THE ATARI 8-BIT NEWS-PAPER

Previously published on disk as the Atari 8-bit News-Disk

£1.50   Issue 16 - Jan/Feb 1994

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Phone: (0302) 855026

EDITORIAL

By Dean Garraghty

Welcome to issue 16 of the News-Paper. I'm amazed we've made it after a rather shaky start with issue 15. It would appear that people are far from happy with the new magazine. All UK subscribers should have received a letter from us explaining the situation. All I can say is that things will get better with time. Just give us a chance. Who knows, one day we may be the only ones left!

We have extended this issue to 24 pages. We couldn't really afford to do this, but it should hopefully stop people complaining for a little while!

We still need more subscribers. I am pleased to say that we have a FEW new subscribers, but could do with a lot more! Please tell all your Atari friends about DGS and the News-Paper.

This issue contains 8 articles, some quite long, so there should be something in here for all tastes. A new series of QUICK tutorials starts in this issue. There is also a re-print of the 1050 W/P diagram from last issue. It faded quite badly during printing. This was totally beyond our control. It looked fine when it went off to be printed!

Here is some news that will be of interest to you. There will be TWO AMS shows in 1994. The first is called SAMS and is on 16th April 1994 at Bingley Hall, Stafford. The second is AMS8 on 12th November 1994 at the same venue. We will be taking stands at both. Come along to either (or both!) and come to our stand!

Some people have asked what will be happening as far as programs go, as we used to put the odd program on the News-Disks. Well, we will be producing one special disk a year to complement the News-Paper. Details of the disk will appear nearer the time. Also, there is a new procedure for lists of used hardware and software. You will get a PD update and new product update sheet in with each issue of the News-Paper, but lists of used software and hardware will only be available on request. Just send us a SAE and we'll send you the very latest list.

For many people, this will be the last issue on your current subscription, so it's time to re-subscribe again! PLEASE do not desert us now! If nobody re-subscribes then the future of the News-Paper is surely doomed! £6 isn't an awful lot of money to ask for, and it will help secure a future for the 8-bit Atari. If you need to re-subscribe, then a form will be enclosed.

That's all for this time. In conclusion, please re-subscribe if you have to, please try and get other people to subscribe, and please keep buying from DGS. Let's hope we can work together to keep the 8-bit Atari alive and kicking!

AMS 7 Show Report

By Richard Gore (& Dean Garraghty)

Well, it's that time of year again. Mid-November in the UK sees the advent of AMS (All Micro Show), THE event in the UK for Atari 8-bit owners. This year promised to be something special, as there were several overseas 8-bit suppliers due to be present.

Once again, Dean Garraghty was exhibiting but this time as a full-time commercial company supporting the Atari 8-bits - DGS. Well, once again we left Doncaster (our home town) at 5:00am. This time we had Harald Schoenfeld from PPP Germany in tow, as well as a couple of other 8-bit enthusiasts. The two hour journey down was pretty uneventful apart from the odd rogue lorry. The weather was not very kind to us; it rained all day making driving pretty hazardous and progress was slow. We got there safe and sound just before the exhibitors were allowed in.

Fortunately this year there were more heaters in the building, and it was not so cold. We had plenty to do; the night before we had just added the finishing touches to our new light gun game Alien Blast and had managed to get the shareware sound player 'Fampy' onto an 8-bit disk (thanks Marek). However, we were still struggling to get the documentation files on to the same disk. One guy was all set to break out the sector editor and start changing all the VTOC and directory bytes. Unfortunately, time pressed on (as it usually does) and we never got around to finishing it! We just had enough time for a quick look around the other exhibitors before the doors opened.

First port of call was the TWAUG (Tyne and Wear Atari User Group) stand. This was their first show as exhibitors and they had quite a range of products. They had with them most of their 270+ disk P.D library, as well as a selection of used hardware and software. Most interestingly for UK users was the full Black Box/Floppy board setup they were demonstrating. John and Dave, two of the forces behind TWAUG (the third, Max, had to miss the show as he is recovering from major surgery) were happy to talk (at great length!) to any 8-bit user. They were also promoting their top quality printed newsletter and had back issues available on the day. This group has only been up and running for just over a year but they already have 100+ subscribers and are releasing new software, like Ultifont - a new character generator - every so often. They also have in the pipeline a new book based on Mapping the Atari but aimed exclusively at XL/XE owners with in-depth descriptions of many of the locations inside our beloved machines.

Next to TWAUG were LACE (London Atari Computer Enthusiasts) and Phoenix, a new newsletter produced in Ireland. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to talk with them at great length but it's good to see they are still active.

The next port of call was the Micro-Discount stand. This spanned a massive sixty feet of wall space and was surrounded by two foreign suppliers - KE-Soft on one side and A.N.G on the other. These people, along with our very own Harald Schoenfeld from PPP, had arrived in the country especially for the show, bringing with them many new products. One of the major releases for AMS was The Brundles, the first clone of Lemmings for the Atari 8-bit machines, although I have been told there are another two versions on their way. Priced at £15 it certainly was not cheap, but it is supplied on two disks and has many features found in the original version. Other new items on the Micro Discount stand

were a light gun especially made for MD in the USA (by Best Electronics?) and a new version of the Operation Wolf clone - Operation Blood - for use with the light gun, along with many other games such as Bank Bang, Microx, and a good few others too numerous to mention. Another major product was the stereo upgrade and the associated stereo MOD player. This was demonstrated to us and was pretty impressive when played from a 130XE via an amplifier. Also available for the stereo upgrade are new versions of Zybex and Draconus with stereo sound. There have been rumours of new stereo samplers but as far as we could see they failed to materialise just like the infamous R-Time 8 replacement!

In the far corner of the room was the usual Page 6 stand selling a wide range of software including cassettes, disks, ROMs, and back issues of their excellent magazine New Atari User. Their software range was remarkable. I even got myself a copy of Jawbreaker II which was released way back in 1980. As usual they were very willing to chat and happy to try and answer any questions. I have no hesitation in recommending you support this company by subscribing to their excellent magazine and also buying some of their software. Page 6 have their own software label as well as selling old commercial software, so there should be something there for everybody.

Somewhat swamped inbetween PAGE 6 and MD were Tiger Developments, a small operation that has produced some very good software. Their range includes several arcade games (Lizard, Tarkus etc) as well as several programming utilities. Recently they have also imported two Polish games, Kult and Miecze Valdgira and they have told me hopefully more are to follow. However, the 8-bit community does not seem to be responding to them and sales have been very low. This is not a reflection of the quality of their games which is very high, but more to do with 8-bit users just not gving the support they should!

The next port of call was Gralin International run by two guys, Colin Hunt and Graham Broomfield (hence the name GRALIN from Graham and Colin) from the BaPAUG user group. Their newsletter "8:16" has recently died so support is now limited to software and hardware. On the stand they had a new Gumby compatible stereo upgrade that simply plugs into the socket left by your old pokey chip (assuming your computer has socketed chips) as well as a range of software including one or two pretty rare items like the Action Runtime and a few APX titles. They are hoping to have some stereo music programs available soon.

