



UNITED AMSTRAD USER GROUP



1, MAGNOLIA CLOSE,
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AMENDMENT

Issue 2

Since the January 87 Editorial was written we have had to cut out the AMX Mouse and Pagemaker Review. They will be Reviewed at a later date. In their place we have added a 'Skywave Multi-port' Review which I hope you find interesting.

Sorry for any disappointment caused.

United Amstrad User Group.

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NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 1987

EDITORIAL

Dear Members, welcome to the first 'Official' newsletter. Now after the slow start to 1987 we have finally got things organised! We have started a new service, a Computer Book Library, which is now fully operational and we hope you'll take advantage of the opportunity to read books on the subject of computing without the need to pay lots of money for them. There is a small linking fee but this is only to help us cover the cost of postage.

The service is going to operate in a similar way to that of a normal library but through the post. If you require any of the books in the library then all you have to do is fill in a 'Book Request Form' and send that to us together with a Cheque/Postal Order for the small fee. If we have the book in we will send it off to you straight away, but if on the off chance the book is already out when you order it, we will simply reserve it for you, and send it off the moment we receive it back.

As for the worst bit, the fee, we have decided to start it at 75p per book, which isn't bad when consider postage costs, and some of the books are quite large. Anyway if this proves successful we will probably drop this cost down to about 50p. The latest book, which only has a few books in it, is included in this newsletter. We hope to get lots more over the next month or so. If you have books which you have either finished with or you have got of, why not send them to us, offer all its better than giving them to some little girl.

The Public Domain software library is doing quite well, with 20 programs now available. Most of them are of magazines but at least it saves you having to type them in. My thank to Mr T Houghton (1112) for sending alot of them in. Also you'll notice programs BU10017/D and BU10017/D have both written for the Serial BIOS extension, by Mr R B Taylor (1111). If you have any programs, either ones you've written yourself or ones you have typed in from a magazine, then why not send them in.

That brings me onto another point. All software/hardware to see in the newsletters now, unless stated otherwise, will be for the CPC range of rights. This is because we have had to close our doors to ZX and PC users due to the amount of money it was costing to keep these machines open.

The Durrell titles (pronounced law-Rell) are still on offer. Nobody has taken advantage of these offers yet, but I'm sure somebody will. Most of the games are great and whats more they'll work on all the CPC's!

You'll find some interesting reviews in this newsletter including two games reviews, one on Knight James and one on Elita. They were reviewed by Seamus Delaney. If for some reason you don't agree with any of these then we'll be pleased to have your comments, and that goes for everything we write! I did the Mini Office II review myself and I think I've been fairly accurate. The hardware review on the AMX Mouse and Pagemaker was written by Colin Roy who's lucky enough to own both of these fine items.

Starting from the next newsletter Steve Glover will be writing the hardware/add-ons and computers in business sections. His reviews should have been included in this newsletter but I couldn't get them to load into Tasword. If any of you would like to write an article or review we're always glad to receive them.

I've also included a Show Report in the pages of this wonderful publication. That's one of the reasons its large. I don't know how many of you got to the show, but it wasn't as good as I expected it to be. For a start I thought there would be more software stands there, for example Durrell and Pride Utilities were both missing! I wanted to go and thank Durrell personally for the discounts they're giving us.

I'm still trying to obtain discounts from all software/hardware companies but at the moment I'm having trouble even getting a reply. Thanks again Durrell!!!

Well that about wraps up my editorial for this newsletter. I hope enjoy reading through the rest of it. Also enclosed with this newsletter is a Service Summary which will tell you how to use all the services and Guide to Order which will probably tell you that we're good at making life confusing!

Well until next newsletter, happy computing.....

Dary Carter



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THE AMSTRAD COMPUTER SHOW REPORT (11th JANUARY)

This was the first Amstrad computer show I had managed to get to so I wasn't too disappointed overall, but I've been told this was the worst one so far. Probably because a lot of the major software companies were missing, ie Durell, Pride Utilities etc.

The show was spread out over two floors with the 'Amstrad Thearte' in between the two, where talks and film shows were held. By the look on the peoples faces as they came out from a talk I dont think they could have been much fun, so I didn't risk it.

