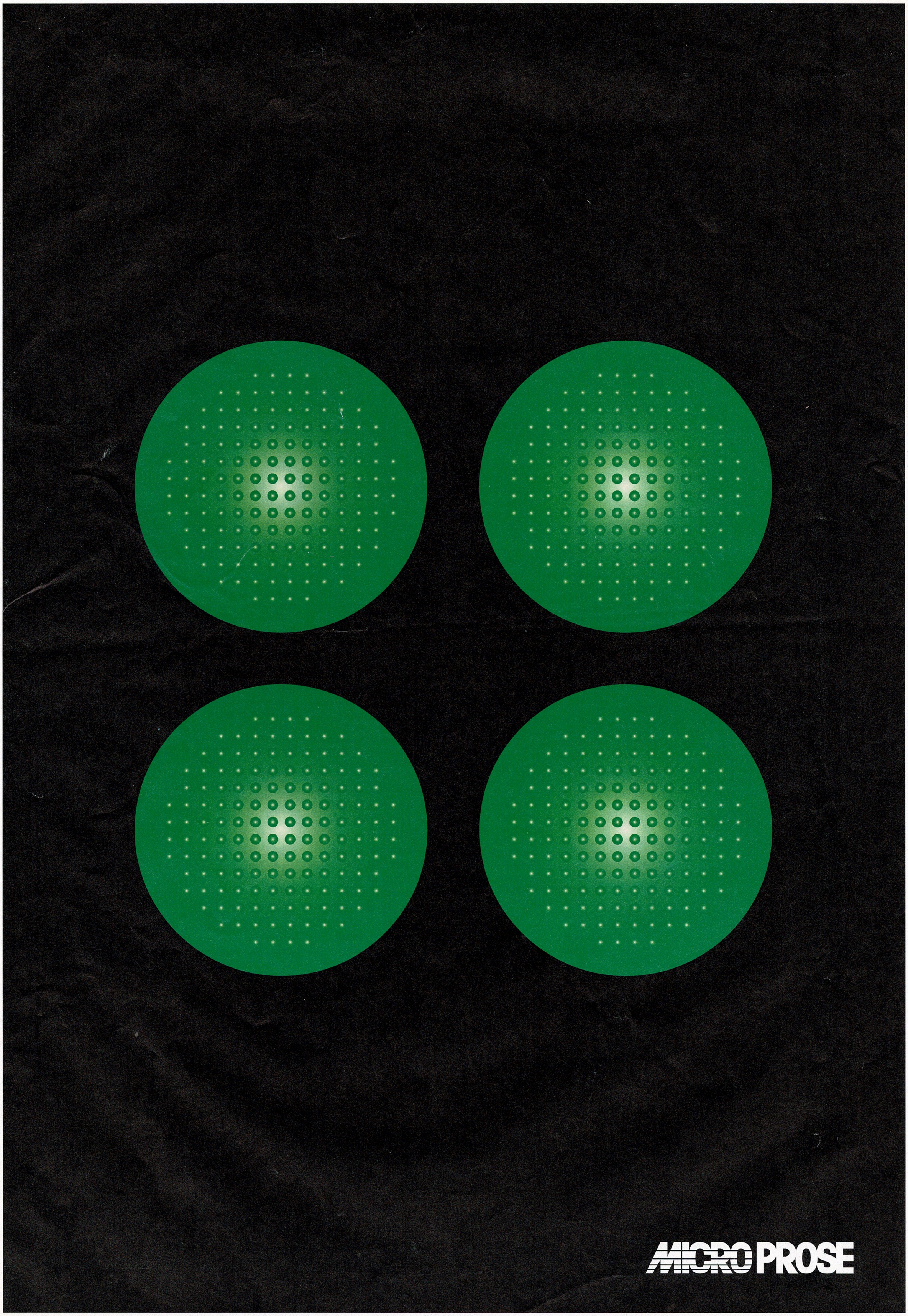
"We've actively promoted it, had leaflets printed and had a Nintendo open evening with a monster screen connected to SurroundSound speakers. We're not doing all this to make a profit, we're doing it to win friends and influence people. If we sell them and make money, well, that's a bonus really. It's being done as a marketing exercise to get our name about. We've had staff from Game, Future Zone — even Sony — coming into our store to see this thing."



Japanese N64s are already easy to find in the UK

"We've sold about five so far. We're doing them at £599 with *Mario* and £699 with *Pilot Wings*. The longer it takes to arrive, the more benefit we'll get from it. Realistically, I can't see it coming before 1997. When it hits the US, demand will be huge and that market, along with Japan, is not price-led. If a machine is the best then the consumers have got to have it, almost regardless of cost, so Nintendo will want to deal with those areas first."

And with a machine this good, it looks like they might take some satisfying. ❑


MICRO PROSE

NEWS ANALYSIS: UBI SOFT GOES PUBLIC

CITY OF DREAMS

CentreGold may have suffered a turbulent time in the City, but it hasn't put other games companies off. Indeed, at the very same time that the UK group was disposing of its distribution arm through an MBO, Gallic games giant Ubi Soft was taking the French Stock Exchange by storm — and it has plenty of reasons to believe that its flotation has a bright future. TIM GREEN talked to its management team, the Guillemot brothers, to hear why...

June 1996 was the month France's investors attempted to understand the computer games industry. It can't have been easy for a pin-striped brigade more used to playing the Stock Exchange than *Street Racer,* but to have shied away would have been to risk missing out on the second most successful flotation since the French financial sector's 'second market' was established 13 years ago.

The cause of all this activity? Paris-based developer, publisher, distributor and all-round monolith of the French games industry Ubi Soft.

In the event, the sale of a designated 10 per cent of the company raised more than Ff55m (£7.5m). Shares were 75 times over-subscribed and, by the end of the first week's trading the value of each one had risen from Ff250 to Ff295.

In fiscal terms, Ubi Soft is about as hot as they come.

Those who sent off for a prospectus were bombarded with statistics detailing just why this company was worth a punt (see box elsewhere) and over 20,000 would-be investors bought it. In every sense of the word.

But, to repeat, the 222,300 shares available represented only 10 per cent of the company. The remaining 90 per cent remains in the hands of the five Guillemot brothers who founded the company 10 years ago.

It was Michel who discovered, in 1983, that software was selling in the UK for the half the price it went for in France. An obvious business opportunity beckoned. So he imported all the hits on C64, Amstrad and Sinclair and distributed them by mail order. Business boomed. Brothers Yves, Gerard, Claude and Christian were soon co-opted and in 1986 Ubi Soft (Latin for 'where the software is' incidentally) was officially launched as a distributor for third party publishers. Early hits included *Commando* and *Zombie.*

It quickly came to dominate the business in France. Today, it handles 30 affiliate labels including Blue Byte, LucasArts and Mindscape and expects to release over 1,000 SKUs this year. However, the Guillemots realised that the long-term security of the company could not depend solely on physical distribution and licensing/affiliate labels. Instead, the future lay in development.