All of the above mentioned companies have a mail order service and are willing to ship anywhere in the world. They are waiting for your support!

Now on to DGS. Well, we had several new releases on the day. These included a new light gun game called Alien Blast, as well as a new German game called Bombi, featuring digitised sounds and high quality graphics. We also had available our full range of P.D disks and commercial titles. These included the powerful Quick programming language as well as the first Quick Support Disk, three other games from PPP Germany (Minesweeper, Glaggs It! and Rubberball), the Demo Maker, Digi-Studio (we even sold a copy of this!!!!), and back issues packs of our now deceased disk newsletter the "News-Disk". Recently, we decided to produce our newsletter in a printed format, hence the News-Disk became the News-Paper and we decided it should be launched at AMS 7. The usual price of this newsletter will be £1.50 per issue. However, as a show special and to try to increase the reader base, we were selling the first issue for 75p. We had to virtually threaten

people to buy them! You can only just buy a Sunday newspaper for 75p, but people didn't want to buy our News-Paper. At times like this it makes us wonder "is it all really worth while?". It took a massive effort on our part to get it ready for the show and we were quite pleased with the results, only to have people turn their faces up at it and refuse to buy it at 75p. We had to have 200 printed to make the cost per issue reasonable and only sold about fifty, so if you are interested in a new newsletter you know who to call. We also chose the day to release the PPP games on Rambit Turbo format tapes. The Rambit Turbo Charger hardware module allows you to load converted tapes at around 3500 baud, vastly faster than the standard 600 baud. Software is included to allow you to convert your own tape-based games. Response to this was also disappointing, but once word gets around we hope things will pick up.

AMS is not dedicated 100% to 8-bit users. There were vendors selling products for PCs, old televisions, VCRs and even satellite receivers could be bought. A bit of hunting can usually produce some bargains. However, the crowd was a little disappointing this year; the people seemed to stay longer but were much more reluctant to part with their money. Perhaps it's our economic climate, but then perhaps the interest is just not there anymore. I don't believe this as there were a good few people interested in our products and willing to buy them, just not enough of them. Sharward Services are having two AMS shows in 1994. The next is on 16th April 1994 at Bingley Hall, Stafford (usual venue). We'll be there!

Well, as 4:00pm arrived the small number of people left drifted away and we packed up all our kit and started on the journey home. The rain had not relented all day and once again progress was slow. A few miles down the road and disaster struck. One of our cars broke down, and we had to unload some of the stock and get people into the other vehicle while calling for the RAC to rescue the car. It was dark, raining, and cold. Not a very nice end to a rather disappointing day, but still some of us enjoyed it.

Now for the plea. Please, please show some support for the above mentioned companies. Only by buying things from these people can we keep the 8-bits alive. Their addresses are given below.

Dean Garraghty Software - D.G.S., 62 Thomson Ave, Balby, Doncaster, DN4 0NU, ENGLAND. Phone: (0302) 855026.

Tyne&Wear Atari User Group - TWAUG, P.O. BOX 8, Wallsend, Tyne&Wear, NE28 6DQ, ENGLAND. Phone: 091-262-6897.

London Atari Computer Enthusiasts - LACE, 143 Richmond Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 4BT, ENGLAND.

Micro-Discount, 265 Chester Road, Streetly, West Midlands, B74 3EA, ENGLAND. Phone: 021-353-5730. Fax: 021-352-1669.

Page 6 Publishing, P.O. BOX 54, Stafford, ST16 1DR, ENGLAND. Phone: (0785) 213928.

Tiger Developments, 159 Warley Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 3TW, ENGLAND.

Gralin International, 11 Shillito Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH12 2BN, ENGLAND. Phone: (0202) 571181. Fax: (0202) 580452.

KE-Soft, Kemal Ezcan, Frankenstrasse 24, 63477 Maintal, Germany. Phone: +49-6181-87539. Fax: +49-6181-83436.

A.N.G., Ridderkerksestraat 60, 3114 RK Schiedam, Netherlands.

Dean Garraghty adds:

This year's show was probably the worst one I have ever done. The number of people visiting was way down on previous years, possibly due to the bad weather. Those who did come didn't want to part with their money. We spent about £500 on the show, and we didn't even gross this amount back. The result: a loss! Not only large amounts of money were spent. The amount of time I spent preparing for AMS7 was far more than I have ever spent before. Getting Harald over from Germany for the show was very hard work, and took a lot of organising by both of us.

We were particularly amazed that people didn't want to buy the first issue of our new magazine for just 75p. Many people bought one, but some people just pulled a face at us when we showed them a copy. This really is a personal insult to all the people who work on the magazine, and all those people who write for it.

In conclusion, I was extremely disappointed with the way things went at AMS7. Let's hope things are better at the next show, which is on April 16th 1994 at the same venue.

Now a few thanks to the following people for helping out on the day: Richard Gore, Harald Schoenfeld, John Boyle, Mike Watson, Mark Keates, Paul Saunders, Mike Broadhusrt, Jon Morgan, Bill Todd.

AMS7 SHOW 1993

By Richard Preston

Having been to two previous AMS shows (4 and 5) my son, Matthew, and I, were all fired up to leave fairly early on the Saturday morning, as we live near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire and faced a reasonable drive to get to Bingley Hall. But as you all know, the best laid plans are always subject to Murphy's law! A mix up at the garage where Matthew was getting his car serviced meant that we didn't get on the road 'til 9.45.

The weather certainly didn't help either. All the way up the M1 and M6 we seemed to be playing dodge the 16-wheeler whilst trying to see through a constant curtain of water. Plus having to contend with contra-flows (surely I wasn't the ONLY person who observed the 50mph limit). Anyway we did eventually arrive at about lunchtime and managed to park reasonably near to the entrance. As we had arrived late there wasn't any queue to get in. We entered and exchanged our advanced booking tickets for programmes and entered the hall. The first thing that we noticed was that it seemed warmer in the hall than on previous occasions!

It took a few minutes to get our bearings as we wandered about looking at the stands. I wanted to find the TWAUG stand as I'd been advised to get one of their issue discs as it contained a printer driver for my KX-P1123 which would work with AtariWriter+. I soon found them and got the disk, plus some good second-hand software.

Matthew, who has recently managed to get gainful employment after finishing two years at college, had money burning a hole in his pocket. What to buy first? He had a long talk to Gralin International about their new stereo enhancement which they had fitted to an 800XL. It sounded pretty good, so he bought an 800XL with it already fitted, as he's lethal with a soldering iron. This included a disc with some stereo samples on. Gralin also had quite a few reconditioned 1050 disk drives for sale at £50.00 each, which I thought was very reasonable and I was tempted to buy one as a back-up in case my trusty XF551 ever dies, but funds didn't run to it (in any case I don't think my wife would have understood the logic!).

