The Twenty-eighth

WACCI

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THE WORLDWIDE WACCI AMSTRAD WACCI CPC USERS CLUB

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O.K. straight in with an apology. Yes this month I have "dried." No I haven't gone all waterless and crinkly. "Drying" is a condition that occasionally effects people who have to write a lot. When it happens, it manifests itself thus:-

You sit down at the computer and think "I'll just finish off this month's magazine by typing out the last three pages of Thanx and Stuff" (or something similar.) Fingers raised over the keyboard you get set to turn out reams and reams of prose when... nothing happens. Yup, your fingers hang in mid-air waiting for your brain to engage, your eyes flick across the monitor expecting to read the witty text but your inspiration has gone to sleep. You can't think of a single thing to write. You have "dried."

At first you try to make light of it by telling yourself it is only a temporary hiatus, a glitch, a hiccup in life's rich tapestry. Ten minutes later your fingers (still poised) are beginning to ache and you realise this could be serious. You tell yourself that what you need is a quick break and when you get back to the computer your inspiration will have returned.

So you go off and make yourself a cup of a cup of coffee, water the plants and feed the cat (an amazing feat really considering the fact you don't own one.) Having tootled around for a while you sit down at the computer and try again only to find that there is still nothing there.

If you are lucky the literary juices start flowing again after a few hours. If you are not so lucky it may take a couple of days before you get going again. This is my fourth day and I'm still waiting. So if this month's Thanx and Stuff seems a little disjointed in places, you now know the reason. Enough of my problems let's get going.

INTRO

Are you reading this after the 25th of December? If you are then skip the next paragraph.

Happy New Xmas and have a Merry Year (or something like that.) Yup, that time of the year is upon us again. Xmas, The only time that you can say "and you" to the next door neighbour and get away with it.

WHOOPS

Sorry but you have gotten your copy of WACCI a little later than I intended.

The January issue was on a very tight schedule anyway and my brain grinding to a halt didn't help matters. This issue was posted only a few days before Xmas and obviously that was too late to guarantee it getting to you in time for the festive season.

PRICE RISE

Due to increased costs, as from next month the price of WACCI is going up. The new subscription rates (including free membership) will now be:-

Feb 1988 issue	UK+BFPO	£1.25
	Europe	£1.88
	Overseas	£2.00
6 months	UK+BFPO	£7.50
	Europe	£11.25
	Overseas	£15.00
12 months	UK+BFPO	£15.00
	Europe	£22.50
	Overseas	£30.00

This is the first price since the magazine started over two years ago and hopefully will be the last one for the foreseeable future.

FSW RISE

For the same reason the 1p per K copying charge has also been increased to 2p per K as from this issue. The money that is raised by this service helps subsidise the magazine.

REFRESHING NEWS

Would you like a new printer ribbon for 35p? Yes? Well I think I can help you. It's not quite a new ribbon, in fact it is the one that you already have in your printer at the moment. All you have to do is re-ink it. No I'm not talking about a re-inking kit or an expensive re-inking machine. The product I talking about is a ribbon re-inking spray called Refresh and is made by Caspell Computer Services Ltd.

The spray is simplicity itself to use. It comes with a little straw attached (a la WD40 mode) to direct the ink. All you have to do is pull the cartridge out, prise the lid up, give it a quick burst and leave it to soak in for a while.

What do the results look like? Judge for yourself because you are currently looking at them. Yes, my printer ribbon went dry at about the same time my brain did. So it was out with the spray and hey Tesco it was back to normal. Why can't someone invent a spray that does the equivalent of that for the brain?

One can will re-ink about 25-30 ribbons and the RRP is £8.95. In the usual tradition WACCI is selling Refresh at £7.95 per can.

Pardon? Oh yes I nearly forgot about DMP 2000 ribbons, thank you for reminding me. Yes it will do DMP2000 ribbons but obviously they are a little bit more fiddly. The good news is that DMP2000 need only a tiny fraction of the amount of spray that cartridges do, so God only knows how many times you will be able to re-use one of those ribbons.

ASTROSUITE

I've taken out this program from The FSW Library after a request from its author Alastair Scott. He is a little worried that people might confuse it with his current commercial package of the same name and not buy the more expensive version. In fact he assures me that the only similarity between the Astrosuite in the FSW Library and the commercial program is in the name and the subject matter

FSW LIBRARY UPDATE

Firstly, before I forget and before I start to ramble on about the new programs, let me quickly point out that under CP/M+ the ESCape key is accessed by pressing CONTROL and the left hand square bracket e.g. ^[. So many people get caught out by that one that I thought I'd better mention it.

ADDITIONS

Lots of new stuff in the CP/M+ PD section this month. Most of it consists of handy little routines that can be included on your discs without using up too much space. Here's a quick description.

CLEANUP (3K)

A neat little utility which is small enough to put on all your discs. It offers much slicker file erasing and typing without the need to keep repeating command strings or loading bigger file management programs such as NSWEEP.