The transformation began three years ago. Ubi Soft recruited staff from across the disciplines — artists, programmers, sound technicians etc. — and built an impressive facility for them on three floors of a huge office just north of the French capital. It even houses a 32-track digital recording studio and a video suite which means that soundtracks, intro sequences, even ads can be produced in-house.

But the Guillemots knew that only so much could be achieved with the company's own funds. Especially given the sophistication of technology needed to develop across multimedia PC and super console platforms. Hence the flotation. "As everyone knows," says Ubi president Yves Guillemot, "development takes years to do properly. That's why we needed to raise capital."

Invested interests

Importantly, Ubi began its programme three years before going to the City. Which means (hopefully) that the products (and therefore profits) will be realised quite soon and investment will be repaid promptly. In fact, Ubi Soft's own press release to accompany flotation stated that the anticipated rise in turnover for 1996/7 would be 30 per cent.

This is a key reason why Yves is untroubled by the plight of CentreGold's disastrous flirtation with public finance. He also believes the fact that the directors all share the same parents helps too. "Because we're brothers and we started the business I think investors know that we'll work hard and stay loyal to each other and to Ubi Soft," he says.

The shift towards development didn't just alter what Ubi Soft did but, just as importantly, how it was done. To use phraseology beloved of the Tory party, Ubi Soft operates an "internal market". Its employees are divided into 16 separate companies/studios each of which concentrates on a particular aspect of development and publishing. All are given budgets to buy and sell their services — animation, game design, R&D etc — from each other.

At any time a studio is perfectly entitled to decline the terms offered by the people sitting a few desks away and go outside the company. Of course if and when this happens it will be investigated and changes made to avoid a repeat occurrence.

"I got the idea from reading about Richard Branson. People work better when they're in small groups and they have business relationships with each other rather than just taking orders from a superior," Yves explains.

It sounds weird but it works. And it's had the desired effect of creating a development infrastructure which enabled Ubi to realise unique game engines which can be re-used over and over again, create repeatable brands and develop the technology to port games quickly from one format to another.



GUILLEMOT: "If you grow and make money, everyone's happy — that's all we have to do"

Today the company is working on next-generation PC and console platforms, M2 and N64 (even though it is not yet part of Nintendo's 'dream team').

Under the stewardship of brothers Gerard (product conception) and Michel (development co-ordination), Ubi Soft's development resource has thrown up straight-ahead games like the award winning platformer *Rayman* and branched into edutainment and 'how-to' with *Kiyeko* and *Easy Guitar.*

Ubi's ultimate aim is to be a globally recognised force in the business, a top 20 player with a reputation as big as EA, Virgin and Acclaim. To do so it must extend its influence beyond Gallic boundaries. The process is already underway with a relentless surge into new territories.

All the above have that important quality of repeatability. *Rayman* will soon be reborn as a teacher of sorts in the educational title *Rayman Numbers & Letters* while the *Guitar Hits* brand is being considered for other instruments (which Ubi should be canny enough not to call *Guitar Hits*).

The move into edutainment may seem an obvious one to UK readers. But it made Ubi a pioneer in its own country. "The UK market for this kind of product is very mature," says Gerard. "In France that's not the case. So it was important for us to be present at the start." Indeed, edutainment currently represents seven per cent of Ubi's revenue. It was virtually nothing two years ago.

Now the company is warming to its task. It has a dedicated 'living book' department working on projects like *Waldo,* an adventure for children which was 18 months in the making and comprises a soundtrack specially composed for ethnic instruments.

Meanwhile, a schools syllabus related product *Tim7* will be released on October 1st (there shouldn't be product slippage because the designers' PCs have screen savers which read '*Tim7* will be released on October 1').

Ubi 2000

After three years the shift of emphasis from distribution to development is striking. Ubi Soft's own figures show that distribution represented 55 per cent of its turnover in 1993/4 while development was 25 per cent and licensing 20 per cent. Today, distribution and development share 40 per cent with licensing static.

Of course this is not to imply that Ubi Soft wants to abandon two parts of its business. Both distribution and licensing revenues have increased in volume — it's only their share of the total which has fallen.

To stretch the graph to the end of the century Ubi projects that development will bring in Ff500 million, that's 80 per cent of the company's total revenue stream. It also expects licensing to have overtaken distribution with earnings in the region of Ff100m.

Ubi's ultimate aim is to be a globally recognised force in the business, a top 20 player with a reputation as big as EA, Virgin and Acclaim. To do so it must extend its influence beyond Gallic boundaries. The process is already underway with a relentless surge into new territories.

While other companies are closing their satellite offices Ubi just keeps opening up. "There's no substitute for having your own presence when it comes to knowing what the local market really wants and needs," says Yves Guillemot.

Having a presence in one market can also present opportunities elsewhere. "To have a stake in the UK market is to have a stake in South Africa, Australia and the Middle East," adds Gerard.

The differences between markets are many. In France, Italy and Spain, for example, retail buying decisions are made at branch level, a radically different approach from the UK where head office decides what to stock. Ubi is also aware of the different levels of format penetration around the world. For instance, its development resource has a large team working on network and online gaming even though the market is all but non-existent in France.

The results of Ubi's expansion into new territories is already evident. Overseas revenues have tripled in two years to represent over 30 per cent of the total.

If the expansion continues apace Ubi's twice yearly meetings with the shareholders will be happy affairs. And the Guillemots will have no cause to regret loosening their absolute grip on control of the company. Not that they regard their independence as threatened anyway.

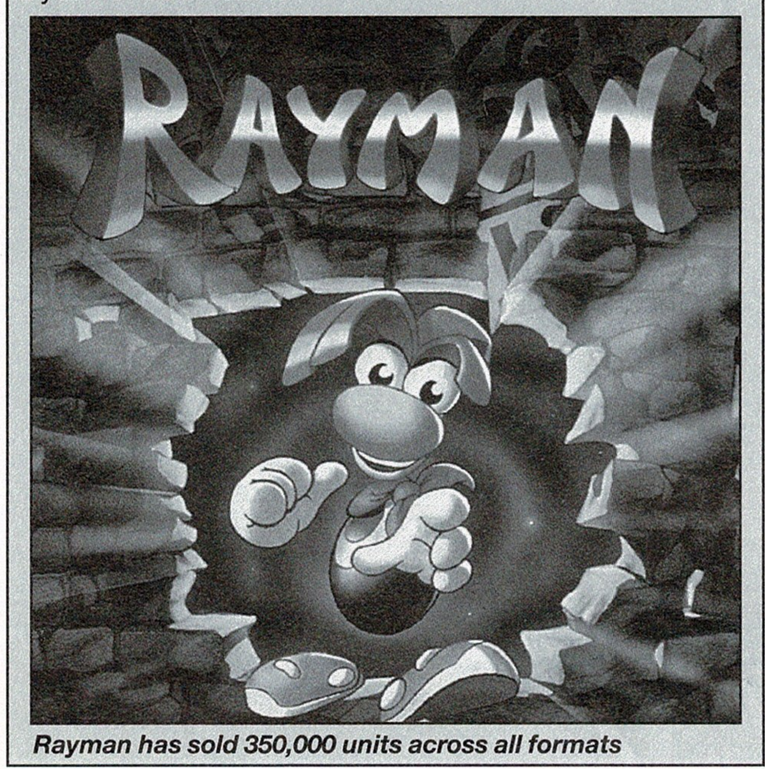
"We're still independent," says Yves, who gives the impression that nothing's really changed at all within Ubi.