Matthew also bought some discs from Derek Fern's Micro Discount stand with MD8 files on, which are compatible with Gralin's stereo system (although you only get stereo on the adapted 800XL of course). We also got a light gun and Operation Blood here as well as the Klaus Peters Speedy upgrade for Matthew's 1050 drive. Although the instructions for Speedy were in German, Derek's son had fitted one already and readily gave us the low down on how to fit it. The operating system is simply a plug in replacement, the only tricky part is soldering the two wires into place to operate the fast/slow switch which comes with the kit. There is a clear diagram included which is easy to follow. It also came complete with BIBO-DOS which, among other things, includes a mean disc copier. Now our 1050 can read and write to disc incredibly fast, and in all densities. A worthwhile purchase, no doubt about it.

Micro Discount also had boxes full of 130XEs and 65XEs for around £35 each (without PSU), plus their usual ranges of discs, tapes, cartridges etc. at very reasonable prices.

Next door was the Ke-soft stand where we bought Brundles (excellent new

"Lemmings" game). Kemal Ezcan told us that although there are "only 60 levels at the moment, I have nearly finished another 40 with, hopefully a level creator so that you can create your own levels in the future." On the other side of Micro Discount was the ANG stand where we bought Humanoid and Chaos Music Composer.

From there we went along to the Tiger Developments stand and had a chat with Neil Ottaway and Raphael Espino and bought Tarkus. Page 6 next door was also doing their usual steady trade. Next we went hunting for Dean Garraghty's stand as Matthew has been using Digi-Studio for a while and we were both interested in having a look at the SAM Desktop system and the QUICK programming language.

On Dean's stand I think they must have thought Christmas had come early as Matthew suddenly seemed to be buying everything in sight. He bought SAM, QUICK (and the support disc), the News-Disk back issues pack, and I'm not sure what else. But, as he said to me afterwards, it's only once a year!!

We also had a chat with Stuart Murray on the NOSAUG (Futura) stand, where we bought a second-hand Mapping the Atari book and a couple of other things I think. From there we went along to the LACE stand; a London Atari group who produce their own newsletter (BOOT!) which contains many interesting articles, adverts, hints and tips.

Apart from the dedicated Atari stands, there were also loads of other interesting things to see, including one company who offered a personalised embroidery service! You could get new or second-hand printers, modems, discs . . . . The list goes on and on.

We had used up most of our money by about 3.30, and so decided to leave before the rush. Back on the road the rain had eased off quite a bit and we seemed to get home much quicker than going (why does it always seem like that?). We're still going through most of the discs and things we bought weeks ago, discovering things on PD discs that we missed first time round. Still puzzling over QUICK and wondering if we'll ever get the hang of it and will we ever understand the manual that came with it!

All things considered we think that it's always been well worth the trip every time we've been to AMS. I hope that Sharward Services can keep holding these events which gives us all a chance to meet other Atari 8-bitters and to speak to some of the programmers and promoters who are still willing to put their money where their mouth is and support the Atari 8-bit computers.

Gaming Column

By Richard Gore

Welcome once again to my little (or not so little) gaming column. The column in the last issue of the News-Paper was criticised for being too long, so this time I will make it shorter - don't say we don't listen to what you the subscribers want! If you would like to see any specific titles reviewed let us know and we will do our best to oblige.

Right, this time I will take at look at the eagerly awaited Lemmings clone 'The Brundles'. It has been 18 months in the making and is still not finished although a version is being sold. It was launched in the UK at AMS 7 on 13th November 1993, with only 60 of the 100 levels complete. Inside the packaging there is a little slip of paper telling you to return your master disks in a few weeks time to get your disks updated to the full 100 levels for free. The paper gives the address of Ke-Soft but hopefully UK buyers will be able to return their copies to the UK distributor Micro Discount. However, don't take this as gospel as I don't think everything is sorted out yet.

On to the game. Well, it is supplied on two disks, one is single sided and contains the title screen and game code etc., and the other is double sided and contains the level data. On boot up you can press the space bar to access the customiser menu, from here you can select which input device you want to use: mouse, joystick, CX85 keypad or Animation station(!) as well as which port you want to use (1 or 2) and also the amount of RAMdisk you have. The RAMdisk feature allows you to load as much of the level data as possible into the RAMdisk and then load from there rather than from the levels disk. Support is given for 64k, 128k and 192k RAMdisks but unfortunately this feature doesn't seem to work properly! The data loads into the RAMdisk but then when playing the game the level data is taken from the floppy drive!!! This needs fixing.

The actual gameplay is just like the other versions of Lemmings. You have to guide the Brundles from their entry point on the screen too an exit point somewhere on the other side of the screen. Sounds simple doesn't it, however things are never that easy! Brundles are rather stupid creatures and will walk in a straight line until they bump into the scenery, at which point they will turn around and walk in the other direction. All is not lost though as you can assign your Brundles with various powers, these include Blockers - the Brundle will remain where he is and not let any others past him, Floaters - these beasts are kitted out with a parachute and can fall large distances without being hurt. There are many other functions like digger, miner, climber etc but the instructions tell you all about these so I'll leave the other details for you to find out. Each level requires you to guide a set number of Brundles to safety. When you have reached that point you can wait for them all to reach safety or for the timer to count down, or most fun of all Nuke 'em, at which point they will all blow up and you can progress to the next level.

Each level has a password so you don't have to go all the way through the earlier levels every time you want to play a game!

The background graphics are nicely done, colourful and crisply displayed, the actual Brundles themselves are a bit of a let down, they are very small, which they are supposed to be, but they are blue and yellow/green and hard to see separately when there are a few of them

together, still it is an admiral attempt at producing them, they are animated and are adequate. The sounds are only average, a piece of music plays away (it can be switched off) and there are one or two spot effects, no digitsed sound or anything like that but the major plus point of Brundles (Lemmings) has always been is playablilty and addictiveness. The computer population can be divided into two groups, those that love Lemmings (Brundles) and those that hate it, with the former being the majority! This Atari version is very playable and quite addictive, for a games player who has never played another version (like me) it takes a bit of getting used to, but once you have mastered the controls and remembered what the icons and special features are you could be playing the game for hours. The game is best played with a mouse but a joystick does suffice. It's a shame the RAMdisk option doesn't work (perhaps it will be fixed in the final version) as the disk access for each level slows your progress slightly.

The Brundles costs £15, yes £15 which makes it very expensive for a game in the UK today, but when you think of the amount of work that has gone into it and you do get two disks worth of code and data, it's not too bad. At least after you have paid your cash you get a quality game that will keep you occupied for many weeks, possibly months.

My array of contacts have told me there are two new versions of Lemmings being programmed at the moment, one should be ready about now, the other soon. I have no details on prices etc., but I am told they are much better in terms of graphics, sounds, and playability than The Brundles so we'll just have to wait and see.

TETRIS MANIA

By Richard Gore

A few years ago there was a puzzle game that seemed to be dominating nearly all the home computers and games machines. Now all the hype has died down and "Beat-em-up, Street Fighter 2, SEGA/NINTENDO fever" has taken over I will take a look back at that puzzle game as it relates to the Atari 8-bit computers.

Well, if you haven't already guessed it from the title that puzzle game was "Tetris", invented by a Russian it has to be one of the most addictive puzzle games ever. The plot is very simple. Various shaped objects fall down the screen and settle where they can. Your job is to create full horizontal lines which will then disappear giving more room for some more pieces to fit into. When the screen is full the game finishes. The objects are generally squares, L-shaped, T-shaped or just straight blocks. You can rotate them and control their horizontal position but they continually drop down the screen. Sounds simple doesn't it?