Most of the 'Cheap Software' stalls were on the bottom floor, and this is where I foolishly headed. I didn't stand a chance of getting to the stands as masses of people had flooded round them, and were determined not to move until they had found something they liked. There were some very good bargains to be found on these stalls, for example Sweevo's World on disc for only a fiver! Thats the cost of the disc alone in some unfortunate parts of the country.

Timatic Systems, another Fareham based company, had a large central stand on the top floor, showing off their 'Micro Draft', a professional CAD (Computer Aided Design) package, available for the 6128.

There were several digitizers on show including the new one from The Electric Studio, and 'Vidi' of course! It was possible to have yourself digitized at the show for only 50p, this seems a bit pointless to me as a photograph serves equally well.

Phasor One, the new joystick from Britannia was on display. It uses micro-switches and so is very sensitive and it even comes complete with a 12 month unconditional guarantee (for normal use), quite useful for people like me who usually destroy their joysticks within the first couple of hours. They were also showing Super Romplus, a 14 socket Rom Board.

Romantic Robot and Mirage were both showing off their Tape/Disc copiers, both look quite good except Romantics Multiface Two incorperates a reset button. Both have 8k Ram and 8k Rom on board and are completely self contained. Please note: These products should only be used to make back up copies of your original software.

There were a few stands avertising communications add-ons, including Pace and PMS Communications. Pace were showing their Nightingale modem and the Commstar communications software, and their 5 1/4 inch second drive for the PCW8256.

After spending a whole day at the show I decided it was quite interesting and well worth going. It's a shame that more of the classier software companies weren't there but I suppose they were busy working on their next masterpieces. This show didn't impress me as much as the professional Business shows do but thats just a matter of opinion.



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HARDWARE REVIEW

MULTIPOINT

Skywave Software, £99.99, All CPC's

Essentially Skywaves Multipoint is a comprehensive RS232 interface which allows you to connect a modem to your computer, but this little device has much more up it's sleeves than first becomes obvious. It contains in fact, an RS232 port, a 24-Bit Parallel Port and a 2 Socket Rom board.

The unit works perfectly well with both Tape and Disc systems, although 664 & 6128 users need a different version of the multipoint. There is a through connector so it is possible for other add-ons to be connected at the same time.

The RS232 is a fully compatible Serial port which can be set to 9600, 4800, 2400, 1200, 1200/75, 75/1200, 300 and external baud rates. A switched mode power supply is used to supply the correct 12 volts needed for RS232 connections.

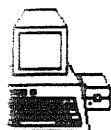
The 24-bit Parallel port is physically compatible with the BBC's User Port and can be used to control the extra features of some modems or just used as a general purpose Input/Output port.

Fitted in one of the Rom sockets is 'Skycom', a comprehensive communications program, which allows connection with Prestel, Telecom Gold, Bulletin Boards, etc, although there are only four colours available when connected to Prestel. There is also the facility to download software from Prestel and Viewfax 258.

The software gives enormous flexibility when handling files, and files can be spooled into memory or onto Disc/tape. There is also a printer option which allows Prestel pages to be printed (text only), and when used in Gold or Terminal mode will send every character received to the printer as well as the screen. The software is controlled by commands as well as single key procedures. When the software is first booted in using '!SKYCOM' the screen shows the parameter window, and the command line. Commands can be enter at the command line or keys on the keypad can be pressed to change the various options, like Filter on, Echo on etc. The Keypad has been defined in all modes so allowing fast access to the various options.

I would recommend the Multi-port to anyone who was interested in on-line communications, or thinking of buying an RS232 port. The only fault is the documentation which is a bit on the brief side. Skywave Software also upgrade 'Skycom' every now and again and will re-program the Rom on board with the new copy. This insures you always have the most up to date version.

Presentation:	70%	Actual Use:	85%	UAUG rating:	70%
Documentation:	45%	Value:	75%		



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GAMES REVIEW

KNIGHT GAMES

English Software, £8.95 Tape £14.95 Disc, All CPC's

This game has received fantastic reviews in other publications, but we at UAUG like to be honest about these things. In short I am very disappointed in the game. I read the reviews and promptly went out and bought the game, how stupid of me, what a let down.

After the game has eventually loaded from tape a perfectly acceptable menu screen is displayed. Choose the event you want, which looks very exiting on the inlay card, and get ready to be disappointed. The background looks good (but I have it on good authority that the graphics are better on the C64 version) even the little men look acceptable, all well and good.

