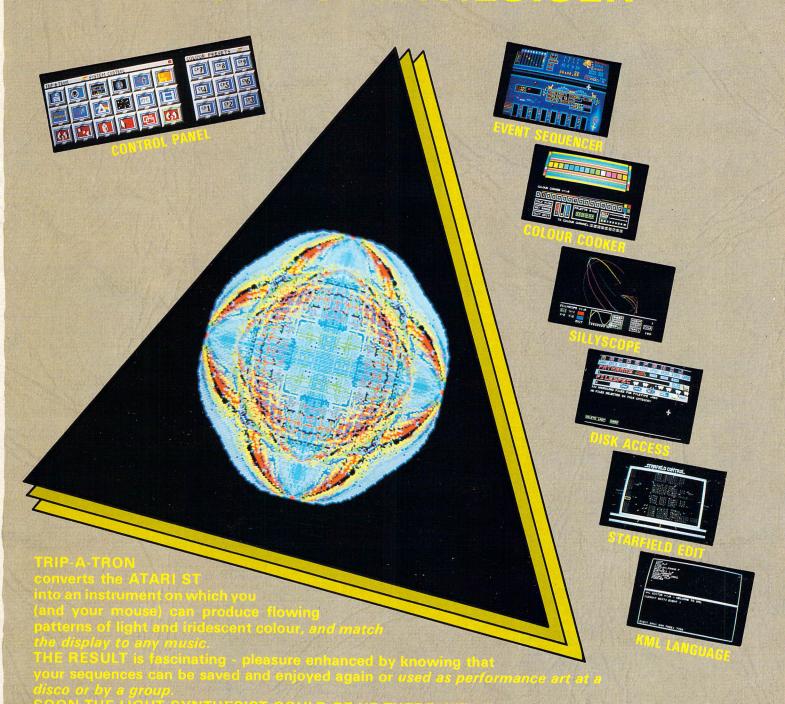






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LIGHT SYNTHESISER



SOON THE LIGHT SYNTHESIST COULD BE UP THERE WITH THE GUITAR HEROES

TRIP-A-TROIN runs an any version of the ST. It is in a form which is instantly usenals. It has its own programming language. KML, and beautifully designed pop-up screens, helping you create an infinity of unique effects.

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Vol. 3 No. 8 October 1988

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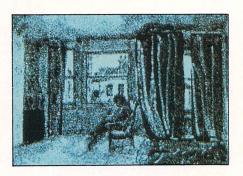
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MORE FOR YOUR BINDER . . .

Part 3 of The Complete Atari ST. Over the months this illustrated pull-out, which comes free with Atari ST User, is building up into the definitive guide to the working and uses of this powerful micro—starting with beginner's basics and eventually progressing to cover the most advanced concepts and applications.

Continuing this month with:

- Exploring the internal structure of the ST.
- Using VDI fill patterns within the Gem environment.
- Creating and using colour in ST graphics.
- Basic arithmetic and string handling.
- Problem solving in text adventures.
- Converting Fahrenheit to Celsius using C programming.



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Brillig

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Mailbag

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Computer Breakdowns

How to avoid and correct those expensive breakdowns on your ST. Francis Botto has all the answers.



Competition





Win a superb new 520STFM for your school. Plus lots of runners-up prizes in our simple-to-enter competition.

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Star Printer

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Desktop Publishing

The outstanding Publishing Partner Professional is previewed by our man in the know, who says it's a winner.

Library

Mark Smiddy reviews a manual of do-it-yourself electronics to help you repair your own micro and printer.

Fontz!

David Davenport closely examines this flexible new utility from Neocept for creating fonts for Gem-based packages like Degas and Word Up.



IS Santa really in danger of being zapped this year?

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

The theme is Atari in Entertainment - and that translates into games, games and more fun and games.

- Take part in the non-stop Big Game Highest Score Contest for a major prize.
- * Drop in on the spectacular Atari Games Arcade.
- Visit the Atari Games Workshop and discover what makes a bestseller.
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DATABASE EXHIBITIONS

ATARI and more than 70 other exhibitors are determined to make this the most fascinating

show ever held.

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

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

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

HOW TO GET THERE

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

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

Unix technology for super ST

MORE details have been emerging about new Atari ST machines currently in the pipeline. The laptop version of the ST – a project exclusively revealed in Atari ST User – is in the final throes of development.

"Although at this stage our specification remains top secret, I can tell you we expect to make announcement about availability of the portable ST later this year", said Atari spokesman Peter Walker

He also confirmed that Atari is working on a Super ST built around the 68030 operating system and incoporating Unix technology.

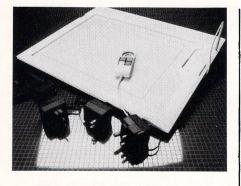
"This product is being developed in the US under the code name of Unix Engine", Walker said. "Most of the work on this project has been completed. Atari is currently awaiting porting for Unix Version 5.3 from Unisoft".

Atari would be making announcements at the PC Show, he said, but would not give details of the products involved.

To make room in the market for new ST models, Atari will re-align its current range.

After being upped by £100 earlier this year, the ST is expected to come down to £299 once again to allow at least one ne model into the £399 slot.

Looking farther ahead, there will be "another exciting consumer offer timed for Christmas to replace the summer ST package", according to Peter Walker.



Handy for the artistic

PACKAGES promising to make the most of the ST's graphics capabilities are still flooding the market. Now Cherry (05827 63100) has entered the fray and teamed up with specialist Atari distributor HB Marketing to produce a special driver for its high-resolution A3 Graphics Tablet.

The driver enables the tablet to fully emulate the Atari mouse, which means Cherry's digitiser can now be employed with Gem-based applications such as Timeworks DTP.

The main advantage of the graphics tablet is that its stylus is a more natural instrument for freehand drawing than a mouse – and its cursor puck is virtually essential for users wanting to digitise existing drawings accurately.

The Cherry digitiser package includes a full A3 graphics tablet, four-key crosshair cursor puck, stylus and full documentation. Price £632.50

Federated's losses hit Atari

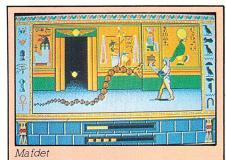
ATARI Corporation's purchase last year of the Federated Group, which at the time looked an ideal US retail outlet for its products, continues to nibble at the company's balance sheet.

Taken on its own, Atari second quarter figures show net sales of \$101.5 – up 44 per cent. Income before tax was \$16 million, an increase of 15 per cent. However, in the same period Federated suffered a net loss before tax of \$7.6 million on sales of \$63.2 million.

Together Atari and Federated reported net sales of \$164.6 million compared with \$70.7 million for the same period last year – an increase of 133 per cent. But income was down from \$7.8 million to \$5.6 million.

Atari president Sam Tramiel said: "Federated's losses, while reduced from the first quarter, were higher than expected. The turnaround process continues at Federated, and all the necessary measures are being taken to return to profitablity".

Despite the poor performance of Federated, Tramiel was very optimistic about the future of Atari itself. "The computer and video game segment of the company continues to grow at a healthy pace", he said. "The ST range continues to sell very well throughout Europe, Australia and Canada – where demand outstrips supply".



Action in ancient Egypt

PLEDGING itself to games that will use the graphics, sound, speed and disc storage of the ST to the maximum, Software Horizons (01-348 4577) has released its first "full power" games

released its first "full power" games.
The company is making its debut with three titles, all developed by Paradox software. All are original games developed for the 16 bit market – Horizons has no intention of taking the easy route and uprating 8 bit software.

Two of the initial offerings – Veteran and Luxor – have familiar themes, commando missions and space fantasy



Veteran

but the third is rather more novel.

Mafdet is an adventure set in ancient Egpyt, with the player taking the role of Mafdet the cat goddess. Action and puzzles abound as usual—the twist in the tail is that Mafdet can take human or feline form to complete the quest.

The three games are available at £14.95 each – and Software Horizons promises that all future releases will carry the same price tag.



Desktop Publishing can be a real jungle.

Confused by the dazzling array of products to emerge from the booming desktop publishing industry?

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Please send me FREE tickets to The Desktop Publishing Show 1988. (No persons under 18 admitted)

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Waiting for you at the show will be everybody who's anybody in desktop publishing.

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- Rank Xerox Panasonic
- Wang Acorn ...and many more.

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Compiled by STEPHEN MORTIMER

FIRMING up its grip on the desktop publishing market, Atari has teamed up with Imagen to distribute the latter's PostScript compatible interpreter, UltraScript.

The software-based interpreter supports the Atari SLM-804 laser printer and requires a minimum 2Mb of memory. In its first release UltraScript will be a standalone program that requires the user to print a PostScript file to disc then output it to the Atari Laser. Later versions will allow direct output.



WITH mail order firms now removed from its list of distributors, Atari is making strenuous efforts to widen its coverage within the States and to strengthen its relations with users. So far this has meant more support for user groups and more prominence in User Group News - a newsletter first published in May and now going bimonthly.



ONE spin off of the protracted dispute between Apple, Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft could be a new look front end for Atari users. Hewlett-Packard is strongly contesting Apple's claim that its New Wave windows environment is too similar to the distinctive Macintosh look, charging that Apple was not the originator of the environment and thus cannot claim copyright.

If Hewlett-Packard's countersuit is successful Atari will no longer be restricted in the design of its user interface - and in the end all users will benefit from greater compatability between different computers.



NO dates yet for an official launch, but Atari has finally released the SFP004 floating point coprocessor to developers. It is available for the Mega's internal 68000 bus and contains a 16MHz Motorola 68881 floating point coprocessor

Applications are not affected by the coprocessorified to take advantage of its capabilities, after which performance may be increased up to twentyfold.

Let battle commence...

ATARI has announced it is to bring out a new series of war game simulations to be called Battlescapes. The first two, written by Scrabble author Dr Peter Turcan, are Borodino and The Armada.

Borodino recreates the 1912 battle between the French army - led by Napoleon, and the Russians. The Armada simulates the Spanish fleet as it sails up the Channel with the English in hot pursuit

A whopping 400k in size and incor-

porating 3D graphics, each game needs a second disc to hold the massive amount of program data.

A novel element is that the player takes a single role - that of one side's leader while the computer plays all the other commanders involved, including those serving on the player's side.

Atari spokesman Peter Walker told Atari ST User the first two Battlescape games should be released in the autumn, probably priced around £30.



WHAT limited success the Atari ST has enjoyed in the US has been largely due to its enthusiastic reception as a vehicle for making music.

Now there are signs that the machine's capabilities in this particular area are being increasingly appreciated within the UK. The British Music Fair at Wembley provided plenty of evidence of the growing belief that the ST is "the" computer to make music on.

Visitors were treated to a mass of ST products from firms like Syndromic Music, Musimex, MCM, French newcomers Digigram, Evenlode, Sound Technology, Yamaha and a new British name Pandora.

(See Music on the ST - Page 16.)



Megablaster

More joy from Konix

TWO new ST joysticks are to be launched by Konix (0273 561306). Predator will probably sell for just under £13 and Megablaster for about £8. Konix told Atari ST User.

Although similar in appearance, the joysticks will be different internally, Predator being operated by microswitches while Megablaster uses a more traditional mechanism

Busy link

ONE of the most active areas of Micro-Link - the Telesoftware Library - has achieved a new milestone, with the number of programs now available topping the 800 mark.

Much of the demand for the service comes from Atari ST users, who have one of the most popular sections of the library at their disposal. And that number is increasing all the time as the listings for games, utilities and educational programs from each issue of ST User are uploaded.

Spain and Malta can now be accessed directly by MicroLink subscribers. Compania Telefonica Nacional de Espana and Alpha Communications of Malta bring to 20 the number of Email systems available through the international Dialcom network.



Predator

Easier drawing

EASY Draw 2, Electric Distribution's draw package for the ST, has been "supercharged" into a third generation to include the ability to combine line artwork with bit images from paint programs.

Users can now import and edit – pixel by pixel – bit images from existing paint programs including Degas, Degas Elite, MacPaint and Neochrome. And the resulting images can then be combined with Easy Draw's line art.

Specific areas of an image can be selected and saved, and a snapshot facility enables the user to capture screens from any Gem application. Supercharged Easy Draw also offers a comprehensive range of type styles. Price £99.

Upgrades are also available, priced at £39.95 from Easy Draw 2 and £49.95 from the original Easy Draw.

A companion package supplied by Electric Distribution (0954 61258) is Migraph's Easy Tools which allows free rotation and polyline versatility.

Simply installed with either Easy Draw 2 or its latest incarnation, Easy Tools appears as a desktop icon with five features aimed at users involved in the generation of technical illustrations, mechanical drawings, forms or gaphs. Price £39.95.



3D comes to the ST

WITH billions of screens and a new concept in graphical representation, Incentive seems set to take the games market by storm with the release of Driller for the Atari ST.

The new concept is Freescape, which allows the user to move to any point in 3D space, look in any direction and see the view as if actually there.

Freescape makes its debut in Driller, which Incentive (07356 77288) is describing as "not an arcade game, not an adventure game nor strategy game - but all three plus much more".

The scenario has players locating and releasing dangerous gases beneath the surface of a moon while avoiding defence mechanisms and exploring ever deeper.

Compression techniques have allowed Incentive to squeeze in 18 major sections, each offering more than 20,000 billion possible screens.

Driller, complete with manual, novella and a 3D mapping model costs £24.95.

Chance to beat bookies

THERE's no such thing as a foolproof betting system, as is testified by the absence of bankrupt bookmakers. But with Cascade System's Form Master punters are at least promised a fighting chance.

Form Master, which has been 20 years in development, requires users to input selected information on horses running in a given race – easily gleaned from the racing press.

The program analyses form from that data and presents the user with a list in order of win probability. Easy to use,

Form Master has recently thrown up a string of winners, and over the past five years has consistently managed to beat the odds.

In monitored tests carried out between 1984 and 1986 it managed 260 winning selections in 441 races – a £10 stake on each would have yirelded a pre-tax profit of almost £9,000.

Cascade (0423 525325) is selling Form Master at £99.99 – or bundled with the multi-function Psion Organiser II for £199.99.

Time for a change

THE tried and tested Timeworks series has been expanded to include a relational data management system which utilises the power and graphics capabilities of Gem.

Available from Electric Distribution (0954 61258), Data Manager Professional ST is flexible enough for the structure of a database to be changed after entry of data and offers powerful sort, search and report facilities. Price £69.95.

New DTP package

THE International Desktop Publishing Show returns to London's Business Design Centre in October, and Silica Shop (01-309 0300) will be using the occasion to demonstrate what it claims is "the most cost efficient desktop publishing system available in the UK market".

That modest claim is backed by the fact that Silica is bundling together a Mega ST, laser printer, mono monitor, second disc drive and software for less than £3,000 The software selected to

accompany the bundle is the easy-to-use Publishing Partner, which offers a wide variety of fonts and most of the options the average DTP user is likely to need.

Silica Shop is also hoping to have Publishing Partner Professional ready in time for the show.

This will offer auto text flow round graphics, macro facilities, text rotation and kerning, and other sophisticated features not normally associated with product in this price range.

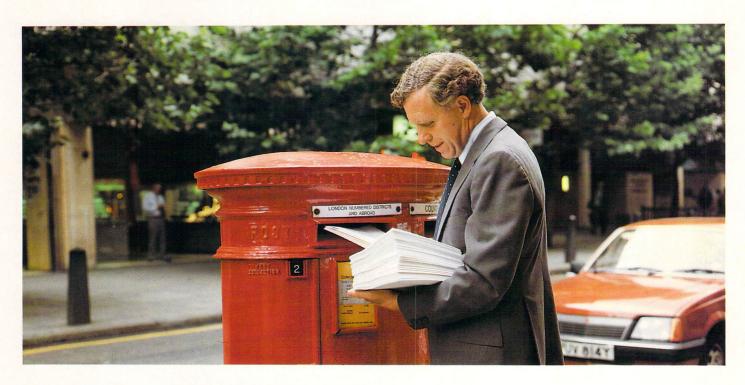
PC "Walkman"

AN agreement between Atari and UK company DIP will lead to January release of an IBM compatible PC the size of a personal stereo for less than £200.

The Pocket PC, which will be manufactured by Atari, offers 512k ram and 256k rom – which contains a word processor, spreadsheet, diary, calculator and auto dialler.

A super twist lcd screen displays eight 40 column lines, and data and software can be stored on plug-in smart cards.

The day Roger Jackson sent his first mailshot.



I was impressed by the fact that Star have now produced a great looking little budget printer with a 24 pin head.

I was impressed by its excellent quality – the 8 resident fonts available and its high density letter quality helped me produce a really professional mailshot.

I was impressed by the extremely swift draft elite speed of 170cps and LQ elite at 57cps and the standard 7k buffer.

I was impressed by the special push-tractor feature that allows the LC24-10 the lowest possible tear off and its ability to 'park' continuous paper and load single sheets automatically – so there's no need to remove the continuous.

I was impressed by the touch-button front control panel that makes using the printer an absolute dream.

But most of all, I was particulary impressed with myself.

Because my Star LC24-10 was so inexpensive and no other printer comes close for sheer quality and value-for-money.





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CYBER PAINT

CYBER PAINT is a powerful animation CYBER PAINT is a powerful animation and paint program. Use it by itself to create colourful 2D animations, or add the final colourful 2D animations. colouliu 2D allimations, or add the final touch to your three-dimensional Cyber Studio animated sequences.

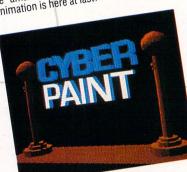
Choose from a host of flexible paint box tophologies to retouch individual Cyber tophologies to retouch individual Cyber touch individual Cyber

choose from a host of flexible paint box techniques to retouch individual Cyber Studio frames. Cyber Paint lets you overlay one image with another, so you can even add imported Degas or Neochrome back-

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

you can produce sophisticated video effects just like the ones on television — and the ones on television — and the ones of the studio you need is your ST.

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



NEW! CYBER SCULPT

Want to create your own 3-dimensional designs? Need more sophisticated modelling techniques? Then CYBER SCULPT is for you! A mouse-driven, stand-alone program you! A mouse-driven, stand-alone program that does just one thing: build 3D objects. And not just spun or extruded — but wisted, pushed, pulled, tweaked and pummelled! The most fantastic shapes imaginable.

imaginable.

Working with Cyber Sculpt is just like Working with clay. Your object's not quite working with clay. Your mould it into a new the right shape? Then mould it into a new shape! Grab some vertices and move them into a better position. Or use a "magnet" to stretch them

Cyber Sculpt has cross-sectional modelto stretch them. ling, for easy creation of complex shapes like boat hulls, and for engineers, there's support for digitizing tablets.

3D DEVELOPER'S DISK

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

3D PLOTTER & PRINTER DRIVERS

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

NEW! 3D FONTS I & II

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



CYBER CONTROL CYBER CONTROL is an easy to use. BASIC-like programming language specially designed to work with Cyber Studio.
It enhances CAD-3D 2.0 with a host of new features. There are two new cameras, free to move around or through your 3D to move around or through your 30 creations. Movable, multi-layered Cyber Paint blocks for colourful cel animations. And the power to create complex curved abients using spling generation techniques. And the power to create complex curved objects, using spline generation techniques. Together they let you animate complex objects you never thought possible—like a skeleton doing backflips!

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

program.



NEW CARTOON DESIGN DISK A collection of 3D comic characters, plus special Cyber Control programs to move them. You decide which way their heads turn, where their eyes look, how fast they move — or fly — and Cyber Control brings them to life automatically.

NEW VIDEO TITLING DESIGN DISK

Add that professional touch to your home videos with spectacular animated titles.
Includes 3D font and objects specially designed for titling effects. Plus custom Cyber Control programs to animate them, create credit sequences, etc. All you need to challenge Hollywood!

HUMAN DESIGN DISK

An accessory disk packed with humanoid forms and figures to add life to your CAD-3D scenes. Includes complete male and female scenes, pure detailed heads of the prototypes. skeletal prototypes, plus detailed heads, hands, etc. Take a tour of the human skeleton!

FUTURE DESIGN DISK

Turn your ST into a space engineering factory with this library of futuristic objects.
Everything from androids, rocket engines, and command pods, to complete spacecraft.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN DISK

An electronic architect's studio packed with doors, windows, stairways — all you need to build your own CAD-3D dream house.

STEREOTEK

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

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

CYBER STUDIO

CYBER STUDIO combines STEREO CYBER STUDIO combines STEREO CAD-3D 2.0, a three-dimensional design program, with CYBERMATE, a powerful animation control language. Together they are realistic 3D moving images into realistic 3D moving images. into realistic 3D moving images.

STEREO CAD-3D 2.0 allows you to create

your own 3D objects and scenes — quickly your own 3D objects and scenes — quickly and easily! Use the built-in 3D primitives to shape your ideas, then add more detail with CAD-3D 2.0's tools, combining several objects to build up more complex chance. objects to build up more complex shapes. objects to build up more complex snapes.

Add the final touch with subtle lighting effects and that's it — from starting point to starship in a matter of minutes!

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





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THIS year's British Music Fair proved once again, that the Atari ST is tops for music. Although other computers may be catching up they still have a long way to go to equal the hundreds of music software titles now available for the ST.