"The Stock Exchange is easy. If you grow and make money everyone's happy. That's all we have to do." ❑

THE UBI FILES

The 10-year old Ubi Soft operation boasts:

- A 30 per cent share of the French games market, clearly leading the market.
- A turnover of Ff250m (£35 million) which is expected to rise by 30 per cent in 1996/7.
- Influence all over the world with offices in European territories such as the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain, plus Japan, US and soon Brazil and China.
- A development staff of 130.
- A catalogue including *Rayman* (350,000 units), *Street Racer* (300,000 units) and *Kiyeko And The Lost Knight* (100,000).
- 50 products in development and over 1,000 distributed a year for other labels.



Rayman has sold 350,000 units across all formats

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JOHN DAVISON

NO POINT, NO PRIZES

Multimedia software. Sure, there are some quality titles, but not enough. And if an increasing number of titles are quality in a design sense, many still completely miss the point when it comes to that great business principle of having a 'market' to sell to. JOHN DAVISON knows, he's seen the orange cows and psychedelic fish...

I got my hands on a new PC recently and have been dipping my toes into areas that I've tended not to bother with before. Considering that I've spent the last God knows how many years looking at pretty much games and nothing else, it's been an interesting experience.

Having spent the last three years subscribing to the 'multimedia is crap' school of thought, I had feared that I was a hopeless bigot. But five minutes with *Encarta* and *Cinemania* soon put this right and before I knew it my mind was open to the boundless possibilities offered by this apparently fantastic media. Well, sort of.

With this in mind, I have occasionally had a quick peep at fellow *CTW* columnist Mat Toor's title, *CD-ROM Magazine,* to take a look at all the stuff that it reviews — obviously naive in my thinking that multimedia applications are more often than not 'useful' I soon had my eyes opened there. Video-clips and sound bites seem to be available for just about any subject you could ever want to know about.

Anyway (stay with it, I am going somewhere with this) it wasn't until early last week that lots of little things slotted into place in my mind and I understood why this particular market isn't really going quite as well as originally intended.

The main crux of the problem is that, overall, multimedia is actually crap after all. Not because as a media it does anything wrong — it's really quite admirable in what it can provide. No, it suffers mainly because of what it seems to encourage people to do.

Would you Adam 'n' Eve it?

Before I go on, I'm not pointing the finger at a product for actually being 'bad' I just want to give you all an example of a scary multimedia experience.

It's this new Peter Gabriel thing that's coming out soon, called *Eve.* Peter Gabriel is quite clearly going through one of those periods in his life where he obviously wants to be taken seriously as an artist (man). The thing is though, like Sting and all the other rock stars that are soon to be pushing 50, it seems that to be 'serious artists' they have to be what the rest of us simply call 'weird'.

A new multimedia thing from a rock star. "Oh," you think, "Peter Gabriel, some of his stuff was OK really wasn't it? He did that *Biko* thing and that song with the video where he snogged Kate Bush. A CD-ROM with his stuff on should be quite cool."

And people whinge about multimedia being an over-crowded, ultimately disappointing sector of the business right now... Yeah, well, I'm not bloody surprised.

Wrong.

You turn the thing on and you are presented with an egg and a sperm wriggling into it before being transported to a grassy knoll where you pull a sparkly cursor out of a duck pod. After some fiddling about you find Peter Gabriel walking around with a suitcase full of water which eventually falls into some muddy grass. If you click on the muddy grass you see some fish which, as I'm sure you'd all expect, play funny noises and display psychedelic patterns.

Later Peter walks to the top of a hill where he finds a flugel horn. Blowing into the horn (obviously) makes cows and sheep fall out of the sky. If this isn't weird enough, clicking on one of the cows makes it glow orange and play a looped sample of one of Mr Gabriel's songs.

This isn't my favourite bit though, ooh no. My absolute favourite involves a room with windows in the top right and left corners in which sexless figures stand in a sort of Roman-esque statue pose.

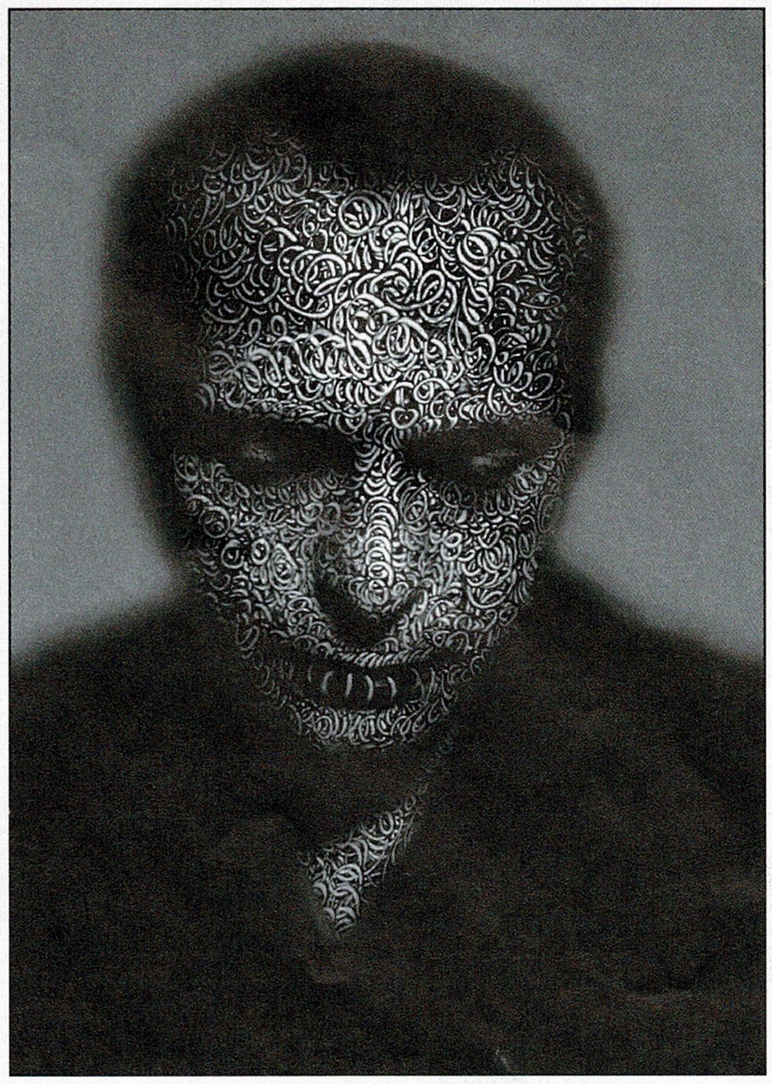
In the middle of the screen is a dirty great big urinal filled to almost overflowing with what almost certainly has to be chocolate milkshake, and sitting in this milk shake are two figures facing each other.