The real crunch comes when you discover just how long it's going to take you to win the game completely. First each player have ten roses at the side of the screen and it is fairly easy to get rid of those. Unfortunately only one tenth of the fight is over, because the ten shields at the top have to be dispenced with as well and they are worth ten roses each.

Regrettably this game is not all its cracked up to be (regettably that is, because I spent my money on it). All in all I would not have bought it if had I known what it was like. Be smart buy something else!

Graphics:	78%	Playability:	09%	UAUG rating:	30%
Sound:	19%	Value:	10%		

ELITE

Firebird/Torus, £14.95 Tape £17.95 Disc, All CPC's

Elite is both an arcade shoot-em-up and a brain buster. The object of your mission is to fly around the universe and get as much money as you can, by buing and selling goods. It is possible to become a fugitive by buying slaves and shooting the hell out of the other ships, but this is not such a good idea because the police and pirate ships keep chasing you! As you defeat more and more ships your rating will increase (it starts at Harmless), and it will take unique skill and dedication to become one of the Elite!

This is a totaly brilliant version of a totaly brilliant game and well worth the money, better buy this instead of Knight Games!

Graphics:	92%	Playability:	95%	UAUG rating:	95%
Sound:	30%	Value:	95%		

Reviewed by Seamus Delaney.



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SERIOUS SOFTWARE REVIEW

MINI OFFICE II

Database Software. £14.95 Tape £19.95 Disc, All CPC's

For anyone interested in typing letters, storing files or keeping their home accounts in order, then Mini Office II is strongly recommended. It combines six of the most popular serious programs in one unique package for one unique price! The package contains a Word Processor, Database, Spreadsheet, a Graphics utility, Label Printer and a Communications program, with comparable programs costing more than the whole Mini Office II package each!

The word processor has a host of features and is greatly improved from the original Mini Office word processor. An 80 column mode is included which makes life a lot easier as you can actually see what the final print out will look like. It also allows text to be Inserted, Deleted, Justified, Moved, Copied, etc. like most word processors, but there is a Typing Speed option which most word processors dont have. One of the best improvements is the ability to select the various options via the [CONTROL] key in combination with another key, instead of having to return to the menu each time.

The database is the best program in the package in my mind, the only comparable program being Masterfile which costs a lot more! For a start the records are now displayed in mode 2 so allowing more characters in each record. There is a choice of five different field types including 'date' and 'formula' fields, with a maximum of 20 fields per record. The only thing I'm not to happy about is the serach routine as this does not allow you to search on numeric data like the old Mini Office version did.

The spreadsheet and graphics programs are greatly enhanced allowing the data from the spreadsheet to be output in a variety of different ways. You can even select the shading on the pie chart option, including the option to dump to printer.

The label printer is used in conjunction with the database and is quite flexible. The label size can be set, and fields selected from a database file, then all the records from the file are dumped to the labels. The approximate finishing time is even displayed!

I cannot acurately review the communications program as I cant get it to work with my 'Multi-port' intereface. It has been designed to work with the Amstrad RS232 interface, and looking at the various options on the menu it seems to be quite comprehensive in it's protocol settings.

All in all Mini Office II is a great buy for both home and business uses but a word of caution, Database Software no longer upgrade cassette copies of their software, so if you buy the cassette version and then buy a disc drive they wont exchange it for a disc copy!

Presentation:	90%	Actual Use:	98%	UAUG rating:	95%
Documentation:	75%	Value:	99%		

Reviewed by Gary Carter.



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COMMUNICATIONS

I intend, during 1987, to take a close look at both large Databases such as Prestel and Telecom Gold as well as the smaller single user Bulletin Boards. I hope also to include an insight into some of the many terms and words used in the world on Telecommunications. I would like to start today with the large Viewdata Service, Prestel.

Prestel is run by British Telecom and can be an ideal way to find out information on a variety of subjects. All the information on Prestel has been provided by Information Providers or IP's for short, these are mainly just companies or businesses which 'hire' Prestel frames to display their information on. Most IP's don't charge the user to view this information and it can be accessed by either going through the menu system, or by going direct to the page.

If you know the page then accessing particular information can be very easy and less frustrating than going through the menus. To go direct to a page in Prestel the user simply types '*page number#' where page number is the number of the page of information required.

There is a vast amount of information on Prestel and it is even possible to book tickets, order flowers or request information on particular subjects. Quite a few IP's provide 'Response Frames' to assist in these activities.