DISPLAY (5K)

Instead of watching text or ASCII files flash past on the screen at an unreadable rate, fiddling with CTRL S or laboriously pressing ENTER until you reach the part of a document that you want to read, this program displays a text file 24 lines at a time. You can then move backwards or

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forwards through the file. -nP moves back n pages, nP moves on n pages. -nL moves back n lines and nL moves on n lines. ENTER moves on to the next page and E exits the program.

SUPERZAP (27K)
This is a nice full screen interactive disc update utility, providing many of the features found in DU, one of the earlier Public Domain sector editors.

The program is menu driven, and little additional documentation is required. The documentation provided consists of a functional overview, plus notes on features not documented in the menus. I must admit that I do like this one but remember that tip about ^[being the ESCape key.

DISCKITA (31K) is a general purpose disk formatter and exerciser for CP/M+ on the Amstrad CPC6128, with one or two disc drives. It also works on the PCW 8256 and 8512 range as well.

It will format the usual data, vendor and system formats, and the PCW drive a: system format, and in addition 5.25" drives as follows:

40 track s/s	(180K)
40 track d/s	(360K)
80 track s/s	(360K)
80 track d/s	(720K)
PCW 40 track d/s	(360K)
PCW 80 track d/s	(720K)

FILECHOP (6K)
Although primarily for breaking down a lengthy text file into manageable parts, for editing or forming into other files, any program can be broken up. It basically performs the opposite to the PIP file1,file2 function.

MAKE (3K)
In normal use CP/M always assumes that you wish to work with User Area 0. You can however select a different user area simply by typing in USER 1 [ENTER] USER 2 etc. The prompt will then show the user area selected along with the familiar A> or B>. Once in a user area you can store and retrieve files in the normal manner but you cannot easily transfer files from one area to another. MAKE simplifies the operation using the command:-
MAKE FILENAME 1

LIST (3K)
Improve the appearance and read- ability of printed listings and text by creating numbered page breaks, left margin options and heading or date. Prints beginning and ending at specified pages and scores the end of each page to clarify the point of perforation. All variables are prompted when the program is run as LIST [filename].

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PASSWORD (3K)
It is designed to protect only .COM programs. You will be prompted for the password. This should be no more than six characters long (the program will accept a longer one but you cannot use it to access the program later). The password program is CASE sensitive. Every time you subsequently type in the filename you will be asked to re-enter the same password. Don't forget it though. There is no known way to remove the protection.

SCRAMBLE (2K)
This is similar to Password but scrambles the contents of the file so it can't be read off the disc using a Sector Editor. Be extra careful with this one.

VLIST (3K)
A variation on the standard TYPE command which allows the user to control the speed at which a text file is scrolled up the screen. It is small enough to include on all the discs where you often need to read the text files. The options available are:-

CTRL	L	Slowest Speed
	K	2 times faster
	J	4 times faster
	H	Same speed as normal TYPE
	S	Stop listing
	C	Exit to CP/M

These may be activated at any time during the listing.

HELP WANTED
Norman Buxton wants to contact someone who can help him with EBasic. If you feel that you can provide this service for a fellow club member, please get in touch with me so I can pass on his telephone number to you.

END BIT
Sigh. I must be catching Auntie John's favorite condition, depression. Five days to write three pages, what is the world coming to? Sigh. Anyway it's all finished now and before I go away to stick my head in a bucket of fertilizer, it only remains for me to wish you a very merry Xmas and a very WACCI new year from myself, Joolz and all the WACCI contributors. Tarrraa.

FAIR COMMENT

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BROS DROSS

Thanks for issue 26. I received it early but had difficulty removing the free 6128 and colour monitor from the cover.

When is KP going to come out of the closet and declare the name of the tune, in his issue 25 composition? I've played it through several times and I can't make any sense of it at all. (It's not Bros by any chance?) PS thanks for the MIDI feature.

Problem time: ASCII to Basic. I have a 10K Basic programme that has been converted to ASCII for beautifying in a word processor. The original file has been lost and only the ASCII remains. Does anyone know of a method or utility which will convert this masterpiece of programming to Basic. It is either that, or print out the ASCII file and type it all back in again and that appeals to me about as much as reading through back issues of ACU.

P. Cox
BFPO 32

<<KP is baring his all (not a pretty sight) in this issue's Compo Corner.

You should be able to convert the ASCII file back to Basic simply by saving it as "Filename.bas" from within the word processor. -Ed.>>

BOXING CLEVER

Here is yet another addition to my addition to *"Fraying with Protext."* I wrote to you about resetting the screen characters after doing IBM boxes with an "unbox.bas" program. I then said this involved saving the working file first, then quitting Protext, running "unbox.bas" calling Protext again and reloading the file. In fact, it was probably quicker to reset and run "disc."

I'm *sure* you spotted the *deliberate* mistake. If you first swap the working file into the second bank (Ctrl-Y), it will be unaffected by running "unbox.bas." This avoids saving and reloading the file and makes the whole process quite rapid: [Ctrl-Y] [ESC] [q] [run"unbox.bas] [Ctrl-f7 or :P] [ESC] and [Ctrl-Y] gets you back to where you started.

