ST\TT\Falcon\Portfolio\XE\Lynx\Jaguar

October 1993

AtariUser

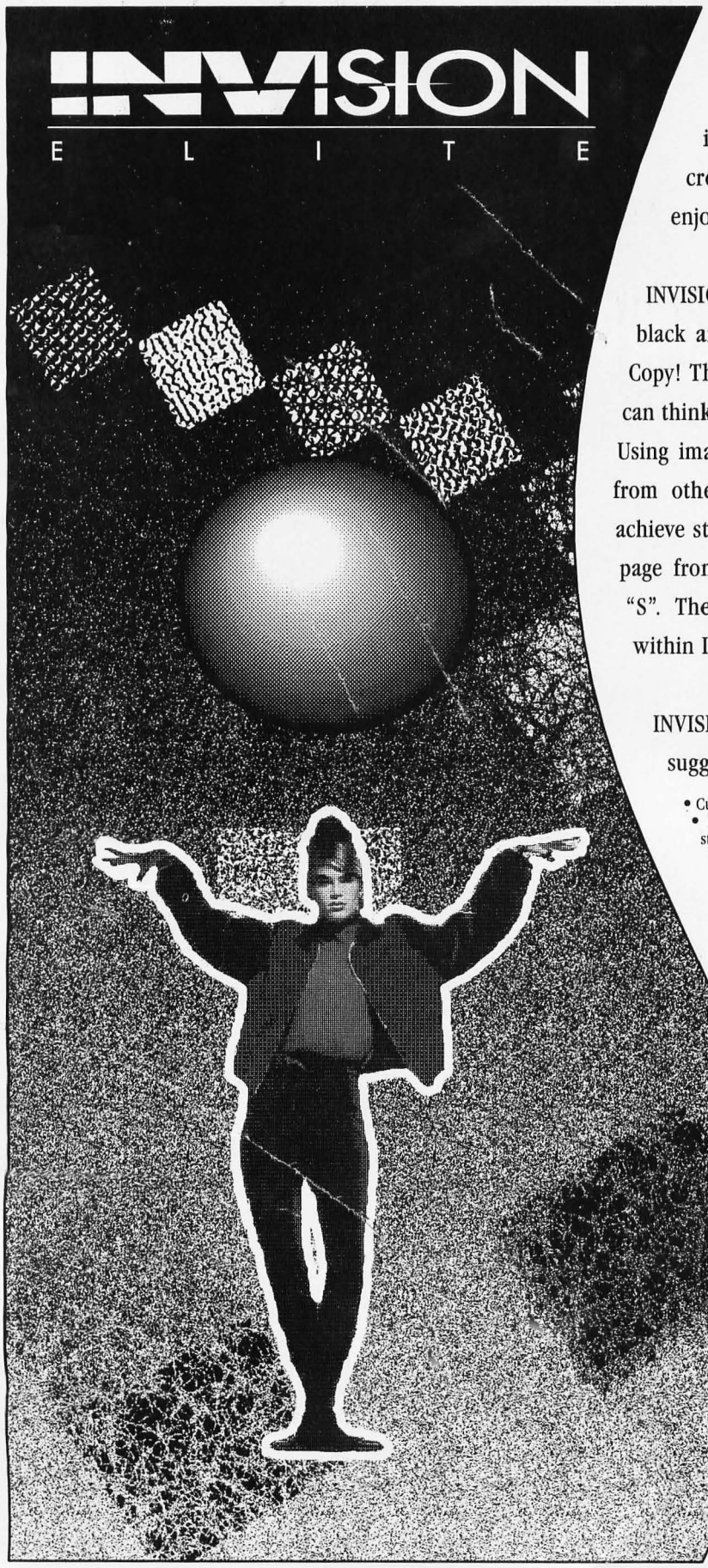
-BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Inside In COLOR:
First Looks at the
ATARI JAGUAR!

EMERGING FROM THE BIG CHILL–
CAN ATARI'S NEW PRODUCTS BREAK THE ICE?

INVISION

E L I T E



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AtariUser

■ *January–October 1993*

Remember Us?

It was December, 1992 when you last saw a new issue of ***AtariUser****. Lots has happened since, and you'll find some of it in this issue, and more of it in the coming issues. I explain what and why we were away in my Editor's Comments on Page 4. I know that I'm grateful to all of you who have kept a great attitude and encouraged me and the* ***AU*** *staff to get the ball rolling again.*

In this issue, we also cover a lot of ground on the goings–on of Atari Corp during the last nine months. Pages of news have backed up on us, and we simply had to decide what to tell you first. This time, ***NEWS.*** *Next month, in our traditional November Product Extravaganza, we'll try to catch up on 100 or more new products that have been announced, released, or improved since we last published. Look for a load of reviews, too!*

The HOT word right now is JAGUAR*. This new game console may make Atari another fortune, and indirectly aid our computer interests with infusion of MONEY and public confidence in the Atari name. We've got the first pictures of the Jaguar, in color, as well as screens from some of the dramatic new Jaguar games.*

Games *are Eric Bitton's beat, and he's got the current lowdown on who, what, and maybe when for all the new ST and Falcon games. And Robert Yung shares his educated Lynx–eye view of the best games available for the hand–held crowd.*

Don't overlook the technical but revealing look at ***Falcon Audio*** *by our newest AU writer, Jeff White. He's done quite a job of explaining just what the new direct–to–disk recording means for the future.*

By the way, many thanks to ***Nathan Potechin and the ISD*** *crew for helping AtariUser look so good. They are responsible for bringing us* ***CALAMUS SL,*** *simply the best desktop publishing and pre–press system on the planet. This issue is 100% produced (color, cover, and all) on Atari computers using Calamus SL.*

Looking ahead, we'll have spotlights on ***MultiTOS*** *and* ***Atari Works,*** *as well as catching up on Portfolio and 8–Bit Atari activities in the months to come.*

We're back. Thanks for waiting.

John M. Nagy, Publisher, AtariUser Magazine

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AtariUser
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Doing our part... Completely printed on recycled paper!

Welcome Back, AU!

We're BAAAA–AAACK! And they said it would never happen. Well, for a while, it felt like it wouldn't.

AtariUser Magazine went from an enthusiastic December 1992 issue into a nine–month hiatus. And we're back on what the world hasn't promised to be a rock–solid month–to–month schedule. Why? And what can we expect next?

The answers fill this "comeback" issue. Frankly, advertising fell dead on its face for Atari magazines. For *AtariUser,* driven exclusively by ad revenues (subscriptions are offered at a breakeven price), it was devastating. Many other mags, even Atari's prestigious ***EXPLORER***, went away. Others depended on their large proportion of subscriber circulation in order to hold on.

We had our own problems, too. I moved my residence (and the *AU* workshop) right after Christmas, and in the process, fell and broke a foot. Worse, I was laid up, mid–move, for many weeks, *WITHOUT* the comfort of a computer. Arrrg. A very serious illness of a pivitol staff member also stagnated database progress, and distribution matters came to a complete halt. We still are recovering data – yours might be part of what is/was lost! Yikes.

But things are better, for now at the very least. Look over our news of 1993 that we are finally catching up for you in this October edition. I'm indulging in a special "mostly news" format this month, with a return to our standard "how to get more from what you've got" direction next time. Next TIME? Well, very probably, almost certainly next month, if....

That IF is the big IF that has kept *AtariUser* out of circulation in our only publication interruption since we began more than two years ago, after picking up the torch from our own predecessor, ***ST JOURNAL.*** IF we get enough advertising to publish on time.

We know *AtariUser* is popular. We've had the verifiable top circulation numbers for Atari publications since we started, topping out at 40,000 actual issues in circulation (figured the way some of our competitors do, that's a "readership of 160,000"). But Atari product makers are in a world of hurt; they can't or won't spend their dinner money on advertising, but they can't sell more products without advertising.

That may finally be changing, as the ***Falcon030*** is finally readily available at dealers in the USA. Production will be driven by demand. What that seems to mean in this tight and competitive computer marketplace is that Atari will build no more machines that it has orders for. Caution, all around. But actual production and sales, even if cautiously slow, is more than we have had until now. And the promise of the ***Jaguar*** (see our Feature Story, starting on page 15) gives more than moderate hope that Atari Corp will survive, indeed, will grow. The company's continued dedication to the TOS computer line will be served by profits from the incredible *Jaguar.* And that offers hope that advertising money might be found, and a COMPUTER ad campaign mounted... and the world might find out what we've known for a long time – these computers are GREAT!

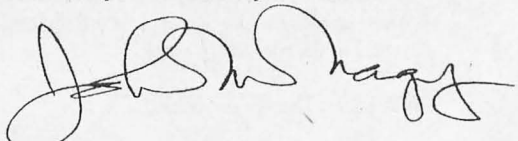
Lots of good magazines have bitten the dust in the last year. *AtariUser* looked like one of them, but a never–ending flow of good will and encouragement from our readers kept the embers alive. Fanned now by a brisker wind from Atari, the flame is back in AtariUser – for at least another honest effort.

AtariUser has evolved into a volunteer magazine. Only our sales manager gets a commission; all of our writers (and editors and publisher) are in it for free – for now, anyway. If things continue to improve, we might just recoup some of the personal debts that staffers have "invested" in the last year.

We know that some of you are "investors" too. Existing subscriptions will be honored. But, understanding your own likely suspicions about investing in the future, we are presently only offering new readers a **$5 mini–subscription; three issues for a five–spot.** Low investment, low risk.

In short, *AtariUser* will continue if there is any way that it can. We aren't running off with your money, we aren't taking our profits (HA!) and cutting out. We'll do *AtariUser* until there is no more need or no more way to do it. We think you want it that way, and we appreciate your patience and investments. Support our advertisers, and encourage your vendors to advertise with us.

It helps – more than you know.



John M. Nagy,
Publisher/Editor, AtariUser Magazine

■ AtariUser welcomes letters, viewpoints, and questions from readers, although we cannot assure personal answers. Send yours to us at AtariUser Magazine, 249 North Brand Boulevard, Suite 332, Glendale, CA 91203.

AtariUser Magazine

The road's been bumpy... but we're back, serving the Atari Community every month with news, reviews, and features to help you get the most USE out of your ST\TT\Falcon\Portfolio\Lynx\XE\JAGUAR!

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AtariUser NewsEdge

Atari Personnel ■ While 1992 offered a continuous sweep of personnel changes at Atari, 1993 has been reasonably low-key. Newcomers in 1992, Atari Explorer staffers Mike Lindsay and Darren Meers were let go in 1993. Long time Atarians Mel Stevens (trade show and sales coordination) and Art Pryzinsky (sales) were also furloughed. As Atari's focus changed to reflect the Jaguar-future, Gabriel S. Baum was promoted to Vice President of the entertainment/games division, and dozens of new programmers and game people have come on board in preparation for the launch.

Bob Brodie remains the single most visible person for Atari owners, despite not attending user shows in 1993. He expects to attend the Glendale show (September 18-19 - look for a complete report next month in AtariUser) on his own ticket, as Atari has downplayed such appearances due to short staffing.

News... Old and New!

AtariUser was away quite a while, so there's lots of catching up to do. We've got the scoop on what happened *"While We Were Out."* Next month, we'll have lots more product news. This time, it's ***Atari Corp*** news and Show reports that have our focus. Overall, it's a picture of "things are bad but not as bad as they might be" all around. There's reason for limited optimism in all this.