If that isn't weird enough in itself, if you click on the urinal a dirty great big bubble starts floating around the screen (what? Did one of them fart or something?) and if you make it bounce near the figures they 'grow' sexual organs. And in the bloke's case this is a bloody great thing that dangles down near his knee.

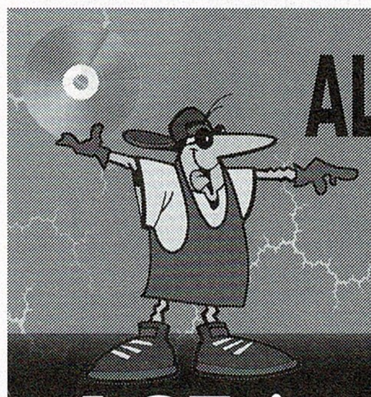
So, er, do you see my point? I'm sure this sort of thing would never be created if multimedia didn't exist.

Does anyone 'get' this kind of thing? Does anyone really turn on their PC and yearn for an interactive cow that glows orange and throbs in time to *Sledgehammer*? (or something, I couldn't make out the tune).

And people whinge about how multimedia is an over-crowded, ultimately disappointing sector of the business right now... Yeah, well, I'm not bloody surprised. ❑



Peter Gabriel's latest CD-ROM project is a curious affair



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SPEAKER'S CORNER

STRAIGHT-JACKET BLUES

In the past 18 months, the leisure software market has seen most leading publishers supplement their direct chainstore dealings with an exclusive partner servicing the other nooks and crannies of the UK High Street. This apparently means a more professional, efficient business for suppliers — but does the retailer really benefit? MICHAEL TRUP, managing director of distribution firm Interactive Ideas, thinks not...

Having read a number of articles expounding the virtues of exclusive distribution, one cannot help but feel that for much of the software publishing industry the 1980s never happened. During this decade other industries became increasingly consumer-driven, the key to a successful business became quality of service.

Whilst most other industries have adopted this ethos, many software publishers are now rejecting it in favour of a 'sales-push' approach created by deploying exclusive distribution. This structures the distribution channel in a way which suits the suppliers and ignores the needs and preferences of their customers.



Peter Sleeman's Pinnacle has caused a revolution in distribution — but is it good for smaller retailers?

At Interactive Ideas, we have particularly focused on serving the many retailers who want to stock titles in breadth rather than depth. These customers want a distributor who can be a high service, one-stop shop. In particular, they need a distributor who can point them toward the better selling titles and away from titles likely to stick on the shelf.

No publisher has a range full of strong titles. However, with exclusive distribution arrangements the retailer is forced to deal with many different suppliers each pushing their own products instead of understanding his needs and providing a degree of independent advice. This service may meet the needs of some multiples who employ full-time software buyers but it places a much greater onus on an already overworked retail manager in many smaller companies.

This is especially true in the many computer and non-traditional software stores now entering the CD-ROM market. We have managed to maintain a 'one-stop' service to date but this has often been in spite of the efforts of various publishers to effectively force the customers to buy from their exclusive distributor. Publishers seek to justify this by complaining about 'lack of focus' on the part of traditional software distribution, what they are really demanding is more 'sales-push' for their products irrespective of what is appropriate to the retailer's needs.

The 1980s were also dominated by the trend towards eliminating the inefficiencies of monopolies, whether Governmental or corporate. Time and again, it has been proven that the spirit of competition leads to a constant improvement in services. Publishers pursuing the 'exclusive route' are ignoring these lessons. Instead of making distributors improve their reporting, they are instead restricting their market information to one source.

Competition is key

The other common justification for going to exclusive distribution arrangements is to prevent 'grey' importing. For the rest of the world, the 1980s saw the single European market become a reality. It became illegal under the Treaty of Rome to seek to prevent the free sale of goods within the EU in order to maintain differential pricing for identical goods between countries.

Why would a retailer in one country want to pay a higher shipping cost and suffer a longer delivery time if the local exclusive distributor was providing product competitively priced and delivered in an efficient manner?

Instead of protecting inefficiencies the publishing industry should be encouraging a higher degree of competition, as only this will increase the flow of products through the channel.

The CD-ROM industry is only young and distribution channels are evolving. Whatever publishers do by way of changing distribution, the reality is that there is too much mediocre product chasing an installed base that is still small. As the installed base grows, so more retail shelfspace will be justified.

Trying to make software distribution fit a model that matches a world that other industries have rejected can only harm its development. If the channel is stuffed with 'sales-push' distribution which leads to a low sell-through then retailers will shy away from committing further space to multimedia.

Interactive Ideas is committed to providing a one-stop distribution solution to retailers stocking multimedia. This service does not match everyone's needs but our success shows that it is a service that part of the channel wants.

In most cases we achieve this by working with publishers, but exclusive distribution agreements often try to limit us. Whilst we will continue to thrive, trying to control the market in this way cannot be good for the multimedia business in the long term. ❑