I first 'discovered' Tetris while playing with a friend's 'GameBoy' (it really was a friend's, honest) and from then on I was hooked. Imagine my delight when a couple of weeks later a type-in version ("Hot Blocks") appeared in New Atari User. Then after a new version seemed to appear every few weeks. This continual stream has now stopped (as far as I know!) so I will now give a brief review of as many versions as I know about for our beloved Atari 8-bit machines. Included in the review will be an indication of where the game can be obtained. Of course, there is one thing to bear in mind - the Atari versions cannot be called Tetris for copyright reasons, but there are many with just a subtle variation on this such as "Tetrix" and "Super Tetris"!

HOT BLOCKS, Type-in, New Atari User issue 46 by Paul Lay.

For a type-in listing this is top class, but then so it should be written by Paul Lay (the man behind Munchy Madness among others). Hot Blocks remains faithful to the original Tetris using the same shapes, although they are coloured. Control is via a joystick (in the usual port 1). Rotation is effected by the fire button and moving the stick left and right moves the falling pieces correspondingly. Also if the joystick is pulled directly downwards the pieces drop stright down without allowing any more alteration. Hot blocks is a no-frills version - a high score table is included and the levels become increasingly harder. The gameplay is just as addictive and I feel this is perhaps the best type-in game I have ever seen. For your first steps into Tetris give this one a try.

TETRIX by Darryl Yong

Available from Page 6 (PD disk 153) or from DGS (PD disk number 31).

The first thing to note about this excellent program is that it is copyrighted software but can be passed around free of charge. In fact distributors are not allowed to charge for the software at all, just for the disk it is on and the duplicating service.

After it has loaded you are presented with a very nice title page, mainly in monochrome with lots of moving lines. From here you can select a skill level from one to nine (start on level one!). Also

displayed are the three previous highest scores which are retrieved from the disk after loading. When your game is finished you are given the option of saving your scores or not - a very sensible idea for those wanting to write protect their disks. Onto the game itself. Well, Tetrix is faithful to Tetris with all the same pieces being used (in monochrome) but the 'well' down which the pieces fall is wider than in most versions. Towards the four corners of the screens are four coloured boxes giving your score, the current level, the number of lines you have made, and what piece is coming next. This is a very helpful feature and is activated / de-activated by pushing up on the joystick, but if the next piece feature is active you get fewer points than when it is disabled. Level one offers a good introduction, but after you have made ten lines the level and speed increases which makes the game more of a challenge. As with most versions, creating multiple lines earns you extra points. With a lot of practice it is possible to complete all the levels at which point you continue but at a very much quicker, almost impossible, speed.

Overall this is a very good implementation. It looks good, plays good, and has plenty of sound effects. Also, it is a challenge for the beginner and the more experienced gamer. Perhaps the best Tetris clone yet!

Ultra Tetris by Tim Truesdale.

Available from DGS (PD109) and elsewhere but I can't seem to remember where I got my copy from!

Ultra Tetris is written in Turbo BASIC and comes supplied with a nicely done introduction screen, a spinning game logo, not brilliant but worth a look. Another point to note - this game is shareware and you are constantly reminded of it, so much so that the joystick and several other features are disabled and only by paying the $10 fee are you told how to activate them. However, the game is playable without paying the fee (although you should if you play the game a lot), but you have to use the keyboard.

Ultra Tetris is a variant on the original; all the pieces are the same shape, vertical bars, and each bar is made up of three coloured blocks. You have to line up at least three of the same colour in any straight line horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. The left and right cursor keys move the bars left and right, the A key cycles the colours of the bar, whilst the space bar causes the piece to drop downwards. This is an interesting variation and it works quite well but it is a bit fiddly using the keyboard and you could easily find yourself pressing the space bar instead of the A key. Still, if you pay your $10 you won't be faced with this problem. The high scores are automatically saved out to disk, but unfortunately it is not error trapped so if the file is locked or the disk is not in the drive the game will crash - very sloppy programming, one simple TRAP statement and it would look much more professional.

Ultra Tetris is not a bad version but I feel $10 is perhaps a little on the high side for a shareware fee, especially for us English who will have to pay extra to get our hands on some dollars to send. Still if you like Tetris you will probably like this and if you don't, well you haven't lost anything.

ATARTRIS Available on Excel Disk 4 (available now from TWAUG) or DGS PD disk number 87.

Atartris is another version faithful to the original, only this version goes further by allowing two players to compete simultaneously, each having their own 'well' on screen and controlling (via joysticks) their own pieces, or perhaps if you think you're really good you could play two games at once! Atartris has a title/menu screen that allows you to control virtually every parameter the game has to offer. These include one or two players, the ability to make all, most, some, a few, or none of the pieces rotate, whether or not a grid is enabled to help you line up the pieces, and even the ability to look up to four pieces ahead! Wow with all those options and a few more for you to discover it should keep you happy for a few hours and as far as I know it is public domain. The actual game play is a little slower than other versions and the pieces rotate at the slightest press of the fire button but it still remains very playable and it's the only version (on the Atari 8-bits) I know of that will allow you to play head to head with a friend.

STACK UP from Zeppelin Games.

Available from Micro Discount on disk, tape, and Rambit Turbo tape priced around £5.

This was one of the last games released by Zeppelin Games for the Atari XL/XE and was written by Brian and Barry Southon (the men behind Joe Blade) so it certainly has the correct pedigree. It is another variation on Tetris, rows of three symbols drop down the screen and must be arranged so that at least three of the same symbols lie in a line horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. As the pieces drop you can interchange the symbol's positions by pressing the fire button. When one symbol reaches the top of a column it remains there but the rest keep on moving downwards. When a three membered match is made it disintegrates and the pieces (if any) above them drop down to fill the gaps left. After completing a set number of disintegrations you advance to the next level where things are quicker, some symbols may already be present and indeed some symbols appear at random. There are several different sets of symbols which are user selectable, your score is displayed at the side of the screens and the sound effects are perfectly adequate, but where the game has a slight fault is that it rapidly becomes much harder, although you are given five lives (or credits!) so I suppose that's not too bad. However, the game is still a challenge and for the price you can't go wrong. What a shame Zeppelin have stopped producing Atari 8-bit games!

LUNACY from Page 6 DISK 179

This is a shareware clone of the original Tetris. When you first boot the disk you have to make another copy and rename a few files in order to get a runnable version. When you finally get into the game you are presented with a nicely done title page and a choice of three musics (created with Pokey Player II). This music plays throughout the game. The main game screen is nothing special. The 'well' is in the middle with the score and next piece displays to one side. Unfortunately, due to a poor choice of colours, the objects and text look dull and blurred. Gameplay is a little slow but it does speed up later on. A high score feature is included. I also found a bug during my first game. I rotated a piece near to a column of other pieces and the rotated piece got stuck halfway up the column overlapping it! Still it

only happened once and it is a minor problem as the game contnued as normal. Overall an average offering.