Atari Operations

Atari Corporation reported a $35 million cash reserve as it began its third fiscal quarter of 1993. The money is now earmarked for a focused launch of the new ***Jaguar Game Console*** (see the Feature Story, page 15-17 in this issue of *AtariUser*).

For the last quarter of 1992, Atari announced a $22 million loss, with net sales of $25.5 million, compared to a $4.4 million loss in 1991's last quarter when Atari had $96 million in net sales. The late 1992 loss included over $14 million in inventory writedowns (unsold obsolete or inoperative goods), $7 million in restructuring charges, and a $5.3 million loss on exchange (international transactions with currency rate changes), but also a $9 million gain due to a previously taken but overestimated losses for discontinued operations (Federated Stores). For the year 1992, net sales were $127.3 million with a net loss of $73.6 million, as compared to sales of $258.0 million with a net gain of $25.6 million in 1991.

In early 1993, Atari posted another $2 million loss in the first quarter on sales of $10 million, down from a $13 million loss on $44 million in sales during that period in 1992. Commenting on the report, Sam Tramiel, president of Atari, said, "The company has commenced shipments in small quantities of its new ***Atari Falcon030*** computers, and initial reactions have been favorable. We expect production of the *Falcon030* to increase during the second quarter. In addition, the company has released for production its proprietary chip set for its new multi-media entertainment system called ***'Jaguar.'*** We are currently organizing the launch of this product. The company has available over $40 million in cash to fund the introduction of these new products."

Atari's second quarter of 1993 showed another $6.6 million loss with net sales of only $5.7 million, compared with a $40 million loss and $23 million in net sales during the same 1992 period. Sam Tramiel said, "The company has focused all of its efforts on the development and launch of its new multi-media video entertainment system called *Jaguar,* which will be launched in the fourth quarter of this year in the New York and San Francisco markets. We have approximately $35 million in cash."

As a relative yardstick for Atari's performance, consider: ***IBM of Germany*** lost $277 million in 1992; ***IBM (USA)*** lost $285 million in the first quarter of 1993 after a $2.54 BILLION gain for the matching 1992 period but a $5 billion loss for 1992 overall (and a 40,000 employee reduction); ***Commodore*** lost $274 million in a 9 month period ending March 31, 1993, on sales of $517 million. In 1992, software for the ***DOS*** market fell by a half billion dollars to $3.7 billion, while ***Windows*** applications grew from a 1991 $848 million to $2.8 billion. ***Macintosh*** software grew from a 1991 $608 million to a 1992 $932 million.

Meanwhile, Atari stock had been languishing at well under $1 until a mid summer announcement of a $500 million 30-month production deal with *IBM* (see Feature Story) sparked a lightning-fast rise to near $5, leveling off at just under $4 at this writing. Public faith in Atari may be back.

Atari Product Lineup

According to ***Bob Brodie, Director of Communications*** for Atari, "At this point in time, we are devoting almost all of our energies toward the *Jaguar.*" The sole production computer available from Atari as of now is the *Falcon030*, now in good supply in one-meg RAM/no hard drive, four-meg/no HD, and four-meg RAM with 80 megabyte internal hard drives, but no national sales promotion.

Again from Bob Brodie, discussing promotion and focus strategies in his monthly live DATELINE ATARI series on the ***GEnie Telecommunications*** network: "Atari has the confidence that this machine (the *Jaguar*) will be a tremendous success. Sam Tramiel indicated back in August of last year that Atari didn't have the same confidence in the ***Mega STe/TT030*** line as a major success in the US, due to the pricing/features/performance constraints. In short, it's not a question of Atari finally understanding that they need a national advertising campaign, it's a question of Atari having the faith in a product that can be a national success. The ***Lynx*** is clearly a technically superior product to the other handhelds in the marketplace, which explains the advertising support that the Lynx has enjoyed. The Atari *Falcon030* is also a product that represents a major technical advancement over the existing CPU's in the marketplace."

Regarding the remaining Atari products, the out-of-stock *TT030* "will be available again" according to Atari, since a number of vertical market applications have kept a specialty market alive for this high capacity computer. While a consumer-rated (FCC Type B Certified) *TT030* was designed, it was not produced in volume, and any further *TT030*'s built will be the older "Type A" certified machine, still appropriate for its market.

The Mega/STe is out of production but not officially discontinued, as is the ***1040STe.*** Atari feels that these machines are a poorer value compared to the *Falcon030,* but has not openly killed them. Despite persistent rumors of a *Portfolio II,* "all ***Portfolio*** projects are on hold."

Formally discontinued two years ago, Atari continues to sell ***8bit*** computers (from remaining stock) to some parts of the world. No further production is considered for these machines, originally designed at the dawning of the home computer market more than 13 years ago.

The future for a TOS computer lineup remains assured, at least according to Atari. While no details will be discussed yet, sketchy plans for a "maturing" line of *Falcon* computers (likely with detached keyboards and expansion facilities) and 68040 computers are repeatedly offered as promise of a commitment to computers and to TOS. The ***Atari DOS/PC*** line is dead again, but Bob Brodie says the ***STBook*** will be back in a redesign. "You can expect things like back lighting in the LCD screen, and possibly floppies or PCMIA connectors. There are some discussions about changing the microprocessor in the unit to something that is a little bit more 'contemporary' than an 8Mhz 68000. Please bear in mind that we're focusing on the *Falcon* and the *Jaguar* right now, the *STBook* is not getting 100% of our attention at this point in time."

Monitors and other peripherals are also on the short list of products leaving the Atari stable. SLM605 laser printers will not be built any longer as the Falcon line has dropped the custom DMA port it uses, but some supplies remain. An adapter for SCSI to DMA has been long discussed but is unlikely to materialize. The big standard VGA color and monochrome monitors designed for the TT are out of production as non-competitive and unnecessary in today's market. The ST mono and color monitors remain in the "active" line at Atari.

Although much touted during 1992, Atari failed to complete negotiations with ***GE Service Centers*** to offer nationally available warranty service for the Atari computers. Atari has instead continued its authorized dealer service program as well as (often slow) factory repair or replacement.

Atari Software

Almost as a big a deal as the *Falcon* to Atari owners everywhere, Atari finally released several software packages that are having a major impact of their own. ***Atari Works*** is an integrated word processor with graphic layout capability, a database, and a spreadsheet with voice annotation. This was the package that was originally named ***ST SUTRA,*** later ***CONCIERGE***, and now ***Atari*** Works.

Abandoning the long awaited and briefly available ***FSM GDOS***, Atari moved ahead with ***SPEEDOGDOS*** using industry standard *Bit Stream Fonts* for remarkable quality scalable typesetting within *Atari Works.*

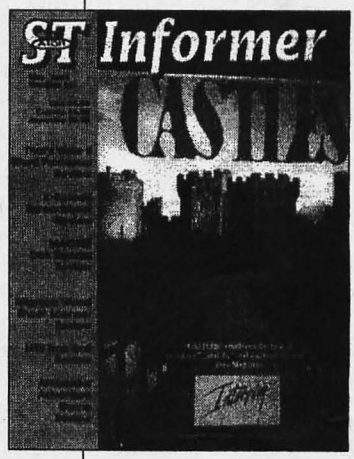
Equally as long in the coming but now available is *MultiTOS*, an honest-to-goodness released and working multi-tasking environment designed for the *Falcon* and TT, but usable even on the older ST machines.

All three packages come with new *Falcons* that have hard drives, and each is available for purchase separately as well. The suggested list price for Works with *SpeedoGDOS* and 14 fonts is $129, with over 1,000 different fonts available from *Bit Stream*, one of the world's largest suppliers of computer fonts.

These packages will each have a spotlight in the next issues of *AtariUser Magazine.*

Magazines? What Magazines?

Atari's own glossy bi-monthly magazine, ***Atari Explorer,*** is on indefinite hiatus. After only two issues of their own, editor Mike Lindsay and Darren Meers (ex of *ST INFORMER* and then briefly *ATARI ADVANTAGE*) left Atari in the Spring of 1993. Negotiations continued for some time that might have let the pair continue to produce the magazine (probably in a newsprint version like *AtariUser*), but at this time it looks like Atari will retain the ownership and let the magazine wait for better times. Subscribers are in limbo as of now. Officially, Atari says, "While Atari still believes in the magazine, it is not profitable at this time, and we cannot afford to publish it at a loss. However, we are very optimistic that with the success of the Jaguar, we will be able to renew publishing *Explorer* again."



ABOVE: The winner for most of 1993, only **ST Informer** maintained it's monthly commercial magazine production.

Meanwhile, to our chagrin, ***AtariUser*** magazine went off-line for nine months, with the December 1992 issue being our last todate. With this October issue, we hope *AtariUser* will be a monthly again. See the Publisher's letter to readers on page 4 of this issue for details on *AtariUser.*

Similarly, the infant ***Atari Advantage*** magazine ceased publishing in 1992 after only a few issues by the new owners, Castle Publishing, and hasn't been answering messages since.

Atari Interface Magazine (AIM) also quit after a very small and late last issue in March. The owners, Unicorn Publishing, are offering their mostly user-group subscribers a chance to change over to Unicorn's new effort, CONNECT, a telecommunications magazine.

All this left the Atari public only two domestic commercial magazines for most of 1993. ***ST INFORMER*** has plugged along without missing an issue (although a

A Some of AtariUser's News and Press information is provided by the ***Z*Net International Atari News Service,*** Copyright © 1992 by Ron Kovacs, P.O. Box 59, Middlesex, NJ 08846, phone 908-968-2024 voice, 908-968-8148 BBS, GEnie Z-NET, CompuServe 71777,2140.

Atari and Related Computer News

few production delays popped up to embarrass the publisher, Rod McDonald, just when he smugly editorialized about being the only magazine to be out on time) – *ST Informer, 280 Peach Street, Merlin, OR 97532.*

CURRENT NOTES has continued their quality 10–issues–a–year production, albeit to a quite small circulation – *122 North Johnson Road, Sterling, VA 22170.*

Another US effort is the smallest of the lot, serving under 500 Atari 8–Bit owners in a not–for–profit enthusiast's venture. Ben Poeland has produced several issues of ***ATARI CLASSICS*** and has more scheduled (and paid for!) into 1994. Subscriptions are $25 (US) and a software disk (8–bit, of course) is another $9. Says Ben, "Every time an issue of this magazine gets printed and distributed, the Atari 8–bit community is telling the world – and the dodo–brains in Sunnyvale – 'We are still here. We haven't died yet. We are still a viable community of users who feel there is value in these machines. You can disown us, or laugh at us, but you can't kill us.'" *Atari Classics, 179 Sproul Road/Route 352, Frazer, PA 19355.*

A new publication is slated to start up in October of 1993. ***PROCESSOR DIRECT*** is to be a Falcon–focused magazine published by Two Worlds Publishing. A 12 issue (monthly) subscription is $25 (US) and discounts for user groups are offered. *Two Worlds Publishing, 3837 Northdale Blvd. #225, Tampa, FL 33624.*

Outside of the USA, the Atari publication world has been in flux, too. Considered by many to be a favorite of the German Atari magazines, ***ATARI JOURNAL*** ended their publishing in January, 1993, citing insufficient advertising income to continue. Other magazines rushed to take up the slack, but all are hoping for global "warming" to the new Atari computer line, and sales to follow.