Due to bickering within the music industry this year's BMF was not held at Olympia but at the Wembley Exhibition Centre. Exhibitors were spread across several halls, in alleyways, broom cupboards (or so it seemed) and some even oozed into the hotel next door – dungeons and dragons fans would have loved it.

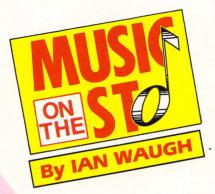
However, your intrepid reporter plodded on and discovered lots of new products. I'll begin with one of the most interesting, a program called Big Band which I first saw at Frankfurt. It's being handled by a French company but it had no direct UK distributor then. At the BMF negotiations for distribution were under way and it looks fairly certain that UK software house Soundbits will be handling it.

Big Band is a composition program which looks like lots of fun. A composition is divided into several parts including chords, rhythmics (bass, drums and accompaniment), riff, counterpoint, melody and solo.

You can enter a melody line and the program will compose the accompanying parts. Or you can enter a chord sequence and the program will compose a melody line and solo parts. If you don't put in anything at all it will produce a complete composition.

There are lots of styles to choose from including rock, funk, disco, ballade, waltz,

ST in limelight at Music Fair



swing, reggae, bossa nova, samba and blues. It should cost around £199 and once UK distribution has been agreed I'll bring you a review.

The same company was also showing an easy-to-use sequencer called the Studio 24 which is likely to cost around £199. It claims to drastically reduce the complexities of sequencer operation without sacrificing any of the power. Big Band can be loaded into the Studio 24 in best multi-programming environment fashion, so you can run them together. A combined package of the two programs should be available for £349.

Composition programs seem to be very popular with software developers at the moment. Dr.T's Fingers (£79.95) has

now appeared and I went away from the Music Fair with a copy under my arm thanks to distributor MCM and the blind eye of a security guard.

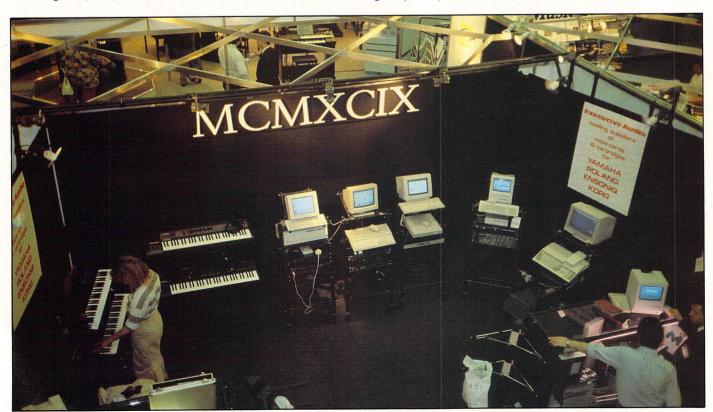
It produces four separate music lines using a different set of criteria for each. It can be used with Midi or the ST's sound chip. A full review soon.

Ålso from Dr. T, and mentioned a few columns ago, is Tunesmith, but I had no details then. It too, is an algorithmic composition program, but rather more complex. It's a second generation version of Phrase which was used by Miami Vice's Jan Hammer. Basically it generates themes and variations which can be controlled in real time.

Advanced rhythm algorithms allow the creation of themes which are rhythmically consistent while the variation algorithms allow the creation of variations which appear to be logical extrapolations of the original theme. If I can get hold of a copy – and if I can understand it – there will be a review of this, too.

Not be be outdone, Hybrid Arts was running a prototype of its new algorithmic program called Ludwig. It aims to do for the composer what the DX and CZ Android programs do for the synthesiser programmer.

Music is organised into eight tracks



Dropping in on MCM

running in parallel, but they don't contain music data, rather they contain lists of instructions used to create music data.

Spot the difference? Real-time control is a major feature and the resulting music can be read into other Hybrid Arts programs. We probably won't see this until the turn of the year and the price – at a wild guess – is likely to be under £100.

Still with composition programs, Intelligent Music, the team responsible for M (reviewed in the May 1988 issue of Atari ST User), has announced the release of Midi Draw (expected price around £50). This compines graphic drawing and music by interpreting your artwork in real time as musical data transmitted over Midi. I can't wait to hear this.

Also from Intelligent is a new program, yet to be released, called Real Time. It's a sequencing/processing program in the mould of Upbeat and Jam Factory.

Still with distributor MCM, as reported last month it has signed up a new British music software company. We can now reveal its name (which was undecided at the time) – Pandora Technology.

It is producing a series of voice editors which operate as desk accessories and so should work with all Gem-based sequencers. Three are already available – DXessory for Yamaha's six-operator DX synths, LAccessory for Roland's D-110 (D-10 and D-20 support due soon) and Mlaccessory for Korg's Ml Midi Workstation. All cost £79.95.

If you're interested in recording you'll probably need some form of sync to tape. Dr. T's Phantom is a hardware/software package which reads and writes SMPTE/MTC through the Atari's serial port. It's compatible with Dr. T's MPE (Multi Program Environment) which gives you access to several programs at the same time. The price is yet to be decided.

Finally from MCM, if you have a spare £2,595 burning a hole in your pocket you may like to invest in what is probably the ultimate Master Keyboard, the GZ-1000. It has 88 wooden keys and the action is adjustable from light to heavy. You just "dial a feel".

A built-in 3.5in disc drive can be used to store performance set-ups and patch libraries. It has two Midi In and eight Midi Out/Thru sockets and supports four foot pedals, three foot switches and two controller wheels.

Soundbits Software, in between Big Band negotiations, was showing its latest program, a Kawai K1/K1M Editor (£75), on a corner of the Kawai stand. It follows the Soundbits philosophy of being easy to use. New too – so new in fact that these products didn't make it to the BMF – are editors for the Roland D-110 (£75) and MT-32 (£69).

Hybrid Arts' recently upgraded EZ-Track Plus (£59.95) and EZ Score Plus (£129.95) were on show running under HybriSwitch (£24.95), the shell program which lets you store 16 programs in memory at once.

Its direct hard disc recording system,



Syndromic Music demonstrating giant discs and Hybrid Arts' software

ADAP2 (£2,699.95), should at last be available in September while ADAP1 (£1,799.95) has reached version 1.3 and includes an improved SMPTE cue page.

At the Fair Hybrid Arts' distributors, Syndromic Music, clinched a deal worth £4,000 to £5,000 with the international School of Audio Engineering to supply Hybrid Arts software exclusively to its training centres.

C-Lab's Notator (£485) on the Sound Technology stand was attracting a great deal of attention – see the review on the following pages.

New software has become available from distributor Musimex who has recently acquired the Lowlands range. Available now are voice editors for the Roland D-50 (£109.50), Yamaha's TX81Z (£109.50) and a sample editor for Akai's S-700 sampler (£149.50).

To follow soon are a Yamaha FB-01 Editor (£79.50), a Midi Interpreter (£119.50), an OME Drum Pattern Editor (£39.50) and a six point (£32.50) and 16 point (£36.50) Multisampler for the S-700.

That man of a thousand Midi boxes, Philip Rees, was there with a stand covered in giant butterflies. The W5 Dual Input Thru Unit (£49.95) and the 5S Midi Selector (£25.95) which were viewed at Frankfurt are now available although the 2M Midi Merge Unit (around £80) and the MCV Midi to CV Converter (around £170) have been delayed.

These are super boxes and I will really have to take a closer look at them in these pages soon. Meanwhile, if you have more than two pieces of Midi equipment and find it necessary to unplug and reconnect them, contact Philip Rees for a solution to your problem.

Finally, news of a British version of PAN, the American-based Performing Arts Network for musicians. It's called TMN – The Music Network – and run by industry veteran Richard Elen.

It will offer electronic mail facilities, help lines, data libraries, electronic publications, user groups, music industry databases and electronic shopping. You will be able to log on with your ST by dialling a local telephone number. A special Music Link program to give icondriven access to the system is being developed.

An individual subscription will be £45 with an online charge of 12.5p per minute regardless of the amount of data downloaded or the time of day the system is accessed. (Prices are exclusive of VAT).

With so many products on the market the ST musician is spoiled for choice. There's a program for everyone, from the novice to the professional and from the serious musician to the experimentalists. And they continue to proliferate! Isn't it just wonderful?

FACT FILE

Soundbits Software, 48 Galton Tower, Civic Close, Birmingham B1 2NW. Tel: 021 233 3440.

Dr.T, Intelligent Music and Pandora are distributed by MCMXCIX, 9 Hatton Street, London NW8. Tel: 01 258 3454.

Hybrid Arts is distributed by Syndromic Music, 24-26 Avenue Mews, London N10 3NP. Tel: 01 883 1335.

C-Lab is distributed by Sound Technology PLC, 6 Letchworth Business Centre, Avenue One, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 2HR. Tel: 0462 480000.

Musimex, 46A Marlborough Road, London N22 4NN. Tel: 01 881 6060.

Philip Rees, Unit B, Park End Works, Croughton, Brackley, Northants NN13 5LX. Tel: 0869 810948.

Duet makes music that much easier

Enter Notator, the ST sequencer with score writing capabilities

THIS would seem to be the year of the scorewriter. All the major software houses have at least one. And still they come. The very latest to appear is C-Lab's Notator. Rather than produce a stand-alone scorewriter program, C-Lab has endowed its sequencer, the Creator (reviewed in the November 1987 issue of Atari ST User), with scorewriter facilities.

Notator has two functions: It converts real-time input recorded with the Creator into traditional notation and it can be used as a notation editor allowing you to enter music by placing notes directly on to the stave.

The integration of scorewriter and sequencer is far more significant than it may at first appear. Most scorewriters read a real-time file and convert it to notation. With Notator, the music is already resident in memory and is shown both in the Creator's event editor as a list of note names, durations and so on, and in Notator's score editor.

The two displays are simply different representations of the same data. If a note is corrected on the stave its Midi data in the event editor changes, and vice versa. This is incredibly useful. From a scorewriting point of view you can play a line, check it in the editor, play a bit more and so on, all very easily. As a step-time composition editor you can enter music



directly on to the stave and play it back immediately. The only major cosmetic difference to Creator is the addition of a score editor below its event editor. It can handle a 32-stave score. On the left is a partbox which is used to select the notes and music symbols.

Let's assume you have recorded some music with the Creator. As soon as you enter the edit screen it will appear both in the event editor and in music form on the stave.

The trouble is, if it's an accurate repre-

sentation it probably won't look the way you want it to.

For instance, if you played a simple bass line, say four crotchets to the bar, and hit one note just 1/32 before you should have done, the computer, lacking the ability to appreciate your artistic interpretation, will display exactly what you played.

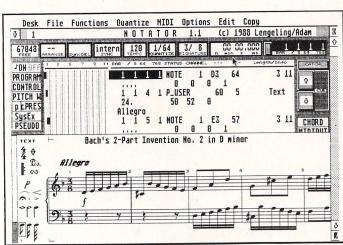
This is a problem with all scorewriters, and they all tackle the problem in the same way – with quantisation. The simplest form of quantisation pulls each note on to the nearest beat.

There are other problems. If you play staccato, does the computer show a note followed by a rest or does it give the note its full value? How does it know what its full value should be? If you really do want a rest in a staccato phrase how does the computer know?

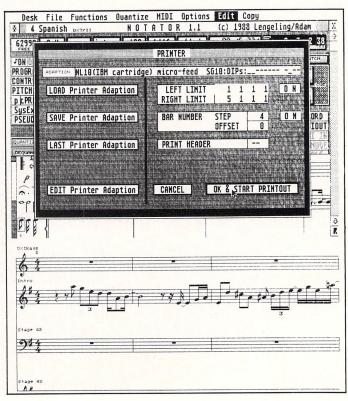
In a legato phrase if you play a note slightly before you release the previous one how does the computer know those two notes are not supposed to be displayed together?

Notator helps resolve these problems in the Display Parameters screen. Here

The printer screen



The edit screen containing the Event Editor and Score Editor



each track (shown in the editor as a stave) can be given its own set of quantisation parameters. Basic quantisation can take one of 16 different values including some which help with triplets, a timing most scorewriters have a lot of difficulty with.

There are also facilities to combat the overlap and the little rests problems. Even more intriguing is an option called Interpretation, which the manual describes as a super version of Rest and Overlap. Using a combination of these features you should be able to pull most parts into line.

Any notes which stubbornly resist are probably well out of time, but should be easy to correct in the editor. I was very impressed with Notator's ability to handle some of the things I threw at it.

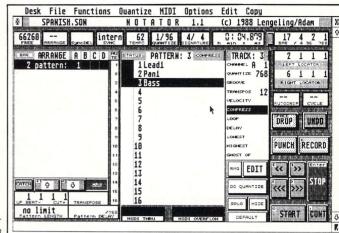
A stave can be shown normal size or in miniature, you can select any type of clef for each stave and any key signature. If you choose a minor signature the accidentals will be displayed correctly. You can't change key signatures in the middle of a track.

Let's look at entering notes directly on to the stave. If a symbol is highlighted in the partbox then clicking on the right mouse button will make it fly across the screen to the arrow. A command line appears showing the note's details – pitch, duration and position in the score.

Notes and symbols can be deleted freely and inserted anywhere in the score, but this flexibility can cause a few problems, as a note must be positioned at exactly the correct place otherwise the ones before it may be cut short or made longer. It's essential to keep an eye on the command line.

Crotchets and quavers are easy to enter, but shorter notes need more care. Triplets need lots more care and have problems of their own. You can input notes in step-time from a keyboard, but this suffers from similar problems and is even more restrictive.

Although the methods of writing direct to the stave aren't perfect they could well be made so – or pretty close – with just a little more effort. The bones of an



The Notator/Creator main screen

excellent system are already there.

Notes are automatically beamed in groups of beats although you can de-beam and re-group them and all beams are horizontal.

There are some displays Notator can't handle, like two parts on one stave, the sort of arrangements you'd find in Bach's two and three-part Inventions and on most modern sheet music. The notes are there but they are forced into one part and it looks terrible. It has no problems with chords.

The music symbols include repeats, pauses and accents which you can click anywhere on to the music. Most are for cosmetic purposes only, but two actually affect it – the Ped On and Off symbols which insert Midi sustain messages into the event editor.

If the system can do this it could also be made to convert other symbols into music or Midi information. The potential here is enormous, and I'm sure this facility will be developed in future updates.

The print routine uses printer drivers and several are supplied including one for the FX85 and some for 8/9 and 24-pin printers. One is almost sure to work with your printer. You can design your own driver but it's not at all easy. The size and quality of the printout depends on the driver used and some of the results are

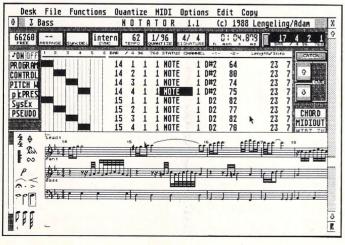
excellent as you can see.

Apart from a few operational niggles I was very impressed with Notator. The review version was l.l and came with several sheets of addenda, but still the manual needs to give more information.

Finally, the Creator part of the program has been enhanced since our last review and now contains a Groove function which gives you 16 preset swing factors and 16 user-definable ones. It has a Humanize function which applies random offsets to a track – to humanize a piece entered in the score editor, perhaps.

New, too, is the real-time Midi generator (RMG) which looks like a mixing desk with 16 faders, one for each track. It allows you to generate Midi events in real-time, as its name suggests. If your instruments respond to Midi controller 7 you'll be able to do a real-time mix on a piece.

Notator may appear expensive, but it does contain two programs. That's £242.50 each, which is on the cheap side of average for a professional music program. Its integration gives it many benefits over two separate programs and its design has laid the foundations for a tremendously powerful – and potentially definitive – scorewriter/notation program.



The edit screen containing the Event Editor and the Score Editor – miniature staves

FACT FILE

Product: Notator Price: £485

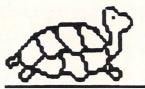
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Taking La Manche – the Channel – in her stride Pam Turnbull dropped in on UBISoft, a software house with a future

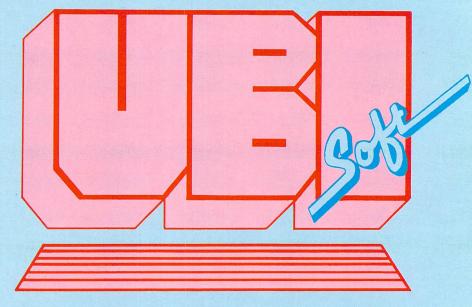
HERE are many different faces to the computer industry, and the most glamorous aspect is the actual programming. Yet overnight success and instant riches come to very few. This is not to say that there is no good life to be had – and having your programming base in a 19th century château in the heart of Brittany takes some beating.

The UBI Chateau, as it is now named, is the development centre for a company which started programming two years ago and expects sales of \$10 million this year.

This is no rags-to-riches tale. The company is run by the Guillemot brothers, Yves, Gérard and Michael. Starting in software distribution five years ago they are now the largest distributors in France.

UBISoft was Yves' concept and was founded in March 1986 as an independent publishing company within the Guillemot group. Apprehension was felt as to how this distributor was going to be accepted by the French market in its new publishing role.

The connection was not immediately realised and its first release Zombi had an excellent response in the French and



The French Connection

European press. Indeed it was this game which introduced the concept of controlling all commands in an adventure game by icons alone.

Plans for expansion into the USA and British markets spurred UBI to hold an extravagant press launch in Brittany in late June, spanning the whole weekend. Reporters from Sweden to Spain were introduced to UBI's next seven products as well as to the development teams working on these projects.

Le software

Most French software houses are famed for their excellent graphics, stylish packaging and above all quality, and UBISoft is no exception. Some of its games will be

Iron Lord

First off the board is Iron Lord set in an uncertain chivalrous time and place. Here young would-be knights must prove themselves by dashing around on their stallions clad in chain mail.

A famed and wise old man informs you of your future struggle against the evil to come.

Iron Lord splits quite happily into three different games. The first has you trying to prove yourself. This you will achieve by succeeding in archery, swordplay, arm wrestling and dice throwing. Your success may



What's on le menu?

well impress the locals who can impart useful information and aid for the second part of the game.

Having proved your knightly prowess, you should have mercenaries and knights willing to fight on the chess board for you. Reminiscent of SSI games, you place your troops in the most strategic position. The third part puts you in a maze to fight associated groblies.

The digitised grunts and groans, and the clang of weapons have all been composed by the authors, programmer Iven Jatot and graphic artist Orou Mama. The graphics are smooth

and well drawn, but with quite a few mediaeval adventures around this one could be up against a lot of opposition.

Three different games concepts are involved here and all look very promising – yet there will have to be something special here to catch the discerning adventure player.

BAT - Bureau des Affaires Temporelles

Due for release in February 1989, this is a detective story in which, using the mouse alone, you try to discover what has happened to a colony in a future time. What has happened, what has



released soon on the ST.

Games are developed as a team project and this has led to a consistently high standard.

How will the games be received in the English market? I was pleased to hear that translations come from someone with English as their first language – more than one excellent game has been spoilt by idiosyncratic English. A nice touch is that the American spelling will be confined to the American products.

UBI's market research has led product manager Gerard Guillemot to consider the different needs and desires in the countries to which they export. So subtle, and not so subtle, variations can be expected in different versions.

An interesting postscript is that the

budget titles are non-existent in France. Your average software buyer will buy a game on its merits regardless of price, and this goes a long way to explain the quality of many of the French games now making their way into Britain.

More than 250 programmers are creating software for UBI, all contracted for their particular projects. Though they are not all French, all live in France. Up to four programmers can be working on different aspects of a game at once, either at the château or at their homes.

Michael Guillemot was asked if there were any problems with living at the chateau. It seems that how long a programmer stays is up to him: Some stay for a few days while others feel the need to

work there for several months.

No standard hours are kept, and it is not unusual for work to go on all night and the day to be spent relaxing, walking among the 700 acres of forest, canoeing or water skiing.

No families live at the château, though there are tentative future plans for building family bungalows in the grounds. But as managing director Christine Quemard, commented, living 45 minutes drive from the nearest civilisation is great for work and concentration, but it can lead to your social life suffering.

Le future

Having just returned from a successful visit to the USA, with a very favourable response to its products at the Chicago Show, UBI has just agreed a deal with Epyx to distribute its titles in North America.

It is trying to decide who will be distributing in the UK – it could be Mirrorsoft, Electronic Arts, US Gold, Rainbird or a rank outsider. The winner will be announced at the Personal Computer Show in September, where you can see the games on display.

John Forrest, lately of Electronic Arts, who has been around the British computer industry for some years now, has joined UBI as Britain's representative in this very French enterprise.

French games have had a mixed response in Britain. Often a result of excellent graphics and sound failing to combine with the gameplay needed to make a true classic. Only time will tell if UBISoft has that special touch.



UBI Château: Home of a \$10 million a year empire

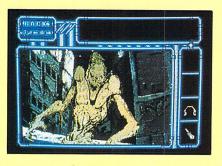
gone wrong and who is to blame? These are only a few of the questions you must answer as you search beautiful screens for answers and clues. Strange alien creatures will speak to you and danger is never far away.

Programmed by bearded Herve Lange, the screens are atmospheric and moody. Totally mouse-driven adventures are not as popular in Britain as they are in France. Hopefully this game will realise its potential and intrigue and stimulate us.

Final Command

Expected around Christmas this is another graphic adventure. You are sent on a Confederation mission to a space station destroyed by a mysterious force. The data banks have survived and you must recover them.