FORTRESS Available from DGS PD disk 87, TGR 01, Excel No.24 (now available from TWAUG) and elsewhere.

This shareware game kicks off with an impressive intro screen and a very nice title page. From here you can select various options such as music off (thank goodness), music selection etc. The music plays too slowly and becomes very annoying, so it's a good job there is a feature to turn the sound off! The main screen has the 'well' down the left-hand side while the other two-thirds of the screen is taken up with various details such as the score, your level, the next piece, and how many of each piece you have used, etc. The falling objects are single coloured, although three separate colours are used. However, I feel it plays too slowly. This might be due to the fact that this was the last game I played before writing this so my senses where honed for the fast action I had just experienced while playing the top level of Tetrix. Still it's not a bad game, but I think it would be more suitable for the first time Tetris player.

None of the above games are bad games, they are all based on a proven formula and are all good attempts at cloning Tetris on the Atari (some are even brilliant attempts). If you are into puzzle games then give them a try. My favourite is Tetrix because of its high speed, it becomes a real challenge to finish!

This list is not 100% complete, there are more games that run along very similar lines but are sufficiently different to make them interesting. Some titles you might want to watch out for are Glaggs It! from PPP (DGS in the UK), Dredis and Cultivation/Chromatics from Ke-soft, Tetris 3D (Welltris) from ABBUC, Thinking Man's Video Game (PD?), Warsaw Tetris, Blockaboo, Tigris and Valgus 2. Most of these are commercial offerings so beware of your source, remember pirating will kill the 8-bits, don't let it happen! There are no doubt some more that I don't know about but I think I've given you enough to have a go at for now.

QUICK Tutorial Part 1

By Dean Garraghty

Some people have asked me to either write a tutorial column for QUICK, or to try and get somebody else to write one. Well, in typical style the latter proved impossible, so it's me who is left to write this!

First of all, let me just say that I am no expert in QUICK. If you are having extreme difficulties then it would be best to contact PPP for help. However, I can help with simple problems. This article (and those that follow in the future) are designed to help new QUICK programmers who have never used anything other than Basic, and who are having a hard time with QUICK. These articles will discuss various common programming techniques, and will give code in both Basic and QUICK, so that you can compare the two. This will hopefully show you how to implement Basic style code in QUICK.

If you are sat there wondering what the heck QUICK is, then I'll tell you! QUICK is a very powerful programming language from Germany. It is a procedural language with many features from C, PASCAL, and Basic. It also has unique commands to take advantage of the Atari's facilities, including PMG control, mouse control, and even support for interrupts! It is available in the UK from us at DGS. Check the DGS catalogue for details.

OK, on with the article! One thing many Basic programmers would have thought when they got QUICK was "where the heck is the FOR...NEXT loop?". Well, the FOR...NEXT structure is unique to Basic, and all procedural languages (such as QUICK, C, PASCAL, ADA) use different types of structures. However, with a bit of thought, you can simulate a FOR...NEXT loop in QUICK. In fact there is at least two ways to do it! First of all consider this Basic code:

```
10 FOR X=1 TO 10
20 PRINT X
30 NEXT X
```

As you will know, this code would print the numbers 1 to 10 on the screen. Now consider the following QUICK code:

```
BYTE
[
  X
]

MAIN
  X=1
    REPEAT
      PRINT(X)
      X+
    UNTIL X=11
ENDMAIN
```

This code will do exactly the same as the Basic program, but a heck of a lot faster! You will notice that it is very different to the Basic program.

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First of all, we have to declare the variable X as a BYTE. In QUICK we must specify which variables we are going to use, and what sort of variable they are before we start our program. In Basic, you don't have to do this.

All the code inbetween MAIN and ENDMAIN is the actual program. First of all we have to give X a value. I have used 1 here because we want to print the numbers 1 to 10. The way to solve our FOR...NEXT problem is to think about what is actually being done. Basically, the FOR...NEXT is a loop which automatically increments its variable while looping. It also does its own checking to stop when the variable reaches its upper range (in our Basic example, when X reaches 11 it will stop). Now that we know what the FOR...NEXT is actually doing, we can attempt to write QUICK code to do the same.

One looping structure in QUICK is the REPEAT...UNTIL. Whatever code is contained inbetween the REPEAT and UNTIL will be repeated until a certain condition is met. In our case, when X becomes equal to 11. All we need to do now is actually print the value of X using PRINT(X) and to increment the value of X ourselves. QUICK has a very nice way of doing this. X+ will add one to the value of X. And that's how we do it in QUICK!

One other way to do it, is to use the WHILE...WEND looping structure. This is similar to the REPEAT...UNTIL, but the condition check is done before the code inbetween is executed. Consider this code:

```
BYTE
[
  X
]

MAIN
  X=1
    WHILE X<11
      PRINT(X)
      X+
    WEND
ENDMAIN
```

Here we are saying that while the value of X is less than 11, we should execute all the code up to WEND. Oh yes, WEND is short for While END! And there we are, two ways to implement a FOR...NEXT loop in QUICK.

That should be enough for you to digest for now. Get your QUICK disk out and type in these two QUICK programs and check them out for yourself!

Next issue I will look at using strings and simple graphics.

THE 20p QUIETENER FOR YOUR 1050

By Dave Richardson

Contrary to some published suggestions, I am convinced that one should avoid direct lubrication of the shafts carrying the head assembly if one wishes to escape the build-up of dust collected by the lubricant, and the consequent accelerated wear of moving parts.

My tried and tested silencer is this: take a piece of soft foam and shape it with scissors to a slab of approximate size 1 inch by 1/4 inch thick by 3/8 inch wide. Soak this with WD40 or Tri-Flow (teflon) non-oily lubricant, and leave until more or less dry.

Next, remove the screws securing the 1050 case, lift off the upper half and, with the drive front towards you, squeeze the foam between the outer edge of the right-hand shaft and the head carraige so that it is longdiudinally between the two slides on the shaft, and vertically half above and half below the shaft. It should hold there OK and act as a damper for the head assembly as it drives.

Before re-securing the case, test load a couple of disks to ensure that the damper does not slow the head travel. If it does, simply cut thin slices off the 1/4 inch thickness of the foam until the correct travel rate is restored. Re-assemble and the job is done.

Figure 1 shows a diagram of how to do all this, which should help.

As always, be extremely careful if attempting this project. DGS and Dave Richardson cannot be held responsible for any damage caused to your disk drive, or person caused as a result of attempting this project.

FIG. 1.