BELOW: At the **NAMM Show in Southern California, Motorola** had such confidence in Atari's new Falcon with the Motorola DSP chip that it featured ONLY an Atari at their booth. They reported high interest, particularly for audio processing.

Online with Atari

Electronic magazines have also been reeling. ***Atari Explorer Online*** was a spin–off and merger of ***Z*NET*** and Atari's in–house print 'zine, established in mid 1992. By the end of 1992, *Z*NET* had split off again and was publishing along side *AEO* on a biweekly rotation on the major telecommunication networks. Publisher Ron Kovacs found that the Official Atari Line was restrictive, and so returned to his own vehicle, honed by 8 years of electronic newscasting. Then, in mid 1993 when Atari dropped *Explorer, AEO* became an independant publication. Without the shackles of corporate approval, Ron Kovacs again merged *Z*NET* into the new *Atari Explorer Online,* and continues to provide the Newswire and news articles. *[Z*Net News Service continues to provide much of the material for AtariUser's news section, as it has from the start.]* AEO can presently be found bi–weekly on ***GEnie, CompuServe, Delphi, F–Net,*** and independant BBS's worldwide.

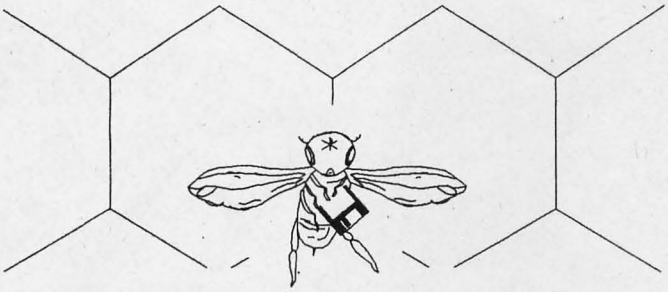
The other well known electronic newsletter for Atari has been the controversial ***ST REPORT***. After years of grousing in his weekly 'zine, publisher *Ralph Mariano* crossed the line into defamation and rabble rousing a few too many times for the tastes of Atari, *GEnie's* Atari Round Table, and *GEnie* corporate management. In early 1993, he found himself expelled from the *GEnie* service. While many readers now find *ST Report* to be little more than a editorial soapbox for Mariano to preach gloom and anti–Atari messages, others find it entertaining. *ST Report* remains available on *CompuServe* and *Delphi,* and on some private BBS systems.

Showtime!

1993 saw fewer Atari shows than previous years, as the slow economy took the wind out of everyone's budget sails. But it started on a high note with the NAMM show.

Filling the Anaheim, California, convention center, the National Association of Music Merchants held its 23rd annual International Music Market January 15–18, 1993. Among football fields full of everything from guitar picks to recording studios, only ONE computer company attended. Yes, Atari. Musicians know and use Atari. In the substantial music software area of the NAMM show, Atari equipment was seen in demonstrations roughly as often as IBM or MAC's, with as many as thirty Atari computers in use OUTSIDE Atari's own booth. Atari's name and logo were seen in many booths as the vendors boasted of their supported platforms.

Atari appeared in a large private suite, draped in black with a complete performance stage gracing the far end. Ringing the room were 15 workstations, manned by



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third–party developers, Atari personnel, and volunteers. Represented were: D2D Systems, ChroMagic, CodeHead Software, Barefoot Software, COMPO, Thinkware, Dr. T's, MGI, Digital FX, OKTAL, Steinberg–Jones (represented by Chester Thompson, drummer for GENESIS), and HOTZ Technology.

Five stage presentations were held, and featured SRO performances from Jon Anderson (vocalist for the YES supergroup) as well as Chester Thompson. But there were far more "names" in the Atari booth as spectators. The first to arrive was popelectronic musician Thomas Dolby ("She Blinded Me with Science"), who entered before opening because he had heard about the FALCON and wanted to see it first. Others came in all weekend, and included Ronnie Foster, Teddy Riley, band members from Bon Jovi, Pointer Sisters, Jacksons, Natalie Cole, MAZE, Neville Brothers, Stevie Wonder, D'Cuccoo, Arsenio Hall Show band, and lots more.

Outside of the Atari area and in the main flow of foot traffic, Motorola had a booth that was promoting the use of their DSP systems in new music devices. On their front table was a single computer. An Atari Falcon030. No MAC. No PC. But according to the woman running the Motorola booth, the Falcon was a BIG HIT, with most musicians knowing about it and wanting one ASAP.

Sales meetings, the whole point of trade shows, went hot and heavy. Orders and dealers were signed continuously. EQ Magazine presented Atari with their Blue Ribbon Award for the Falcon as best new product of the year. Other fallout of the NAMM show: Atari's Director of their Music Division, James Grunke, was selected to be one of the five directors for the MMA, the Midi Manufacturers Association. It was a great show for Atari, and paved the road for the Falcon as an audiophile's treat.

CeBIT

Next on Atari's tour was the world's largest all–computer brandshow in Hannover, Germany, the CeBIT show, in late March. Again, Atari made one of their better showings, despite economic conditions. Dozens of the still–rare Falcons graced the show, as third party devs from all over the world premiered ready and notquite ready hardware and software for the new Atari in over 60 booths.

Top products shown: MultiTOS, SpeedoGDOS, Atari Works, Blackmail (Digital Optical Analog's voicemail system), DA's Vektor (zowie 3–D vector graphics animation package), TruePaint, a Falcon/VME card adapter, ColorDISC Photo CD, Cubase Audio, and Falcon Speed (a very capable plug–in 286 PC emulator). Most of the products shown at CeBIT are available now or are nearing production.

AtariMesse and Others...

Expected for August, 1993, was the annual AtariMesse (Fair) in Dusseldorf, Germany. For years, this was the Atari orgy of the year. In 1993, it was cancelled. Officially, Atari management wants to participate in a multi–platform show in Berlin instead. But the state of Atari sales and dealer participation in Europe in general simply isn't supporting a huge Atari–only event. Downsizing is everywhere. It even remains uncertain at this writing whether Atari will make its usual big COMDEX push this November.

A good many user–group sponsored shows came and went during 1993, and most had respectable but reduced crowds, compared to prior years. We don't have room to report on them all, but AtariUser will be picking them up again starting with the Glendale show in September.

Sadly, the user shows aren't just smaller; some traditions have gone by. The WAACE show, a sister event to Glendale for some years and the largest of the East Coast shows, is "taking 1993 off." Reduced membership in the clubs has played a part in that decision, a common problem across the country. All are waiting for the upswing that general availability and recognition of the Falcon030 may bring. Stay tuned.

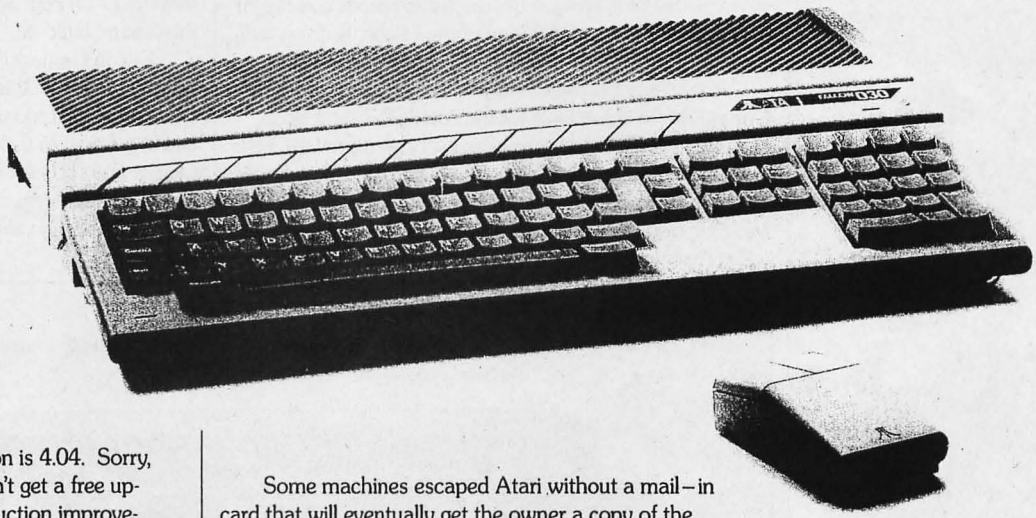
Falcons Finally Fly

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...
William Butler Yeats [1865–1939]

In 1993, things started to fall together for Falcon and Falconer, and the center shows signs of holding. Can the end of anarchy be near?

To recap, the Falcon030 is Atari's newest – and only current production – computer. It has advanced features like True Color SVGA video, many resolution options, CD quality digital stereo sound recording and playback without additional hardware, a digital signal processor (DSP) that can compute at lightning speed, making full motion video, audio enhancement, and 3–D animation all possible in real–time. Atari announced it in 1992, to be available in early 1993 at prices starting under $1,000. Powered by a 68030 CPU at 16 mHz and packed in a 1040–style one piece case, the Falcon030 is slower than Atari's TT030 but far more versatile and compatible with existing ST software. It is the first machine of Atari's new generation of computers.

Dealers across the USA got their demo units of the



ABOVE: Pictured is the only currently available configuration of the **Atari Falcon030 computer**, this one – piece case has drawn flames from power users who want detached keybards and open bays for cards and drives. Atari says, essentially, "be patient." Meanwhile, those new to Atari find the case quite satisfactory. The entire CPU, the keyboard, an 80 megabyte hard drive, 14 meg of RAM, an internal speaker, and an internal 1.44 meg floppy disk drive all live happily inside this tiny grey fan – cooled cabinet.

Falcon030 in March and April, about three months behind Atari's intended schedule. Atari had stopped production and changed their manufacturer due to insurmountable quality control issues; the machines simply would not keep running. After another month of waiting, the pipeline opened at least for a steady trickle of rock–solid Falcons into the USA. As a bonus, the new supplier upgraded the standard hard drive from 65 megabytes to 80 megabytes – at no price increase. A newer TOS revision also followed quickly, and the current version is 4.04. Sorry, owners of early 65–meg machines can't get a free upgrade to 80, but that's normal for production improvements as compared to production corrections (like the free repair of HD driver problems of some early 1040STe's). The "FPATCH.PRG" program, distributed by Atari on the major telecom services, will effectively update earlier TOS versions in operation, but for the purists, a new TOS ROM with 4.04 runs $59 from Atari.

As of this writing, Atari still has no 14 megabyte boards for the Falcon; options are 1 and 4 meg RAM. However, at least two after–market companies are offering configurable RAM expansion units. CHRO–MAGIC has the RAM Gizmo, using SIMMS cards, for $99 (unpopulated with RAM). Zubair Interfaces also offers a RAM board in several configurations.

To upgrade to an internal hard drive won't be too expensive, as the interface is part of every Falcon motherboard. It needs a cheap IDE/PC–style mini–drive, and an install kit will beavailable from Atari "later." Odds are that it can be added without the kit if your tech person knows how to built a mounting platform. Otherwise, better use an external drive.