You face traps laid by a Confederation traitor, the imminent explosion of the station, possible aid from survivors if you can negotiate with them successfully – and you have to master operating a new space shuttle. Though



this is still at a fairly early stage of development, the graphics are of the expected standard and the ideas for sound and music should enhance gameplay.

Fer et Flamme

This is a working title for a game not expected to be available until February or March next year. Again programmed by a specific development team, the graphics and presentation should be up to the high standard. Watch out for a preview at the Personal Computer Show in September.

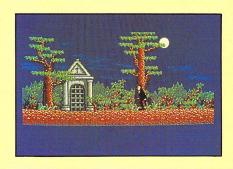
Vampire

There's an interesting slant on the familiar Dracula story. This time Vlad the Impailer's descendant is searching for the evil Doctor Van Helsing.

Seemingly Dracula aims to rule the universe – no mere world domination for him – and to do this he must find a talisman which was stolen by the Doctor some years ago and defended by his army of vampire hunters.

Casting popular mythology to the winds, you can change Dracula into bat or werewolf. As you would expect,

Turn to Page 24 ▶



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energy is replenished by fresh blood, while crosses, garlic, holy water and wooden stakes must be avoided at all costs. As if these are not enough, enemies to contend with include archers with poison darts, and birds of prey in bat form.

Vampire is a pure arcade adventure with objects to collect and a manuscript to piece together to fulfill your quest. One hint: Pay attention to the songs of the birds and changing shades on screen – which herald the dawn.

Skateball

An interesting concept – combining the skills of soccer with ice hockey. It's played on an ice rink littered with deadly obstacles and hazards.

You have to steer your team, the Red Comets, to victory against a friend or the computer, who controls the Blue Stars.

Forget good sportsmanship and clean play – bonuses are awarded for



Skateball

barging and kicking. After four goals you can move to the next level and more mysterious obstacles.

Unusual and strange, but possibly addictive if this is your cup of tea.

Puffy's Saga

This is the most finished of the games on display, and already translated in English. It is simple and fun, and considering the number of people around the computer, very addictive.

Basically it's PacMan revamped, and there is a good sprinkling of cute in the ingredients. It's something you'll



Puffy's Saga

either love or hate. The graphics are clean and bright, and the gameplay very simple.

You begin by choosing your alterego – Puffy or his female counterpart, Pufyn, with long lashes and a bow. Puffy is stronger, but Pufyn is quicker. You must then collect beads scattered around.

Naturally there are monsters to catch you and acid blobs to hinder you. Medallions give you extra speed and enable you to breathe fire. Don't worry after an encounter with these monsters as Puffy will tell you what they do in cute digitised speech.

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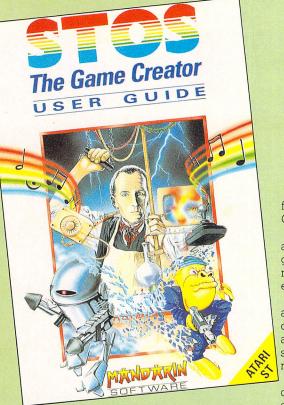
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Andy Richards reports on the arrival of a new and powerful package for games programmers

Tools of the trade

floating point routines were written by Constantin, a 39-year-old from Athens.

Stos provides all the facilities necessary to create arcade and adventure games. It is made up of several integrated modules - Basic, assembler, music editor, sprites editor and so on.

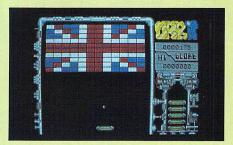
It lets you move and animate sprites, add an interrupt-driven soundtrack, define 16 areas of the screen to scroll in any direction, zoom in or reduce pictures, store screens and create pull-down

Until now, such effects - although quite common in games - required a great deal of time, effort and extremely complex machine code programming.

With the aid of Stos these tasks can now be achieved by ST owners with only a sprinkling of programming knowledge. Clearly, being a machine code programmer, musician and artist would be a



The sprite editor



The demo game - Orbit

three discs, one archived to squeeze on even more data. For instance, there is the facility to grab sprites and screen data from commercial games software such as Bomb Jack and Alien Syndrome.

These sprites are subject to copyright restrictions, so you couldn't sell your masterpiece - but it's useful and fascinating to be able to look through your favourite games and see all the many sprites hidden on the disc.

The last thing you want to do with Stos is attempt to run the standard benchmark test programs to measure its performance and compare it to its competitors.

It hasn't any rivals as it isn't primarily intended to be a Basic interpreter there's also a compiler due to arrive in October - it is a games creator!

Stos is designed with the typical ST owner in mind, but it is also a powerful development tool for software companies. And, whatever Atari may wish, the ST is perceived as a games machine by the general public.

We should see a major change in magazine listings as it is now possible to write short, compact Basic listings of almost arcade quality, judging from the standard of the demonstrations on the

Imagine a type-in listing of an Arkanoid-like game in Atari ST User. This is possible - there's one on the Stos disc to prove it - and what's more I'm told it took just two days to write.



Assembler package author Constantin Sotiropoulis (left) and Francois Lionet author of Stos Basic

AME writing on the Atari ST will Gnever be the same again following this month's launch of Stos - The Games Creator. The breakthrough - culmination of two years work - stems from an Anglo-French joint venture between Mandarin Software and a leading French software company, Jawx.

The Stos concept was developed by Francois Lionet and Constantin Sotiropoulos for Jawx. Francois, a 24-yearold veterinary surgeon, is no stranger to games programming - having written the PC and C64 conversions of Captain Blood and provided hits for Bug Byte and Firebird. The major part of Stos Basic is his work. The built-in line assembler and

great advantage - but the tools are just as easy for the novice to use.

Earlier this year Stos was released in France in a less sophisticated form but sufficiently good enough for a number of French sofware houses to use for writing commercial games.

Mandarin and Jawx have been working for the last six months to develop the product further - bringing the total number of commands up to 340, rewriting the sprite definer, improving the music editor, adding three sample games and including many example files to create a really powerful games-creating

Stos is so comprehensive it comes on



Product: Starglider 2
Price: £24.95
Supplier: Rainbird: First Floor, 74 New
Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PS.
Tel: 01-379 5683

E have waited a long time for this sequel to Starglider – one of the first decent arcade games for the ST on the market. Was it worth it? The answer must be a resounding Yes. The game is far beyond anything I imagined.

The scenario isn't too far removed from the orginal game, but the main difference hits you in the eye straight away – and that's the superb 3D solid graphics. Where once we were satisfied with Starglider's wireframe display technique, we have now come to expect solids, and here Starglider 2 excels.

As before, you pilot an advanced

spaceship of superior design but initially minimal armament, and find yourself on the surface of an extremely hostile planet.

The place is packed full of all manner of buildings, air and land craft, all armed to the teeth and on the lookout for some poor, hapless space pilot on whom to take out their frustration. Basically, it's not a nice neighbourhood to hang around in.

So the first task, after shooting up a

few locals, is to find out what the game's all about.

Watch for a roundish building with a hole in the top – it's the entrance to a tunnel leading into the heart of the planet.

These passages are a devil to navigate as they go on forever, or so it seems, and all look alike. The best clue I can give is to keep left and watch out for large black panels on the floor – these will lead you to a

The Walker

depot where you'll be given instructions.

The scientists here will build you a powerful neutron bomb with which you can destroy the enemy space station that threatens to bring anihilation to the rest of the galaxy.

Unfortunately, the scientists don't have the materials to build it, and you must collect them and bring them back. The objects required include a crate of nuclear fuel, mineral rock, an Ergron mini rocket, an asteroid, a diamond and so on. These are scattered over several planet surfaces – you're not restricted to the one planet.

Once you find them they can be drawn aboard using a tractor beam and stored in the hold of your ship, the Icarus.

To fly to another world you head skywards at maximum thrust until you enter space. Then you can slow down, look for your destination



SOFTWARE REVIEWS

SECOND Sight

What a brilliant game, I just wish I new what was going on! Everything seems to shoot and nothing appears to be friendly so I employed the old tactic of blasting everything that moved, plus a few other objects as well for good measure.

It's quite a reasonable shoot-'emup so I'll think I'll leave the Novenians to their own devices while I blast a few of these wretched Ergrons or whatever they are called

Andy Richards

planet – using your on-board computer to identify it – and engage the stardrive to speed you there as fast as possible.

Watch out for space pirates while jetting around the upper stratosphere, you haven't really got the time – or the energy – to engage them in battle.

As in Starglider, towers with beams of pure energy running between them can be used to replenish your dwindling supplies by flying along them. Unlike the original, the beams are like jagged electric sparks across pylon tops, so flying down the beam is tricky, as you must hop over each pylon.

The graphics are brilliant – well defined, superbly animated, and very fast too. Numerous aliens can be seen using a utility called Paint with Rolf, available from the options menu. This has little to do with the game, but it does allow you to see and identify the alien types. During the game your on-board computer will also identify unknown objects.

The packaging is superb as usual, with a nice box, 44 page novella, playguide and key guide. The only criticism I can make is that the game is quite difficult to get into, and at first you'll be lost and confused.

Stick at it, all becomes clear after a while and it soon becomes quite addictive.

As a welcome bonus, it is one of the few games around that runs on a mono monitor just as well as on a colour one. It automatically detects which system it is running and adjusts itself accordingly.

Roland Waddilove

	The state of the s
Sound	10
Graphics	10
Playability	
Value for money	
Overall	

It's a killer

Program: Bionic Commando Price: £19.95 Supplier: US Gold, Unit 2-3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021-356 3388

HE justification for indulging in wholesale slaughter and general mayhem reaches its thinnest with this latest Capcom arcade conversion from US Gold

The bottom line is, that armed with a telescopic arm you must guide your bionic commando through five levels of an enemy base and destroy the alien missile launch computer, thus bringing peace to your ruined land.

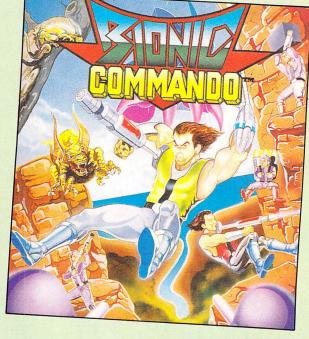
You control a compact looking figure who, accompanied by an infectious little ditty, has to make his way up and along. In the first level the scenery consists of branches, boles and foliage which have to be run along, and more importantly, climbed. Your bionic arm, grabs the tree branches and hauls you up.

The problem with this arm business is that it shoots out a specific distance, and if it doesn't hit anything then out it goes again but a bit further, until you release the fire button or hit some scenery. The upshot is that you spend far too long fishing with your arm while the enemy drop from above and start shooting.

The defending aliens endeavouring to stop you, drop like flies from above, while at branch level extra large heavies charge in and booby traps and mines get in the way.

The flip screen scrolling can be annoying when there is a choice of direction, but you can't see which is the best. Still, at least the graphics are OK – even quite attractive on further levels, if you can get that far.

In the best tradition, extra weapons are there for the taking, assuming you



get lucky. Like everything else in this game they descend from the top of the screen by parachute, so if you've got time to spare send out the bionic arm to pick them up.

Usually they drop down on the opposite side of the screen of course, but I suppose it's meant to be random.

As you reach the uppermost branches, and the completion of the level, killer bees and savage flying squirrels have to be contended with. On further levels – which all load from disc – the scenery changes to include a castle, sewers, control room and finally the silo.

Bionic Commando is a worthy enough game, but suffers from dodgy playability and all too often unavoidable death. Recommended only if you fancy a pretty stiff challenge with loads of scenery.

Mark Luckham



This is definitely a kill or be killed romp for only the most skilled of arcade junkies. You need to be quick on the fire button if you are to survive for long. Some of the sprite movement is clumsy, and consequently I would suggest that you try before you buy.

Nic Outterside

Graphics	8
Sound	7
Playability	
Value for money	
Overall	7



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Program: Starquake Price: £19.95 Supplier: Mandarin Software. Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Tel: 0625 879920

IANDARIN Software is a new company, launched recently to create a major Inew force in games software. It has been pretty busy already, signing contracts with several top software companies, and the results so far are certainly impressive.

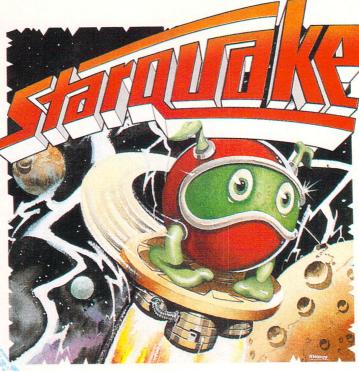
One such deal is with Bubble Bus - a long-established firm in the 8 bit market, which recently stopped publishing its own games and is now concentrating on 16 bit software.

Its main claim to fame was an arcade adventure called Starquake - very highly acclaimed on all 8 bit formats and now Mandarin is releasing an updated ST version.

You are cast as the none too glamorous sounding Blob, or Bio-Logically Operated Being. Your spaceship has just crashed on to a planet which is about to implode, that is unless someone can re-stabilise it. Just for a change, that someone is ... you.

Re-stabilising is no mean feat. You have to rebuild the planet's core using various bits and pieces scattered around the place.

The game starts well. There is a pretty loading screen, showing a remarkably accurate rendition of the game's packaging artwork, followed by a pleasant simulation of your craft's



computer breaking down. At which point you're all on your own.

You need to find your way right to the core of the planet, using various passages and tunnels. Meanwhile, assorted aliens which defy any meaningful earthly description start buzzing around you. Luckily, all is not lost, as you have a ray gun to ward off anything which gets a bit too close. You'll need to watch this though, as your ammo supply is strictly limited. I soon discovered that running out of ammo is not a good idea, even with several lives.

The graphics are small but very

detailed and well drawn. The advantage of small sprites is that you can have a much larger playing area on screen at any one time, giving you a better general idea of what is going on.

Scrolling is well up to scratch, and your Blob is nicely animated as it walks along. Usually Blob can only walk to the left or right or drop downwards, but once you have found a hoverpad, you can really go exploring in earnest.

The backdrops vary quite considerably; some are surprisingly bare, while others are amazingly full. However, the basic rock surfaces are



Starquake certainly seems to provide satisfaction all round sound, graphics, playability, and above all that elusive addictiveness which makes it a classic. True, it hasn't been designed specifically for 16 bit machines, but this doesn't seem to detract from the game's enjoyability in any way.

Nic Outterside

well designed throughout. In the event, the emptier screens are often the most useful, since you have more space in which to manoeuvre.

Once the aliens descend they can clutter the place up no end, and no matter how many you zap there always seem to be more to take their place. Some superb little installations crop up from time to time - and some very mean looking plants.

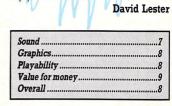
Graphic effects are excellent. When you lose a life several puffs of smoke get the point across quite clearly, and I love the way that Blob materialises on each screen for each new life.

The game-over sequence is a particularly pleasant graphic routine - in fact there are lots of attractive little touches like these throughout the game.

Sound is varied and quite a few different ditties play at various points in the gameplay. The sound effects, while not exactly original, are pretty well done and add considerably to the game's addictive qualities.

All in all, Starquake is a superb arcade adventure, which looks like catapulting Mandarin to an enviable position among 16 bit software houses. My only reservation is that it is still in essence a conversion of an 8 bit game. But it is by no means alone in that, and is certainly a very good conversion, with several enhancements over the original.

I am looking forward to future offerings from Bubble Bus/Mandarin designed to fully exploit the power and capabilities of the ST. In the meantime Starquake will do perfectly as a highly enjoyable time-filler.





Program: Summer Olympiad
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Tynesoft, Addison Industrial
Estate, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear NE21
4TE.
Tel: 091-414-4611

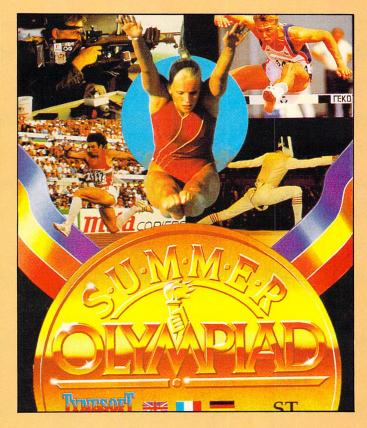
ITH the Seoul Olympics upon us, Tynesoft is cashing in with another sports simulation timed nicely to tie in with the event. When I reviewed Winter Olympiad in the March 1988 issue of Atari ST User I have to admit feeling that the ST probably couldn't do much better. So when the sequel arrived I was expecting pretty much the same kind of thing. Was I wrong!

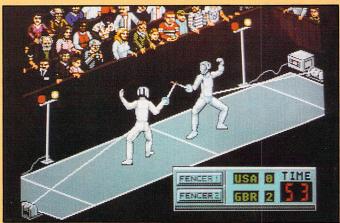
The new game comes on two discs containing a staggering 1.5Mb of compacted programs and data, which is extremely good value for money. There are five events – skeet shooting, diving, fencing, 100 metres hurdles and triple jump. The compulsory opening ceremony is in there too, of course.

As the game loads, the screen opens out requesting the competitors' names – up to six people can play at once. Following on is a well thought out country selection screen, with the flag of the currently selected nation waving in the breeze. While this doesn't add anything to the game, it gives the feel of a professional and well designed product – a taste of what is about to be unveiled.

An animated start-up screen displays the five events on one of six TV monitors, the sixth being used for the opening ceremony. Pointing at the relevant screen and clicking on it stops the animation and selects the event. This way you only play the games you want to, instead of having to keep on going though the whole lot.

On now to the first event, skeet shooting. The idea is to shoot down a clay disc using a double-barrelled shotgun. In essence, this is a variation on the old duck shoot theme, although there's the option at the start to use a joystick or mouse—it's easier with the mouse—and as the game starts, prepare to be





Fencing

amazed. The marksman stands a full half height in the screen and as you move the target circle his whole body moves, aiming the gun. As the circle reaches the left or right hand edge, the

screen smoothly scrolls sideways. To add to the effect, clouds can be seen drifting past in the distance.

"Pull", a skeet whistles across the screen from one of the three launchers, subtending a beautiful arc through the air. In fact for the first few rounds of this I was so dazzled by the incredible graphics I completely missed the point of what I was up to. Although, with a bit of practice I was soon knocking them out like ninepins.

For each clay launched you get one shot, and two can be in the air at once.

Next up comes the diving. Walk to the end of the board, fall off, andploop. What could be easier? However, your marks are determined by the number of rolls, pikes and twists



I have seen most of the sports simulations available for the ST and this one stands head and shoulders above the rest of the pack. The graphics are stunning, the action thrilling and the gameplay totally addictive. This must rank as one of the most outstanding games of 1988.

Nic Outterside

you complete and your style of entry.

A random wiggle of the joystick won't help as the diver plummets in a roll towards the water. This one takes skill and practice to get the entry right.

For me the next event was the toughest. The triple jump is one of the wiggle-the-stick type of procedures. Once the target speed is reached press the fire button and adjust the launch angle. Up to the board and hop-skip-jump straight into the sandpit. Sadly I just couldn't get it together and usually ended up skating into the sand on my backside.

On to the fencing and with the typical Forester hack-cut-slash I soon found the computer spiking me neatly into a corner. Once again, I discovered the only way of beating the machine was playing the sensible game of parry-riposte-parry.

Problem is you have to win three bouts to qualify, and the computer seems to get better with each one.

The last, furious joystick-bashing finale to the Summer Olympiad, is graphically the best. The hurdles do not sound very exciting until you place the camera view behind the competitors.

Couple this to a 3D sequence where the camera drifts into position behind the player – which has to be seen to be believed – and you have an amazing event. As usual, speed is controlled by frantic joystick wiggling, the fire button being used to jump.

I have no doubt this new game is going to be the market leader in its field. The graphics are amazing, the gameplay superb and the production first rate, although the music is a little lacking

On your marks, get set, go – down to the shop and buy it.

Julia Forester

Graphics	10
Sound	
Playability	10
Value for money	10
Overall	



Skeet shooting

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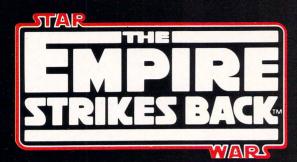
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Product: The Empire Strikes Back Price: £24.95 Supplier: Domark, 22 Hartfield Road, London SW19 3TA. Tel: 01-947 5624

TAR Wars, the home micro version of the Atari coin-op arcade game – was a huge success when it was released last January, so it is hardly surprising that Domark has also now come up with an equally exciting sequel called The Empire Strikes Back.

This is another conversion of a coin-op machine, and is very similar in style to the original game. It features 3D wireframe graphics and the four levels represent different scenes

from the film of the same name.

The first level takes place on the rebel hideout surface, with you zooming around on your snowspeeder. Your aim is to stop the probots from sending pictures of the rebel's power generator to Darth Vader. Not only do the probots transmit messages back to Darth, they also take quite a few potshots at you too.

After dispatching these mechanical menaces, it's on to the next level and the Imperial Walkers. There are two types, the massive AT-ATs, and the smaller but more agile AT-STs.

Both types are easy to hit, particularly the AT-ATs, but as their armour plating is quite extensive your laser has little effect. They do have a vunerable spot however, and with a little practice are easily dealt with.