RH SHAFT

HEAD CARRIAGE

PIECE OF FOAM

FRONT OF DRIVE.
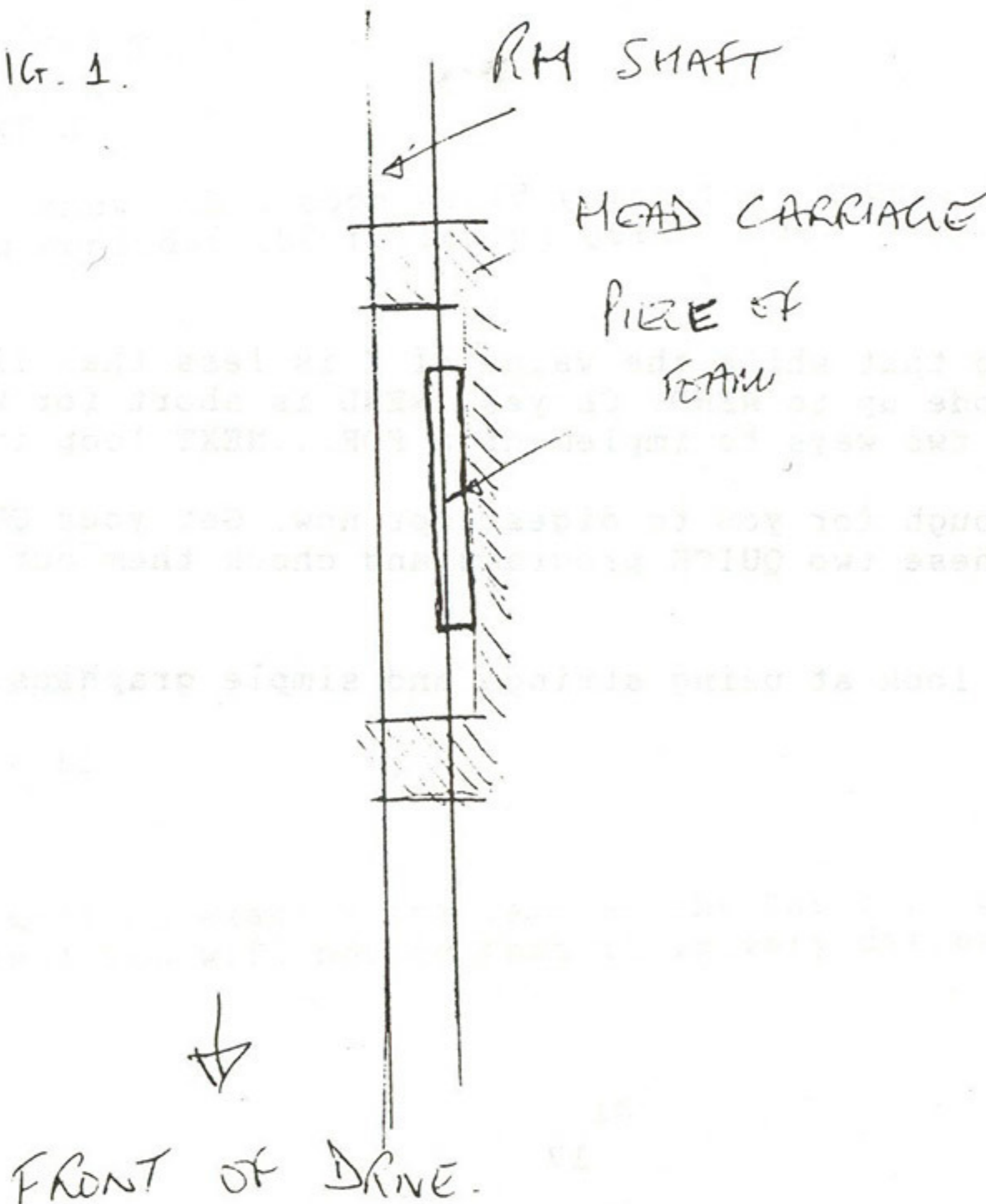
Stereo Upgrade Review

By Mark Watson

The Stereo Upgrade (previously known as 'gumby') has been developed by ANG of Holland and is now available in the UK from Gralin and Micro-Discount for the XL/XE only. This upgrade simply adds an extra Pokey (sound) chip to your machine. This gives your Atari stereo sound. One Pokey controls the left channel and the other controls the right.

With the package from Micro-Discount (costing £22.50) you receive a World of Wonders demo disk (in guess what.....Stereo!!), a small P.C.B with ribbon cable on it and an instruction sheet. The fitting of the PCB requires you to get out your soldering iron to solder about 20 wires to your Pokey chip and one to your CPU (risky!). If you don't feel up to it then I believe Micro-Discount run a fitting service for a small fee. (Also on the Gralin version I believe there are 2 Pokeys and you just have to remove the old one and plug in the new one. This cuts out the soldering to the Pokey so this should be easier if your Pokey is socketed, as in early XLs).

So, I opened my computer and heated my soldering iron up. Then I fitted it slowly and carefully(and worryingly!!). The instructions were helpful, but confusing in places. Now that I had got the hard bit over, I had to drill three holes in the case for the Phono sockets and switch.

One hour later I slowly flicked the switch and loaded the disk. When the stereo songs began I listened through the TV. But alas no stereo! I switched it off worried. Then after reading the instructions again I discovered that the Micro-Discount version doesn't mix it through the TV speaker(phew!!). However, the Gralin version does, but the Micro-Discount version can easily be modified. So I fixed it up to the stereo and booted the disk. Then the stereo song began playing ......wow, I thought 'Is this my 8-bit Atari?'.

Now for some technical details. The second Pokey is mapped 16 bytes above the original and is identical to the first. Therefore with both Pokeys you can now use either:

    8 8-bit channels
    6 8-bit and 1 16-bit channel
    4 8-bit and 2 16-bit channels
    2 8bit and 3 16-bit channels
    4 16-bit channels

There are several commercial packages for the stereo upgrade, E.g Zybex and Draconous from Micro-Discount for £6 and £7 respectively. I don't really know what Gralin have but I believe Stereo Pokey Player is available. Also ANG sell a few things. One program that sounds particularly interesting is the Stereo Converter that is being developed at ACPC (The Atari Classic Programmers Club) that converts disk games to stereo.

To sum it up the stereo upgrade is an excellent buy.

PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEWS

By Alan Hitchen

Alan checks out some PD disks from the DGS library.

DECOMPACTEUR XE (PD 135)

This is a disk (by Peter Falton?) suitable for 128k plus machines.
After boot up you are presented with a message (in French as are all
the prompts) telling you to flip the disk. On doing so the RAMdisk is
charged with pictures from a compacted file. After loading the disk is
flipped back and the slideshow program loads. This continuously shows
the 15 picture files together with a simple musical backing. Be advised
that two of the pictures are unsuitable for children. However, as the
slideshow program is in basic it can be changed to not show these
pictures if required. The other pictures are taken from games or drawn
with Atari Artist.

If you tire of these pictures hit break and run MENU.BAS. When this
loads you are offered a choice of a 130 XE demo, which will return you
to the slide show, or a strip tease. This will run a continuous show of
17 pictures taken from Strip Poker. These are naturally not suitable
for children.

Other programs include DEMO1.BAS which will show single picture files
from D8: (default) or other drives. RAMDISK.BAS will load or save the
RAMdisk contents. As the picture files are held in a compacted form on
the disk they need to be downloaded from the ramdisk to save them in
the standard (compressed) format for use elsewhere. A couple of .ASM
files are included to round the disk off.