Sorry about the fits and starts but I thought of this, riding my bike back from work, today. I was listening to Altered Images, from an old John Peel programme, at the time. I think the world should be told.

Peter Ceresole
London

DISC SWAPPING

I should be very grateful for your advice on a projected purchase of a second disc drive. My Amstrad started off as a standard CPC464 to which I first added a DDI-1 disc drive, followed by a 64K expansion and the 6128 chip.

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I have recently been using a program, which involves constant swapping of discs, on a single drive set-up and this, coupled with the excessively high cost of 3" discs, (even from WACCI,) has made me think seriously about a second drive. The alternatives appear to be:-

1 FDI-1 3" drive
2 KDS 5.25" drive with software on RAMSDOS, ROMSDOS or RODOS.
3 Siren Software 3.5" drive with similar software.

Could you give me your recommendations on the pros and cons of each of these three alternatives and also identify the differences between single and double sided discs and the various densities of the discs.

P W Race
Cheshire

<<Read Phil Craven's review of Siren's new 3.5" disc drive in this issue and then make your mind up from that. I'll say no more than I think a second drive, albeit 3", 3.5" or 5.25" is very useful -Ed.>>

SUCCESS

I have finally got round to letting you know how I fared with CP/M Disc 5.

After some initial hiccups, (i.e. not being able to get the tabs to work in VDE.COM) everything has gone brilliantly.

I thought that I would get my kids in on the act, so enclosed is an already data format disc, along with my order for some PD software.

I apologise for sending back the same Jiffy bag, but I don't have any others at the moment. It will have to be sealed with some sellotape or staples.

J. Hadfield
Cleveland

<<Don't apologise about re-using the Jiffy bags, they are meant to be used a few times before they ascend to that great bubble bag in the sky. All I ask is that you seal it with tape instead of staples, it saves the wear and tear on my tender hands -Ed.>>

STARRY EYED

Please find enclosed an order for Model Universe by Arnor.

Before you even *think* it, I am aware that this has nothing to do with the Blessed Alastair and Astrosuite.

S. Harris
Cheadle

<<I didn't say a word Stan -Ed.>>

PICTURE PALACE

The enclosed listing may prove a better solution to Peter Campbell's problem than that given in November's Fair Comment. It avoids the striped effect normally shown by a loading screen. It uses the firmware call, SCR Set base to alternate the screen between &4000 and &C000.

Thanks to you all at WACCI, keep up the good work.

```
10 REM ******** Display ********
15 REM a picture show for disc users
20 REM mode      to suit pics
40 MODE 0:MEMORY &3FFF:CLS
50 CALL &BC07,&C0
80 READ a$ :IF a$="\" THEN GOTO 140
   ELSE LOAD a$,&4000:CALL &BC07,&40
100 READ a$:IF a$="\" THEN GOTO 140
    ELSE LOAD a$,&C000:CALL &BC07,&C0
110 GOTO 80
140 CALL &BB18: RESTORE: :GOTO 50
150 DATA 1st pic, 2nd pic,
    3rd pic,\:REM etc
```

A R Payne
Staines

A BUGLET

I have included Disc Menagerie II, as my previous copy had a slight bug, which I hadn't seen reported in WACCI.

After selecting Amsdos commands and then drive B, I get "Bad command" in the window. I find the FSW programs, which I have obtained from you, very useful indeed, with NSWP being the "daddy" of them all.

F. Frost
Scarborough

<<Yes I get the same little "*feature*" occurring with my copy. Perhaps when Alastair Scott reads this he might iron it out -Ed.>>

A LARGE FAN

When the Glenn at Large column first appeared in WACCI, I was one of its critics. Now, however, having watched it mature with incredible speed, from its awkward beginnings to its present lucid and funny (hint, Steve) self, I would like to register as a fan.

Reference to John Ridge's "A Passing Thought" column: Children are no less intelligent than adults. The difference between the two is one of experience. Place both in a situation where all previous reference points are invalid and the advantage goes to the child. Minor point though this is, it is a generally held misconception.

John Hilton
Bristol

<<As a teacher herself, Joolz says she agrees with your second point but then she has yet to meet Glenn Carey -Ed.>>

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SOUNDING OUT

In answering John Sholicar wanting to connect his 'pooter to a hi-fi, he needs a lead with a 1/8th inch stereo jack plug at the Amstrad end, and two phono plugs or a 5-pin din plug at the hi-fi end. Such leads can be made up by *Strachan Electronics* of *9 Croall Place, Leith Walk, Edinburough EH7 4LT.*

Alternatively, a lead with the 1/8" jack plug at one end and 2 phono plugs at the other can be found at your local Tandy, code 42-2475, price £2.49 for a 39" lead, or code 42-2481, price £2.79 for a 79" lead. Hope this helps.