You have a limited number of tow ropes, and these can be fired at the AT-ATs legs, tripping them up so they fall to their destruction. There's also a tricky flying manoeuvre that can be performed for a nice bonus – flying through the AT-AT's legs.

The third level is set in space and involves blasting your way through a squadron of Tie fighters. This is almost identical to level one of the original Star Wars game and there are no surprises here.

The final level involves piloting through an asteroid field without the aid of lasers. This is by far the most difficult section to negotiate, but once through you're back to the start again and the easy levels once more.

If you do make it right through you gain a healthy bonus if you choose anything but the beginners' easy level. Starting at the beginning you have to go round again, but this time the Empire's forces know you are coming and are twice as vicious.

As before, there's plenty of digitised speech taken directly from the film.

The sound consists of explosions



The original Star Wars was a great game and I was hooked on it from the start. Empire though, is too much like the original; I would have appreciated something a little different from Domark.

However, it is competently programmed, has good graphics and sound and fairly addictive gameplay. I found it a bit too easy though.

Roland Waddilove

and zaps, plus the film's title theme.

Fans of the original game will welcome this with open arms, and if you haven't seen it before, then why on earth not? It's a brilliant game, so buy it.

Andy Richards

Sound	8
Graphics	
Playability	
Value for money	
Overall	

© The Walt Disney Company

Mickey Mouse The Computer Game

Program: Mickey Mouse Price: £19.99 Supplier: Gremlin Graphics, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: 0742 753423

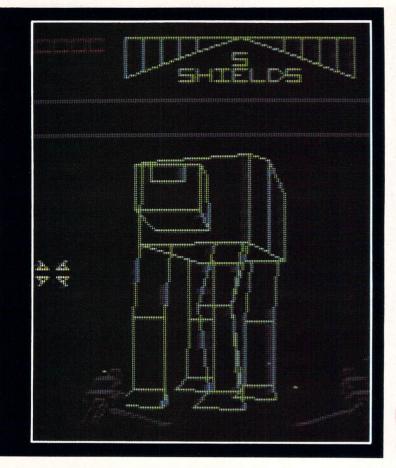
ELL if this ain't cute...
Mary Poppins can't fly!
Here's the storyboard:
The wicked witches of
the North, South, East and West (wasn't
one of them a goody?) have stolen Merlin's magic wand.

The 'orrible Ogre King used it to cast a sleeping spell over Disneyland then broke it into four and gave a piece to each of the witches. They immediately holed up in the four tallest towers in Disneyland – populated, of course, by numerous monsters and meanies made with some of Merlin's enchanted water.

As Mickey Mouse you must climb the towers, kill the meanies and witches then retrieve the four pieces of wand. You have a rubber mallet and a water pistol filled with magic water. Some monsters you squirt to death; others must be pounded into submission.

When you zap a monster it turns into the enchanted water from which it was made – you must collect it to refill your water pistol – or some other goody like a key, a bomb or a shield.

As you move up the towers you'll see side doors. Inside is one of four sub-



games. If you complete them successfully you'll get a hammer and nails and Mickey will board up the door as he leaves. You must nail shut all the doors before you can tackle the witch.

Some of the sub-games are quite difficult in their own right. There's a puddle maze in which you must burst the water monsters. In the bubble machine you stand on a moving platform and must hammer the bubbles which escape from a leaky pipe below.

In the pump room you must hammer corks into a leaky pipe – while little monsters keep pulling them out – and in the dripping tap room you must turn off four taps in a specific order.

The graphics are excellent, even down to the flickering candle shadow on the wall. I love the idiotic grin on Mickey's face as he bashes a monster. The music is, of course, Dukas' Sorcerer's Apprentice, well implemented since no sampled sounds are used.

Reaching the top of a tower, boarding up the doors, defeating the monsters and knobbling the witch takes some doing. If you complete even one tower you deserve a pat on the back.

My only niggle is having to start each time at the bottom of the first tower. Why not have passwords to let you start at any of the Towers?

The game concept isn't terribly original, but as a variation on the plat-



Mickey Mouse in an unfamiliar role as the neighbourhood vigilante, freeing Disneyland of wicked witches and meany monsters. It has to be seen to be believed. The game had me in stitches and was superb game play to boot. The graphics are excellent and the animation good.

Nic Outterside

forms and ladders theme it has a novel touch. In spite of its subject matter, it's not a game for the kiddie winkies, being just as difficult as any game of its it.

If you like Mickey Mouse it's a must. Even if you don't, it's well worth buying and will keep you well occupied for many hours.

Ian Waugh

Sound	9
Graphics	10
Playability	
Value for money	8
Overall	

Monster epic

Program: Vampire's Empire
Price: £19.95
Supplier: Gremlin Graphics, Alpha
House, 10 Carter Street, Sheffield S1
4FS.
Tel: 0742 753423

AMMER horror film fans should need no prompting to recall that Dracula's nemesis was one Dr Van Helsing, made famous by Peter Cushing. This game sets Van Helsing once more in pursuit of the fanged fiend.

Vampire's Empire is another variant on the familiar platforms and ladders format, although graphically it is superior to most and adds a few new incredients.

The game is set in a huge castle with more than 160 screens to strut around. Van Helsing is depicted as a longhaired, wild-eyed and white-bearded old man who moves with suprising speed.

As well as running left, right, up and down, he can kick out and hurl garlic cloves at approaching vampires.

By strategic positioning of mirrors and crystal balls, he can direct a light ray into the deepest caverns of Dracula's underground lair, thereby ridding the world of this infamous creature of the night.

Van Helsing is nicely animated – he comes skidding to a halt after a sprint – although control of all his actions is not always easy.

Flip screen, as opposed to continuous scrolling is used and as it is very fast, it doesn't disrupt the flow of action. The caverns are attractively designed and quite atmospheric – lots of slimy staircases, sculptured columns and pillars.

I particularly liked the gargoyles that spew poison or some other form of unpleasant liquid upon the hero when he passes below. Monsters – mostly vampires - pop out of the many caskets scattered around the castle and can usually be despatched by a quick throw of garlic.

Skidding off the edge of a ledge, falling down a slide or through a trap door are the main ways of getting deeper into the complex in a hurry.

There doesn't seem to be a time limit to the game so you get to see as much of the set in a single sitting as you wish. Subsequently this is more a game of strategy than of fast reflexes.

Sound consists mainly of a jolly tune with intermittent "woo-woo" and other effects in keeping with the game's theme. Not bad but nothing special in this department.

Despite the attractive screens, puzzles and the humorous touches, Vampire's Empire lacks excitement, the controls are a bit awkward and there simply isn't enough variety in the gameplay. Worth giving it a try, as the game does have some good points.

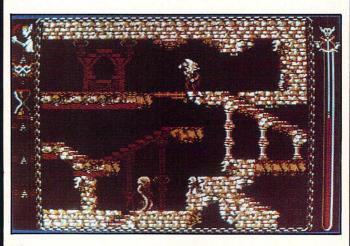
Bob Chappell

Sound	6
Graphics	8
Playability	6
Value for money	6
Overall	



This isn't in the top league of arcade adventures but it certainly has some novel touches, and gameplay is addictive. Some actions are a little clumsy and I feel that as a whole Vampire's Empire lacks full development touches. I'd say try it before you buy it.

Nic Outterside





Product: SideWinder Price: £9.99 Supplier: Mastertronic, 8-10 Paul Street, London EC2A 4JH Tel: 01-377 8411

LTHOUGH these days vertical shoot-'em-ups rarely possess any special qualities other than pretty graphics, I still can't put the joystick down once I've started playing them. SideWinder is no exception.

For aeons alien planets have been fighting a never-ending battle between themselves. However, reports are now being received on Earth that a huge craft named Star Killer has broken away from the battle lines on to a flight path which will bring it towards us.

The Star Killer is the size of a small planet and has enough defence capability to allow it to travel without

On Earth all available firepower has been mustered in an attempt to terminate its journey before it pursues its devastating course through our planet.

Unfortunately our lasers and torpedoes are said to have had the same affect as gnat bites. Yet it has fighter could penetrate the ship's dock-

ing system and then move through into the centre of the craft.

In order to get to this point the pilot will have to negotiate several levels of the Star Killer, each housing various aliens and their arsenals.

You have been brave enough to accept this suicidal misson in a last attempt to save us all from devastation.

As you pilot your fighter through the been noticed that a single-seater complex levels of the small planet you will be able to collect various power

rapid auto fire and P for power shots which will destroy a target with just one

G will turn you semi-transparent and invulnerable to enemy fire, while H will stop your ship from travelling forwards, thus allowing you to hit targets which would otherwise be missed.

The power packs will have an effect for either 15 seconds or two levels.

At the beginning there is an option for selecting one of five levels of play, ranging from beginner - a level added just for the editor - to master.

And if you enjoy humiliating your friends or family you can do so using the two-player facility.

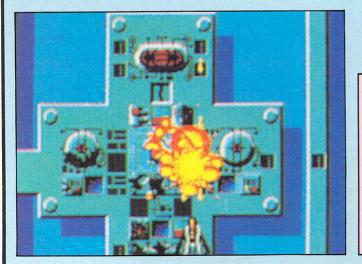
The explosions have been thought out very well, both graphically and sound-wise, but the graphics are let down by jerky sideways scrolling.

Other disappointments with the game are that it does not record any high scores and it can only be played using a joystick.

Otherwise an exceptional budget title which is a definite must for all shoot-em-up addicts.

John Butters

Sound	6
Graphics	7
Playability	8
Value for money	10
Overall	





Another vertical shoot-'em-up, and a fairly good one at that, especially considering its budget price. The scrolling is a bit on the jerky side, but this doesn't interfere with the overall enjoyment of the game.

There are ground targets, lots of things flying around in the air to pulverise, and the colour is varied. If you like this genre of blast-it games, Sidewinder should certainly appeal.

Nic Outterside

Program: Shadowgate Price: £24.99 Supplier: Mirrorsoft, Athene House, 66-73 Shoe Lane, London EC4P 4AB. Tel: 01-377 4645

HE very last thing you remember is standing before the Wizard Lakmir as he gestured wildly and chanted in an archaic tongue. Now you find yourself staring at an entryway which lies at the edge of a forest.

The druid's words still ring in your ears: "Within the walls of the Castle Shadowgate lies your quest. If the prophecies hold true, the dreaded Warlock Lord will use his dark magic to raise the Behemoth, the deadliest of the Titans, from the depths of the earth. Only you can stop the Warlock Lord from darkening our world for ever"

Shadowgate is the latest graphics and text adventure from Mirrorsoft and is very much in the windows and icons style of its earlier release Déjà Vu as reviewed in the February 1988 issue of Atari ST User.

The use of windows and icons makes Mirrorsoft's adventures rather different from the run of the mill, and although at first sight the play may seem rather restricted, in practice it isn't.

The display revolves around the use of windows which can be moved and manipulated like the normal desktop variety

These separate panels consist of a colourful, graphic depiction of the current location, your inventory, the possible exits, a list of available commands, an area set aside for the program's responses in text form and a box representing yourself.

Movement around this adventure's world is easy. You can either double click on the appropriate place in the main picture - if a door is closed, this will be interpreted as a request to open it; if it's already open, you will pass through it - or on the relevant square in the Exits window.

You have only eight commands at your disposal - examine, operate, hit, open, close, consume, speak and go but when used with the variety of objects in the game, the combinations of possible commands really start to build up.

Many of the objects that are shown graphically in any location can not only be examined and generally messed around with but can be physically picked up and moved. All this is done using the mouse.

Clicking on the command Examine and then clicking on a mailbox shown in the current location results in the item being highlighted in the main pic-



ture and a verbal description of the results of your examination appearing in the text panel.

Should you then click on the Open command and the mailbox, a new window will open up showing you the contents of the mailbox – in this case an envelope.

You can examine it in its own window but if you open the envelope, a further window will appear, holding the contents of the envelope – a letter and an amulet. Alternatively, you could drag the envelope to your Inventory window and open it up there.

This is all great fun to play around with and should your Inventory window get in a mess with overcrowded or overlaid objects at any time, an option from a special pull-down menu will tidy it up automatically for you.

There is also a mess up command for those who just hate things looking too neat.

So there you are, outside an ominous-looking wooden door crested by a skull-like device. You can go straight in but my advice would be to examine and then open the skull, as you'll need the contents.

Through the door is a torchbedecked entrance hall of an ancient and oppressive-feeling castle. Make sure that you grab all the torches and any other light sources you can find as you go or you'll soon be in big trouble.

Before you can take another step, a

pair of huge, orange cat's eyes light up and you are warned: "The Wizard was a fool to send a buffoon like you to stop me. You will surely die". A horrible laugh rings out – the first of many digitised sound effects which add pleasurably to the atmosphere of the game.

The castle is full of traps and surprises. Innocent-looking candles and books may lead to your downfall if you're not careful. A dragon's lair is full of promise and alluring items, but a blast of fiery breath from the incumbent can easily lead to a quick roasting and a crispy end.

An object on the far shore of an underground lake looks tempting enough were it not for the lone cruising shark putting you off a morning dip.

A chamber of upright, closed tombs gave me my biggest scare - turn your

SECOND Sight

I must admit that I do like the idea of adventures within a Wimp environment, because you are virtually free of the keyboard. Like Déjà Vu this one is an excellent example of the genre.

The graphics are impressive, the windowing interface is a powerful one, and the adventure itself is exciting and full of puzzles and surprises. Well worth the money.

Nic Outterside

volume control full up when you start messing about in this place and I guarantee you'll get the fright of your life courtesy of one demented and wailing banshee.

One final tip: Examine everything you possibly can, even down to the slightest irregular smudge on a wall or smidgeon of goo on the floor – you never know what it might reveal.

Shadowgate is a stimulating adventure, far from easy but never less than challenging. The user interface will seem strange to those who've never played Déjà Vu, but you'll quickly grow familiar with it and find it very comfortable to use.

Highly enjoyable and a must for every adventurer's collection.

Bob Chappell

Presentation	9
Atmosphere	
Puzzlement	
Value for money	
Overall	



A stimulating adventure, far from easy

Get on the ball!

Program: Hotshot Price: £19.99 Supplier: Prism Leisure, Unit I, Baird Road, Enfield, Middlesex ENI ISJ. Tel: 01-805 8100

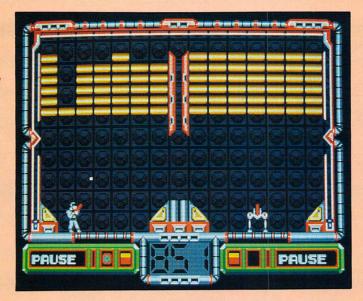
OTSHOT is a ball game with a difference, a game where inexperience can have fatal consequences, in which humanoid, alien and machine can compete together for the prestigious title of Hotshot.

A contest consists of five separate rounds, each being followed by a short bonus game – provided you have scored sufficient points. Whether or not you progress to the next round depends upon your ability to reach the target scores set for each level.

The game is always played between two contestants – these may be controlled by two humans, the computer, or more usually both.

Each character is equipped with a launcher that can be used to either catch or fire a ball.

I use the word ball loosely as you



would be ill advised to catch this particular sphere – touch it with anything other than your launcher and you'll lose your head – literally.

Round one is set in a single large arena divided into two halves by a barrier, a large hole in the middle of which allows the single ball to pass between the two halves.

Suspended high above your head is a Breakout style brick wall and the aim is to keep the ball in your half of the arena and demolish as much of the wall as possible.

The best tactic is to get the ball behind the wall and then drag it from

side to side using your launcher's magnetic properties.

The bonus game takes the form of a giant pinball table – you stand at the bottom and launch the ball high into the bumpers. High scores can be achieved by firing the ball into a small, difficult-to-reach circle.

Pinball is the name of the game in round two. This time the arena is divided into two separate halves, each with its own ball. Round one was played against a time limit of 60 seconds, irrespective of how many lives you lost. The second round can last indefinitely, providing, of course,

SECOND Signt

Breakout was always an excellent game, and Hotshot succeeds in taking it into the next generation with some style. Keeping your head while all around you are losing theirs is the secret of survival. This game has many levels of fun and sprite animation is stunning.

Nic Outterside

you can hold on to your three lives.

Round number five is a duel to the death. Suspended between the players is a black hole, the gravitational properties of which create havoc with the ball's trajectory.

Each time you decapitate your opponent the hole drifts his way. A couple of well placed shots will see him sucked into oblivion and you hailed as champion.

Hotshot breaks no new ground regarding graphics and the sound is no more than adequate, but its gameplay is excellent – skill and tactics play an important part in the outcome.

Jon Revis

Sound5
Graphics7
Playability8
Value for money6
Overall7

Turbo drive Breakout

Program: Arkanoid – Revenge of Doh Price: £19.95 Supplier: Ocean, 6 Central Street, Manchester M2 5NS. Tel: 061-832 6633

HIS is the follow-up to Ocean's hugely popular coin-op conversion, Arkanoid. Ignore the overdone storyline, this is Breakout with turbos, slick, colourful graphics and sound effects.

Revenge of Doh oozes professionalism, from the smooth loading screen to the catchy and addictive tune you are hooked.

You are limited to play using the mouse, but I found this was more suited to the game than a joystick. The graphics, while not outstanding, are polished and there are some interesting backgrounds.

The most difficult aspect is aiming the ball at particular bricks. There are



not many differences between this version and all the other Breakout clones, apart from a few new bonuses. One, which is certainly a mixed blessing, turns one ball into 10. Take some advice – only aim for one at a time or you may miss them all. A new slant is

that as you move from side to side the bat stretches to the chosen position and then returns to its normal size. This is very handy for catching balls and bonuses.

There are a variety of screen designs and this beats the original hands down.



This is a good implementation of the age-old Breakout topic, with smooth control and some clever variations. However, Hotshot is for my money, a much better development of the same theme. So shop around, there are many variations on this idea, some implemented better than others.

Nic Outterside

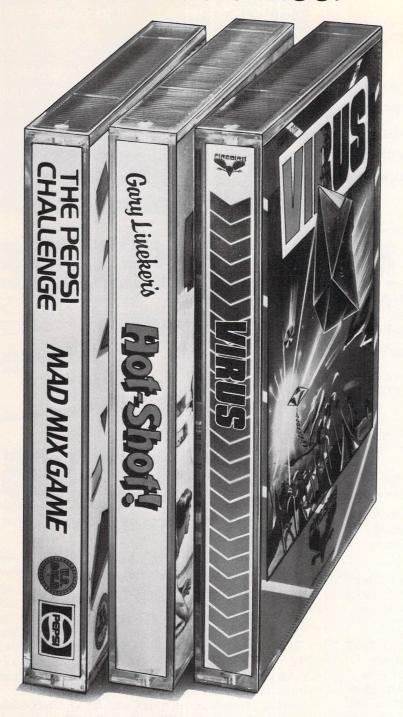
If you enjoyed Breakout you will not regret buying Revenge of Doh, but if you already have a clone this is not so very different.

David Lester

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

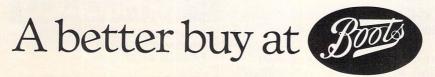
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PLEASE BRING OR QUOTE THIS ADVERT AS SHOP PRICES MAY VARY PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES & P.O. PAYABLE TO NORTH NOTTS COMPUTERS Slight discount price increases in any software is regrettable but necessary due to new trade price alterations GRANDSLAM is a relatively new company with a fairly impressive list of products and tie-ins, including budget, full price and 8 bit games, as well as reciprocal deals with other leading publishers such as Datasoft from the USA.

Yet, despite a long list of products to be released this year, and the promise of some great new things later, little is known about the company itself.

Grandslam was born at the end of 1987 following a management buy out by Stephen Hall from the multi-national BET, which owned the company in its previous Argus Press Software incarnation. With Hall's background at ATV, he used his experience to bring some high quality products to the company, ensuring that Grandslam got off to a good start.

Recently it has gained the rights to titles such as PacLand – which it publishes through its Quicksilva subsidiary – The Flintstones, Peter Beardsley's International Football and Terramex. Additionally, the news that it is completely relaunching its Bug Byte budget label means that over the coming 18 months we'll see yet another entry into the highly competitive budget market. But with Grandslam's buying power, we can look forward to some of the better back-catalogue software.

Opportunity knocks

So what made Stephen Hall make the switch to Grandslam?

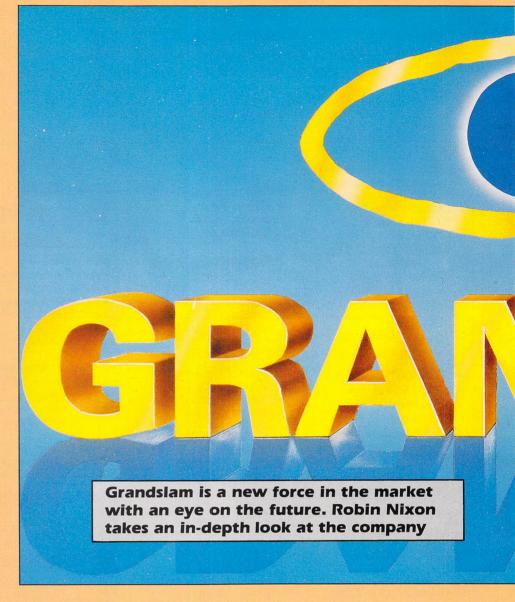
"I'm a real believer in seeing an opportunity and seizing it. This is exactly what happened with Grandslam. The opportunity came up to reposition Argus – as it was then – and really give it a proper kick into a leading edge entertainments company", he said. "I believe that with the sort of things we are doing now with 16 bit, Archimedes and 8 bit we are paving the way for a very successful future".