The Mailbox facility is quite crude, and is no where near as sophisticated as Telecom Gold's, however it does allow messages to be sent to IP's or fellow Prestel Users. To send a mailbox or message you need to know their nine digit account number which can then be entered at the appropriate prompt. The message can then be entered onto the page but users of some communications packages may find certain keys don't do their correct job, for example the DELETE key may not actually delete a character. Before the page is actually sent there is a final question confirming whether or not the page should be sent.

The problem with Prestel is that it works on numbers. For a start you have three numbers to remember, a nine digit account number, a ten digit identity code and a four digit password (the last two are supposed to be kept secret). Then you have page numbers, some are as long as ten digits and all the menu's work on numbers, so if you don't like working with numbers then you had better steer clear of Prestel! BT have promised a key-word search facility soon, which would help immensely.

Next Newsletter, we'll take a closer look at the information available from Prestel.

Written by Gary Carter. (Yes me again, I told you I did everything!)



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HINTS, TIPS AND CHEAT FOKES

ON THE CP/M SIDE

Mr R B Phillips (1007), has come up with a useful little tip for producing a CPM plus manual.

Copy HELP.COM and HELP.HLP to a blank DATA disc, from side 3 of the systems discs on the CPC6128.

Fire up CP/M plus, and type: HELP [EXTRACT]
(arrows are left and right square brackets respectively).

You'll finish up with another file called HELP.DAT which can be split up with PIP and Word Processed into a CPM manual.

ELITE DOCKING

Having trouble docking on Elite? Seamus Delaney has found a way to dock with a station without the need to dock?!?

Log in the hyperspace system using the local cluster chart, and hyperspace to the new system in the normal manner. Then instead of docking with the space station press [DEL] to pause the game and then 1. When the save/load menu appears save the current commander and reload it again straight away, now get back to the game by selecting option 4 and answer NO to the question "Load new commander?". When the game starts you will find you are on the new space station with all your credits and cargo still intact.

Although this is a slow process (even worse if your using tape!) it will allow you earn enough credits by trading to by a docking computer.

WORD PROCESSING BASIC

Ever wondered how you could edit your basic programs on a word processor? Well there is a very easy and simple solution.

To edit an exsisting BASIC program, simply load the program and re-save it using the format SAVE"name",A which will save the program in full ASCII representation instead of the short hand notation the computer uses. Now run the word processor and make sure the left hand margin is set to 1. Load the BASIC (ASCII) program into the word processor in the normal way that you would load in a file, and before your very eyes is your BASIC program in your word processor! The program can now be edited using all the word processors features, like delete line, insert line etc. etc. Dont forget to save the program before you exit!

To re-load a word processed BASIC program simply return to BASIC and load the program in. Re-save using the format SAVE"name" which will save the program in the short hand notation. Now the program can be used like any other BASIC program.



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ALL-IN-ONE ORDER FORM

Name: Membership No:

I enclose a Cheque/PO for the Total of £.....

BOOK REQUEST FORM

Please send the following books as soon as possible:-

Code	Title

I enclose a Cheque/PO for £.....

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE REQUEST FORM

Please send a copy of the following programs:-

Code	Title

I enclose: Tape [] Disc []

EPROM PROGRAMMING REQUEST FORM

Please transfer a copy of the following program(s) onto Eprom(s):-

Filename	Eprom Name	Type	Length

Please supply Eprom(s), I enclose a Cheque/PO for £.....

I'm supplying Eprom(s), I enclose a Cheque/PO for £.....



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COMPETITION TIME

FIRST PRIZE: The Rocky Horror Show on Tape!

The numbers 0-9 and the letters A-Z have all been rearranged to form a code. The below five questions have been written in this code. Break the code and answer the five questions in normal English and send your entry on the below form to the usual address. The first correct entry out of the hat will receive CRL's great game, The Rocky Horror Show!

- 1) L180J48QL8P0148VPOQ856S6ECE3ZQP07QTN21OTNO ?
- 2) L180PZI4T35ZP6P5T4P0148VPOQ8555ZHNP4 ?
- 3) L1Z616TVS8UJSQT5N645VZUZT33Z64ZZ ?
- 4) L18068Q5T4P8W8UPM28QTLU ?
- 5) 1TLV8UJ6Q45ZOP5TJTNP08QOLZO1TU4WZO4 ?