Re: "Mad Mick" Madden's request for COBOL help, if he hasn't already done so, an essential purchase is Mastering Cobol Programming by R.Hutty, in the Macmillan Master Series, which is as close to an idiot's guide as you're likely to see in print.

D. Dunmore
Harpenden

PASS THE PRUNES

I would like to know if it is possible to pass variables from Basic to Promerge Plus and back. I have a number of things I would like to be able to do.

1) Promerge plus only supports maths functions to two decimal places. I would like to use Basic floating point maths in Promerge Plus documents. e.g.

SV pi = 3.14159

SV volume = pi * 8.3456 * 67.999909

The answer is given as 1782.32, I would like 1782.85245 for accuracy.

2) I would like to pass integer random variables into Promerge Plus programs.

3) I would like to assemble a Protext document from within a Basic program. Has anyone done any of this already? I would be most interested to hear before embarking on this task myself. As I have just started learning machine code, this could prove very difficult for me.

For reference, I have CPC6128 and FD1 with a Rombo containing Protext v1.1, Promerge Plus v1.07, Prospell v1.1, Utopia v1.25, Maxam v1.5.

David Scott
London

<<It's very difficult to answer your questions David because I am not too sure what you are attempting to do. What sort of program are you trying to write? Without a bit more information it is hard for me to be of any help to you. Write back and tell me more. In the meantime the answers are:

1) You can't, CPC Protext only works to two decimal places.

2) I'm not too sure but I think this would involve calculating them in Basic, storing them in an ASCII file, booting up Promerge and then reading the file. A bit long winded though.

3) What do you mean by "assemble?" Areyou thinking in the machine code sense of the word? This leads back to my original point -Ed.>>

A PASSING THOUGHT

At various times there have been discussions about the place of humour in WACCI. Some sober-minded souls have declared themselves to be against it. Other members of more frivolous disposition have expressed the opposite view. At least, I think

they have. They might have been only joking, of course. I wonder if I may be permitted to throw my own opinions into the arena of debate.

I have only met two other members of WACCI. One is the founder and ex-editor, Jeff Walker, and the other happens to be my youngest daughter Joanna. As for the remaining several hundred members, well, I imagine that some are female and others male, some still at school and others retired, and that their interests vary enormously. The one thing all of us have in common is that we own Amstrad CPC computers, or would like to do so. It is that which persuaded us to become members in the first place.

The prime function of WACCI must surely be to cater for the one interest we all share, regardless of age, sex or status in life, by imparting information about CPC computers and the uses to which they can be put.

That, however, makes WACCI into no more than a computer magazine. As such, it has to stand comparison with the more glossy magazines available on the newstands. Does it contain as much useful information as they do, including the advertisements which tell us what is available for Amstrad users? Living, as I do, in foreign parts, I cannot answer that question, so I must leave it for you to decide.

WACCI claims to be more than a magazine. It is also a club, that is an association of people united by a common interest. Despite the odd attempt to hold meetings in Uxbridge in the past, the geographical distribution of members makes personal association virtually impossible. The magazine, therefore, must serve as a substitute for face-to-face contact. It should provide facilities for us to discuss matters concerning our computers, to ask questions and express opinions. It is the nearest thing we have to a club-house.

Had we numbered a mere handful, then it would have been possible to get to know one another on a personal basis through the pages of WACCI. We could have told one another about our jobs, our families, our children and the rest of it. Alas, it is impossible to get to know several hundred people that intimately.

Arising from this there is a danger which I think should be avoided. Although most of us must remain strangers, united only by the one interest, it is possible for small groups of members to form closer friendships. That is fine so long as any such small groupings do not form cliques within WACCI, leaving the majority of members to feel excluded. It is not desirable, I suggest, for the magazine to serve as a vehicle for the members of such small groups to exchange "in" jokes or refer to activities to which the other members are not privvy. I think I have detected such a tendency a few times. The culprits know who I mean, I dare say. Let all members be equal, and not have some members more equal than others.

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What has all the foregoing to do with humour in WACCI? Clearly, nothing. In a club dedicated to the exchange of information about CPC computers, humour has no place whatsoever. Mark Twain observed that a German joke is no laughing matter. Neither is an Amstrad computer. All the same, I can see no reason to refer to it with solemnity and reverence all the time. By all means, let us have the occasional lightness of touch or even jokes. I would add one or two provisos, though.

You may have had the misfortune to come across one of those books which describe the workings of a computer in terms of chewing-gum and elastic-bands, or what is almost as bad, explains everything by using cartoon figures. American authors are particularly prone to sugar what they judge to be difficult pills to swallow

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by resorting to such artifices. I find the practice abominable. The books may contain much useful information, but just try finding it. You have to hack your way through all the irrelevancies to get at it. Such books would be half the length and twice as useful without the candy-floss, if you will excuse the slight change of metaphor.

Similarly, useful information in WACCI can be obscured if the author of an article does not separate the serious content from his attempts at humour, or indeed from anything else that is not really germane to the subject matter. Certainly, the two may be mixed, but it should be made possible to distinguish the one from the other at a glance.