He continued: "I'm now surrounded by an excellent team of staff who give their full in every product we undertake. Without this and the excellent programming teams we use, we wouldn't have quite the degree of success I feel we've enjoyed under our new banner".

Indeed, it has to be said that the company's progress has been fast, bearing in mind some past disappointment with products.

Hall agreed: "That's true, but as I said, I'm a great believer in determination and being surrounded by the right people. We do owe a lot to our technical people, who've constantly come up with excellent and original game concepts.

"Teque Software, which is a couple of guys who used to do great things with Gremlin Graphics, has really turned up remarkable results – I mean have you seen the sort of graphics we've got with Peter Beardsley's International Football.



Grandslam bug-bytes back

It's got to be the best football game to date".

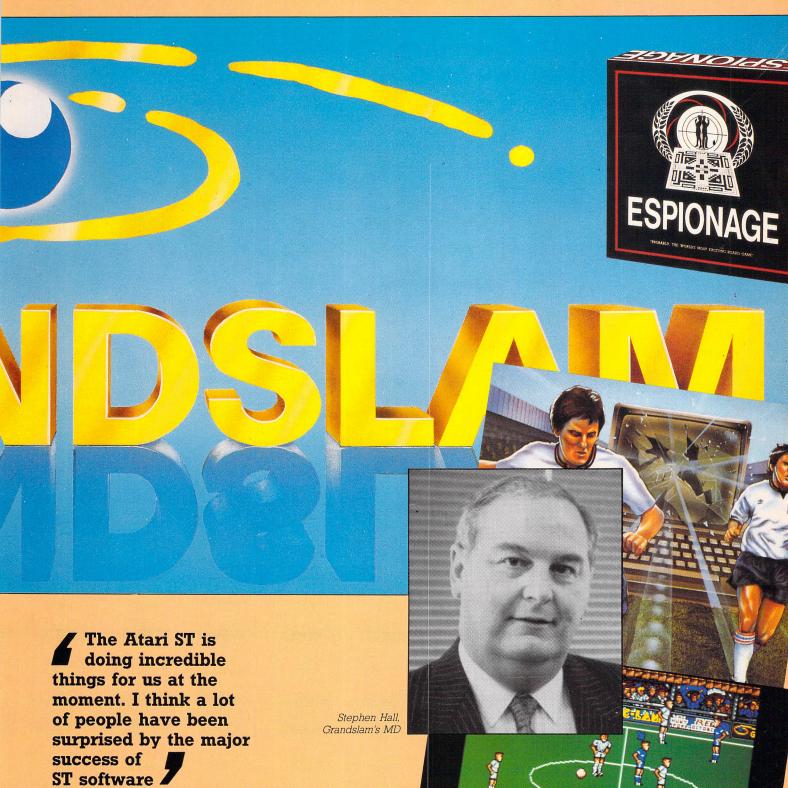
For the future

Grandslam has also been busy spreading its list of products, tying up recently with the major US company Datasoft. This means that Grandslam will also be responsible for the Alternative Reality range, as well as some of the firm's other

arcade offerings later in the year.

Although Hall will not at this stage give details of products for the rest of 1988, he has confirmed that the company has the rights to sell the computer version of Espionage, a new board game due to be launched here very shortly. Also the company has the rights to Thunderbirds, the television series.

"Espionage is an intriguing new board game. I don't want to say that much about it at the moment, but it'll be available



across all the major formats. It is being billed as the next big board game by the toy trade", Hall says. "It is also receiving extensive press coverage in the Daily Telegraph, Toy Trader magazine and USA publications".

Why did Grandslam take on Thunderbirds, especially as it had been previously released by Telecomsoft on other formats without much success?

"I always thought that it was never done justice in the first place", answered Hall. "The series really is a classic, and also one that I was involved in during the late sixties when I used to work for Lord Lew Grade at ATV. I pursued it, and took it on. This time aorund it's going to be a great product, probably being released very

Hall's affection for strong tie-ins is obvious, and looks certain to continue into next year. In fact Grandslam is already lining up products for 1989, though again Hall plays his cards close to his chest.

"The problem", he says, "is not giving the game away too early". Telling the world about new software is always exciting, but giving the good news too early can lessen the impact of a new idea or concept.

October 1988 Atari ST User 41

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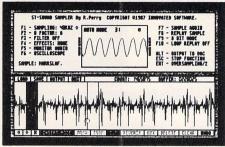
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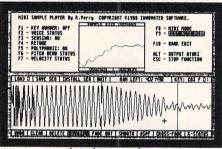
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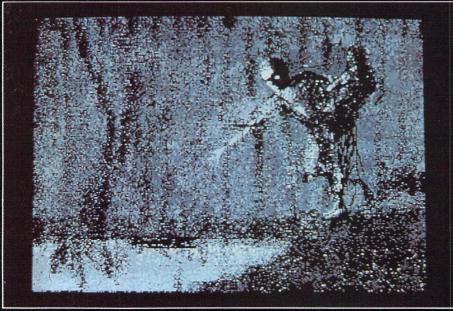
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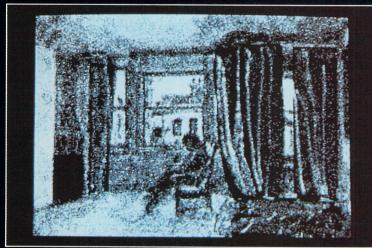
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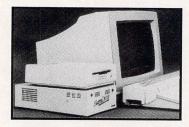
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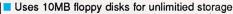
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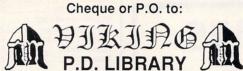
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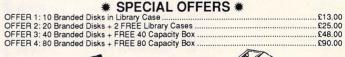
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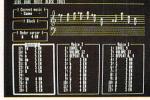
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A trip into the

T's not a game, it's not a graphics package, it's not a serious utility. So what is it? Trip-a-Tron is unique in being a software package designed solely for entertainment. It is a light synthesiser created entirely by the last of the wild-eyed independent programmers, hippy guru Jeff Minter.

Imagine a kaleidoscope which uses

Imagine a kaleidoscope which uses not shards of coloured glass, but mouse-controlled pixels on a computer monitor. Add to that a huge range of pattern and colour control options, programmability and interfacing possibilities, and you have Trip-a-Tron, the long-awaited new release from Llamasoft.

The idea is to put on some cosmic music, switch off the lights and just groove to the pretty patterns!

Trip-a-Tron is based on Psychedelia, a similar but less powerful program for 8 bit computers, and on Colourspace, designed for the Atari 8 bit and ST micros. What's been added is a selection of graphic programming screens, a complex function control language and the possibility of linking several machines.

The end results, it should be stressed, are substantially the same as Colourspace – swirling abstract patterns of luminescent colour against a space-black background, or your own imported graphic images.

If you already have Colourspace, you can upgrade to Trip-a-Tron for £24.95. Its two discs can be backed up to a single disc for double-sided drives, or transferred to hard disc. The control cursor can be moved by the mouse or a Pro-Draw graphics tablet.

On loading and selecting the control device you are presented with a black

Chris Jenkins looks at a psychedelic light synthesiser utility

display over which is laid the main control panel. Each icon on this panel pulls up further displays, either to the right of the main one or covering the entire screen.

To get an idea of what Trip-a-Tron can do, you can get rid of the control panel by pressing Escape, and move the cursor around the screen, pressing the left button to draw. Immediately you'll be entertained by huge swirling psychedelic light displays.

Hitting the keyboard will change the colour palette, symmetry, decay and other characteristics. You won't really understand what's doing what until you press the spacebar to clear any extra effects you've selected and proceed to investigate the submenus.

There are several demonstrations on the disc which can be loaded in turn by pressing F10. Each uses a different range of effects, assigned to different control keys.

Let's look in more detail at the sort of control options open to you. The bottom row of icons on the main panel control the basic plot routines. Clicking on them brings up a charming llama on the right of the panel. Markers surrounding the icon can be selected or deselected to control the basic pattern pre-symmetry (replicating each pixel drawn in different sections of the screen).

The pixels in the basic pattern can then be mapped on to a pseudo-solid shape, say a cube, if you have a Map file in memory as you perform. It's also possible to remap the pixels on to sheared shapes, or into up to 14 resized windows.

There's also a post-symmetry function. The result is that with everything switched on, each pixel you draw on the screen creates 2,688 images of itself. Pattern drawing then becomes very slow, but of course it would be rare for you to want to use all these basic functions at once.

The Colour Cooker page allows you generate both static and dynamic colour pattern effects. There are 200 preset palettes, each of 16 colours. You can redefine individual colours, set colour cycles and ranges, and create waveforms which will dynamically vary the red, green and blue levels of each colour.

Creating patterns

A multiplexing function lets you combine colours from one static palette with those of a dynamic palette, making it appear that there are more than 16 colours on the screen at once.

The Pattern Edit icon brings up a screen which, like a font editor, allows you to place pixels on a grid to define a basic drawing pattern. In this case, though, you can use the Decay feature to plot different levels to each pattern, so their colour and shape can fade gradually after you release the mouse button.

Another definable option is Line Mode, where the pattern generator attempts to draw lines between the primary cursor and a secondary one, or the centre of the screen.

The Waveform Creation screen is



light fantastic

central to the operation of Trip-a-Tron. The waveform editor display allows you to draw an oscilloscope-like shape, and to define the waveform speed and running mode.

Two different waves can be added to create new shapes. The Oscillator Effects screen allows you to use these waves to effect the pattern display when triggered from the keyboard, or incorporated into pattern set-ups. For instance, a second cursor can be programmed to orbit around the primary one, following a course defined by a waveshape, or you can change the basic drawing pattern according to a preset waveform, or dynamically alter the screen width or height using the Sizer function.

The Video Sequencer functions, which work only on systems with one 1Mb or more, allow you to store about 16 picture files generated by Trip-a-Tron or standard graphics packages and stored in a special compressed format. Like a mini-animation package, the VSEQ allows you to create rotation, reflection, scrolling, resizing, duplication, colour filtering, pixellation

and in-betweening effects, over which you can add Trip-a-Tron performances.

The VSEQ eats up memory so, as the manual points out, it can only really perform to its maximum capability on multi-megabyte systems. Still, there are some impressive demos on the disc.

More straightforward is the performance sequencer, which can record up to eight channels of your real-time performances, edit and splice them, then arrange them under keyboard control for automated playback.

Another impressive aspect of the package is the starfield effect. This creates background effects of moving pixel fields with variable speed in x,y, and z dimensions, origin point, angular velocity, rotation points, projection depth, colour and trailback. Most of the symmetry effects of the main control panel can be applied to starfields, but there are limitations on the mixture of starfields and foreground performances.

The last major performance characteristic is the Sillyscope. This generates oscilloscope-type displays on the pattern field. As with the waveform

generator, you can draw waveshapes, splice and combine them, alter the sweep speed and colour variables, then set the pulsing curves spinning around the screen.

Unfortunately, you can't combine them with standard Trip-a-Tron patterns, though you can have starfields switched on at the same time. Because you don't want to mess about with control panels while you're actually performing, the KML (Key Macro Language) allows you to define your own control keys to assign commands to any required keys.

The KML language uses commands such as Strobe, Wait, Subtract and Set, together with a diagram of the ST's keyboard, to allow you to define your own performance controls.

It all gets a bit heavy here, with talk of conditional block delimiters and binary byte constants. This isn't fun - this is just hard work. More entertaining are the possibilities offered by the Midi functions. These allow you to link together up to 16 STs, using any

Turn to Page 54 ▶



◄ From Page 53

one as a master or slave.

Alternatively, you can use a Midi synthesiser, playing the keyboard to generate Midi data which will control the performance of slave STs. This doesn't mean that Trip-a-Tron is a cheap Midi-to-light system, but as work on the software progresses, it may get that way.

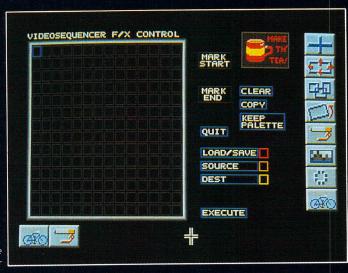
All the performance characteristics

can be saved to disc, using a bewildering variety of file extenders, via the disc access page.

The overall impression is that Trip-a-Tron is incredibly powerful but hideously complex. Considering that it's meant to be a bit of fun, having to wade through a 139 page manual seems like an uphill struggle. It doesn't help that Jeff's individual sense of humour pervades the entire program, with the result that you'll be hard pressed to find something as straightforward as an Exit box to click on.

Most of them are labelled something like Vamos, Naff Off or Baa. All the control displays without exception, are confusing and badly laid out, and it's quite possible to become completely lost in a maze of file extenders, waveform generators, colour palettes, mapping patterns and keyboard

Trip-a-Tron may be a brilliant package, but it's so intimidating that only one man may ever be able to get the best out of it - and that's Jeff Minter.



FACT FILE

Product: Trip-a-Tron

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Football management games, both Soccer and American Football, have the potential to produce excellent strategy games of some considerable sophistication. QUALSOFT produced League Division One in 1983, and Mexico 86 in 1985, but otherwise the implementation has been infantile. When Coda sent me HEADCOACH for the BBC Micro, 2 years ago, I saw an American Football computer game for the first time that measured up to the same standards. QUALSOFT is pleased to offer Atari ST users "World of Soccer" and "Head Coach v3", two games I honestly believe will fill a yawning gap for those looking for realistic simulations of the real games.

Malcolm Howard, QUALSOFT

WORLD OF SOCCER

International management is the ultimate challenge in soccer. To build a squad of players to defeat the ball playing skills of Brazil, the fluid play of Holland, the organisation of West Germany, the counter-attacking of Italy, and the many varied styles of many others, demands an insight into the game rare amongst managers let alone fans. Do you exploit a team's weaknesses, or play to your own strengths? Do you attack down the flank with wingers, or pierce the centre with powerful midfield running? Do you play a flat back four, or use a sweeper or libero?

In "World of Soccer", players are not just attackers/defenders/midfield but goal poachers, play makers, ball winners, wingers, left, right and centre backs, sweepers (19 types of player in all). The results of matches are determined by simulated soccer matches controlled by the skills of the opposing players. Strategy is determined by the skills you build into your squad, and tactics by the particular skills you use to defeat particular teams. Substitutions and tactical moves can be made during the match to change or reinforce your plans.

For four years, through the Qualifying and Final stages of the European Championship and the World Cup, you will guide the European team of your choice. You can prepare for the competitions with friendly matches of your choosing, developing your strategy to match the in-form players at your disposal. Success is there for the taking, but it will need earning.

Choose from 33 European squads. The 4 UK home countries have 16 man squads which can be increased to 36 with players of your own. A customisation program will allow squads for any of the 33 countries to be created.

HEAD COACH v3

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

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

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

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

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- What was Tom Cruz's latest film success?
- 4 Steuerknüppeln is German for what computer accessory?

ANSWERS

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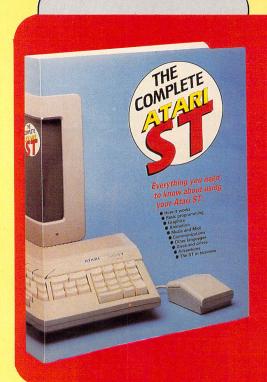
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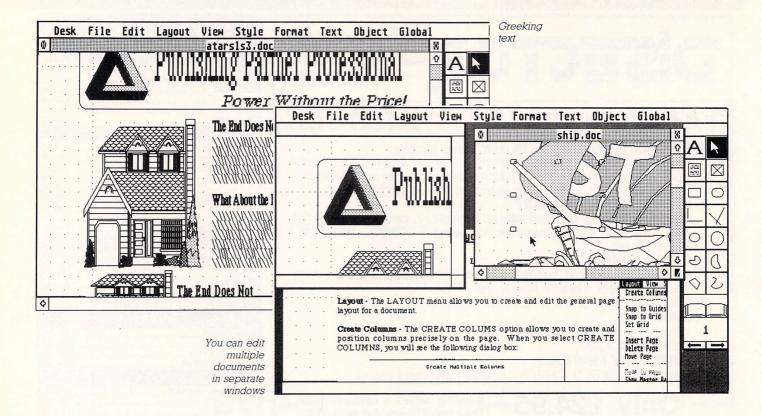
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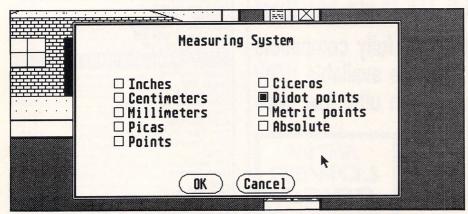
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The professional



A broad range of on-page measuring, systems is available

PUBLISHING Partner was the first package for the ST to launch into the desktop publishing arena against the likes of Pagemaker and Ventura Publisher on the Macintosh and the IBM PC. Now, over a year later, SoftLogik is about to launch its second offensive into the DTP battle with Publishing Partner Professional.

This multi-featured new package is now in its final beta testing stages, and this preview is based on a recent betatest version. It covers the improvements over previous packages reviewed by Bruce Smith in *Atari ST User's* October

1987 issue. A full review of the finished program will appear in due course.

Back to basics

The most noticeable change is the reversion to a true Gem environment. Gone is the now familiar Publishing Partner variation on the window sliders and back come normal Gem windows.

The dialogue boxes are also more like standard Gem, although they still retain the feel and layout of the originals with some improvements.

The Import desk accessory is

Richard Hawes previews some of the goodies known to be included in the new Publishing Partner Professional

noticeably absent from the Desk menu, and appears to have been rendered unnecessary by the powerful importing capabilities now present within the program itself. Special .IMP files describe import operations to the program and on the tested version included Gem, Degas (including compressed), and Ascii text conversion set-ups.

The final program promises to include lst Word, .NEO, .IMG and other import capabilities. This method of import description files means that as soon as a new data transfer standard appears all SoftLogik has to do is add a simple .IMP file to cope with it.

Text imported from 1st Word, Word Writer or Word Perfect will retain attributes such as bold or underlining.

Professional is now far more like Easy Draw in appearance and use, while retaining the familiarity of Publishing Partner. This means that various objects – graphics as well as text – can be grouped, moved and copied together,

and separated at will. The options bar to the right of the screen is now a separate window in itself, and can thus be moved around the screen as desired. What's more, it does not have to be the currently selected window before options are selected from it.

Multiple windowing

As many as six different windows can be open at once, each containing a unique document, and information can be copied easily from one to another. Each window's contents can be displayed at any enlargement within the wide range allowed by the program. Professional now includes a zoom feature allowing close-up viewing of any selected part of the page.

Many features already available in Publishing Partner are enhanced in Professional. An example is the measuring system. Professional can measure in inches, centimetres, millimetres, picas, points, ciceros, didot points and metric points to an accuracy of one 3,600th of an inch. In addition, an absolute measuring system is also available.

Publishing Partner was always fast on

the screen, albeit a little untidy. Using Gem properly, Professional is perhaps a little slower at updating the screen although a feature known as greeking is now employed.

This allows you to make the program display all text under and over set point sizes as a series of dashes. This makes the screen much faster to draw while still showing you what areas are taken up with text.

Couple this with the ability to switch off graphics, and Professional's great reduction in unnecessary screen redraws and the display is reasonably fast. The one drawback is that still only one screen font is used, which makes large text appear blocky on screen.

Printing power

Professional is undoubtedly ahead of the competition in many respects when it comes to printing. The printer fonts are all improved with an SLM 804 Atari laser driver allowing text at more than 100 point to be printed crisply and sharply. All other printers supported by Publishing Partner are still supported by Professional.

The speed of printing has also been dramatically improved. A page of text and graphics typically taking 10 to 15 minutes previously on the Atari laser printer will now print in around 50

seconds. Text can be in any size from 2 to 216 point on most printers and higher on many like the Atari laser. Text can be scaled in increments of much less than one point both vertically and horizontally.

Any object that can be brought into or created in Professional, or any group of objects, can be rotated in one degree increments. This includes text and any form of graphics.

Options are also included to slant the object horizontally or twist it vertically. A box within the dialogue box contorts according to your instructions to show you what effect you will have on your object

Professional now comes with three different types of dictionary – an ordinary spell checking dictionary complete with full-function spell checker, a kerning dictionary where you can store details of typical kerning pairs for each individual font and a hyphenation dictionary showing the best places to cut words for automatic hyphenation. In addition other rules can be set for the way Professional handles its automatic hyphenation.

Full colour support?

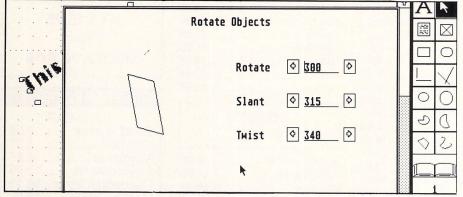
Colour is better supported in the new program and there's a rumour that the finished product will fully support colour printers including the latest Colour Post-Script format.

Text can be made to flow around graphics in a number of ways. In addition, drawings can go over the top of text if required. The attributes of any piece of text, including point size, can be determined easily and attributes can be changed on a search-and-replace basis.