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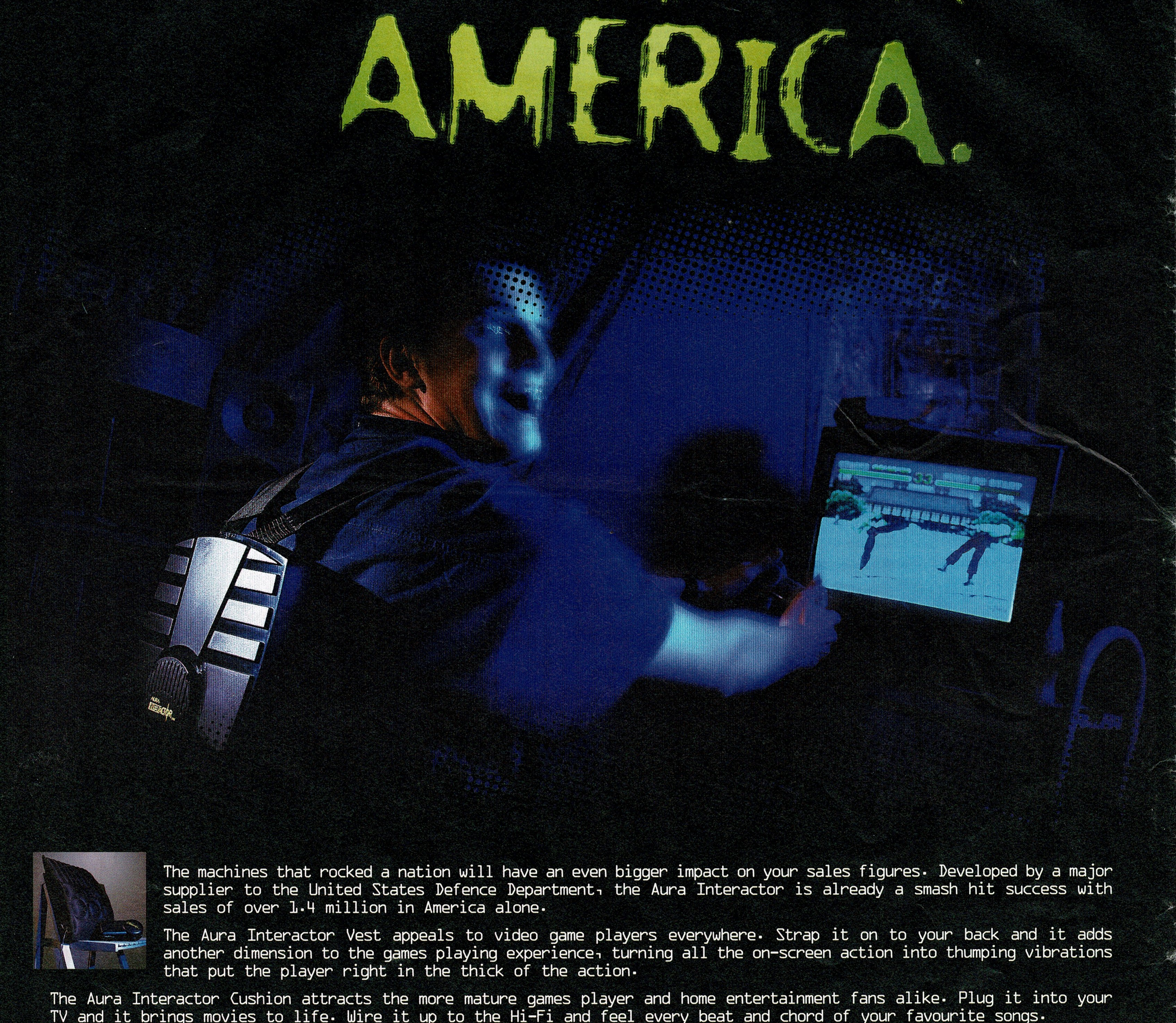
The right person will not necessarily have come from a distribution background. I am, however, looking for a candidate who has a sound knowledge of the 'Games and Entertainment market' and possesses drive and enthusiasm.

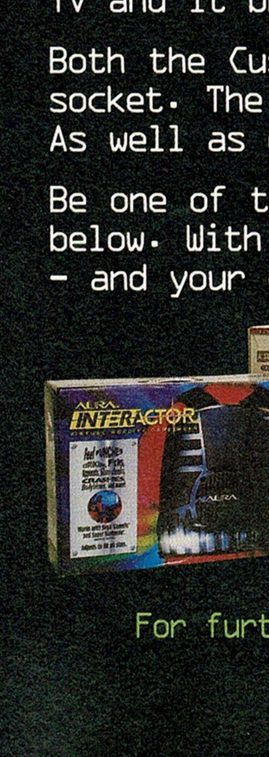
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Aura Distribution Services Ltd., Aura House, 77 Dane Road, Sale, Manchester M33 7BP, UK.

PRODUCT FILE

F1GP2
PC CD-ROM
MicroProse
Tel: 01454 893893

There's one good thing to be said for product slippage, sometimes it means cracking titles are released in the summer. And the Geoff Crammond-authored *F1GP2* certainly falls into that category.

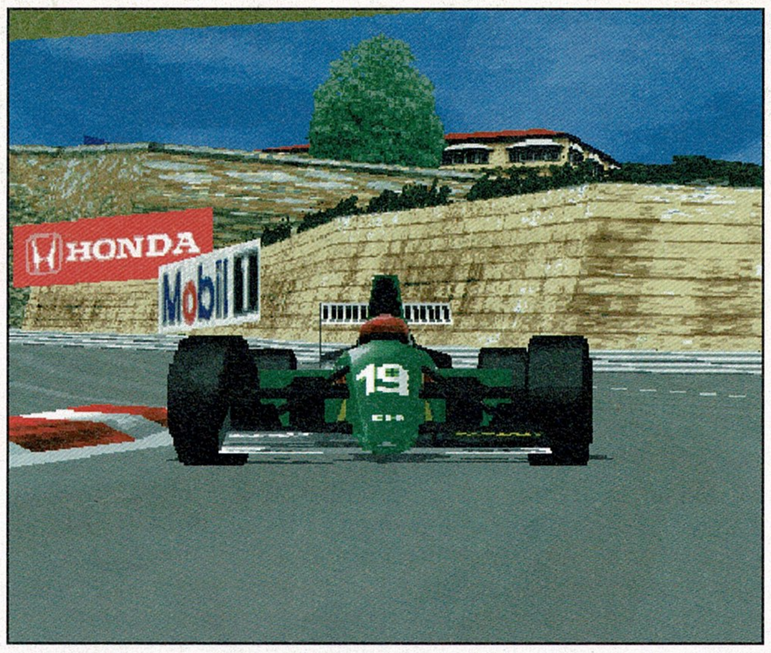
It boasts some of the best review scores of this year, including 95 per cent from both *PC Gamer* and *PC Zone,* and it's no mean trick to get that pair to agree on something, as well as 93 per cent from *PC Home,* 9/10 from *Edge,* 9/10 from *PC Review,* 90 per cent from *Games-Master* and maximum 5/5 scores from *Computer Life* and *CD-ROM Magazine.*

RECOMMENDED

A pan-European marketing campaign estimated at over £500,000 features advertising in the specialist and lifestyle press, cross promotions with Oakland, Dugena watches, and the Silverstone and Hockenheim circuits.

POS posters, standees and *F1GP2* challenge packs containing key rings, posters, t-shirts and badges are available from Pinnacle.

Number one for the next month, at least.



GP2: It's finally here, and it's going to be big

Olympic Games
PlayStation
Eidos Interactive
Tel: 0121 606 1800

After Konami's polished *International Track & Field* debut last week at number one in the charts, it remains to be seen how big a market there is left for Eidos Interactive's official licence, *Olympic Summer Games.*

On the plus side, it is the official Olympics licence after all and it's being backed by a massive marketing campaign including high profile ads in the specialist press and *CTW.*

In the only head-to-head review published so far, *Play* scored it at 89 per cent — against *ITF*'s 84 per cent.