Name: Membership No:

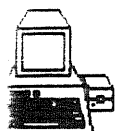
Answer 1:

Answer 2:

Answer 3:

Answer 4:

Answer 5:



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ADVERTS

FOR SALE: Amstrad DMP1 Printer.

In excellent condition with new ribbon (and spare) and 100 sheets paper
Only £65 including Postage and Packing. Contact:-
G Kania, 36 Lansdowne Gardens, Jesmond, Newcastle on Tyne, NE2 1HH

FOR SALE: GT65 (Green) Monitor for 6128.

Brand new. Only £70. Phone:-
Mr B Merrett on Swindon (0793) 610325.

NEW ADVENTURE: "Blue Raider" for Amstrad 6128,664.

This 2 part adventure begins in The Wilderness with some intriguing
puzzles and leads to the final part in The Castle. Over 200 locations
to explore! Includes position LOAD and SAVE commands.
Available on Disc for Only £6.95.

Cheques to: T Roberts, Woodlands, Church Road, Herrietsham,
Kent, ME17 1AP.

COMING SOON: World War II adventure, available early 1987.

FOR SALE: Original Amstrad Tape Games.

Roland in Time, Harrier Attack, Flight Path 737 and Classic Games.
Only £5 each or £15 the lot.

Compatible with all Amstrad CPC's. Contact:-
United Amstrad User Group, 1 Magnolia Close, Fareham, Hants, PO14 1PX.



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COMPUTER BOOK LIST

Code	Title	Remarks/Subject
B1001H	Computer Programming	Learn computer programming
B1002P	How to Get Your Programs Running	De-bugging programs.
B1003P	Using Computers	Programming ideas.
B1004H	Colour Coded Guide to Computers	Everything on computers.
B1005P	Writing Adventure Games Amstrad	BASIC adventure writing.
B1006P	Sixty Programs for Amstrad 464	Also 664 & 6128 compatible
B1007P	Computer and Video Games	Basic but interesting!

REDUCED SOFTWARE/HARDWARE LIST (ALL CPC's)

Code	Description	RRP	CLUB
RS1001T	Combat Lynx (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1002T	Saboteur (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1003T	Turbo Esprit (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1004T	Critical Mass (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1005T	Death Pit (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1006T	Harrier Attack (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1007T	Spaces Hawks (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RS1008T	Roland goes Square Bashing (game)	£8.95	£5.50
RO7001	Maxell CF-2 Blank 3" Discs	N/A	£3.99
RO7002	Hitachi 27128 Eproms (16k)	N/A	£4.50
RO7003	Blank disc labels x100	N/A	£2.50

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE LIST (AMSTRAD CPC)

Code	Title	Description
PU1001T/D	Bindump .001	Machine code dump for serial 8056 printer.
PU1002T/D	Basdump .002	BASIC screen dump for serial 8056 printer.
PU1003T/D	Typewrit.003	Simple typewriter program for 664 or 6128.
PU1004T/D	Digit .004	Sound digitizer program.
PU1005T/D	Minifile.005	BASIC card indexing system.
PU1006T/D	Clock .006	Real time clock routine controlled by RSX's.
PU1007T/D	Search .007	Locates keywords/variables within a program.
PU1008T/D	Minimag .008	Mini Magnifying routine. Large characters.
PU1009T/D	Xen .009	Adds 34 extra RSX commands to Amstrad BASIC!
PU1010T/D	Xenplus .010	Adds another 13 RSX's to Amstrad BASIC!
PU1011T/D	Keylett .011	Keyword abbreviations routine.
PU1012T/D	Pagelist.012	Stops screen displays scrolling to fast.
PU1013T/D	Freemem .013	Constant memory status display.
PU1014T/D	Memedit .014	Allows you to view ROM and view/edit RAM.
PU1015T/D	Sidewrit.015	Two RSX's allow text display on the side!?!?
PU1016T/D	Bigscrol.016	Massive scrolling displays! Ideal for ad's.
PU1017T/D	Keylist .017	Lists all the function key definitions.
PU1018T/D	Assemble.018	Z80 assembler. Machine code experts only!
PU1019T/D	Disassem.019	Z80 disassembler. Hackers only!
PU1020T/D	Bigtext .020	Double height text, using two RSX'S.