Another presentation of the Strip Poker pictures can be found on the B
side of PD123 entitled Sweet Teens. This program by Frank Gabler and
Andreas Beer is more sophisticated. After a title screen comes the menu
screen where selection is made by joystick. The music can be switched
off which might be best as it is affected by the disk operation as the
pictures load. One of the four girls, Marlene, Candi, Melissa or Suzi
may be chosen and shown. The final picture is held until the trigger is
pressed to return you to the menu.

The A side of this disk is S.S.M.B's Musical Kaleidoscope. On boot up
there is a loading screen which is replaced by a rainbow screen and
Hotel California begins to play on the sound track. The rainbow splits
into four to reveal another title screen with horizontal and vertical
scrolling messages containing the F word. This can be avoided by
booting with OPTION and SELECT pressed to take you straight to the menu
screen. The two menu screens offer 52 tunes taken from games and will
provide quite some time of listening pleasure.

MEGABLAST I (PD152)

This game created by Torsten Karwoth in 1992 is perhaps the best
shoot-em up game ever seen on the Atari. On booting up you are
presented with the credits while the program checks what memory you
have. If it is 128k plus it will load a digitised sound track of
Genesis taken from Amiga samples.

The intro screen details the controls, hazards and power-ups available
in three pages. If you don't like the digitised music you can select

the standard soundtrack instead. Options for two players, player vs computer, or computer vs computer are available. Press the trigger to start and you are presented with two ships in opposition with a barrier in front of each and deflectors randomly positioned in front and behind the ships.

The object seems simple enough, blast the opposing ship. But to do so you must first shoot holes in your barrier and then his barrier, avoiding both his shots and your own richochets from the deflectors. Shots can be deflected all over the screen, you can even shoot yourself in the back. Hazards and power-ups appear at random and are collected or destroyed by shooting them, if the deflectors allow you to hit them. As the higher levels are reached more deflectors and hazards appear. The bombs can cause a chain reaction as one sets off others filling the screen with a hail of shrapnel which you must avoid if you can. You have 9 lives to start with, bonus lives are available, and you will need every one when the shrapnel starts to fly.

So in conclusion this is a first-class highly addictive game that is so well presented that you just won't believe it is in the public domain.

Also on this side of the disk is the Small Demo from ABBUC. This opens with a picture of a polar bear on an ice floe before going to the main display which has large alternating ABBUC/POKEY heading, a horizontal scroll, random stars and four bouncing bars, plus the usual catchy tune.

On the other side of the disk is the TOP 3 Demo from the World Federation of Mad Hackers. The TOP series of demos are fully reviewed in New Atari User 65 so I won't describe this one in detail. This multi part demo is of a very high standard, but the part that really stands out is the 'Dancing Woman' demo. This needs 128k to see all the features but it will run on smaller machines. It features a digitised movie of a dancing woman (what else) moving to some great music, along with two scroll lines. This really stretches the Atari to its limits as 444kb of information is crammed into memory and unpacked as needed. The scrolling message informs you that this demo was inspired by Hollywood Poker on the Amiga and the Das Omen demo on the Atari.

Das Omen can be found on PD118 and is a terrific demo from Germany by Ingo Tamme and Uwe Loos. After the title screen comes a picture depicting a moonlit scene with the menacing figure of a bald man in the foreground. Suddenly he opens his mouth and a digitised voice announces Das Omen, the music begins and a dancing figure appears in the middle of the scene. The menacing man occasionally moves his mouth and eyes. After a while the picture changes to a beach scene where the dancing figure continues to gyrate on the sand. However, your attention is now held by the gaze of an attractive blonde. She winks, blinks and blows kisses at you. No doubt trying to entice you into her convertible that is parked on the beach. The scenes alternate until the music ends, then it starts all over again.

The B side contains a Digi-Studio demo to enable you to try out this excellent program. Three tunes (Joy to the World, Yesterday and View to a Kill) are included. These can be played with one of four samples (Church Bells, Pig Grunts, Heavy Guitar and Trumpet). Documentation and an order form are included.

VOICE MASTER DEMO (PD14)

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This disk gives you some idea of the capabilities of the Covox Voice Master digitised sound system. The system can record up to 64 words in one file. It can also store 32 words of command per file. That's right, it can recognise your spoken commands. It can also compose music as you hum or sing to it, no musical knowledge required. An extended Basic adds 19 commands to control your sounds. The package included a voice controlled game of Blackjack and a subscription to the Covox News newsletter. All this for just $89.95, according to a 1985 advertisement. However, like a lot of other products, this one has probably long gone out of production.

The demo is in seven parts, first is the introduction which describes the capabilities of the system. Next is a simple talking head announcing the Covox Voice Master. After that is a talking keyboard, it tells you what key you have just pressed. The talking calculator will do your sums for you out loud in English or Spanish. The special speech demo shows how a raw voice sample can be cleaned up for a better sound. The speech editor allows you to edit a sample for yourself. There are five sound files on the disk to play aruond with. Finally there is Voice Master Basic which you can use with your own programs. The demo disk has only six commands available. SLOAD loads the sound file. SPEAK runs the particular sample from the sound file, up to 64 samples can be held in one file. VOLUME, SPEED, PAUSE and CLEAR speak for themselves.

On a similar theme is the Parrot II demo disk (PD15) which demonstrates another sound sampling system, similar to Replay. This was available from Alpha Systems for $39.95 in 1985 and is probably also extinct.

This demo dating from 1987 contains two songs, I can't wait (Nu Shooz) and the Addams Family end theme. Both are excellent examples of what can be achieved. There is also a mix 'n' match selection, offering seven sample sounds and six tunes to play them with.

On the B side of this Disk is the Max Headroom demo. After a couple of adverts for Bulletin Boards are shown the demo proper loads. This depicts the familar TV character Jerkily moving his head from side to side. A message says that this demo is soon to be modified for speech with S.A.M. The improved version does not seem to be available as yet. Unusually for a PD program it has been protected. It is written in Basic but the variable name table has been poked with the end of line code (155) to scramble the display.

The Software Automatic Mouth (S.A.M.) is another product that is long gone. However, demos of S.A.M. in action can be found on the Don't Ask Software demo disk (PD75). The menu offers a selection of the software that was available in 1983. When you make your choice it is announced by S.A.M. himself before running the demo.

Abuse is an idea straight out of Monty Python as it gives you a chance to argue with your computer. Word Race has you defining the meaning of words against the clock. Claim to Fame is the same idea but you have to identify what a person was famous for instead. S.A.M. Talks is self explanatory. S.A.M. is a synthesised voice created by the concantenation of allophones to create words and sentences. The next demo goes a step further as S.A.M. sings the American National Anthem with a musical backing, an astonishing feat of programming. S.A.M.'s New Knobs demonstrates some new features to create special voices. TelAtari informs you of the features of this telecomms program. Poker S.A.M. plays a hand of Poker with you and he laughs like a drain whe he

wins. PM Animator is a very impressive demo of various creatures building a screen. When it is complete there is a demo of the revolving Earth and finally the Don't Ask logo is displayed before you are returned to the menu.

The B side to this disk contains some cartoon drawings in the Japanese Manga style apart from Asterix and Obelix who are of course French.