Bundled Falcon Software

A good reason to pay for Atari's internal hard drive on your Falcon (beyond the obvious advantage to one–piece portability) is the bundled software you get IF you get a hard drive. At no extra cost beyond the $300 option cost of the HD, you get Atari Works and SpeedoGDOS, a $129 retail value. HD equipped Falcons will also have D2D, a simple version of a hard drive audio recording system in CD quality stereo. It's fully functional, but has no real editing ability – for that, buy D2D EDIT for about $300. All Falcon's are also shipped with MultiTOS, hard drive utilities (you'll need them sooner or later!), the games Landmines and Breakout, CalAppt (a Personal Time Manager, Phone Book/Dialer), ProCalc, and the Talking Clock.

Some machines escaped Atari without a mail–in card that will eventually get the owner a copy of the SYSTEM AUDIO MANAGER (SAM, it lets every key and function trigger a selected digital sound) and the AUDIO FUN MACHINE (graphic equalizer with real–time special effects, reverb, etc.). These products weren't (and still aren't) ready to ship. Falcon owners, be sure you send a card or ask your dealer for a card to get these programs. Same goes for anyone's machine that had early, defective versions of these, or perhaps no WORKS.

DEALERS?

At last report, Atari had over 120 Falcon dealers signed on in the USA. A limitation on the sales of the Falcon030 computer is that it ONLY be sold by a signed dealer; a new dealer agreement is required. Part of that agreement is a prohibition on mail order. While any dealer can still sell other (1040, etc.) Atari products without signing the new agreement, no Falcons will go out without the contract. So NO MAIL ORDER ANYWHERE. Now, your local "dealer" might not be a Falcon dealer. Or, you might not have a local dealer. What to do?

Atari's answer is for you to contact your closest dealer, who will get permission from Atari to serve you specifically. If Atari finds a closer registered dealer, you'll be referred. All this is to protect dealers, who have been ravaged by low–overhead mail order houses in the past. Worse yet, local dealers have always had to pick up the customer service and training left out by that P.O. Box with the low low price. Such is the cost of building a dealer network.

None of this is to say that a dealer can't or won't cut you price below retail. They are welcome to adjust their margins, Atari doesn't care – each dealer has a territory, so to speak. We've heard cases of the oppo-

site, though; due to high demand, some dealers (mostly music stores) have charged prices ABOVE retail, and have gotten it from the over–anxious.

Third Party Software

According to Atari observers, Falcon–specific software and hardware is starting to come on strong. The most dramatic products are those that use the digital audio recording capabilities, and those that exploit the true–color video. True Paint, Oregon Research's advanced color paint program for the new resolution of the Falcon, is doing well, as is Compo's MUSICOMM audio recorder/mixer/editor.

In professional music corners, the highly regarded Cubase Audio is available for the Atari ST, Atari Falcon, Macintosh & IBM platforms. But every platform EXCEPT ATARI, Cubase requires expensive additional hardware to do its direct to disk recording. The entire Falcon can cost less than add–ons for other computers – and the Falcon will still outperform them.

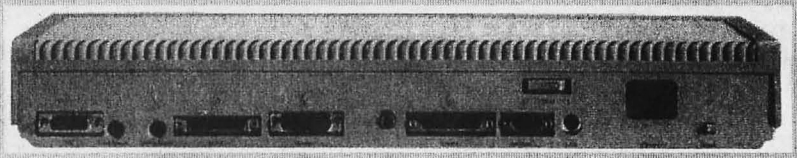
Overseas, the Germans have developed excellent DSP programming libraries and the Screen Blaster external graphics box that adds a huge array of new screen resolutions (256 colors in 800 X 600, for example). Scotland's Rombo is producing a video digitizer that can do 256 color real time video digitizing in 320 X 200 and supports true color modes as well (a US NTSC version may take some time to be developed). One company has prototypes of a VME harness, opening the Falcon030 to the world of add–on cards enjoyed by the TT030 and Mega/STe. Of course, future upscale Falcons might have this feature built–in.

Falcon Games? They're on the way too. Check Eric Bitton's update, in this issue.

There's just too many new products (Falcon specific and in general) to tackle in one issue of AtariUser. We have at least 60 new software and hardware announcements to share, and we're running out of room in this NewsEdge section already. Look for lots more next month.

What's Behind the Falcon030?

Falcon's are still as rare as ...um, hen's teeth, and we've been asked repeatedly to describe the connector ports. So here's a Southern view of a Northbound Falcon030.



1–DSP: Here's where the fancy external goo–gaa's will be attaching, with direct CPU and 56K DSP signal processor access via a DB26 female jack. The first items will be audio multichannel recording interfaces, plus digital modems.

2–Audio Output: A Stereo mini jack, standard in PC audio cards, tiny add–on speakers, headphones, and portable audio equipment. Level will be sufficient for headphones without external amplification, as is becoming industry standard for these connectors. It may need a pad (and RCA adaptor/cable) to bring to home audio line level to pump into your stereo.

3–Audio Input: A stereo mini jack (1/8") at microphone level. Use an external "pad" resister pack ($5 or so) to reduce the input level to home audio line levels, and convert to RCA type audio plugs (typically used only at line level). Atari decided to go with mic level to avoid forcing users to have an external preamp, and had no room for more line jacks on this model.

4–SCSI II: A 50 pin high density plug (new standard), same as was on the NeXT computer, not the larger, older standard used on PC's and TT's. Cables and adapters for this format will be moderately more expensive items. No DMA/ACSI jack, so hard drives designed for ST's will need a conversion – the "host adapter" can easily be bypassed. But Atari Laser Printers are OUT. A planned adapter (DMA to SCSI) hasn't materialized.

5–Monitor: A universal jack, the male DB19 will take a variety of "smart" adapters, each for a different monitor type (Atari ST mono or ST color or PC SVGA). Each adapter will inform the Falcon of what the attached monitor is capable of. Adapters will not come with the Falcon; you'll buy the specific one(s) for your monitor(s) at $5–$30 each.

6–TV: RF/TV output goes to the antenna terminals like any game machine. But graphics look mighty good here.

7–Parallel: The "printer port" is now a true bi–directional parallel port, so it can talk back and forth to other peripherals the way PC's have for years, with the standard DB25F connector.

8–Serial: With hardware flow control fixed for high speed modeming. Uses the new smaller standard DB9 jack.

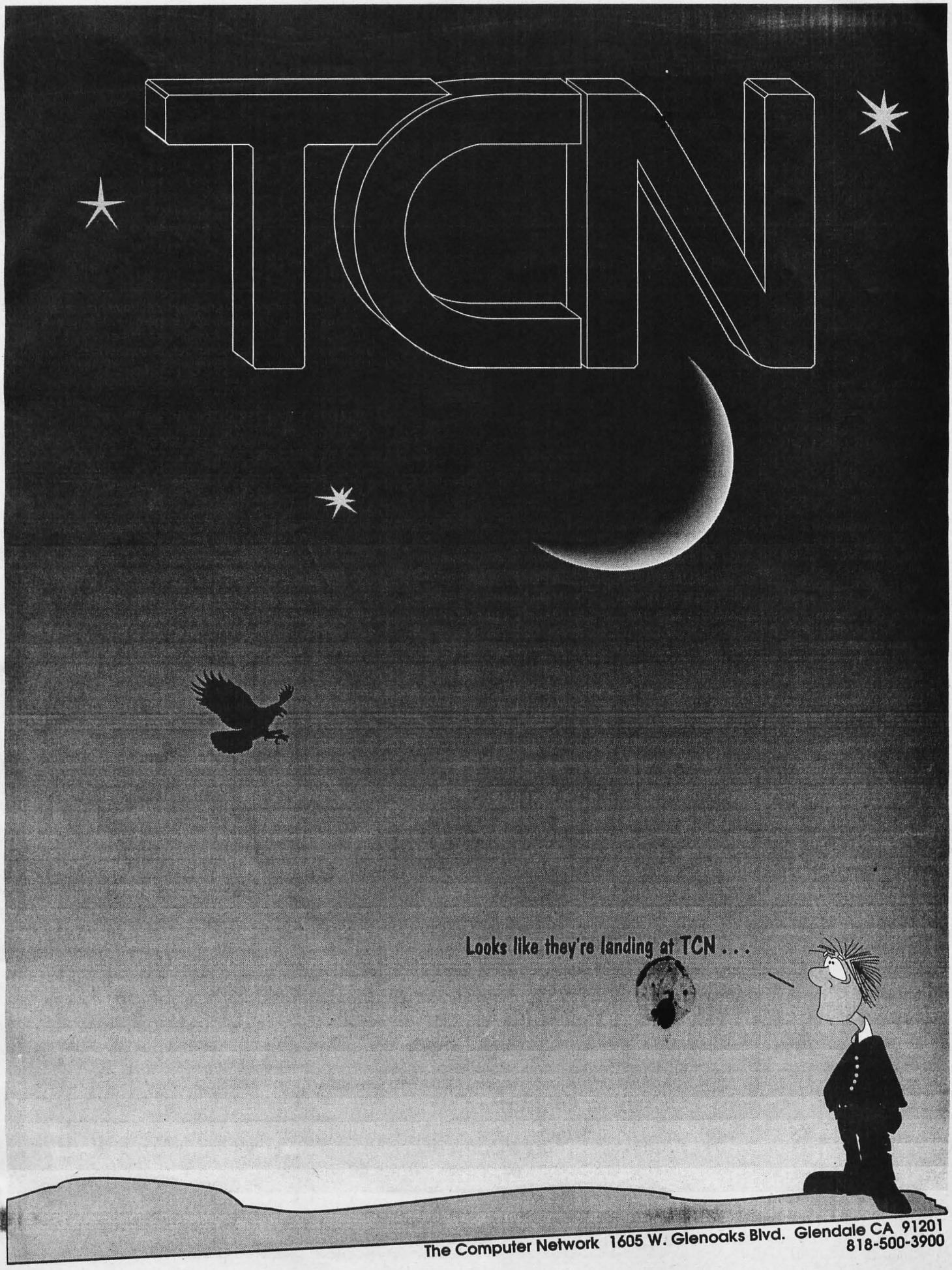
9–LAN: Appletalk compatible and just like the LAN port on the Mega/STe, not the higher speed port on the TT. Uses the mini DIN RS422 jack.

10–Power: A new design should be up to the internal hard drive, 16 MEG of RAM, and fan requirements.

11–Reset Button: Bomb removal unit.

MIDI IN and OUT, Cartridge Slot, Analog Joysticks, Regular Joysticks, Mouse: Under the keyboard and on the side, just like any 1040STe. Sorry about that.

Missing: A FLOPPY DISK PORT. So, no existing external ST drive can be used. On the other hand, most owners want a hard drive, and can get one for near the cost of a second floppy, making an external floppy a bad deal. If you really need an external floppy, you can buy a SCSI unit, or an external "Floptical" drive ($300 and up) with much more versatility – like using standard 3.5", 1.44 meg, or 20 megabyte disks at under $20 each.



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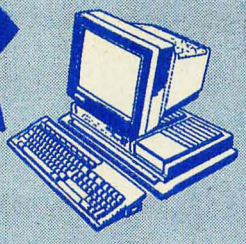

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Atari Lets Another Cat Out of the Bag

This may be the machine that rebuilds Atari. Adding irony to the comeback of Atari as a video giant, the unit will be built by computer giant *IBM!*

The **Atari Jaguar** is a 64-bit home game console – oops, make that "**Interactive Multimedia System**" – that will premier in test markets (New York and San Francisco) this Christmas season, with an international roll-out scheduled for 1994. Sixty-four bit? Yes, that's four times the CPU power as the top *SNES Genesis* systems, and double that of the yet-unreleased but much touted *3DO* 32-bit system that will retail at $700. Atari's Jaguar will set a new price standard for next-generation consoles at a target of $200.