People's sense of humour varies enormously. Personally, I find nothing funny at the mention of bifurcated undergarments of feminine attire or references to that part of the anatomy which points skywards when one stoops to pick daisies. I might have done when I was 12, but not now. Still, some do, so for their benefit, and to show how broad-minded I am, I say knickers and bum. It may be juvenile, but it is unlikely to cause much offence.

I think, though, we need to be a little careful, what may be humorous to one person may leave another cold. In that case, no great harm is done. But someone else might feel it breaches the bounds of good taste or, even worse, is downright offensive. We may live in an age when most of the old taboos have been largely forgotten, but we should not confuse freedom with license. Just as freedon of speech does not give us the right to shout "fire" in a crowded theatre, the freedom of expression we now enjoy should not be abused.

By all means, let us have lavatory humour and obscene jokes in the right sort of company, and let us poke fun at religion and politics in the presence of atheists and the

apolitical. Remember, though, that membership of WACCI is open to everyone, including puritans, prudes, people whose religious faith remains intact in this secular age and those who take politics in deadly earnest. Why upset them for the sake of a cheap joke? It could lose the club members,

WACCI, I suggest, is not the right setting for Rabelaisian humour. Jocular references to condoms seem to be popular, but I fail to see any connection with computers or computing. As subject matter for jokes, they are totally out of place in a computer magazine. If someone is incapable of finding anything more relevant to laugh at, then his sense of humour must be pathetic.

Animadversion is alien to an amiable soul like myself, so I hope no one will take my remarks too personally. They are only my private opinions, and I may be a minority of one. I am certainly not poking an accusing finger at our esteemed editor. Obviously he does not see his role as being that of censor and arbiter of good taste, and quite rightly so too.

Provided club unity is not jeopardised by us attacking each other in the pages of WACCI, and so long as he guards against possible libel actions or prosecution under the Obscene Publications Act, he is more or less obliged to publish the letters and articles he receives. The whole tone of WACCI is the joint responsibility of all members.

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Having declared myself in favour of certain types of humour, if not others, I would like now to make a plea for moderation.

In Personal Computer World there is a feature called Directory of User Groups. In it WACCI is described as being "great fun." I find the description damning rather than complimentary, yet I am bound to admit that it is not entirely unjustified. Can we not order things between us so that Mr Rupert Steele will feel obliged to say that WACCI is essential reading for all CPC users besides being great fun? The anti-humour lobby may hold somewhat extreme views, but they may also have a valid point.

John Ridge
Norway

<<Sigh, here we go again. However eloquently stated, it's still the same old argument.

Last year we wheeled out the WACCI survey forms and asked readers what they thought. The results were clear. No games reviews, more technical articles and more reviews. Readers also voted that the level of humour was OK. The magazine format was subsequently changed slightly to accommodate the results and it was hoped that the old argument had been nailed once and for all.

The steadily rising membership figures are the only evidence I need to tell me that WACCI has the correct overall balance. But what do other people think? Next month I'll be wheeling out the survey forms once again so that everyone has a chance to have their say -Ed.>>

FOR WACCI PHONE 01-898 1090

WHAT THE!!!!

Where did you get your exclamation mark purging device from? I'm referring to my latest "Bankman" article. Every ! has been systematically removed. What is worse is that in some cases they have not been replaced by a full stop but have just been lopped straight off with an axe, leaving sentences ending ending like this Here is a selection of !s so you can make up the deficit in a future article:!!!!!! OK?

I realise that a surfeit of !s leads to the Zap! Bang! Pow! (or should that be Zap Bang Pow) style of the tabloid press, but having none at all is even worse, and makes text strangely lifeless. This problem is not confined to WACCI: my ACU articles are also divested of their !s as soon as they pass through the Brentwood letterbox. What have people got against the poor maligned little !?

Alastair Scott
Edinburgh

<<One heck of a lot. The humble little exclamation mark (or screamer as we, in the know, call them) is a pretty unnescessary part of the English language as well as looking ugly.

If text is well written readers should be able to make up their own mind about where to put the emphasis instead of being told where it goes. At best a screamer turns a statement into an apology at its worst it insults the reader's intelligence. The same goes for BLOCK lettering. Italics *should* be enough for any emphasis required.

This is a small part of the unsung duties of an editor. Other things I *love* to hack out are:-

1) The word "just." Except when used to discuss the verdict of a court it is a meaningless, overworked word used to pad sentences out. "Only" is nearly as bad.

2) Commas placed directly before "and" or "but" (incorrect grammar.)

3) Numbers 1 to 10 when used in place of the written equivalent.

Hehe, so the Editor of ACU dislikes screamers as much as I do? What a coincidence. I think you should give up swimming against the tide and *STOP USING THEM!!!!* -Ed.>>

WHOOPS

Thank you for printing my letter in the December issue regarding my problem with JRT Pascal. The program you printed had a full stop in line seven eg 7: end. In fact the listing I sent you omitted the full stop which was the cause of the problem.