Daley Thompson
PC CD-ROM
Interactive Magic
Tel: 01276 62462

Is it the 1980s? *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* is back! But whether the Daley name, ancient gameplay and 32-bit presentation is enough for *DTWCD* to walk off with the punters' Gold is doubtful, especially with Eidos Interactive's rival offering scheduled to hurtle onto the shelves soon after it.

Interactive Magic has certainly done it's bit to make the title shift. Marketing support includes 22 pages of ads, plus A2 posters, banners, flyers and demos as POS.

Bud Tucker
PC CD-ROM
Merit Studios/Funsoft
Tel: 0191 460 6060

A comedy adventure which apparently boasts a sexy stripper, 70s funk plus the voice of Rick Mayall, here's Merit Software's *Bud Tucker In Double Trouble,* published by Funsoft.

PC Zone has already called it "a winner", *PC Format* "slick" and a first review of 82 per cent from *PC Power* augers well for scores to come.

Merit is backing the title with ads in the specialist press and *CTW,* and a demo of the game has been covermounted on the PC mags.

Loaded
Saturn
Gremlin
Tel: 0114 275 3423

Gremlin's PlayStation hit now brings its own brand of blood, guts and guns to the Saturn.

Loaded has proved as popular with the Sega press as it did with PlayStation magazines, claiming review scores of 93 per cent from *Mean Machines Sega,* 84 per cent from *Sega Saturn Magazine* and 82 per cent from *Sega Power.*

All this is backed up by a marketing strategy that includes specialist press ads and a free T-Shirt given away with every game.

By Ian Lynch
of Play Magazine

To be featured in Product File, please send review copies to CTW, Troopers Yard, 23 Bancroft, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1JW. We also need details of marketing support and any review scores already received.

CTW GAMES GUIDE

To ensure inclusion in CTW Games Guide, product details should be sent to CTW Games Guide, Troopers Yard, 23 Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England SG5 1JW — or fax us directly on 01462 442489...

JULY

Dungeon Keeper	Bullfrog/EA	PR	Week 3
Olympic Games	US Gold/Eidos	PR PL	Week 3
Olympic Soccer	US Gold/Eidos	PR	Week 3
Baku Baku	Sega	SA GG	Week 3
Primal Rage	Warner Int.	SA	Jul 17
Mechwarrior 2	Activision	PR	Jul 17
Zork Nemesis	Activision	AC	Jul 17
Daley Thompson Decath.	Int. Magic	PR	Jul 17
Afterlife	LucasArts/VIE	PR	Jul 17
Virtua Fighter	Sega	PR	Jul 18
Spud	Gametek	W95	Jul 18
Empire Soccer	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Elite+	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Pacific Islands	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Shadow President	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Campaign Enhanced	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Campaign II	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Pipemania/Volified	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Megatraveller/Mega II	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Magic Boy/Cool Croc Twin	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Twilight 2000/Space 1889	Empire Budget	PR	Jul 18
Slam 'n' Jam	BMG	PL SA	Jul 19
Time Commando	EA	PL	Jul 19
Arcade Classics	Sega	MD	Jul 19
Magic the Gathering	MicroProse	PR	Jul 19
Virtual Golf	Core/Eidos	PL SA	Week 4
Afterlife	LucasArts/VIE	AC	Jul 24
Kyrandia	VIE	AC	Jul 24
Lost Eden	VIE	AC	Jul 24
Mortimer...Riddles	VIE	W95 AC	Jul 24
Elk Moon Murder	Activision	W95 AC	Jul 24
Onside	Telstar	PR	Jul 25
Davis Cup Tennis	Telstar	PR W95 PL	Jul 25
Starfighter 3000	Telstar	SA	Jul 25
Argonauts Holiday	Sony	PL	Jul 26

For formats key see Charts Section

VOLUNTARY AGE RATINGS

11+: *Dungeon Keeper, Time Commando, Elk Moon Murder*

All other games listed above and submitted by ELSPA members have been classified as suitable for all ages.

CHARTS

WEEK ENDING JULY 6TH

Compiled by ChartTrack

ELSPA — Entertainment & Leisure Software Publishers Association (UK) Ltd

COMMENT

And sales continue to grow... Thanks to the end of the school exam period, the change in weather and the fact that there was no football on TV, the market last week increased by another 12 per cent.

Up by some 13 per cent to claim two thirds of the total market, the All Formats CD sector boasted a new number one with the *Flashback* sequel *Fade To Black* debuting at the top, thanks to the arrival of the PlayStation version.

Further down the chart, EA enjoyed another new entry, with the arrival of *Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels* at number 14.

Elsewhere on the chart, there was little significant movement, although the release (at last) of MicroProse's *Grand Prix 2* this week will surely make a major impact (and then stick around for ages).

The more observant of *CTW's* readers will notice that the Full Price Home Computer chart has this week been replaced by ChartTrack's PC CD-ROM top 20 listing. This has obviously been introduced as a reflection of the ever-growing importance of the format within the overall leisure market.

Lisa Foster

TOP 20 — COMPACT DISC

TW	LW	TITLE	LABEL	FORMATS
1	—	*Fade To Black*	Electronic Arts	PL, PR
2	1	*International Track & Field*	Konami	PL
3	3	*Duke Nukem 3D*	US Gold	PR
4	6	*Theme Park*	EA/Bullfrog	PR, PL, SA, DO
5	4	*FIFA Soccer '96*	Electronic Arts	PR, PL, SA
6	2	*Euro '96*	Sega/Gremlin	SA, PR
7	9	*Worms*	Ocean/Team 17	PR, PL, SA, CD
8	5	*Settlers 2: Veni, Vidi, Vici*	Blue Byte	PR
9	10	*Championship Manager 2*	Domark	PR
10	7	*Civilization 2*	MicroProse	PR
11	—	*Wing Commander 3*	Electronic Arts	PL, PR, DO
12	15	*The Need For Speed*	Electronic Arts	PL, PR, DO
13	12	*Command & Conquer*	Virgin	PR
14	—	*Space Hulk VOTBA*	Electronic Arts	PL, PR, DO
15	8	*Adidas Power Soccer*	Psygnosis	PL
16	11	*Ridge Racer Revolution*	Namco	PL
17	14	*Encarta '96*	Microsoft	PR, AC
18	16	*Little Big Adventure*	Electronic Arts	PR
19	17	*Alien Trilogy*	Acclaim	PL
20	19	*Magic Carpet Plus*	EA/Bullfrog	PR