Custom RISC and graphic chip sets in the Jaguar allow the fastest computed animation ever in a home computer, let alone in a

Top: Atari's new Jaguar game console has the look of the future to match its performance. A **CD-ROM** add-on will snap in place on top, with cartriges inserting in a pass-through port.

Above: While not challanging the 3-D and texture mapping power, the Jaguar **RAIDEN** version shows full arcade-quality action and color. So good, in fact, that arcade machines may be built using the Jaguar chipset.

Right: A screen from KASUMI NINJA gives a hint of what 3-D texture in real time will offer. We're told that this title also offers **91 different martial arts moves!**

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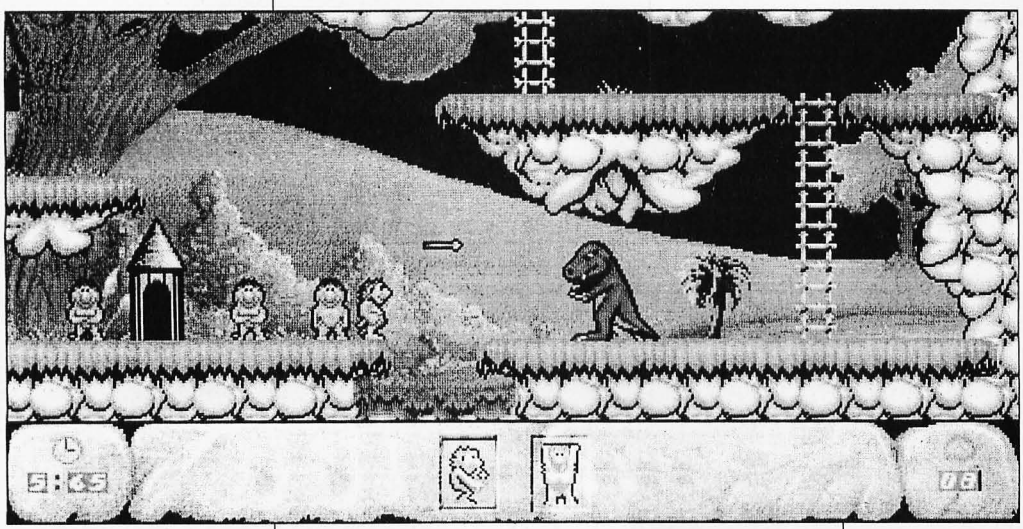


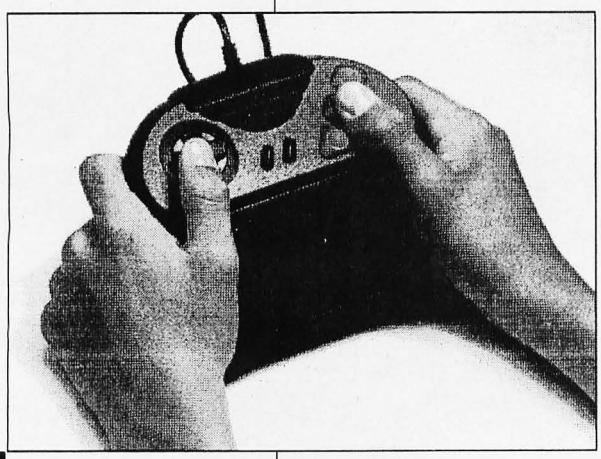
A ComLynx port will open the door to interactive games using Atari's hand-held color portable game unit. The Lynx might be used as a super-controller, provide private views of a larger multi-player game on the main TV screen, or be a tool (tricorder?) for use in a 3-D virtual reality adventure.

A surprise announcement from Atari on June 28 told of how the Jaguar would be entirely built by ***IBM*** in their Charlotte, North Carolina facility. A series of firsts, the Jaguar is *IBM's* first venture into being a turnkey manufacturing service provider. It will make the Jaguar the only videogame built in the USA. And it is Atari's first chance to be free from its biggest source of problems: production. In a 30-month, $500 million initial contract, *IBM* will do all the component sourcing, assembly, packaging, and even distribution. Atari only provides the plans and the places to ship the finished units.

ABOVE: Screen from **Evolution: DINO DUDES** shows detailed conversion of the **Lynx Dinolympics**, with 80 levels of play and vivid color. Smooth animation and fast action can't be shown in print; you'll have to see it in person. Then, you'll want to buy it. Worldwide distribution of the Jaguar will begin in early 1994.

BELOW: Seen before in AtariUser (see December 1992), the new 17-button and joypad control unit will be standard with the Jaguar, and already works with the Atari Falcon030 computer.

TV-top game box. The system will feature over 16 million colors in 24-bit true color graphics, with shaded 3-D polygons for manipulation in "real world" in real time. The Jaguar can render 50 million shaded pixels a second, and uses five processors in all, including a *68000 CPU and a DSP* as co-processors on its full 64-bit bus. A 32-bit expansion port will allow for future connection into cable and telephone networks, a digital signal processing port for modem usage, and connection to digital audio peripherals. The Jaguar will also feature an optional double-speed **compact disc** peripheral. The initial games will be cartridge-based (holding up to 400 megabits on each cart!), while the CD will be available in 1994, designed to plug into the top of the Jaguar console. It will even play ***Kodak Photo CD's,*** and full-motion video. Up to an hour of video can be delivered at motion-picture speed from the CD unit. Sounds from the Jaguar will be 16-bit stereo, the same quality reproduction delivered by modern audio CD's.



The demand has already been demonstrated, as international interest has been sparked by the word of the new Atari game unit. One program designer, after viewing the Jaguar system, said of the graphics, "It's sort of like that Listerine commercial, the one where the bottle swings through the jungle, but better." Sam Tramiel, president of Atari, said, "The imagery is something that needs to be seen to be believed. Imagery is one thing, but wait until you see how you can interact with these images. If a spaceship goes around a moon, or a person walking on a street turns on the next corner, every object, every detail in such scenes is reproduced in shaded 3-D images with texture. It's truly amazing stuff." Texture mapping, 3-D forms, morphing, variable point of view and point of lighting – all done in realtime by the Jaguar graphics engine – will make the Jaguar experience like none other on the home market today... or tomorrow. The system's graphics performance is to be comparable to that of the 3-D engines in midrange ***Unix*** workstations. The chips responsible were designed at an Atari facility in England.

Future competitor ***3DO*** has said much poo-pooing the Jaguar, including charges that the "64-bit" unit is really only two 32-bit processor on one bus. Atari provided a refuting bus diagram showing the processor and coprocessor design, and answered that even if *3DO* were right, Atari would be offering twice the unit that *3DO* plans to produce – and at less than one third the price. At $700, the *3DO* unit won't be a hot consumer item at ***K-Mart.*** Meanwhile, ***Nintendo*** jumped their announcement of a similar 3-D unit to be introduced in 1994. Most industry observers agree that the *Nintendo* machine

is still vapor, but they refused to appear to be left standing at the gate of the escalating premium game race – even if they were.

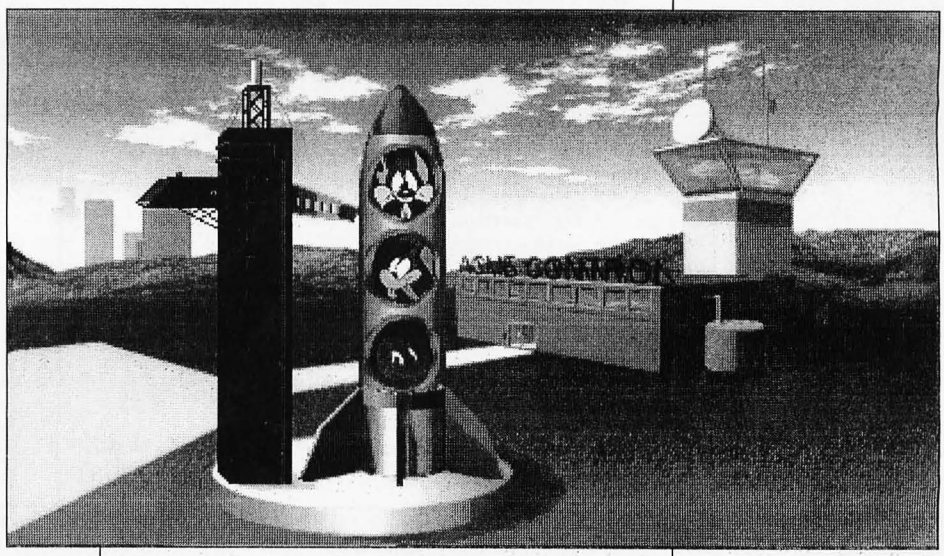
New Jaguar 3–D game titles will include **"Cybermorph"** (terminator–like action), **"Alien vs. Predator"** (yes, a spin on TWO movies at once!), **"Jaguar Formula One Racing"** and many more.

Third–party publishers are obviously also anxious to join the Jaguar family. The Atari Jaguar packaged unit will include one *"software experience"* (that's techspeak for one game, title as yet unannounced) and a *"Power Pad"* Controller with a ten–key pad and other special features.

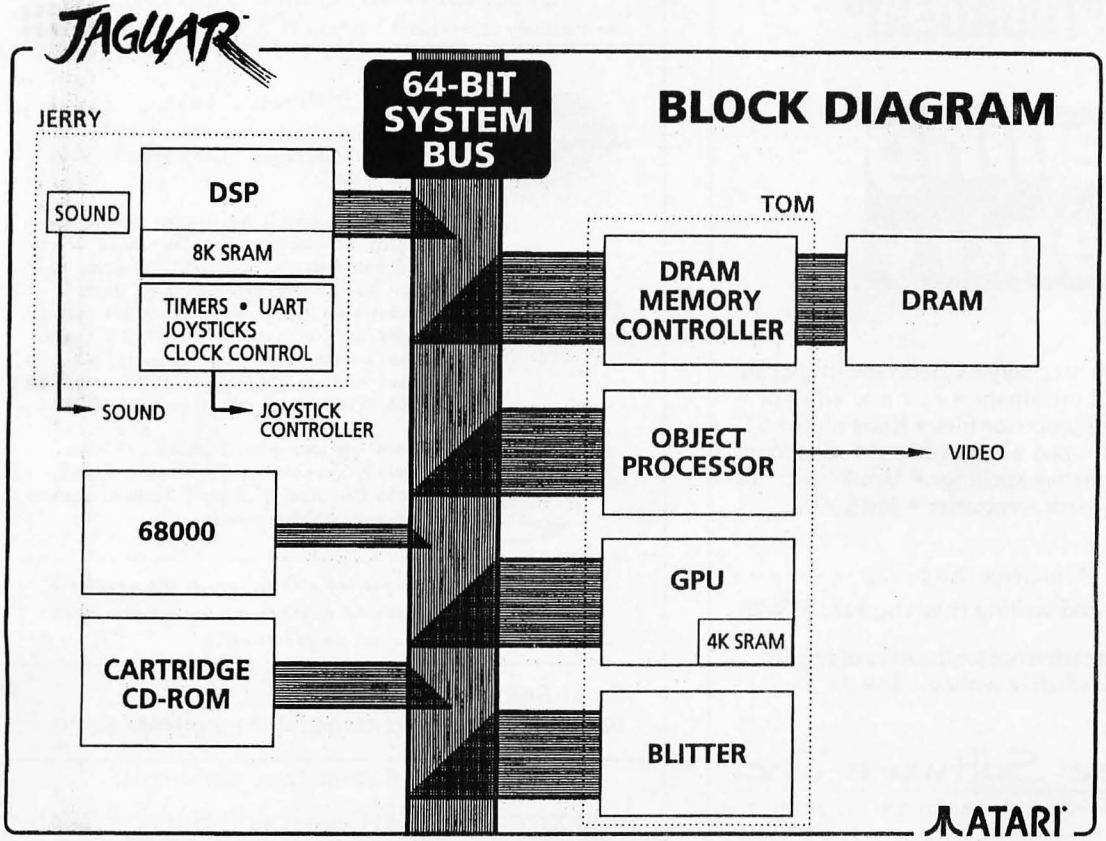
Atari plans to spend $3 million promoting the Jaguar in the two test markets this fall. Production availability of the new custom graphics chips prevents a wider debut, but 1994 should bring unlimited manufacturing and a $45 million promotion budget.