John Shaw
Wargrave on Thames

<<Automatic error correction -Ed.>>

ERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGAN
DER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER .
.. PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PR
OPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERG
ANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER ... PROPERGANDER

STEPHEN "SCOOP" GRAINGER TAKES A NOT SO SERIOUS LOOK AT THE NEWS.

AMSTRAD BUY UP XMAS

Rumours are now rife within the industry that Xmas is about to be bought out by a major British Consumer Electronics company that is thought to be Amstrad itself. It is thought that Amstrad have almost half the shares in Xmas and that by next year the company will have a controlling majority.

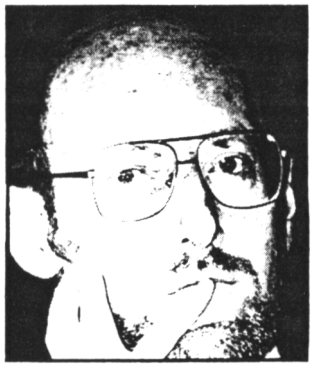
It has been known for quite some time that Xmas has been in financial trouble. Only last year, Santa Claus, managing Director of Xmas PLC, was quoted as saying "Since Rudolf was put out to stud, the bills for light bulbs have been astronomical."

Ho ho ho?

The paticularly seasonal trading of Xmas PLC has also been pin pointed as one of its major problems and certainly one that Amstrad will be hoping to put right, possibly by staggering Xmas trade by allocating Xmas day to different months for different parts of the country.

If this is the case it is expected that it will be Brentwood that will retain the traditional 25th December date.

In line with Amstrad's usual policy of packaging together several separate products to produce an overall package. It is expected that by that early in the next decade Xmas will be available with built in Easter and Shrove Tuesday. In the City, rumours are rife that Bernard Matthews has already been contacted about the possibility of breeding turkeys in the shape of eggs.



A pudding?

Sinclair Research have been brought back to life to look after Xmas Pudding Research and Development Ltd. (a subsidiary company of Xmas PLC.) An inside source is quoted as saying that they have already started work on the next generation of Xmas Puddings which will probably use the new Wafer technology. This development will probably make them taste slightly drier than the current Xmas Pudding. As with all Sinclair Research Products, orders can be placed now but deliveries are unlikely before the turn of the century.

As would be expected, the buy out of Xmas PLC has caused controversy among the various religions. The Bishop of Durham denied that Xmas day actually existed and claimed that "it is only the way that some people like to interpret the 25th December". Pope Jean-Paul II, when contacted about the situation, said that he lived in Italy and that his fridge was a Zannusi.

However, not everybody is against the takeover. A spokesman for the Conservative party said that "For far too long Mr.Claus has had a monopoly on Xmas. The consumer should be allowed to choose what sort of a Xmas he/she wants and what time of year they want it."

It is expected that if and when Amstrad do take over the current management will be laid off and Alan Sugar himself will head the company and in doing so will become the next Father Xmas. When contacted about the story Mr. Alan Sugar was quoted earlier today as saying "Bah Humbug."

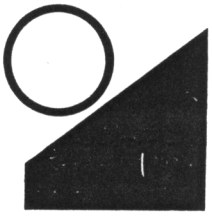
FREESCAPE PYRAMIDS

First there was Driller, acclaimed as a major breakthrough by the computer press in general and amassing the highest ever total in the old WACCI reviews, then came DarkSide, a improvement over Driller in many areas, particularly gameplay, it once again collected the highest accolades, now comes the sequel to the sequel and the question everybody is asking themselves is can it go one better than DarkSide?

The answer on first glance is that the latest Freescape development, Total Eclipse, has indeed improved on the original (and the sequel come to that.) Not only is it the biggest Freescape game yet but it also contains many new features such as tripwires, hidden trap doors,

pressure pads etc.

Set in Egypt in 1930, you face your hardest task to date. You have two hours before a total eclipse will appear over the shrine of the sun God Re. Now Re, being a bit grumpy, doesn't like his sun being blocked out during daylight hours and if it does he will probably blow up the moon, causing a disruption in the ecological balance and plunging civilisation into a second ice age and generally annoying everybody. Armed with only a gun, a watch, a water bottle and your trusty compass your mission is to destroy the shrine before the eclipse sets in.



Total Eclipse has been written by Incentive's in house programming team, Maior Developments and should be in the shops well in time for Xmas priced at £9.95 on cassette and £14.95 on Disc.

CHARITY-SOFT FOUR

Following the success of previous charity compilations The industry is hoping to get together once more within the coming month to sort the details of the next compendium which will be put together early in the new year.

Soft Aid (1985), Off the Hook (1986) and Kids Aid (1987) have raised nearly half a million pounds between them (although almost three quarters of it came from the original Soft Aid.)

It is expected that most of the big software houses such as Ocean, US Gold, Elite, and Telecomsoft are likely to donate games for the compilation. It is also hoped that the computer press will donate advertising space in order that it should receive good publicity without effecting the profits.