Altogether Publishing Partner Professional is a very classy product. In its finished version it should compete well in terms of both features and value for money with packages like Pagemaker.

At £149 Professional should set a new standard in ST DTP programs. Existing owners of Publishing Partner will be able to upgrade to the new version for a nominal fee – details from distributors SDL.

touch



Publishing Partner Professional has powerful facilities for rotating and distorting images

Improvements in the new product

- Automatic text flow round graphics.
- Auto-hyphenation and kerning.
- Grouping of objects.
- Reordering of pages.
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- Import formatted 1st Word, Word Perfect and Word Writer files.
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- Adjust point size on X and Y axes.
- Hanging indents and outdents control.
- Save user-defined kerning pairs.
- Make capitalised command.

- Tag function.
- Rotate text or graphics in one degree increments.
- Create style sheets.
- Optional fixed or auto-leading control.
- Slant or twist any selected object.
- Lock and unlock objects.
- Draw arcs.
- Add word to hyphenation dictionary.
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WINNERS (TOP RATED)	79 (24)	37 (11)	73 (22)	39 (11)	32 (6)	260 (73)
PERCENTAGE	60% (75%)	62% (53%)	61% (65%)	63% (69%)	48% (38%)	59% (62%)
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If you require top quality output from your printer, the Star NB24-10 could be just what you're looking for, says André Willey

NE of the perennial problems facing computer owners when choosing a printer is that of print quality. You must always weigh up the pros and cons of buying a dot matrix device if you want graphics dumps and clever user-defined characters, or of buying a daisywheel printer which will be far less versatile, but will provide outstanding text quality for pure correspondence work.

Recently, laser printers have added to this confusion – giving the best of both worlds, but with a pretty hefty price tag.

Over the past couple of months I have had the pleasure of working with Star Micronics' new 24 pin, dot matrix printer, the Star NB24-10, which seems to be a very successful compromise. Indeed, its letter quality (LQ) mode is almost indistinguishable from typewritten text, but at a fraction of the price of a laser printer.

Each individual character is made up of a pattern of dots three times smaller than those of ordinary matrix printers, and so each letter can be three times more detailed. In fact, the NB24's draft output is clearer than some cheaper supposedly NLQ printers can manage in their high quality modes.

Draft quality does have the advantage of being very much faster of course, clocking in at 180 characters per second as opposed to the single pass 60 cps in LQ.

The NB24-10, and its wide carriage cousin the NB24-15, is capable of emulating either Epson or IBM printers, although it is not possible to switch between these modes under software control.

All the usual text styles are available, including elite, pica, condensed, semi-condensed, expanded, italic, superscript and subscript, plus bold and emphasised, and many of these may be combined for even greater flexibility.

Another pleasant surprise is that all of these styles are available when working in letter quality text, and additionally most may be set from the front panel controls.

The NB24 is absolutely packed with features, many of which are rarely seen on other similar printers. For instance, in addition to the usual double-width text you also have double-height and quadruple-height versions – both available for either draft or LQ text.

Other useful facilities include both underlining and overlining of text, microjustification – adding a little extra space between characters – and fully proportional print. Text may also be aligned to the right margin, centred or fully justified, all by sending simple control codes. Line

Clear-cut compromise

spacing can also be set very simply, as can horizontal and vertical tabs and reverse line feeds.

Graphics dumps are amply taken care of with an amazing range of bit image resolutions – selectable from 60 dots per inch all the way up to a maximum of 360, which is slightly more than most laser printers can handle.

It's worth noting that while all of the standard Epson eight and nine pin graphics modes are available, line spacing on the NB24 is set in multiples of 1/180 inch rather than the older 1/216 inch. This is due to the revised spacing on a 24 wire head and will be the same with any 24 pin printer.

The upshot of this alteration is that any printer driving software configured for



This image was first scanned using the Hawk IV scanner, then transferred via a IMG file into Fleet Street Publisher before being printed out in the NB24s 180/180 mode

eight or nine pin machines will overspace the whole image vertically. This is quite noticeable on Alt+Help dumps, but there are a number of public domain programs around that should allow you to reconfigure the operating system to correct this effect.

One thing I especially liked about the

printer was the front panel control system which allows you to adjust many of the standard settings – including page length, type style and pitch, plus all of the margins. You can also ask the printer to lock into a given mode to prevent your software from erroneously deselecting your chosen print style.

Your own preferred settings may be set up permanently via the printer's internal DIP switches which may be accessed easily without resorting to dismantling the whole unit. Just remove the ribbon cartridge and the two switch blocks are tucked away underneath a flexible plastic dust cover.

Also on the front panel are either one or two rom sockets – two on the wide carriage NB24-15 version – which allow you to plug in extra font cartridges, or even a battery-backed ram board to take extra-large downloaded fonts of your own.

The standard internal 8k buffer memory allows you to define up to 35 draft or LQ characters, but adding the ram board increases this to 192, all of which will then be retained when you turn the power off.

The manual is well laid out and pretty comprehensive, though some confusion sometimes occurs when trying to work out which command is applicable for the currently selected emulation mode. Also there is a slight tendency for a bit of pseudo-Japanese-English to rear its incomprehensible head.

There are no real problems as far as operation goes, with auto-paper feed being quite a boon. This also means that the cut sheet feed unit is relatively cheap,

Turn to Page 80 ▶

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NLQ PICA: Italic Text abcde ABCDE 12345
NLQ PICA: Bold Text abcde ABCDE 12345
NLQ PICA: Bold Italic abcde ABCDE 12345
NLQ PICA: Superscript and Subscript

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NLQ CONDENSED: Bold Italic abcde ABCDE 12345
NLQ CONDENSED: Bold Italic abcde ABCDE 12345
NLQ CONDENSED: Superscript and Subscript
```

Some of the NB24's varied text modes

◆ From Page 80

with the printer doing most of the work

I found the hopper system incredibly quick and easy to fit. Indeed it just drops on to the top of the printer and the whole job is done in two seconds flat. I use it almost exclusively now, and have had only very rare mis-feeds - most of which were my own fault anyway.

The ribbon, which is not a standard Epson MX/FX design even though it looks very similar, is easy to fit and works fine, although in LQ mode the printer seems to gobble up ink at a rather alarming rate. You can then opt to replace the whole cartridge or slip in a special ribbon insert, which is a little messier but about half the price.

The NB24 performs well and gives extremely high quality printouts when

used with a word processor, but I found it really comes into its own when used with such packages as Mirrorsoft's excellent Fleet Street Publisher.

The results obtained using the 360/180 dpi mode are really quite outstanding, especially when printing from high resolution .IMG picture files. With a new ribbon installed there is absolutely no tendency for pale horizontal lines to break up large dark areas, unlike many other printers.

However, the NB24-10 certainly isn't cheap and potential purchasers should examine their needs carefully before making up their minds. Don't necessarily be put off by Star's recommended retail price of £599 plus VAT - I got mine from Evesham Micros who currently charge £469, inclusive of VAT with a printer cable, two spare ribbons and delivery

thrown in. And you can't say much fairer than that.

The printer is so versatile that I certainly haven't been able to do it full justice here, but overall I found it to be extremely easy to use as a plug-in-and-go unit, and yet also very powerful if you want to program it for yourself. Having worked with it extensively, and especially considering my own requirements for neatly printed final copy, I will continue to use mine for some time to come.

FACT FILE

Product: Star NB24-10 Price: £688.85

Product: Optional font cartridges (Courier, Letter Gothic, Orator)

Price: £46

Product: Optional cut sheet feeder

Price: £63.25

Supplier: Star Micronics (UK) Ltd, Craven House, 40 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London W5.

Tel: 01-840 1800

POINTS FOR:

Exceptionally good quality. Easy to use.

AGAINST:

Non-standard line spacing may cause problems.

This is an example of Fleet Street Publisher's 12 point text on a Star NB24-10 printer running at 360×180 dots per inch.

And with 12 point serif text.

And 12 point Helga Bold.

And 12 point West End Bold.

Here is 24 point text in the same 360×180 print mode on the NB24-10.

And in 24 point serif text.

And 24 point Helga bold text.

And how about in 24 point Mediebal?

Fleet Street Publisher 12 point and 24 point text samples

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Male – Female RS232	1.0m	£8.95	-	2.0m	£9.95
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& colour res. 2.0m	ot for a timpo oor o ii				£22.95
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modulator) 2 0m					£4.95
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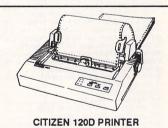
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DIY and the ST

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ODAY's computers are, to say the least, very complex. Printed circuit boards packed with custom chips, dozens of discrete components and thousands of connections. The ST is no exception. At its heart beats the 68000 16/32 bit microprocessor surrounded by a box full of support chips - and custom designed monsters like Glue, DMA, MMU and Shifter.

With this sort of complexity, it's surprising how reliable the ST is, but on rare occasions something fails, even with the extremely sophisticated quality control systems used by Atari. So what do you do if it does go wrong?

The problem lies in the fact that computers are integrated machines, and if one tiny part fails the whole machine is quite likely to go dead. No matter how competent you are with a soldering iron and a multimeter, fishing around willynilly inside the case is almost certain to result in more damage than was initially present.

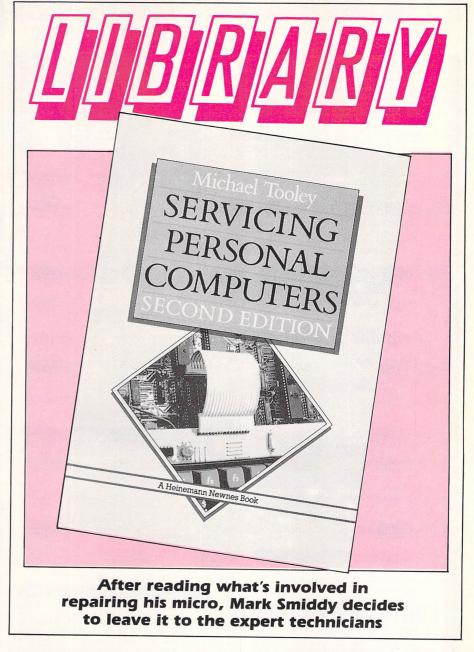
There are two answers: Take it to a repair shop and get charged an arm and both legs for replacing a burnt out bridge rectifier, or find the fault and fix it yourself - properly. I'm not suggesting you do this without guidance of course, and this is where Michael Tooley's book comes in.

Right from the word "phut" - before you pick up your tools - the book gives the budding repairman a lesson in what he is about to fix. The first chapter contains a technical description of how computers work - at electronic level. This is fairly heavy going and not for the faint-hearted, but it is vital the principles are understood, in part at least, before any repairs are attempted.

Topics covered include simple microprocessor block and timing diagrams, logic paths, multiplexing, Mos technology, programming, input/output including a full RS232 set-up, and raster scan displays. Also to be found here are the full pin-outs of several microprocessors including the 68000 and most of the common support chips. For the more important chips, each pin-out has been given a clear description.

And if that was not enough, there's a vast number of diagrams showing parts of working systems - address decoding, for instance. Even though not all of this appertains to the ST, the book explains the principals - after all that's what counts.

If the first chapter is meant to put you off intellectually, the second must surely be designed to give your bank manager



heart-failure. Seriously though, it talks of equipping your workshop with the correct tools and test gear, some of which can run into hundreds of pounds, although they can usually be borrowed from another friendly electronics buff.

Not content with just listing the required tools, the author includes examples of their use and what readings to expect.

The next 41 pages are spent on an essential skill in repair work - fault diagnosis. This starts once again with the principals of the technique and quickly marches through individual test procedures - how to do them, what to poke and what reading to expect while you're poking it.

Chapter four covers disc drive faults in great detail and concludes with a superb fault diagnosis guide. Likewise, chapter five includes full test, fault diagnosis and repair of printers and monitors.

The section on monitors is a little lack-

ing for colour systems and TVs. That said, messing around in monitors should only be done if you're aware of the lethal voltages inside the case. The basic safety rules are not emphasised enough here.

The whole thing concludes with a nice, but not altogether concise reference section, most of the contents being reiterated in the better electronic supply catalogues like Maplin and Radio Spares. The index is better than average – listing references to part numbers as well as the usual buzzwords.

This is not the sort of book for a bedtime read - nor is it meant for a complete beginner. However, anyone with some knowledge of electronics should be able to grasp most of the text fairly easily. If nothing else, it might show you that fixing your ST is a job that really should be left to an expert.

For anyone at college studying for an ONC or higher in computing, this book is highly recommended.



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SCRAPBOOK this month features an assembly language program from Julia Forester of Redcar, Cleveland to set the ST up to boot from drive B, followed by a Basic utility from Janice Murray of Warrington, Cheshire, to count the number of words in 1st Word and ST Writer files.

F you're one of the many ST owners with a 520ST and an external drive, you're quite likely to have asked yourself: "Can I boot from drive B?". This particular problem becomes apparent when you have a 1Mb external drive and a double sided disc brimming with auto programs and desk accessories.

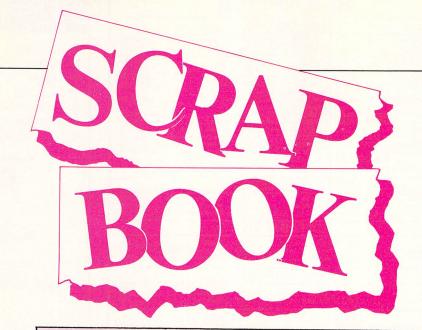
Under normal circumstances it just couldn't be done. Well, now it can. The short listing presented here creates a small machine code program to reconfigure the ST to think drive B is the boot device. It works like this:

The location \$447 in supervisor memory contains the number of the current boot device, normally zero. This program stores the value one in this location using the Xbios function SUPERX. From now on each time the ST is reset it looks on drive B for the accessories. Switching the machine off for a couple of seconds restores everything to normal.

The program has been written using Abacus Assempro, although conversion to other assemblers should be very easy. For instance, with GST's Macro assembler replace semicolons with asterisks on comment lines and TEXT with SECTION CODE.

To use the program either place it in the AUTO folder on your normal boot disc or simply run it from the desktop. A word of caution: Some desk accessories and AUTO programs expect to be on drive A and will not work properly from drive B. However, the vast majority run from the current drive and will work without a hitch.

```
; ReBooter
    Loads accessories from B:
    By Julia Forester
   (c) Atari ST User
  ; Abacus Assempro
 TEXT
start:
 pea boot(pc)
                    ; Start
  move.w #38,-(sp)
                    ; Xbios SUPERX
  trap #14
                      Call Xbios
 adda.l #6,sp
                    ; Tidy stack
 move.w #0,-(sp)
                      Return to parent
 trap #1
                      Call Bdos
 adda.l #2,sp
                      Tidy stack
boot:
                      Important bit
 move.b #1,$447
                    ; Set drive B:
                    ; as boot device
 END
```



SCRAPBOOK is a regular feature consisting of short, simple programs sent in by our readers. It's a place where we can publish all of the interesting little routines that don't end up in our regular features but are too good for us not to share with other readers.

If you have a short program which you think other readers would find useful, send it to:

Scrapbook, Atari ST User, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

Counting up

ONE of the features lacking in both 1st Word and ST Writer is a word counter. It's impossible to tell how much you've written, and this information is quite important when writing reports and documents, or possibly articles and reviews for *Atari ST User*.

A word counter has been published before – in the October 1987 issue of *Atari ST User* – but unfortunately it was written in C, and unless you have a suitable compiler it can't be used.

Here's an ST Basic version which is just as good, though perhaps a little slower. To use it first boot up ST Basic and then load the program. Place your disc containing the text file in the drive and run the program. Enter the filename and you'll be told the size of the file in bytes and the number of words it contains.

The program will work with both versions of ST basic. However, you won't be able to get a directory listing on screen with the old version as it won't accept line 80 or 90 – it reports *Something is wrong*. You can skip these lines when entering the program as they will be ignored by ST Basic.

The program can be compiled by HiSoft Basic to a TOS application and run directly from the desktop. This saves the bother of booting up Basic and loading the program, and it runs much quicker too.