Needless to say, ***AtariUser*** will bring you Jaguar news every month, with the fastest reviews and pictures in the industry!

– John Nagy



ABOVE: **TINY TOON ADVENTURES** explores the new limits of cartoon graphics in a vibrant and realistic true–color environment. A ***Time–Warner*** product, the Toons are a natural for Atari, since T–W still owns ***25% of Atari Corp!***



LEFT: Atari's Blueprint for success, the Jaguar internal orgainzation. Note that **"Tom and Jerry"** are massive integrated processers that handle the bulk of the work. A **68000 CPU** is almost a side–issue, but may provide some code compatibility with existing projects. It can be addressed in any way that Tom or Jerry need to provide sound, color, or animation processing.

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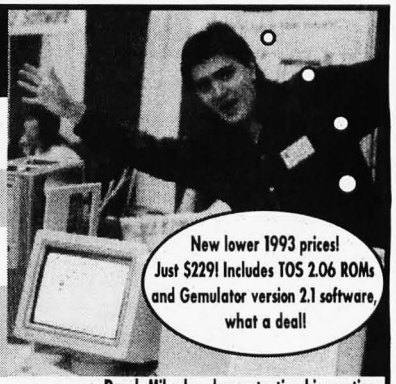

• Darek Mihocka, demonstrating his creation, Gemulator, which runs on 386/486 PC clones.

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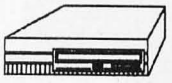

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Son Of AtariUser's Wacky World Of ST Gaming

by Eric Bitton

It's been over a year since I wrote the original Wacky World of ST Gaming article for AtariUser (July 1992), and things have changed drastically. Several companies have dropped the ST altogether, and some went out of business. The number of games being released for the ST has taken a nosedive. Atari also released the new Falcon machine, and we're waiting for game developers to take it seriously. It may take a while. Anyway, here's an update on the State of the Game. Refer to the ST GAMING RESOURCE in the July 1992 AtariUser for additional details and for all Game Developer's addresses and phone numbers.

The American Companies:

Atari: Falcon stuff in the works: Cyber Assault, Llamazap (by that wacky Jeff Minter), Road Riot 4WD, and Steel Talons.

Digitek: Hill Street Blues has been released as scheduled. Digitek has no interest in releasing anything for the ST, which is just as well, as their products just aren't good.

Electronic Zoo US and UK have gone out of business.

Empire: International Sports Challenge was released in Europe, but not here strangely enough. Also out: Campaign and War In The Gulf (Team Yankee 3). Coming soon: Cyberspace, and Campaign Mission disk.

Innerprise: Battle Squadron was cancelled, and they're out of business.

MegaSoft Entertainment: Disciples Of Steel (fantasy RPG) continues to do well, and the company is supporting it with upgrades.

Merit Software: Traders (from Swiss company Linel) was cancelled, and Merit dropped the ST.

Psygnosis: Ork and Air Support (UK only) were released, along with Lemmings 2: The Tribes (June '93). Most of their games only come out for the Amigas, especially the new 1200. By the way, Sony now owns Psygnosis, so we will see some high-end stuff from them, like 3DO, CD-ROM, and maybe even Jaguar. Coming soon for the ST: C.A.P. (Combat Air Patrol), a mission-driven jet fighter sim. They're supposed to be working on Innocent Until Caught for the Falcon, but they're not talking.

Readysoft: Guy Spy, Dragon's Lair III: Curse Of Mordread, and Animation Classics Pack (containing Dragon's Lair II, Space Ace, and Wrath Of The Demon) were all released. Nothing definite yet for the future.

Sublogic: The California Collection scenery package for Flight Simulator isn't quite ready yet.

Yep, that's all of the relavant American Game Companies!

The European Companies

Accolade UK: They've dropped the ST.

Beaujolly UK: Another fine compilation was recently released, The Greatest. You get Shuttle, Lure Of The Temptress, and Whilrwind Snooker, all from Virgin UK, all in one neat package.

Core Design UK: Doodlebug (cutesy platform game) was the only game to be released since July '92. Looks like they're pulling a Psygnosis on us and only fully supporting the Amigas. No info on any future ST stuff.

Daze Marketing UK: Lots of stuff released since last time: Bunny Bricks, Fantasy Pak (Crystals Of Arborea, Boston Bomb Club, and Colorado), Magic Worlds (Crystals Of Arborea, Dragon's Breath, and Storm Master), Transarctica, and most recently Ishar II: The Messengers Of Doom. Special Falcon versions of Ishar and Transarctica are also out, and are doing very well. Coming soon: Ishar II (Falcon), and The Patrician (German medieval strategy game for the ST).

Digital Integration UK: Still waiting for Tornado, a very detailed simulation of the Panavia Tornado fighter-bomber. A Falcon version should be available as well.

Dream Factory UK: Gobliins 2 and Ween: The Prophecy were released. Coming soon: Falcon versions of Gobliiins, Gobliins2, and Ween.

Domark UK: AV-8B Harrier Assault, and Rugby: The World Cup are out. Coming soon: Flight Sim Toolkit (Simis), F1 (UK version of Vroom 2).

Eclipse (Germany): In the works: a Falcon game of 3D polygons space combat called (strangely enough) Eclipse.

Electronic Arts UK: They've dropped the ST again *(again!)*. The last 2 things to come out were Risky Woods (another platform game) and Steel Empire (Millenium), a game of conquest through the use of mechs. It seems Millenium wants do Falcon stuff however: Daughter Of Serpents (spooky 1920's Egyptian mystery), and Rome AD92 (social climbing in Ancient Rome).

Fun & Games

Not too many game developers have yet taken the Falcon to heart (regardless of what Atari may say), while competition, the Amiga 1200, seems to have garnered a larger following. Many European companies are releasing both regular Amiga and 1200 versions of their games (and some companies only release stuff for the Amiga period). Before you forever curse my name and wish a thousand deaths unto me for even mentioning the Amiga, let me make myself perfectly clear: the ST is a fine machine. It does a lot of things well. The Falcon is even better. But for gamers, what's a great machine without software? So far, there are 2 games out that were designed to run on the Falcon. Many more are promised, but, to quote an old French proverb: "In the land of promises, one starves to death."

While the situation will change (it always has changed!), you may want to consider owning more than one computer system if you want lots of great games RIGHT NOW. I'm not suggesting that you give up or sell your ST, PUT AWAY THAT KNIFE!

Whew! Many well-equipped household have a Nintendo and a Genesis living side-by-side in peace. Your Atari could use company, too.

Eric Bitton's Wacky World of ST Gaming...

For continuing updates on the ST gaming world, consult my electronic magazine, the ST Gaming Digest, published bimonthly and available on GEnie. You can drop me a line at Category 9 (games) Topic 22 (STGD) of the ST RoundTable or in E-mail (ZRATH-SMILEY). Or, I can be reached at the O'Mayer V BBS at (213) 732-0229. - Eric Bitton

Empire UK: See Empire US for current line-up. Coming soon: Eye Of The Storm (hopefully).

Excelsior (France): A new French company working on Falcon titles only: Street Warriors (beat'em'up) and Unknown Ocean (adventure).

Grandslam UK: Stone Age and Beast Lord, two rather bad games. Still in the works: Beavers (a furry animal platform game), Liverpool FC (more soccer), Nick Faldo's Championship Golf, and Tensai (hack'n'slash).

Gremlin UK: Lotus III: The Ultimate Challenge and Nigel Mansell's World Championship came out as planned. Incidentally, Nigel Mansell's isn't very good and in no way replaces either Vroom or Microprose F1 Grand Prix. In the works: Zool, a console-quality platformer.

Impressions UK (new home of Omnitrend products): Air Bucks (airline business simulator), Caesar (Roman SimCity/wargame), Warriors Of Releyne, Cohort II, and Paladin 2 (Omnitrend) have all been released. In the works: Rules Of Engagement 2 (Omnitrend), and When Two Worlds War.

Infogrames (France): Nothing for the ST, but it is rumored that they're converting Alone In The Dark to the Falcon. That would be neat! Alone In The Dark is set in a haunted mansion and all the characters in the game are 3D polygons. The camera angles keep changing, too.

Konami UK: In the works: Batman Returns (Denton Designs), similar to the Genesis cartridge, and Frontier: Elite 2, the game that will make my year if it's ever released before the end of it (year that is...). Frontier makes the original Elite look like Star Raiders. I want it now.

Krisalis UK: Sabre Team (isometric Special Forces), and Shadoworlds (sequel to Shadowlands) released as planned. Youneed 1 meg for both. Nothing definite planned so far...

Lankhor (France): Vroom is back, bigger and better. Vroom II is a super-enhanced version of Vroom with tons of new features. Here's a few of 'em: split-screen mode, player VS CPU, 6 new tracks, ability to race on Vroom and Vroom Data Disc tracks, joystick for all modes, 4 skill levels. Domark UK will sell this under the name of F1. Coming soon for ST: Black Sect, creepy adventure game, and Sukiya (or Suriya), a graphic adventure with speech (and sequel to Maupiti Island). Coming soon for Falcon: Black Sect, Sukiya, and Vroom II.

Loriciel (France): Tiny Skweeks, a teeming legion of nasty little critters. In the works: nobody knows.

Microprose UK: Ancient Art Of War In The Skies, B-17 Flying Fortress, and Civilization were all released. No sign of A.T.A.C. In the works: Dogfight (mix'n'match planes from any time period), and Gunship 2000 (for real!). Spectrum Holobyte now owns Microprose US.

Mindscape UK: They've dropped the ST.

Mirage UK: Falcon stuff in the works: Raiden, conversion of the rather good shoot'em'up, and Space Junk, a space trading adventure.

Ocean UK: Cool World (platform movie tie-in), Lethal Weapon (platform shoot'em'up movie tie-in), Sleepwalker (Comic Relief UK platform tie-in), and WWF European Rampage Tour are out. Sleepwalker only works on STEs. In the works: Jurassic Park (surprised?), Universal Monsters, One Step Beyond (Push-Over sequel), European Champions (soccer), and Super League Manager (soccer managing). The last two titles will be able to share data.