The charity that has been chosen to benefit this year is the National Autistic Society, which follows the trend of recent years of choosing a charity that effects the younger generation. At present it is hoped that the compilation will be released by March, although nothing has yet been confirmed.

CONNODORE?

If you have been watching ITV over the last month or so it is likely that you will have seen the current advert for the CBM Amiga 500. If you haven't then let me explain: 90% of the advert is taken up with a digitised plane flying over a digitised background, with super hi-res graphics and such high speed that it is difficult to imagine how any computer with less processing power than a Cray 2 could cope. An Amiga 500 would never get anywhere near this sort of standard.

However, during all this action a voice over is saying how wonderful the graphics capabilities of the Amiga are. Get the picture?

Imagine a kid of fourteen or so, never having been particularly interested in computers, then suddenly he sees on his telly a computer that is superior in all ways to the arcade machines down the local shopping centre and decides he wants one for Xmas.

Come Xmas morning he opens up the computer Santa brought, realises that the advert was a con and looses all interest in computing. Meanwhile Commodore continue to rake in the profits.

Obviously I wasn't the only one to see it like this and as such Commodore was brought up in front of the IBA to explain what they were up to. They explained the advert as follows "TV viewers are seeing what the machine itself thinks it is displaying and not what it is actually sending down the RGB lines." A less than charitable observer commented that when translated into real English that sentence actually means "Yes, we know that the ad it a total con but if we run it we will sell loadssa computers and make a huge profit - please find enclosed in this envelope £10000 in used bank notes".

But this is not all, Commodore then went on to explain that the real operational screen of the game is seen when the advert cuts back momentarily to a child playing the game. What they didn't mention was that this particular shot is visible for approximately only half a second, in addition the screen the game is being played on takes up only about 5% of the screen and even then the child playing the game is obscuring most of the view.

Plans to go ahead with the new Skoda commercial are now being made. It will show a man driving a Rolls Royce (as this it what he thinks he would rather be driving, although not actually what he is driving.)

SUPPORT YOUR CLUB

PLEASE MENTION WACCI WHEN REPLYING TO ADVERTS

KEEP YOURSELF OCCUPIED OVER THE HOLIDAYS WITH THOMAS HARDMAN'S TYPE-IN

Yipppeeee. At last the thing you've been eagerly waiting for all year has arrived. No, I do not mean Xmas. I was referring to part six of the Good Vibrations series, (humph!)

-oooOOOooo-

Xmas, as you have just pointed out, is nearly upon us once again so I've included a program that makes your Arnold play a crimbo carol that will amaze your friends and relatives. Not only that but this month I'm also going to give a brief explanation of the DATA command. Impressive eh?

DATA PROTECTION

Data commands are the biggest boon to computer users since the invention of the on/off switch. The clever little things allow you to type in a line of numbers instead of ten to fifteen lines of SOUND commands. There are three other commands which we'll need to use in conjunction with the DATA command. These are the READ, FOR and NEXT commands.

Type in and run the tiny program in fig 1. to see how the commands work. Typpink urrrors permitting, you should have heard eight notes play on the left speaker. They should have started high and then gone lower.

The first four lines of the program

```
10 FOR tune=1 TO 8
20 READ reference,tone,duration,
   volume
30 SOUND reference,tone,duration,
   volume
40 NEXT tune
50 DATA 1,100,50,15,1,200,50,15,1,
   300,50,15,1,400,50,15,1,500,50,
   15,1,600,50,15,1,700,50,15,1,
   800,50,15
```

fig 1.

are the lines which tell the computer to read the DATA lines and then play them. In these first four lines you never need to change any commands or numbers with two notable exceptions, which are:-

(1) If the tune you wish to program has more than or less than eight notes you have to take away the eight at the end of line 10 and put the number of notes you want the computer to play.

(2) If you want to use ENV or ENT commands in your program. This being the case, commands lines 20 and 30 will look like this:-

```
20 READ reference,tone,duration,
   volume,env,ent
30 SOUND reference,tone,duration,
   volume, env,ent
```

Surprise surprise, if you want to use the ENV only, lines 20 and 30 will change to:-

```
20 READ reference,tone,duration,
   volume,env
30 SOUND reference,tone,duration,
   volume,env
```

Amazingly enough if you only want to use the ENT command then lines 20 and 30 will look like this:-

```
20 READ reference,tone,duration,
   volume,ent
30 SOUND reference,tone,duration,
   volume,,ent
```

If you are going to use the ENT and/or ENV commands make sure you put the ENV/ENT command lines before the FOR command. Line 50 marks the start of the DATA command lines.

Try imagining that the numbers after the DATA command in our example are in grouped into sets of four. The first number in the set of four is the reference number of the note, the second is the tone, the third is the duration and the fourth is the volume

of the note you want to play.

If you had used an ENV or an ENT command you would have to imagine that the numbers are in groups of five, the fifth number being either the ENV or the ENT command.

But if you used both the ENV and the ENT commands the numbers would be in groups of six and the fifth number would be the ENV command and the sixth number would be the ENT command.