```
10 REM Word Counter
                                             170 ? "File is"; LOF(1); "bytes long."
                                             180 ? "Counting...
 20 REM By Janice Murray
 30 REM (c) Atari ST User
                                             190 GET #1,ptr%
 40 REM ST Basic & HiSoft Basic
                                             200 b%=ASC(buffer$)
 50 REM Medium/High resolution
                                             210 IF b%>32 AND b%<127 THEN GOSUB 280
 60 FULLW 2: CLEARW 2
                                              ELSE inword%=0
 70 GOTOXY 0,1
                                             220 ptr%=ptr%+1
 80 DIR :' New ST Basic only!
                                             230 IF ptr%<=L0F(1) THEN 190
 90 FILES : HiSoft Basic only!
                                             24Ø CLOSE #1
100 PRINT
                                             250 ?"Words ="; count%
110 INPUT "File to count:"; file$
                                             260 INPUT "Hit Return", dummy$
120 OPEN "R",#1,file$,1
                                             270 END
130 FIELD #1,1 AS buffer$
                                             28Ø IF NOT inword% THEN count%=count%+1
140 ptr%=1
                                             290 inword%=-1
150 inword%=0
                                             300 RETURN
160 count%=0
```

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and experienced Fortran programmer alike." ST

"The GEM documentation is among the finest I have seen. For each section of the AES and VDI there is an explanatory passage, followed by a detailed description of every call. All of the parameters of the calls are detailed and examples | Name are provided for each one." Atari Explorer

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Prospero Pascal for GEM and Prospero Fortran for GEM combine a compiler with an editor environment. The programs, complete with 800 pages of documentation, cost £86.91 (Pascal) and £113 (Fortran) from dealers or Prospero Software. They are available for the Atari ST. and PC Compatibles.

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True to the letter

IN a recent comparative review of ST word processing packages I looked at some of the facilities offered by Neocept's Word Up, one of the new breed of so-called document processors. These programs offer not only WP facilities but also the full range of typefaces and special effects previously only achievable on the printed page through the traditional typesetting process.

Document processors and DTP systems usually come supplied with their own range of fonts – typefaces – in a variety of styles such as bold, italicised and outline, each font normally having a family of several of the most commonly needed point sizes. A point is 1/72 of an inch, the standard measurement used in typography to gauge the size of a typeface.

However, the more experienced – and inevitably more adventurous – you become with such packages, the smaller and more restrictive their range of fonts appears to become, and before long you find you have nowhere near enough strings to your bow.

It is to remedy this kind of problem that Neocept has produced Fontz, a Gembased font editor that amounts to a complete typeface development tool. What Fontz allows you to do is load in any standard Gem character set and modify it to suit your precise requirements, or if you feel really creative, design your own typefaces from scratch.

Compatibility

Fontz will save fonts in two formats – the standard Gem font one, which means its creations can be used by such programs as the Degas art package, and it will convert standard fonts from the Apple Mac-

David Davenport meets a reformed character as he tests a powerful and versatile new font editor from Neocept

intosh, Commodore Amiga and those used by HippoWord.

The typefaces used by Degas Elite are different to those used by the original Degas program, so Fontz also provides a means of converting them into a compatible format.

It should also be noted that only screen fonts from the Macintosh can be used, since Laserwriter fonts use the PostScript page description programming language, which is not supported by Fontz.

The program will run on any Atari ST machine, with either a colour or monochrome monitor, the only restriction being that it will not work in low resolution. Gdos must be made resident for the full range of the program's facilities to be available, so it should be put in an Auto folder.

Fontz works through a system of pull-down menus, although the majority of actions can also be carried out using short keyboard commands. Once a font has been loaded from disc into memory you are presented with the main font editing screen.

Along the top is the main pull-down menu banner, and directly beneath this is displayed the range of characters defined for the font in memory, which you can shift along by means of a horizontal scroll bar.

The main part of the screen is taken up by the character editing window, which

holds a boxed grid containing a blown up pixel image of the character currently being edited. To load a character into the grid, choose the Enter Ascii value to edit option from the Edit menu and specify a character's numerical Ascii value.

That character will appear in the grid, and any changes made to it are immediately reflected, to scale, on the appropriate letter in the top window displaying the complete character set.

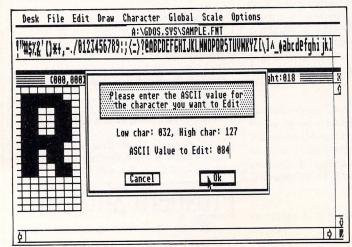
Character manipulation

The character in the grid can be manipulated in a wide variety of ways. You can change it pixel by pixel manually using the mouse, or make use of the powerful facilities offered by the Character, Draw and Edit menus.

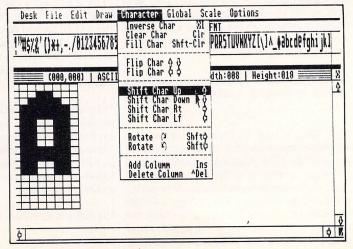
The Character menu provides operations which take effect on the whole character in the grid. You can reverse it to white on a black background, flip it vertically or laterally, shift it by a pixel's distance in any of four directions, rotate it quarter turns clockwise or anticlockwise, add or remove extra columns to its overall width and either clear the whole grid or fill it in completely.

The Edit menu offers cut-and-paste type block editing functions, which work by means of a temporary buffer in memory. You can cut a whole character to this buffer, or a block of it by means of a rubberbanded box you define with the mouse.

Whole characters or parts of them can then be pasted on to or even merged into another character or the same character, a facility which could drastically cut down the time needed to build up new fonts, since the most common structural forms from already-available fonts could be



Choosing a new character to edit



You can perform a wide range of operations on whole characters

used in this way as the base for new variations.

The facilities in the Draw menu are intended to help you design new characters. From here you can access routines to draw lines, filled and outline boxes, filled and outline circles, arcs and pie slices. This could be perhaps the most useful of the menus, were it not for the fact that most of these routines are both slow and inaccurate

For instance, I tried to draw a straight line at a 45 degree angle that manually could have been built up simply by plotting pixels corner to corner. But the line drawing routine failed miserably, plotting nothing but the first pixel of the proposed line, so that I finished up with a doglegged arc.

Had I tried a line 30 degrees off vertical I could understand some margin of error, but for a 45 degree angle, completely missing the mark is unforgivable. The Draw menu lets down what is otherwise an excellent range of editing functions.

Scaling

A font can also be scaled up or down in size. If you know the exact point size to which you wish to rescale a character set. you can specify this in the scaling instruction, but if you don't you can just as easily do the readjustment by eye using the program's option to scale a font up or down by a certain percentage of its original dimensions. Scaling can be done on an overall basis, or by specifying the appropriate ratios in the X and Y axes.

Fontz also allows you to account for the resolution of various Gem devices, and this must be borne in mind when scaling. Each font created using the program is designed to work with a Gem device of a specified resolution.

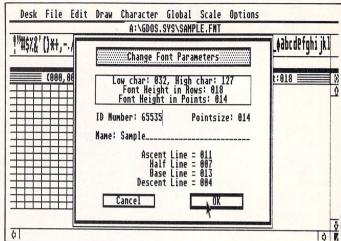
So to allow for these hardware differences there are facilities to scale a font to a different device, and here you can either choose from one of the devices currently installed, or manually enter the resolution of the proposed device if it is not installed.

One potential use of the package that is not immediately obvious is for the creation of logos for such things as business letterheads. Creating a logo is as simple as designing a very large typeface.

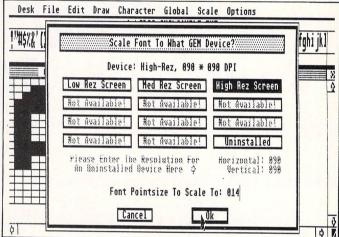
Groups of logos as large as character sets can conveniently be saved off to disc together as font files, and the manual offers a short section on the creation and use of logos designed in this way

The documentation is a 90-page paperback manual covering everything you'll need to know about the software in a methodical no-nonsense fashion.

The style is informal and text is backed up with plenty of illustrations. There's an introduction to the concepts of font design



There's precise control over a font's basic dimensions



Scaling a font to suit a different Gem device

and a clear Getting Started section, so this is particularly suitable for complete beginners.

More advanced users setting out to design their own fonts from scratch will benefit from a special section explaining some of the basic do's and don't's of typographical design, and there are guidance sections on converting fonts from other packages.

For the Gem programmer wishing perhaps to hack around with the typeface files themselves a separate detailed chapter is included documenting the details of the Gem font header definitions as they are expressed in the C language.

Conclusions

Apart from the few criticisms I have of its shape-drawing routines, I found Fontz to be a very full-featured, versatile and above all else highly user-friendly package. I was particularly impressed with its error messages, which are lengthy and tell you in layman's terms not only what is wrong when you foul up, but also how to go about putting it right again.

In the right hands Fontz is a powerful tool for editing and designing professional looking typefaces, as well as bridging the compatibility gap between the fonts of various other well established programs and the standard Gem format.

For anyone seriously involved in DTP or micro-based typesetting of any kind on the ST, Fontz is well worth a look. And if you already have Neocept's own document processor Word Up, it would make the perfect complement to your system.

FACT FILE

Product: Fontz Price: £24.95

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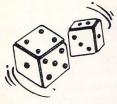
POINTS FOR:

Overall a powerful and very usable package. Excellent support for various Gem device resolutions. Detailed friendly manual suitable for a beginner. Program's error reporting is easy to understand

AGAINST:

Shape-drawing routines are mostly very tacky and inefficient.





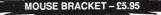
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Written for the young in heart

STAKING her claim to be the oldest ST adventurer is Mrs R Wilgaus of Grimsby, who writes to say that she will be 66 next birthday. She first became interested in adventures on a Vic 20, moved up to a Commodore 64 and is now building up her library for the ST.

Mrs Wilgaus is waiting for her fouryear-old grandson – already a budding arcade buff – to start school so she can inculcate him into the world of adventures.

Although not the oldest adventurers, Allen and Mark Errington of Newton Hall, Durham, are a father and son team whose combined age tots up to 67 years, Mark accounts for 21 of them.

They are prolific adventure players and I'm always pleased to receive their neat and complete solutions to the latest games.

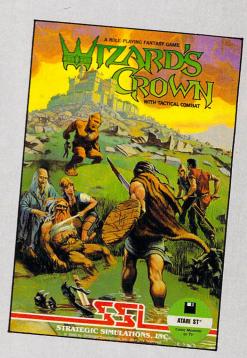
They have now finished Space Quest II

and are currently working on Shadowgate. They've certainly got a lot further with Shadowgate than I have – my excuse is that I've been finishing off The Uninvited from the same stable – but still have a few questions that need answering before they can finish it:

Can the rope be used or climbed in the Epor chamber? Can the fire-breathing dragon be passed? Is there anything to be done in the armoury? Where is the key for the door in the banquet hall?

Any help from other readers on this pretty tough adventure will be welcomed.

I am in a little trouble myself. I've just been playing the fruit machine in the alien bar in Space Quest I, and although I know from Allen and Mark and other readers that the machine should break down with a system crash – giving me 250 buckazoids into the bargain – the crash



just won't happen no matter how long I keep playing. I've tried betting various combinations of one, two and four buckazoids, but it doesn't seem to make any difference.

Where am I going wrong? Do I need to

Turn to Page 92 ▶

HINTS AND TIPS

JINXTER

Jannedor a problem at the end?

■ Make sure you've woken Xam earlier –
he'll then be chatting to the witch. Grab
the ball then head for the hall. Doofer the
ball, put ash on the hearth, put charms on
the bracelet and hide up the chimney.
When her claw appears, put the bracelet
on it.

WIZARD'S CROWN

Need some cash?

• Collect all the booty won in battle and sell it at the market at the top of the city just before the north gate. Your thief can use his haggling skills to get the best price.

Day a bit short?

• Entering a tavern makes the time pass quickly.

THE LURKING HORROR

Zombie a nuisance?

• Get the axe from the cabinet by breaking glass with gloves or crowbar. Chop the power cord with the axe.

Need the keys from the hacker?

 Heat the carton in the microwave (don't overdo it) and give it to the hacker in exchange for a master key.

DUNGEON MASTER

Level 5 gate keeps closing?

• Place any object on the slab where the transporter appears. Pull the lever to turn on the transporter and the object will be

whisked into the alcove whereupon it triggers open the gate.

The Matrix confusing you?

● Follow the passage until you reach the entrance. In front is a never-ending passage – turn right and take next passage on the left. Go straight on to the end then turn left. In the second alcove on the right is a button. Press it, continue on the left and you'll find a secret alcove containing a key.

Riddle Room a complete mystery?

● You need a bow, a blue gem, the mirror of dawn and a gold coin.

Slowed up by Time Is Of The Essence?

• Drop all the objects you don't need to acquire extra speed. Press the buttons and sprint like the wind past the traps. There's a key at the end.

◄ From Page 91

tamper with the machine, or have I just not yet managed to strike it lucky? Have I got a duff disc - well, you start to wonder when you get really stuck like that. Any advice would be highly appreciated.

Turning now to Dungeon Master, it seems that far more of our readers have completed this adventure than I thought. Just goes to show that you must never underestimate the intelligence of ST adventurers. Nicholas King of Cranbrook and Andrew Levison of Tonbridge have sent in a load of tips, and claim to be the first people in Britain to have completed it, finishing it on Sunday June 4, 1988.

An anonymous reader from Giffnock in Glasgow claims he has finished Dungeon Master, as has his friend James Pearson. I thank him for his tips on Jinxter and can return the favour by telling him, in this month's Hints and Tips section, how to kill Jannedor in the same adventure.

Ashley Conlan of Swansea and Andy Newbold of Hull are two more readers who have completed Dungeon Master, while Tony Oldridge of Goole is almost there - thanks for your tips, men.

Clive Robinson from London is still battling away and would like some assistance with getting the key from behind the closing gate on level five - a problem that has stumped many a would-be Master. The answer can be found in the

That amazingly fast solver of adventures. R.G.B. Marshall of Congleton has breezed through The Uninvited and is now trying his hand at writing his own adventure using STAC. I wonder whether he'll be the first one in with a solution to Rainbird's Corruption; we shall see.

Infocom's The Lurking Horror is proving troublesome for Garry Marshall of Scarista on the Isle of Harris in the Outer

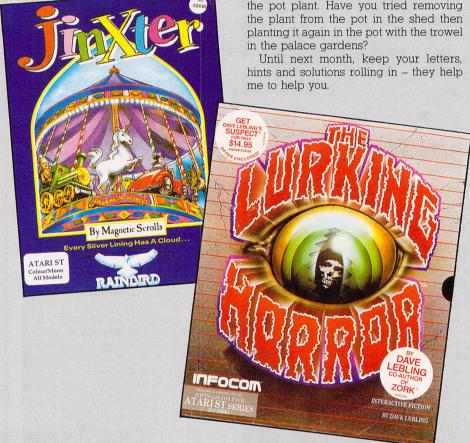
Hebrides. He can't get the keys from the hacker and is finding the floor-cleaning zombie a mite difficult to eradicate. Help is lurking at hand, Garry.

My thanks go out to Steve Bennion from Great Sutton in South Wirral for his very detailed and lucid exposition of Wizard's Crown. He hasn't finished yet, and says that he is not very good at solving computer adventures. But judging by his efforts on Wizard's Crown, I'd say that he

is a born adventurer. I am passing on one of his tips, in particular for C. Willis, who was having difficulty in obtaining money in this adventure.

Appreciation also to Jonathan Capener of Keele in Newcastle-under-Lyne for his tips on King's Quest I, II and III, Leisure Suit Larry and Space Quest II. Jonathan would like to know how to escape from the Wizard's power in KQ III - does anvone know?

Some readers have not got maximum points from The Pawn and suspect they've failed to do the right thing with the pot plant. Have you tried removing



Not quite spellbinding

WIZARD Warz trumpets itself as a game that takes fantasy role playing one step further. Sadly, that claim is not borne out by the product. What we have here is the same, tired old scenario of the hero trundling across a foreign land while doing battle with assorted monsters and ne'er-do-wells along the way. One step further it is not.

You start off as a junior wizard with very little power and less than a handful of spells. Your aim - to duff up the seven greatest magicians in the world. When you've given the magnificent seven their comeuppance, you'll end up as the big boss wizard, which is the whole aim of the enterprise

Wizard Warz is broken down into three

Program: Wizard Warz Price: £19.99 Supplier: US Gold, Units 2/3, Holford Way, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021-356 3388

stages. In the first you move around a scrolling map, somewhere upon which are seven cities and half a dozen monsters. Each nasty guards a treasure which must be retrieved (by spifflicating said nasty) and returned to the appropriate city. When you've done that, you can visit the seventh city to move on to stage two

Here there is even more brute-bashing to be done and more items to be collected. The final stage pits you against each

of the seven magicians in order of strength. Needless to say, each wizard is protected by a number of nasties, so its once more into the breach with further punch-ups.

The only spark of originality that I could detect was in the screen presentation. I didn't particularly like it, but at least it was different. The screen is split into eight windows thus - two spell books, portraits of player and opponent, player and opponent's attributes - physical, spiritual and mental strength - player's inventory and, lastly, scene of the action.

The action window shows the minimally animated and diminutive hero,

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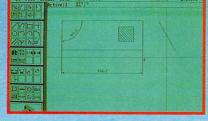


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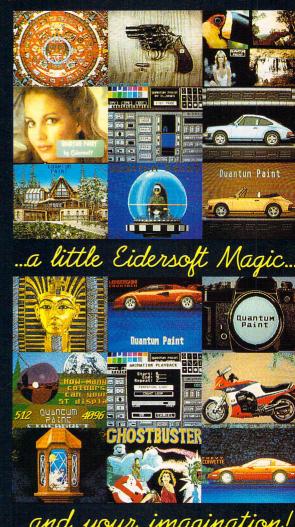
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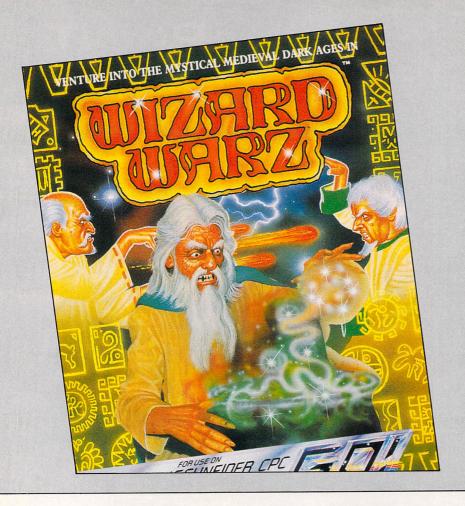




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◄ From Page 92

initially centred on a stylised map. Considering that this is where all the incident takes place, this comparatively small playing area gives an almost claustrophobic feel to the game.

The portaits are quite good - there's an impressive variety of monsters and the hero's picture changes the more powerful he becomes.

On encountering a monster, the action window changes to a crudely drawn battle arena upon which the fight takes place. Fairly unispired stuff this, since it consists of little more than both characters toddling around and blamming away with whatever spell is deemed most

The only mildly impressive aspects of this game are the slightly different approach to presentation and the range of portraits. Apart from that, it is really rather dull and the sound effects do little to pep up the interest. Not so much a case of Wizard Warz as Wizard Bores.

Sound	4
Graphics	
Playability	4
Value for money	5
Overall	

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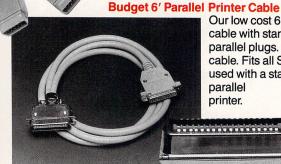


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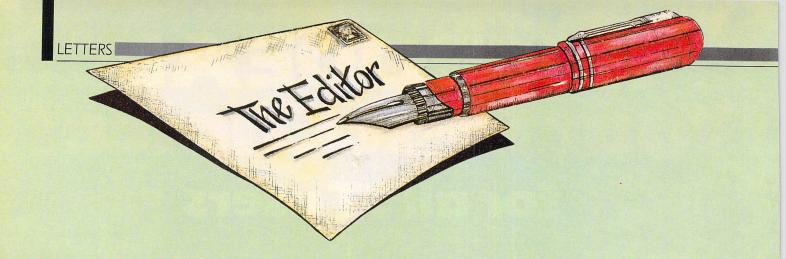
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Monitor/TV switching

I RECENTLY bought an Atari SM125 high resolution monochrome monitor and have encountered a problem involving the connection/disconnection of the monitor lead when switching from using the monitor to my portable colour TV.

I change between the two visual display units quite regularly and as a result the monitor lead is becoming worn and loose. I would therefore like to know if there is an attachment I can buy to allow me to switch between the monitor and the TV without disconnecting any of the leads. – M. Bond, Orford, Cheshire.

● The piece of equipment you are looking for is known as a monitor/TV switching unit. It is available from most mail order companies specialising in peripherals, and costs about £19.95. It is easy to connect and allows you to toggle between TV and monitor at the flick of a gwitch

Choosing peripherals

TWO months ago I bought an Atari 520STFM. I am now contemplating increasing my peripherals to include a monochrome monitor, a printer and a second disc drive. I have decided upon the Atari SM124/125 for a monitor, but remain perplexed about which printer and disc drive to invest in.

I am interested in a dot matrix machine capable of high quality NLQ print, but I don't wish to pay more than £250 for it.

As the internal drive on my computer is only single sided, I feel that the second drive ought to be double sided with a minimum 800k storage capacity. Again, price is a consideration with a ceiling of £150.

Any suggestions and advice would be most welcome – David Owen, Ashford, Kent.

• Most copies of the Atari SM125 have now been withdrawn due to a design fault. However, the SM124 is an excellent high resolution monochrome monitor and can be bought for £119 from some suppliers.

There isn't much to choose between drives, so shop around for the best bargain.

The excellent Star colour LC-10 printer was reviewed in the August 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* and will set you back only £230. In the July 1988 issue we reviewed the Panasonic range of printers and these are also superb buys.

Upgrade will prove costly

I RECENTLY bought my first computer, an Atari 520STFM. I now wish to upgrade it to a Mega 4 ST with a 20Mb hard disc drive.

As I do a lot of desktop publishing I am also considering buying a new VDU and wonder whether a low or medium resolution monitor will suit my purposes. I would be very grateful for any advice you can offer.— Graham Brown, Ormskirk, Lancashire.

● The memory upgrade alone for your 520STFM will cost you £400, and the price of a Supra 20 Mb drive will boost your shopping bill by a staggering £549. That is before you even begin thinking of buying a monitor.

Further to this, you will be lacking the battery-backed clock found on the Mega ST. You will also be without a double sided floppy drive, the new version of Gem, the new ST Basic and the updated desk accessories.

So our advice is that you trade in your 520STFM for a new Mega 4 ST – which is advertised for as little as £999 by some mail order companies.

For word processing and desktop publishing procedures, a high resolution monochrome monitor is best, as some packages will not run in colour.

At last — Elite for the ST

AS an ex-BBC Micro and Commodore 64 user, I among thousands believe that the best game ever released for those two machines was Elite. When are we going

to see it on the ST? - Peter Youde, Llandaff, Cardiff.

* * *

I WOULD like to debate your answer to Jonathan Denne's letter in the August issue of Atari ST User. I have heard from good authority that Firebird is planning to release Elite for the ST. – Ian Munday, Camberley, Surrey.

* * *

IN the August copy of Atari ST User you told Jonathan Denne that there were no plans for Elite to be released on the ST.