Palace UK: Out of business.

Rainbow Arts (Germany): Out of business.

Renegade UK: Chaos Engine (steampunk overhead-view action-adventure), Sensible Soccer: European Champions, and Sensible World Soccer. Nothing planned.

System 3 UK: Status unknown.

Thalamus UK: Creatures is out. Still in the works: Summer Camp, Arsenal F.C. (soccer), and Restrictor.

Thalion (Germany): A320 Airbus USA Edition, Ghost Battle (lousy platform game), and No Second Prize (3-D motorcycle racing) came out. Coming soon: a Falcon version of No Second Prize, Tower FRA (air traffic control).

Titus (France): Super Cauldron (platform game) came out recently. In the works: Lamborghini American Challenge. They have also started their own budget label, good luck suckers! (Everything they've released was crap, up to The Blues Brothers.)

21st Century Entertainments UK: They're probably out of business. No one can put out really bad games and survive, except for Titus ‹grin›.

UBI Soft (France): B.A.T. II and Dyna-Blaster are out. Dyna-blaster comes with a multi-player adaptor. No ST stuff in sight.

US Gold UK: Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis (isometric action-adventure), Legends Of Valour (3D fantasy RPG), and Street Fighter II (the mega blockbuster coin-op) all came out. Coming soon: Blade Of Destiny (RPG), Original Scrabble, and Kingmaker.

Virgin UK: 3D Pool, MacDonaldland (formerly McKids), Motorhead, and Reach For The Skies (Rowan Software) all out. Reach For The Skies uses the same keyboard layout as Flight Of The Intruder and Falcon. In the works: Apocalypse (helicopter shoot'em'up), Cannon Fodder (Lemmings meets the Army), Goal (Kick Off III soccer game), and Rookies (another "Lemmings meets the army" game).

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The Music of the Bytes

Given that computers have been beeping and blurping in one form or another for about as long as they have been around, one wouldn't think that producing sound from within the computer should be that big a deal. Indeed, in the last several years it has become chic to do quite exceptional audio manipulation with a variety of add–on products that fit into other popular platforms, of course at some additional expense.

However, the Atari Falcon030 is the first computer on the market to not only incorporate all the standard "extras" we have come to expect on Atari computers, but to also include 16–bit digital audio input and output capability as well. But wait, that's not all. Not content with just offering stereo input and output of digital audio, Atari elected to be generous in their development process and make provision for handling up to eight digital audio channels, (yes, all stereo at 16–bit CD–quality resolution). Now how much would you pay? Well, don't answer yet.... They even include a special signal processor that's dedicated to doing, well, nothing at all! Enough dramatics – let's get on with it.

Enter the Falcon

Atari thought it would be nice if, besides handling up to eight channels of audio, we were able to treat that audio with some additional processing, courtesy of that undedicated processor – the Motorola DSP 56001. A common myth that has been circulating about this system is that this processor is the main engine behind doing digital audio on the Falcon. This is understandable, since the majority of add–on boards on other machines do it that way.

One factor in propagating this misunderstanding is the fact that other platforms, by and large, employ a SCSI controller that impedes the flow of data. That, in turn, requires the use of faster peripherals to compensate. In other words, you pay for faster peripherals to run on a slower computer.

Such is not the case with the Falcon030. Audio data is handled on the SCSI/DMA bus. It's permitted to enter and leave the system in analog form via the stereo mini–jacks conveniently located between the SCSI port and, interestingly enough, the DSP port. Think about it; the hard drive is where digital audio information is stored to and retrieved from, and the DSP port does not have to be connected in any way to this data path. This frees up many speed issues that cramp other computers. The Falcon's internal hard drive is quite slow by most standards, benchmarking in at 63 milliseconds access time. A removable 44 meg hard drive tests out at around 57 milliseconds. That's way too slow for most systems on the market, with a typical recommendation lying somewhere under 28 milliseconds access time. But on the Falcon, it's plenty fast. And we still haven't used the DSP...

Now if some clever developers choose to avail themselves of the DSP's existence, they can allow us to enhance the audio signal already passing through those mini–jacks with, what else, a digital signal. This can take the form of an effect such as delay, chorus, flange, reverb, harmonization, even MIXING!

Software Meets Hardware

The most practical way to discuss the characteristics and possibilities of audio work on the Falcon is to examine one of the first serious multitrack applications to reach the market – D2D Systems 4T/FX. While this may read like a review for D2D (and that's OK!), consider it to also be a primer of what one developer has done in software using just what comes in every stock Falcon030.

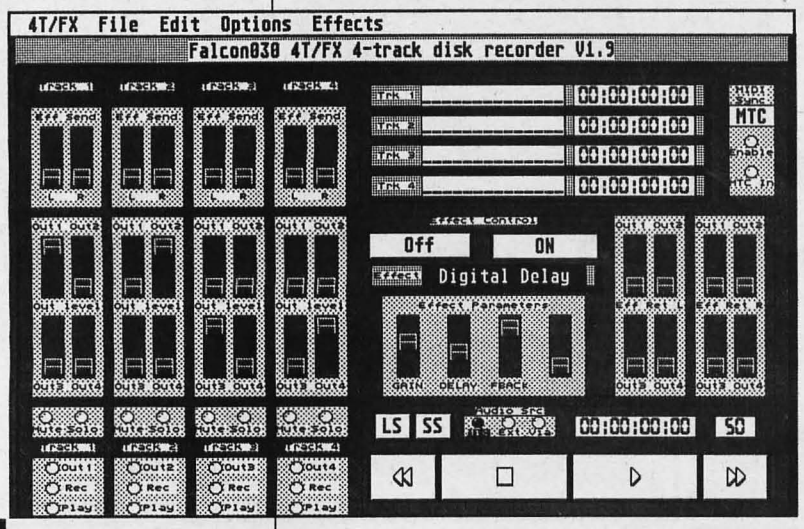
As the name (cryptically) implies, D2D 4T/FX it is a four track system with effects. You can use it to record audio into the Falcon one or two tracks, (channels) at a time and playback up to four at one time – without any additional hardware! And just like some of its mechanical analog counterparts (tape decks and mix consoles), it includes a utilitarian mixer as its main control device.

Each of the four channels is supported with:

- ♫ ***Stereo "effects send";***
- ♫ ***Master output level controls;***
- ♫ ***Channel mute and solo buttons;***
- ♫ ***Record "arm" and playback select buttons.***
- ♫ ***Stereo effects return, with level controls.***

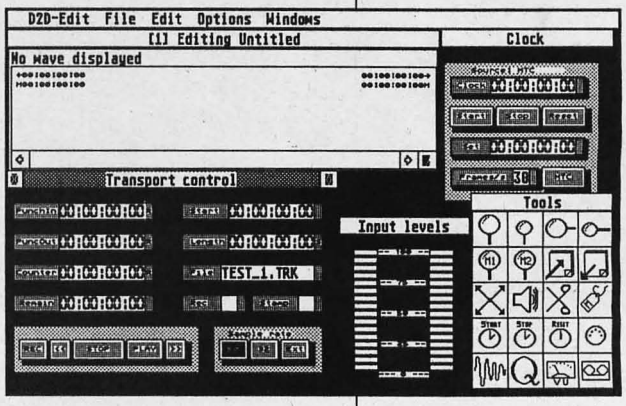
Use It!

So where do you send those signals to and return them from – your (stock) Falcon hardware has only got two discreet channels in and out! Use the built in effects processor, of course, that's why they call it "/FX." Included are an array of useful effects like the aforementioned delay,



BELOW: **The D2D 4T/FX record and mixer window looks like a tape recorder, so it's easy to use even for the novice. But what it does is completely PRO. This is the commercial (full featured) version of D2D that comes with every Falcon030 sold. Note that some Falcon's escaped without the demo D2D. See your dealer! You've got it coming to you from Atari.**

The Atari Falcon030 and the Future of Audio



ABOVE: **D2D Edit** in action. A waveform window along with a variety of tools and controls are called and positioned as desired or needed, shaping the user interface to the user.

flange, chorus, and a bunch of reverbs. Except for the reverbs, all of the effects have adjustable parameters to allow you to tailor the sound to your personal taste. In the case of the reverbs, D2D gives you a variety of preset room sizes with a variable gain control to allow you to determine how "wet" or processed the signal(s) will be.

Where this really starts getting interesting is when you realize that the effects are all "real–time." It's possible to record a track with the effects processor engaged (for your monitoring pleasure or preview) and not alter the recording audio with that effect. That's very useful if the "take" was right, but the effect needs adjustment – just do it afterward. Any of the parameters can be changed, and you can even change a delay into a reverb or a flange, or back again. Using multiple effects simultaneously is simply a matter of "bouncing" a track with the effect set the way you like, then changing the effect on playback. This way, you can have a chorused vocal take, a flanged acoustic guitar, a delayed flute, and a ring–modulated saxophone all playing back through a large room size reverb. Since the bouncing is taking place in the digital domain, there is no signal degradation due to tape generation loss. Like most digital audio recorder systems coming to market today, there's a striking resemblance of the D2D 4T/FX screen to an analog four–track tape deck for an easy learning curve.

The latest release of D2D (1.9) includes individual time code displays for each track as well as the main display to allow for independent track offset or delays. But wait, there's STILL more! Synchronization to external sources can be performed several ways, making this package extremely flexible.

Make Mine MIDI

Incoming MIDI Time Code (MTC) from an external source can be connected to the Falcon's MIDI in port. MTC can also be recognized from a sequencer program, running on the Falcon AT THE SAME TIME! In this situation, one merely loads 4T/FX as a desk accessory rather than a program, and enables MTC output from the sequencer. While this method works very well, the best way to have the audio record and playback in time with your MIDI music is to use a note–on event as a trigger. Simply by placing a note–on on an unused track and MIDI channel, it's possible to automatically punch in and out for record. Then when you play back your sequence, the exact same note–on in the exact sameplace plays back your digitally recorded audio. Need to nudge that audio forward or back – just edit/move that trigger note one way or another. Given that time code offers a maximum of 30 frames per second resolution, it's clear that a sequencer's ability to sub–divide time events far more precisely would make it a better choice for placing events accurately.

Deepest Cuts

Recording, playing, mixing, effecting, bouncing, slipping, synching – not much else left, other than...editing. This is the part that all the audio production fanatics with razor blades and golden ears have been waiting for. Digital editing is cleaner, clearer, quieter, stronger, and best of all, doesn't alter the original recording at all.

The main premise to remember in digital audio is that the vast majority of the functions are non–destructive. Your edits are recorded as tasks to be done in real–time to the untouched source audio when you want your composition played back. They don't consume unnecessary hard disk space in the process.

While our example program, 4T/FX, provides absolutely no way to edit the recordings that you have created with it, you can perform some rather extensive editing in another D2D Systems creation called D2D Edit. It's a complete stereo record/playback/edit environment that provides waveform display editing and cue sheet playback.

Files can either be recorded directly into D2D Edit via the analog inputs on the Falcon030, or transferred from already recorded takes in 4T/FX. Once a file is loaded into D2D Edit, it's displayed in a window as the complete waveform associated with that file. The GEM window can be resized and you can open several files at once.