TOP 20 — CARTRIDGE

TW	LW	TITLE	LABEL	FORMATS
1	1	*FIFA Soccer '96*	EA/THQ	MD, SN, GA, GG
2	5	*Olympic Summer Games*	THQ	MD, SN, GA
3	2	*Brian Lara Cricket '96*	Codemasters	MD
4	3	*Toy Story*	Sega/THQ	MD, SN
5	6	*PGA Tour Golf '96*	Electronic Arts/THQ	MD, GA, SN, GG
6	8	*Pete Sampras Tennis '96*	Codemasters	MD
7	7	*Micro Machines 2*	Codemasters/Ocean	MD, GG, SN, GA
8	4	*Tazmania: Escape from Mars*	Sega	MD, GG
9	10	*Donkey Kong Land*	Nintendo	GA
10	12	*Sonic & Knuckles*	Sega	MD
11	11	*Killer Instinct*	Nintendo	SN, GA
12	14	*Mega Bomberman*	Sega	MD
13	13	*Sonic The Hedgehog 2*	Sega	GG, MD, SG
14	15	*Donkey Kong Country 2*	Nintendo	SN
15	23	*Pete Sampras Tennis*	Codemasters	MD, GG
16	24	*Batman Forever*	Acclaim	MD, SN, GA
17	16	*Dynamite Headdy*	Sega	MD, GG
18	17	*Primal Rage*	Time Warner	MD, SN, GA, GG
19	19	*Ecco 2: The Tides of Time*	Sega	MD, GG
20	22	*Streets of Rage 2*	Sega	MD

Format Monitor *By units*

Cartridge
Total market share: 22.4%
Total sales this week: +11%

Compact Disc
Total market share: 66.0%
Total sales this week: +13%

Home Computer (Full Price)
Total market share: 5.3%
Total sales this week: +6%

Home Computer (Budget)
Total market share: 6.2%
Total sales this week: +11%

Total leisure software sales this week: +12%

All chart and market share information is compiled from data collected from Chart Track's sampled retail panel over a seven day period.

TOP 20 — PC CD-ROM

TW	LW	TITLE	LABEL
1	1	*Duke Nukem 3D*	US Gold
2	5	*Theme Park*	EA CD-ROM Classics
3	2	*Settlers 2: Veni, Vidi, Vici*	Blue Byte
4	6	*Championship Manager 2*	Domark
5	3	*Civilization 2*	MicoProse
6	—	*Wing Commander 3*	EA CD-ROM Classics
7	4	*Euro '96*	Gremlin Interactive
8	8	*Worms*	Ocean/Team 17
9	7	*Command & Conquer*	Virgin
10	10	*Little Big Adventure*	EA CD-ROM Classics
11	9	*Encarta '96*	Microsoft
12	12	*Magic Carpet Plus*	EA CD-ROM Classics
13	14	*Worms: Reinforcements*	Ocean/Team 17
14	11	*FIFA Soccer '96*	Electronic Arts
15	13	*C&C: Covert Operations*	Virgin
16	15	*Warcraft 2*	Blizzard/Zablac
17	23	*FIFA International Soccer*	EA CD-ROM Classics
18	19	*The 7th Guest*	The White Label
19	27	*TFX: EF2000*	Ocean/DID
20	16	*AH-64D Longbow*	Electronic Arts

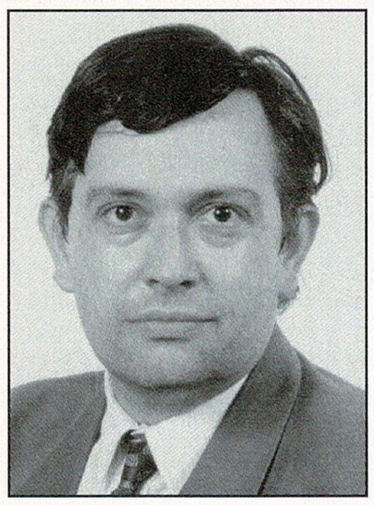
KEY: MD (Mega Drive), SG (Master System), GG (Game Gear), MC (Mega CD), PR (PC CD-ROM), CD (Amiga), SN (SNES), NI (NES), GA (Gameboy), CI (CD-i), AC (Mac CD), AG (Amiga 500/600), AA (Amiga 1200), PC (IBM PC compatible), AP (Mac), DO (3DO), JA (Jaguar), MX (32X), PI (PICO), SA (Saturn), PL (PlayStation), JC (Jaguar CD), HC (Hybrid CD), W95 (*Windows 95*)

Software piracy information?
Call the ELSPA Crime Unit now on 01386 833810

The above charts have been compiled from the Chart Track Weekly Report, which is the strict copyright of ELSPA. It is available on subscription, and features Total Market Statistics and Software Charts & Analysis for all leisure formats. For more information, write to the general secretary at ELSPA, Station Road, Offenham, Near Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 5LW, Tel: 01386 830642.

INSIDE LEFT

IN THE HOTSEAT WITH...



Graham Taylor

Mr. Emap has become Pearson's Mr. Internet in one of the transfer coups of the summer. And he talks first to your super soar-away CTW...

What is your job title?
Pearson New Entertainment's General Manager of Online Publishing.
Which means what exactly?
I'm running Pearson's Internet operation. In particular, along with a bunch of other talented people, I'm going to try and make it fabulously entertaining and *profitable*.
Why have you decided to leave Emap after all this time?
I have had a growing fascination with the Internet for some time, plus an absurd, arrogant belief that everyone else is doing it wrong and that I know how to do it right. Pearson presented the right opportunity at the right time.
What is your fondest memory of the 10 years you spent at Priory Court?
Just one? OK, probably the couple of months I spent with the original team cooking up *Mean Machines...* the midnight oil, the rows, the insanity, the ridiculously over-achieved ambitions. Most of my Images memories are pretty happy.
How easy were the first meetings with so many ex-rivals in the Pearson/Future camp... particularly Greg Ingham?
I've had a pretty good relationship with Greg for some time but, in any event, mostly the meetings have involved Nick Alexander, to whom I now report.
On-line services such as FutureNet are ultimately a threat to the print magazines they're supposed to be supporting. Discuss:
This is what us Internet gurus know as complete bollocks. There are things that magazines uniquely do, like present lots of words and pictures in a portable form that computers are utterly crap at (strangely, however, most Web sites consist entirely of words and pictures in a reduced, harder to read, less attractive and less portable form). The Internet is for other things...
If a '70s-style fight began outside PNE's offices on the King's Road, would you join in with the Punks or Teds?
I'd be the responsible person who tries to get both sides to see sense...and probably gets beaten up by everybody.
Spotted any celebs on your way into the office yet?
As this is being written, I haven't left Images yet and Farringdon was always pretty low on the celeb side — although it's okay for spotting entire staffs of smaller rival games magazines looking for a job.

Graham Taylor was talking with Stuart Dinsey

RETRO

3 Years Ago

Commodore finally unveils its new CD-based games machine, signalling what it believes to be a new era for its Amiga brand. As exclusively predicted by *CTW* earlier in the year, the US manufacturer has used the technology of its A1200 computer to produce a low price CD offering. The Amiga CD32 will ship at the end of August, retailing at £299.

Namco becomes the latest Japanese games giant to set up its own operation in Europe. Following similar moves by the likes of Sony, Konami and JVC, the coin-op specialist is taking direct control of its operations, with the setting up of a dedicated London-based HQ.