Well you are wrong. I rang Telecomsoft and was told that Elite would definitely be released for the ST before Christmas. – Barry Barton, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

● If we bow and scrape enough and admit we were wrong just this once, are we forgiven? A lot of confusion existed originally as to whether Elite would ever be released for a 16 bit micro. We have now seen the pre-production copy of the game for the ST and can confirm that release is imminent.

Much reprogramming has gone into converting a 32k classic into a piece of software worthy of a 512k giant. However, with solid vector graphics, enhanced sound and many other new features, Elite is set to take the ST market by storm.

Problems in Pakistan

AS far as I know, I am one of only four ST owners in all of Pakistan. You can well imagine how lonely it can get, so I especially look forward to receiving your superb magazine each month.

The price I pay for Atari ST User is equivalent to a good meal in a top class restaurant here in Lahore, but it is worth every cent.

As an electronic engineer, journalist and ST user I find your magazine valuable in every respect. However, I would like to make an observation and ask for help with one or two problems.

I have a serious complaint for the makers of Hollywood Strip Poker. It is unfair that as soon as I win the last round, the disc drive begins whirring and the

Star Game for a Star Letter



Each month we'll select a letter of the month – and the sender will receive the program which our reviewers have rated Atari ST User Star game. This month reader Clive Parker will receive Starglider 2, which is reviewed on Page 26. Letters on every subject of interest to Atari ST users are welcome. Send them to: The Editor, Atari ST User, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

Dongle cure for aching eyes

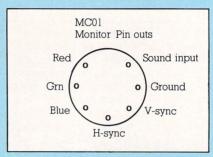
ATTENTION all frustrated ST users with Ferguson MC monitor/TVs fitted to their machine. I have an Atari 520STFM in conjunction with an MC01 and I have never been able to get a decent picture.

Using the lead supplied with my ST the picture on the TV/monitor was very bright and after only half an hour of word processing my eyes began to ache.

As you may know, when the MC01 detects the RGB signal the colour and contrast controls are disabled. I then bought a different lead, made up for me by a mail order firm. The result was as disappointing as before and I had wasted £13.50

After several months of suffering severe eyestrain while trying to use 1st Word, I decided to sort out the problem for myself. I searched through all the back copies of my computer magazines and found several suggestions involving resistors in the RGB lines and a diode in the vertical sync line

I dismantled the lead I had bought and discovered three resistors in parallel with the RGB lines. These proved useless, as electricity takes the path of



least resistance and would therefore ignore them. I rearranged them in series but realised that more resistance was needed.

Eventually I ended up with 1500 ohm resistors in each of the RGB lines and one in the vertical sync line.

Rather than solder the resistors inside the plug I made a small dongle with a plastic adaptable box, a seven pin plug, a seven pin Din socket, some veroboard and about 12in of screened cable. Total cost of the parts worked out a about £3, and all were available from my local electrical store.

I would be pleased to supply readers with further details of this attachment upon receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope.

I now have a working monitor after eight months of frustration. I hope that my simple solution helps out a lot of other ST users.— Clive Parker, 14 Cross Lane, Bristol, Avon BS20 OJQ. the near future. In the meantime we suggest you read Ian Waugh's excellent series on Music on the ST, which looks in depth at most of the musical packages available.

A review of the Star colour LC-10 printer was featured in the September issue of *Atari ST User*. You will be hard pressed to find a better colour printer for less than £300.

1040STFM on the way

I OWNED a Spectrum 128K+ for almost two years, using it mainly for games, but its poor graphics and limited power forced me to consider buying an ST.

I am aware of the vast range of software available for the 520STFM, but intend to buy the 1040ST and have it fitted with a TV modulator. However, I have recently heard that Atari plans to release a new 1040STFM with enhanced graphics animation. Can you confirm if what I heard is true? – Frankie Foo, Sabah, Malaysia.

• Atari is planning to release the 1040STFM this month. We do not have price details at the time of going to press, but this new addition to the ST stable promises to be something quite special.

Looking for a word processor

DES TAYLOR's letter in the July 1988 edition of Atari ST User raises some interesting points that I feel need re-iteration and expansion.

Like Mr Taylor, I use both the Apple-Macintosh at work and the Atari ST at home so have an ideal opportunity to compare them. I am also a little disturbed by the ST's inability to shake off its games machine image.

I consider myself to be a serious computer user, and I used a BBC Micro for many years with Wordwise as my word processing facility. I upgraded to an Atari 1040ST earlier this year.

I thought that I would have little trouble

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hard won screen is immediately lost from sight.

The only way to remedy the situation was to turn off my drive – my disc drive that is – shortly before winning.

I am currently using 1st Word which is a fairly useful program, but I now find that I need a more powerful word processor with spelling check and a mailmerge utility. Can you recommend one?

I am also using my ST with a Casio CZ 101 and an HT 6000. I use Dr. T's KCS for heavy stuff, but think that Music Studio is more ideally suited to my needs, except for its lack of real time recording.

I have recently received a letter from

its makers to say a new version of Music Studio including real time recording is ready for release. Have you had a chance to test it out yet, and when can I expect to read its review in the pages of your magazine?

Finally, can you recommend a good colour printer for use with my ST? – Imran Anwar, Lahore, Pakistan.

Arnor's Protext is arguably the fastest and most powerful of the mid-price word processors. It includes not only a spelling checker and mail merge utility, but also boasts microjustification, to boot.

We will be reviewing Music Studio in

◄ From Page 97

finding a word processing package for my new micro. I further imagined that since the advent of the BBC Micro, programming would have progressed to a level where any new package for a powerful machine like the ST would be several orders of magnitude better than their 8 bit predecessors. I was quickly disillusioned.

I tried a few of the recommended word processors for the ST – some of which were truly awful.

I am currently using a package that, while adequate, possesses no real advantage over Wordwise, except those conferred by the larger memory of the ST.

The answer, of course, is that it is not the machine that is slow, but the software which has been written for it. This seems to be the crux of the ST's image problem.

- Graeme Watson, Poole, Dorset.

• We agree that certain word processors such as 1st Word are quite slow but show on-screen print styles, justification, page breaks and so on which Wordwise makes no attempt to do. These are all time consuming tasks.

We also feel you are being rather unfair by tarring all serious ST software with the same brush. ST Writer is an excellent package available in the public domain, and is capable of outshining Wordwise Plus in almost all respects.

In the mid-price range, Protext is a genuine keyboard-driven word processor and is exceedingly powerful and fast.

Meanwhile Signum 2 – reviewed in the September 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* – is a massive piece of software capable of document processing and most large scale desktop publishing procedures.

Beginner's Basic in print

AS well as being new to the ST, I am a user rather than a computer expert. Not knowing what I was doing I inadvertently wiped off all the information on the discs provided with my computer. The ST

manual is barren to say the least. Where do I go from here?

Could you recommend a good book on how to use the 520STFM or is there anybody out there who could help me? – J.G. Ratcliffe, Kilburn, Derbyshire.

* * *

I BOUGHT an Atari 520STFM in November 1987 and am pleased with everything about the computer bar one problem – the complete lack of any real programming information given with the machine.

Could you recommend a good reference book which will have ST syntax and examples of ST Basic programming?

— D.I. Nurse, Pontycymmer, Mid Clarence, and Clarence are supplied to the control of the contr

D.J. Nurse, Pontycymmer, Mid Glamorgan.

◆ Atari produces a Basic handbook for £9.95, but surely a clearer and better way to learn Atari ST Basic is to collect our own pull-out guide to ST Languages. The first part of this appeared in the August 1988 issue of *Atari ST User* which is available with the free handsome binder from our back-issues department. You'll find an order form on Page 113.

The series is written by our own experts and begins with the real fundamentals aimed at getting the complete novice started, along with programming help for the more advanced user.

New Tos for old

I HAVE a problem which I am desperate for help in solving. I have been using an Atari 520STFM for some time now to prepare my final year project report in an electrical and electronic engineering course at City University, London.

Unfortunately my machine has been replaced with a new STFM with the new Tos chips installed. Most programs function satisfactorily, but as you are probably aware, the compatibility is not universal.

My problem is that I have been doing a lot of work using the CFA Draft II package. This does not function correctly on my new machine and I cannot continue with my project, or even print the drawings I have already done. Can I obtain the

old Tos on disc? Alternatively do you have any other suggestions as things are beginning to get desperate? – C. Smith, Maidstone, Kent.

● The old Tos is not available on disc. You could perhaps persuade your university department to invest in a memory upgrade for the ST. This in turn will give you the extra workspace – which is most likely to be the problem – needed to run your original GFA Cad package.

If this is not the problem, return your Draft II Cad package to your supplier. If you explain your predicament to them we are sure that they will rush you a replacement which is compatible with the new Tos.

Bug hunting Down Under

IN the January 1988 issue of Atari ST User – we are a long way from the UK and editions of your magazine sometimes take months to reach us – I was pleased to see Julia Battle's program, Golden Crown.

I spent hours carefully typing in the listing, typed RUN and the computer responded with, Function call not allowed line 810.

I checked and rechecked my listing, but still the program would not work. In desperation I added the line:

795 RESTORE 980

and was amazed that things actually began to happen.

All was well for only a short time until the screen garbled forth: You are in EAS-WESNOR – What next? Eventually I had to give up as I realised that I was in an unbreakable loop.

Perhaps a small printing error on your part. Or do Australian 520STFMs work differently to their British counterparts?

I would be extremely grateful if you could tell me what is wrong with the published program. – Mike Duncan, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

• All of the listings printed on the pages of *Atari ST User* are printouts from working programs. As such they are usually bug-free.

EASWESNOR is the tokenisation of East, West and North, which you have somehow accessed directly from the program. It appears that you have probably made a typing error in line 810.

We all make some mistakes when typing in lengthy listings. Common typing errors include adding or missing spaces, colons mistaken for semicolons which in turn may be mistaken for commas, upper case substitution for lower case and so on.

The only remedy is to recheck your listing or – better still – get somebody else to scan it while you read out each line from the magazine.

Those baffling basics

WHEN are we Atari 520STFM owners going to be able to type in the listings printed in Atari ST User? Every time I have tried, I find that the program is printed in either Fast Basic or GFA Basic.

Are any programs being submitted to your magazine in the 1.09 operating code, or are we ST owners being forced to buy another expensive programming language? – F.J. Chapell, Hayes, Middlesex.

• Do you mean the new version of ST Basic, as there's no such thing as 1.09

operating code? Most users agree that there are faster and more user-friendly Basics than that supplied by Atari. However, we continue to support ST Basic, confirmed by the listings each month in *Atari ST User*.

Next month we feature a program named Destroyer which is written in ST Basic. In the September 1988 issue we featured an excellent File Dump utility.

Meanwhile our monthly pull-out guide explores almost every avenue of this language.

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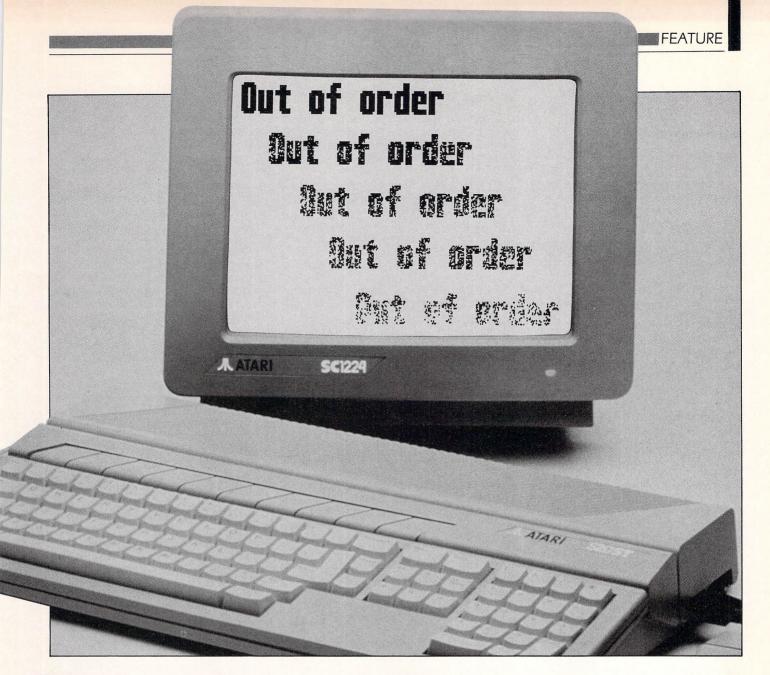
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Better safe than sorry...

Francis Botto shows how to protect your micro from failure

RELIABLE workhorse like the ST gives the impression that it'll never let you down. It's probably this trustworthiness which leads many of us to become a little over-confident in its resistance to withstand our unwitting neglect and sometimes abuse.

Like any machine though, the ST will break down, rarely suddenly and completely, but still partial failures crop up from time to time. It's these irritating hiccups that make you want to tear your hair and make panic calls to your dealer or the first computer repair company listed in the Yellow Pages.

And all too often it happens because you haven't taken mundane precautions like duplicating discs.

As the ST is almost unique in its diverse following – ranging from games enthusiasts to business users – the severity of a breakdown's effects also vary.

Take for instance, an ST which is the mainstay of a business. A catastrophic failure can cause anything from the loss of a few hours work to the cruelest blow of

all, bankruptcy. It has been observed that 80 per cent of American companies having experienced a computer disaster went bankrupt within 18 months, while a further 13 per cent met the same end between 18 months and 5 years later.

Enthusiasts meanwhile, might not depend upon their ST quite in the same way, but still computer repairs aren't cheap and it can be an equally harrowing experience. In short computer breakdowns affect us all.

More fundamental perhaps, many failures can be avoided in the first place by taking the simplest of preventive measures. Naturally, it's impossible to evade all types of breakdown, but it's surprising just how many are the result of easily-avoided causes.

Most ST users are fully aware of the need for simple contingency measures to fend off and cope with breakdowns, but putting them into practice isn't quite as easy. We mean well, but we can never seem to find time to duplicate those discs, or file printouts.

In other words we're a bit lazy about the whole thing – or are we just disorgan-

Turn to Page 102 ▶

◆ From Page 101

ised? Yes, it's probably that. So what we really need is a schedule which forges our planned measures into some kind of rota that will fit in with time spent at the ST.

Preventive action

Measures to help avoid a computer breakdown vary from the obvious to the perhaps slightly obscure. It really depends on how much experience you have.

One starting point is to check your ST's plug fuse, especially if you bought your machine second hand. And if you find the wrong fuse – which will probably be a brown 13 amp job – replace it immediately with a 3 amp one. Needless to say, an incorrect fuse can cause a horrendous power supply failure.

Ironically, a computer as technologically advanced as the ST, like any other micro is prone to mechanical failures. The keyboard, which receives a daily hammering in many cases, can be cared for by a dust cover when not in use.

And as for those finicky plugs and sockets, commonsense should tell you to remove and connect leads gently. In addition, don't ever perform such operations when the computer or peripheral is switched on.

Then there's the disc drive. This almost magical device, which responds to your every wish, can cause tremendous disc corruption. Care of the drive is therefore essential.

There is a school of thought that thinks that cleaning the head can do more harm than good, following the maxim to leave well alone. If you are determined to clean the head use an appropriate kit and follow the instructions carefully.

Needless to say, don't go removing discs in the middle of read/write operations – eventually your drive will protest and refuse to operate correctly.

A further note of warning: With all the cheap discs on the market today – mainly unbranded – it's quite possible to get lumbered with low quality discs that can cause loss of data as well as drive damage. I'm not knocking all unbranded discs, as most are excellent, but if your ST complains of disc errors, perhaps it's just asking for better quality.

Hard disc owners must take extra care, as often large chunks of data or even complete discs can be erased as the result of a single erroneous command.

Apart from tape streamer backups which are excellent but still expensive, it might be worth investing in a backup utility which will ensure you don't lose valuable data accidentally.

It almost goes without saying you should always take care of your discs.

Keep them dust-free and don't ever lean them up against the monitor screen as the electromagnetic emission can rearrange the data. Fluorescent lighting has also been known to have the same effect.

Taking note of Murphy's Law – if something can go wrong then it will – you have no option but to anticipate a breakdown. Sometimes, no matter how much care and attention you give, the ST will fail.

Duplicating discs is naturally a must – no matter how trivial their contents – because you never know when your system is going to rearrange disc data, or even wipe a disc clean. This might be considerably less hassle for those with 1Mb drives, but there again the 512k drives store a lot more than most.

It may also be a good idea to file printouts from time to time. Perhaps collect on a daily basis important spreadsheet information, text, programs and the like.

Floppy backups

Hard disc users should copy important files on to floppy disc. Something tells me that if it were recommended to copy the whole of the disc's contents many would say: "What do you think I bought a hard disc for?".

Having a complete backup system is perhaps beyond most of us, but it's worth keeping a component or two you know your ST has blown in the past – so long as its nothing more than an inexpensive chip.

For example, in the early days Dragon computers tended to devour sound chips, and BBC Micros once had a reputation for blowing 74LS245 data buffers.

Lastly, if you have experienced sudden losses of data or inexplicable program crashes, the culprit could well be an unwelcome mains spike finding its way into your ST from the supply network.

These are most often caused by high powered electrical appliances which, when switched on or off, cause a "bounce" in the supply network which is transmitted to computer users.

This situation can be remedied easily with a spike suppressor – you can get one from most good computer dealers. If not, try some of the large electronic chain stores. It's better to get to the bottom of the problem, rather than be pestered intermittently, as a spike problem can be a real nuisance.

All these dos and don'ts are pretty straightforward, but you need to find time to carry them out. We all know what happens: We sit down at the ST, and the clock ticks on until eventually there's no time to duplicate discs or run off hard copies of text or whatever.

Possibly, you ought to get into the habit of duplicating discs frequently as you work, and print out important documents or information every once in a while. If you own a quiet printer which has a reasonable sized buffer, this shouldn't interrupt your work at all.

Professional users might like to seek a maintenance contract. The down-time period when your computer is out of action will be minimised either by the contractor supplying you with a substitute system immediately, or hopefully swiftly repairing yours on-site.

Numerous policies are available, some specialising in Atari computers. When investing in this type of insurance, you should ask about the average response time – how long they take to arrive when you cry for help? Don't buy a policy in which the nearest service centre is in London when you live in Manchester.

What type of breakdown does the policy cover? Will they supply a substitute machine if your ST can't be fixed on-site within a reasonable period? Fairly obvious questions, but they must be addressed if you're not going to throw money away.

When searching for a suitable computer repair company, you should naturally be cautious. But try to forget those nightmare tales of repairers who've gained the sort of reputation that ranks with the average backstreet garage.

A number of computer repair companies advertise in magazines. Most will operate via mail. If you use one of these services be sure to send your machine by recorded delivery. It only costs 25 pence and will ensure that the Post Office will compensate for any loss or damage. Also make sure the company is prepared to return it the same way – if not by Securicor or the like.

Which repairer?

Apart from the obvious, what else should you look for when choosing the right company? Ask yourself: How much will it cost, is it a standard charge or does it depend on the type of repair?

When do you get your computer back? How long will the guarantee last, or will there be a guarantee at all? Is the repairer or service centre approved by Atari?

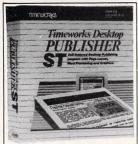
Dealing with the first consideration, I think you'll normally get a better deal from companies that charge a flat rate, in which case you will pay the same price irrespective of parts replaced and work carried out.

Prices naturally vary from company to company, and it's not always a good thing to find the cheapest deal. It's sometimes worth paying that little bit extra for a longer period of guarantee for work carried out.

Look for a same day repairer if possible as this will show the company is equipped with up-to-date automatic test equipment, which helps diagnose faults quickly and efficiently.

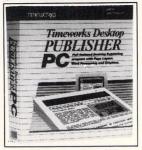
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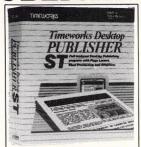
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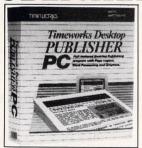
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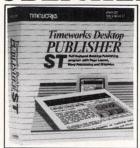
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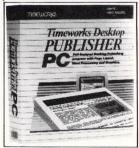
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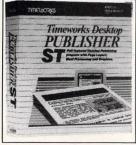


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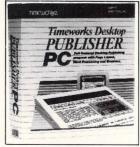
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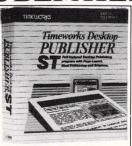
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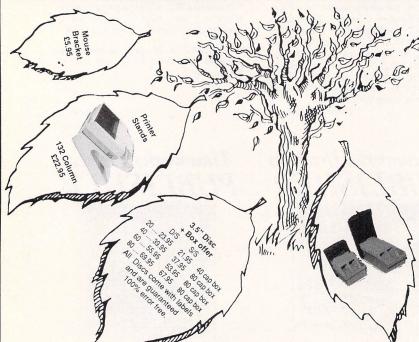


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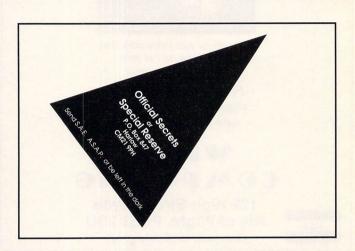


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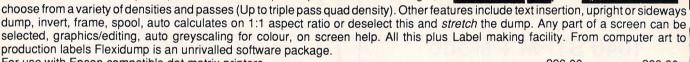
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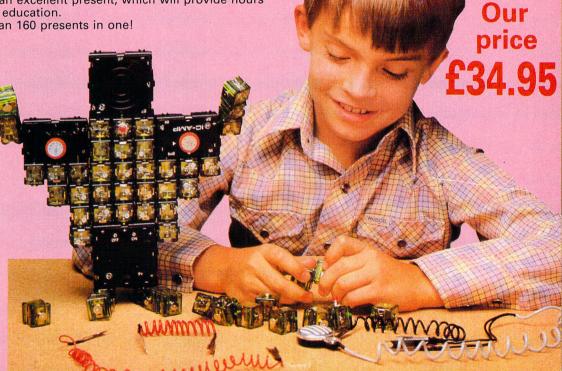
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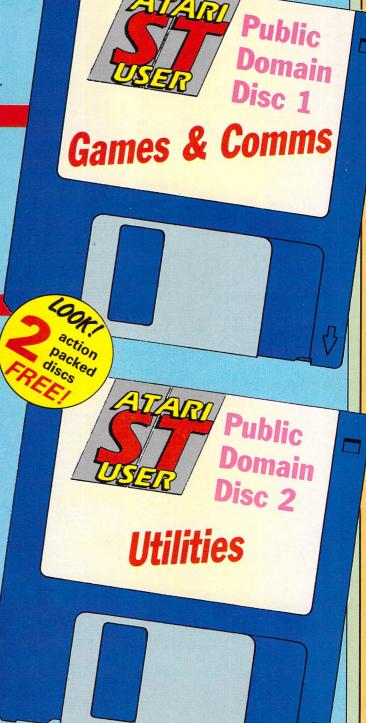
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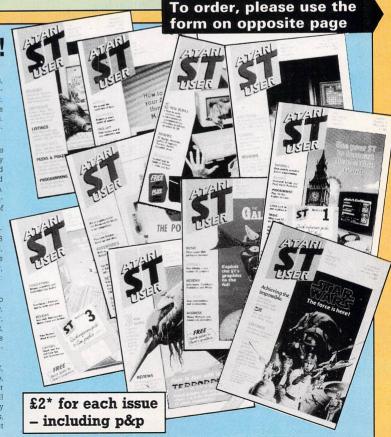
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September issue: Reviews: Laser Spellbook, Signum 2, Ten, Protext Office, GFA Advanced programming, Computer Languages, Virus, Mindfighter, Football Manager 2, Captain America, plus many other games. Features: Midi, Adventures, Gallery, Mailbag, Weatherlink, Pull-out





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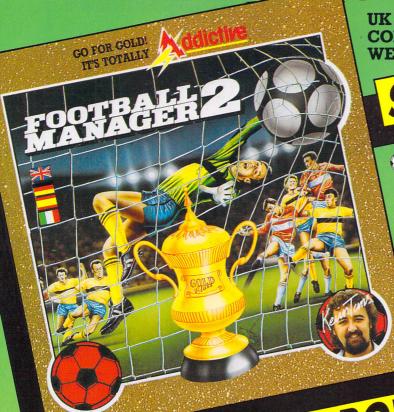
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