As the products mentioned above are sadly no longer available these demos are the only reminder of happier times and so are well worth adding to any collection.

PRINTER UTILITIES/MISCELLANEOUS (PD84)

This disk has something for everyone, a total of 46 programs. Those requiring a printer are mainly for the Epson or compatibles.

BIO.BAS is a German program that will print a monthly biorythm chart on any 80 column printer. BLDLOAD.BAS is also from Germany and is a loading program for Micropainter files. CALENDAR(BAS) prints out as many calendar months as you need. DISASSEM.BAS is a memory disassembler with print option. DISKJACK(BAS) creates a template to cut out and glue into a new disk jacket. DISKLABL.BAS prints a five column disk directory DISKLABL.JAK prints a four column disk directory for 5x1 inch labels. DSKLABE.BAS prints a three column directory for 3x1 inch labels. DSKLABL.BAS is the same as above but has four columns for 5x1 inch labels. DUMPER2.LST is a GR.8 screen dump subroutine. FILER.BAS is a name and address database which does not have a print option. GRAPTEXT.BAS is a German print demo for the Epson. HEXDUMP.BAS dumps any file to printer. LABMAKER.BAS creates 3x1 inch labels and can save them for future use. MENUPRI.BAS is a German menu program that will run the chosen program, call DOS or print an alphabetical directory of the disk. NAME.BAS is a Micropainter to Epson screen dump in listed format. ADDRESS.LAB makes address labels. SDMP1020.BAS is a Micropainter to 1020 printer screen dump. SDUMP0.BAS is a printer subroutine for GR.0 screens. SDUMP8.BAS is the same as above for GR.8 screens. CADCAM.PRT is a computer aided design program for the creation of shapes in 3D. Objects can be viewed at any angle from side on to overhead and printed out. CHART.PRT is a GR.8 dump subroutine with demo screen included. DISKDUMP(BAS) prints a disk directory for 40 or 80 column printers. EPLISTER.BAS prints a listed program ,which can contain control characters, to an Epson printer. GTIADUMP(BAS) can display and print picture files in modes 9, 10 and 11. TINYLIST(BAS) can dump a listed program in the smallest text available on an Epson. CASSPRINT.BAS creates inlay cards, with full information, for cassette boxes to suit computer or audio tapes. BRASS(BAS) is a GR.9 demo screen. CHRTEST.BAS is a character set loading subroutine in listed format. MWINDOWS.COM is a windows program that can be demonstrated with DEMO1 & 2.BAS. DESIPIC, TOWNPIC and WAVEPIC.COM are Steve Dong 256 colour pictures taken from PD80. DRAW800.BAS is a program that draws an Atari 800 for you in GR.15. FOXYLADY.BAS draws or prints a GR.7 picture. FASTSORT.BAS is a demo of mod-bubble, shuttle and shell sorting routines and contains a shell sort subroutine for your use. MIXMODE1-4.BAS demonstrates mixed mode screens created by altering the display list. ZARJAZ.BAS is a demo by Jeff Minter to advertise his Colourspace program. TANKGAME.BAS is Shoot It by Paul Coleman, which is a simple shoot em up with no sound effects!! TANKSET.BAS is the altered character set and loader as used in the game above. It is in listed format. WIDETEXT.LST is a routine that allows easy use of GR.1 text just where you need it.

AH93

SOCKET J11

SWITCH

+

−

5

UNUSED

240 Ω

LEDs

G

−

R

+
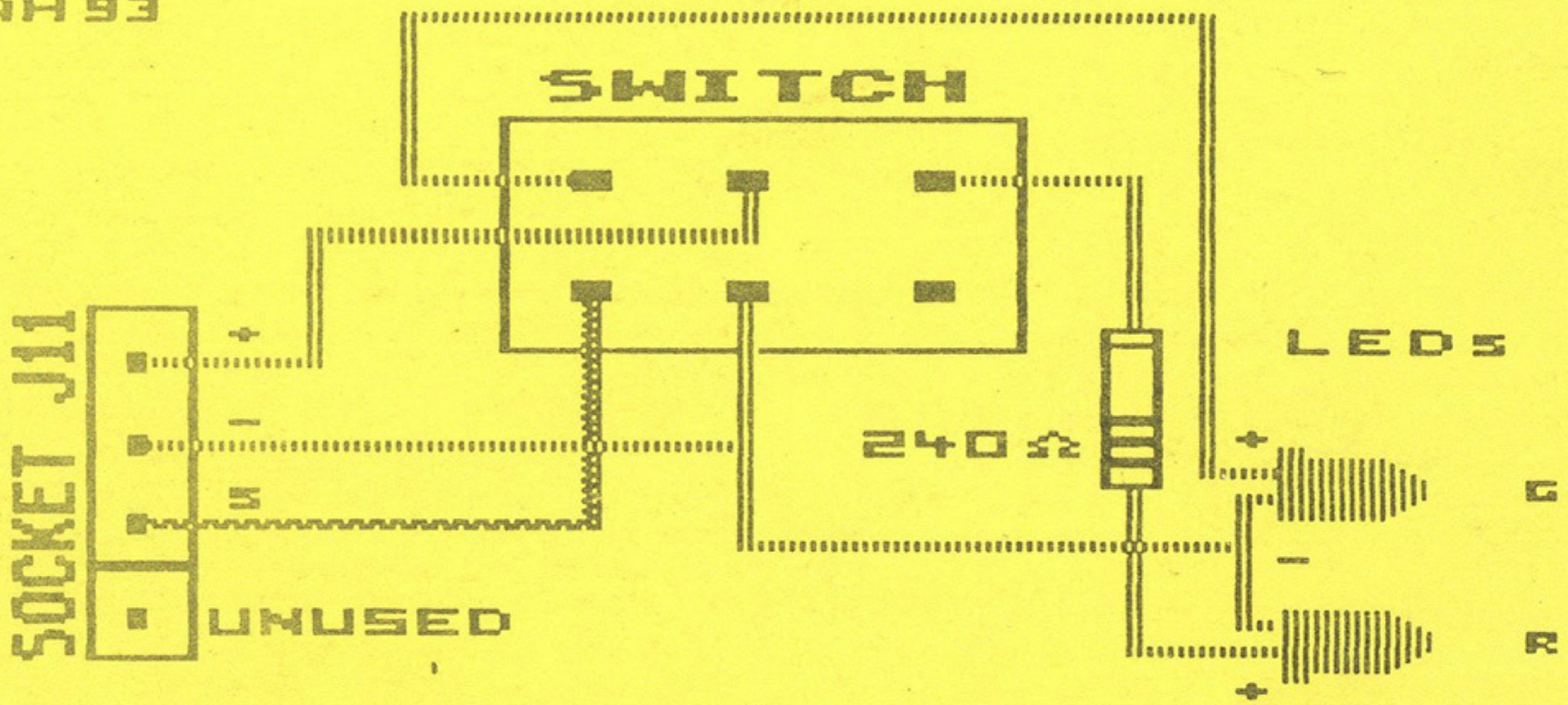
RED IS FOR WRITE
GREEN IS PROTECTED