Virgin Games switches its name to Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

CTW July 19th 1993

8 Years Ago

Elite seeks an apology from US Gold following the Birmingham firm's accusations that Elite's *Overlander* 'bears a marked resemblance' to its *Road Blasters.* Meanwhile, US Gold is also facing considerable dealer disquiet over its new terms. Angry retailers are complaining that the company is variously being greedy, unrealistic and unfair in seeking to reduce margins.

Mirrorsoft launches its new games label Imageworks.

Emap announces record sales of its three leisure computing magazines, with *C&VG* at 108,982, *Sinclair User* at 85,615 and *Commodore User* at 69,006.

Commodore is gearing up for a TV advertising blitz to rival those of the likes of Atari and Amstrad.

CTW July 18th 1988

CTW

Give sales a chance

PC CD-ROM continues to move onwards and upwards, but isn't it rather worrying that software sales so often fail to meet expectations?

PC currently accounts for more than two thirds of the total CD sector, shifting around 50,00 units a week in the UK. But this a multifarious mix of old, new, full-price and — increasingly — budget product.

Judging by the last couple of months, a top-selling game may only be shifting around 2,000 units a week and less than 500 further down the Top 20. Title by title, the figures aren't that much cleverer than PlayStation — a format that is still less than a year old and way behind in terms of installed base.

So what's the problem?

Despite some bizarre analysis offered by the Software Publishers Association recently, bundling has to be a prime culprit. The SPA's assertion was that stacks of current, full edition software coming free with a PC *encourages* purchasing of new titles at retail. Yeah, right. Could the easy cash provided by OEM deals have anything to do with that statement?

Magazine cover-mounts probably aren't helping right now either, not necessarily because giving away shareware or demos is destructive but because there are so many titles on the shelves. A promised 'shake-out' in the PC sector may help things here. Publishers avoiding the temptation to stuff as much software on the disc as possible would be a step forward too.

There's also Internet to consider. Time spent passively surfing is time spent computing, but not time spent playing latest releases bought in the High Street. The more adventurous user, meanwhile, could probably download a new piece of playable software for free every day just by cruising all those official publisher Web sites.

Also, to steal a recent *PC Gamer* discovery, only a handful of the Top 20 sellers need a decent PC to run on. High-spec stuff, even backed by good reviews, regularly stiffs.

So perhaps the publishers currently complaining about poor PC sales have only got themselves to blame.

Stuart Dinsey

EVENT CHECK

SEPTEMBER
ECTS Autumn '96: September 8th-10th, Olympia, London. Call Blenheim on 0181 742 2828

CTW Event Check welcomes details of any shows or conferences being planned for the leisure/low end business marketplace. Please address all correspondence to CTW EVENT CHECK, Troopers Yard, 23 Bancroft, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1JW. Or fax us on 01462 442489.

HANDS ON
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West Byfleet, Surrey KT14 6NP
(Please quote Ref: CTW/VAC/01)

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Julie Fryatt, Personnel & Training Manager,
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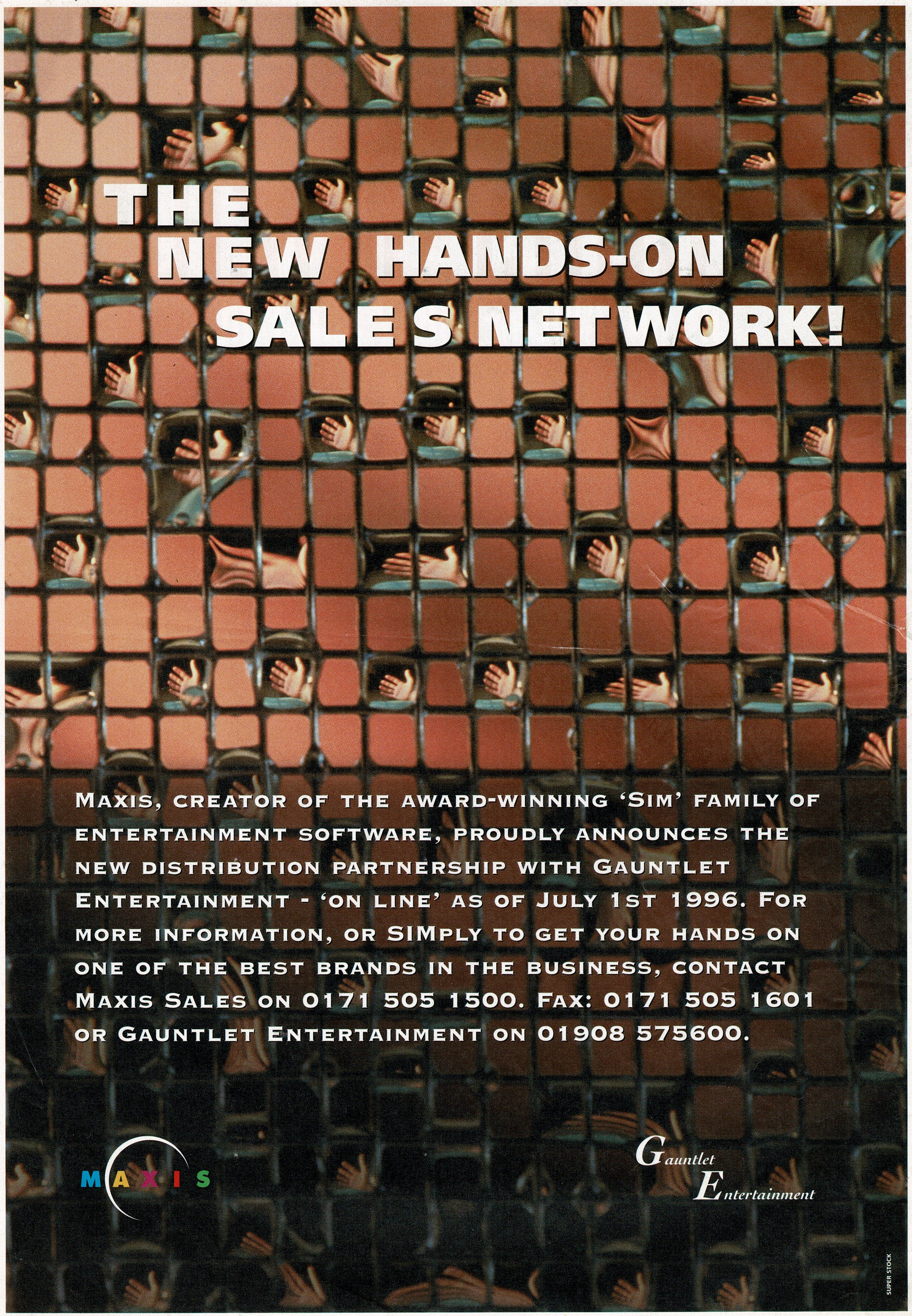
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