4T/FX and D2D Edit are some of the first programs to take advantage of the Atari Falcon030's DSP audio capabilities. As such, they represent a significant advance to the home project studio process by making functions that were previously the domain only of high–end studios available on an affordable platform.

D2D Edit is available for $299.00 and 4T/FX for $599.00. For a limited time, D2D Systems are bundling D2D Edit with 4T/FX at no additional charge as an introductory incentive. The potential here is staggering – a complete audio studio system with the Falcon computer, software, and peripherals costs less than either the "other" computer itself or the soft/hardware add–ons required for that other platform.

WOW!

Again, while we've concentrated here on D2D products, they're just part of the vanguard of audio software and hardware that make the most of the remarkable Falcon030. And audio is just one part of the multimedia potential of the new Atari.

It's going to get REAL INTERESTING around here.

– Jeff White

Jeff White is a manufacturer's representative of professional audio equipment in the Southern California area. He currently consults privately on MIDI and digital audio systems. His credentials includes retail music store management as well as a degree in quality assurance.

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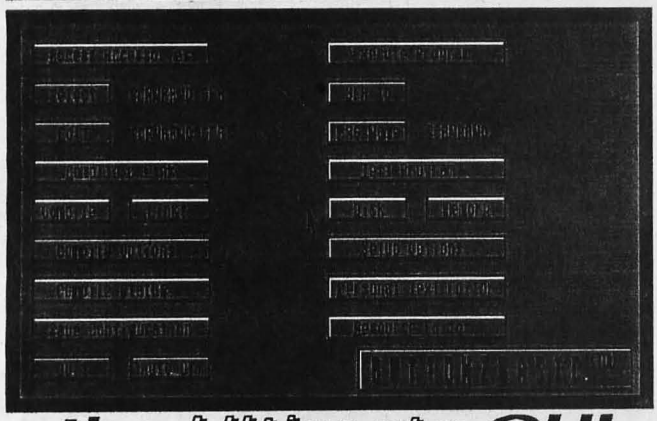

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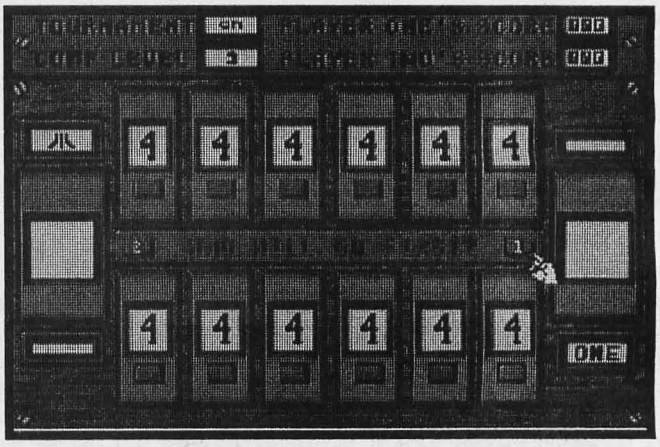

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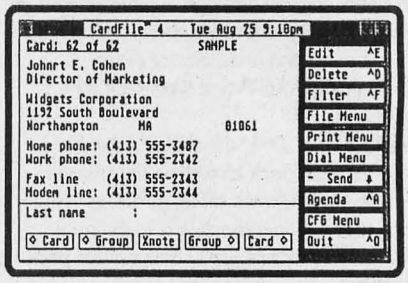

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Robert Jung's Annual Lynx Awards!

(Editor's note: This article was prepared earlier in 1993, and does not account for a few newer titles, like Battle-Wheels and Dinolympics. That said, it's still a relevant look at what's hot for your LYNX! Robert's reviews of all the recent Lynx releases will begin again in next month's AtariUser.)

Game of the Year – JOUST. Easy to learn, easy to play, sophisticated, fast, addictive, and boasts quality graphics and sounds – all the signs of a winner. The original game is great, but the Lynx version adds ten levels and a two-player gladiator contest. A tribute to both the appeal of the arcade classic and ***Shadowsoft's*** nearly identical translation, Joust is hereby recognized as the best Lynx game of the year.

Best Game Runner-up: STEEL TALONS. This is a software tour-de-force that was thought to be unattainable on a portable machine. The Lynx version captures the original's complexity while keeping it playable. While this sophisticated simulator may not appeal to everyone, John Sanderson and *NuFX* deserve kudos for achieving the impossible.

Worst Game of the Year – BASKETBRAWL and NFL FOOTBALL (tie). These games prove that quality hardware can be mangled with bad software. Basketbrawl has poor gameplay, worse sounds, and primitive graphics, while NFL Football is saddled with awkward controls, a computer that cheats, and bland effects.

Best Arcade Adaptation – JOUST. *Shadowsoft's* adaptation of *Robotron: 2084* took this award last year, and their levels of excellence have not declined. The Lynx version of Joust lacks but one sound effect from the original, but otherwise is a near-perfect copy.

Best Arcade Runner-up: TOKI. The conversion of this run/jump/rescue game copies the source in gameplay, sights, and sounds.

Best Action Game – BATMAN RETURNS. This title offers only lots of excitement and no-nonsense rules, and does them well. It's not perfect; purists can argue that Batman spends too much time fleeing, and the $49.95 price is a little steep. Still, for uncomplicated fun, this game will take many hours to conquer.

Best Action Runner-up: SHADOW OF THE BEAST. The ***Psygnosis*** computer title combines terrific graphics and music, puzzle solving and a high difficulty factor into an outstanding package. While the game is a bit cerebral for those who prefer their action games straight, most players should give it a try.

Best Strategy Game – CRYSTAL MINES II. Puzzle-lovers were almost abandoned in 1992, as the only puzzle title released was this one. Fortunately, this very addictive game holds its own, with 180 varied levels to be solved. Though graphics and sound are very basic, players who loved Chip's Challenge will be easily satisfied.

Strategy Runner-up: DRACULA THE UNDEAD. The first conventional adventure game on the Lynx offers a solid mental challenge with great graphics. The only real flaw is the lack of a save-game feature, but this is otherwise a quality title.

Best Sports Game – BASEBALL HEROES. Out of a field of weak offerings, this Lynx sports title stands high above. Though it does have a few rough spots, the game is a simple, entertaining, and challenging version of the sport, with impressive sound and graphics.

Best Graphics – SHADOW OF THE BEAST. Graphics on the Lynx can only be as good as the programmers involved, and Shadow of the Beast is among the best. It mixes multilayered scrolling, smooth animation, and stunning use of colors to create a panorama of visuals. This game shows that the right design can make a Lynx screen as appealing as one on any other system.

Best Music/Sound – SHADOW OF THE BEAST. It's no secret that Lynx sounds are not that great, due to the limits of the hardware. Shadow of the Beast is a major exception; it offers fine sound effects, but its stunning music steals the show. From the title sequence to the final endgame, its numerous soundtracks captivate, making this a hands-down winner.

Silliest Video Game Idea – KUNG FOOD. Changed into a six-inch-tall green copy of yourself, you battle killer tomatoes and mutant carrots to save your hide. While the game is an average fight fest, it gets high marks for its original storyline.

Smartest Move of the Year – BATMAN RETURNS. Atari has often failed at promotions, but everything went right with Batman Returns. The company got a big-name movie tie-in, created a respectable game, and pushed it with lots of advertising. The game arrived a week before the movie, and Atari gave away free copies to new Lynx buyers. This was a textbook case in how to market a product and a hint at how far the Lynx can go if Atari tries.

Dumbest Move of the Year – CHRISTMAS PROMOTION. Atari has the makings of a great holiday promotion: toll-free ordering, a reduced Lynx price, and free delivery. But not enough people knew about it, as it was announced in mid-December, too late for most shoppers, and word came mostly through computer services and a flyer with limited release. If this had started earlier, with advertising and commercials, it could have been a spectacular sales boost. Atari is advised to try it again this year, with better planning.

Biggest Disappointment – SPORTS GAMES IN GENERAL. With true multiplayer ability, hardware scaling, and independent screens, the Lynx has the potential for truly exciting sports action. When they arrived, though, sports games have repeatedly proven disappointing, with Basketbrawl, NFL Football, and World ClassSoccer leading the pack. Poor controls, simple rules, and uninspired sound and graphics are the hallmarks of these titles, which could have done much more.

Robert Jung is a 25-year-old software engineer, longtime video gamer and die-hard Lynx fan who's bought and reviewed every title ever made. He can be reached c/o AtariUser, or on the Internet at rjung@usc.edu.

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DMC PUBLISHING

DMC Publishing is pleased to offer you a comprehensive range of tools to assist you in meeting your desktop publishing needs, efficiently and productively. **Calamus SL** is our state of the art centerpiece based on a sophisticated, yet easy to use, page layout and design capability. There are over 1,000 features in Calamus SL, as well as dozens of optional modules available that expand your creativity while increasing productivity, without leaving the program itself. Calamus SL's modularity is designed with the future in mind, allowing you to add new capabilities as required.

Outline Art 3.0 offers serious vector graphic creating and editing possibilities. Text manipulation is only limited by your own imagination while impressive graphic images are yours to design utilizing the extensive array of tools.

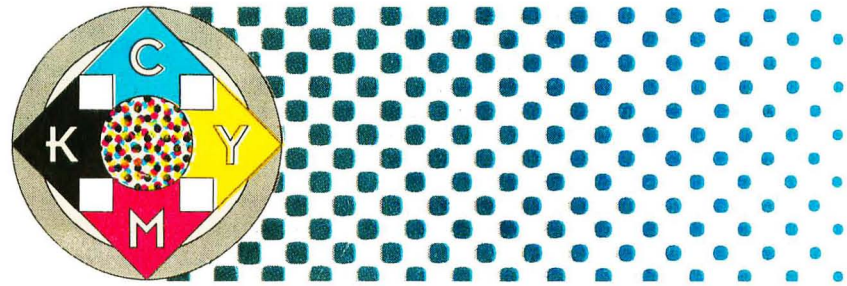
Invision Elite 2.0 is an accomplished raster graphic drawing program. Design, create or manipulate your own or scanned images. This program rounds out your painting and drawing needs.

Our new **Kodak Photo CD** import driver allows you to import your Photo CD files into Calamus SL in any of the 5 encoded Kodak file sizes and then manipulate and output them.

Using **MT Scan** you can directly scan and save transparencies and reflective art in the following formats: ESM, TIF and TGA. Images can be scanned in 1-bit monochrome, 8-bit grayscale and 24-bit color modes and resolutions from 75dpi to 600dpi on the Scanmaker II and up to 1850dpi on the Scanmaker 1850 slide scanner.

And last but not least, there is the classic **Calamus 1.09N**, our entry level page layout program with over 300 powerful functions.

DMC presents Cybercube's **CyReL Sunrise M16-1280**, the first integrated VME bus card for the Atari TT/STe that combines everything from high resolution monochrome displays to stunning 24-bit color graphics, it comes complete with 2Mbyte of fast 32-bit VRAM, flexible expansion buses and VDI drivers. The **Sunrise** is equipped with an expansion slot for the **VidiMix 8** module which gives you the ability to capture, edit, transform and integrate live NTSC/PAL video data for multimedia.



OUTLINE ART 3

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INVISION

E L I T E

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For further information, please call your local Atari dealer or contact us directly. Dealer inquiries invited.