If you still finding it difficult to use the DATA command after all this imagining, there are many books that have a lot more space to give a more detailed explanation. Whizz down to your local library and speak nicely to the librarian.

Once you have got the hang of using the DATA command you should be able to transforms most tunes into programs.

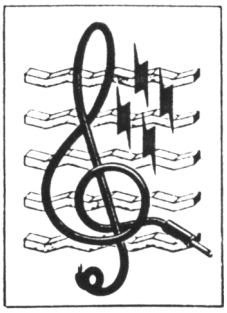
THE SOUND OF MUESLI

One situation that sometimes arises when programming a piece of music occurs when two notes, which are the same, coincide (as in fig 2.) To hear what I am rambling on about, try typing in this proglet:-

```
10 SOUND 1,142,50,15
20 SOUND 1,142,50,15
```

When you run it you will hear one note lasting for two seconds instead of two notes lasting for one second each as you'd expect. A problem? No way Jose.

To get around this particular "feature" you simply put an extra line into the program, one which plays a note for about a tenth of a second but doesn't have any volume so you can't hear it. Type it in this way and hear the difference the extra line makes.



```
10 SOUND 1,142,48,15
20 SOUND 1,142,5,0
30 SOUND 1,142,47,15
```

Note that line 10 has a duration of 48 and that line 30 is now set to 47. This is so that the bar still adds up to two seconds and the tune still runs in sync (Sync? Whoops, *Don't Panic*. It's only a word that we in the "muso-biz" use to replace the "harder to spell" word - syncronisation. Don't ask me what it means, try looking it up in a dictionary) Another way to make sure that the tune runs in "sync" is to add five to the bass line as I have done in the listing (fig 3.)

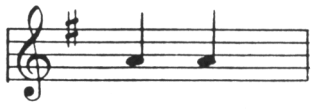


fig 2.

BINGLE JELLS

You will enjoy the carol (believe me you will.) But don't forget to take extra-special care typing in all those data lines. If you start entering it in today, you should just about have it ready in time for Christmas Eve.

That's about all I have for you now. I do hope you have enjoyed Part Six of Good Vibrations. Till we meet again in Part Seven, remember those immortal words from Shaking Willy's skit called "Twelfth Night", Act One, Scene One: "If music be the food of love, someone turn the stereo up quick."

```
10 REM Silent Night
20 REM (c) WACCI and T J (COOL) HARDMAN 1988
30 FOR music=1 TO 95
40 READ reference,tone,duration,volume
50 SOUND reference,tone,duration,volume
60 NEXT music
70 REM "The Music Data lines"
80 DATA 1,159,75,13,4,379,75,13,1,142,25,13,4,358,25,13,1,159,50,13,4,379,50
      ,13,1,190,150,15,4,478,150,15
90 DATA 1,159,75,13,4,379,75,13,1,142,25,13,4,358,25,13,1,159,50,13,4,379,50
      ,13,1,190,150,15,4,478,150,15
100 DATA 1,106,100,13,4,319,102,13,1,106,5,0,1,106,50,13,4,253,53,13,1,127,
      150,15,4,319,100,15,4,358,50,15
110 DATA 1,119,100,13,4,379,102,13,1,119,5,0,1,119,50,13,4,319,53,13,1,159,
      150,15,4,239,150,15
120 DATA 1,142,100,13,4,358,100,13,1,142,5,0,4,358,5,0,1,142,50,13,4,358,
      50,13
130 DATA 1,119,75,13,4,284,75,13,1,127,25,13,4,319,25,13,1,142,50,13,4,358,
      50,13
140 DATA 1,159,75,13,4,379,150,13,1,142,25,13,1,159,50,13,1,190,150,15,4,478
      ,150,15
150 DATA 1,142,100,13,4,358,100,13,1,142,5,0,4,358,5,0,1,142,50,13,4,358,50
      ,13
160 DATA 1,119,75,13,4,284,75,13,1,127,25,13,4,319,25,13,1,142,50,13,4,358
      ,50,13
170 DATA 1,159,75,13,4,379,150,13,1,142,25,13,1,159,50,13,1,190,150,15,4,
      478,150,15
180 DATA 1,106,100,13,4,319,102,13,1,106,5,0,1,106,50,13,4,253,53,13
190 DATA 1,89,75,13,4,213,100,13,1,106,25,13,1,127,50,13,4,319,50,13
200 DATA 1,119,150,15,4,358,100,15,4,319,50,15,1,95,150,15,4,239,150,15
210 DATA 1,119,50,13,4,319,150,13,1,159,50,13,1,190,50,13
220 DATA 1,159,52,13,4,319,5,0,4,319,150,13,1,179,53,13,1,213,50,13,1,
      239,300,15,4,379,100,15,4,426,100,15,4,478,100,15
```

fig 3.

the hard stuff

review special

STUFFING A 3" DISC WITH 800K OF INFO MAKES IT BLOATED. PHIL CRAVEN EXAMINES AN ALTERNATIVE.

All right, so Santa Claus doesn't really exist but, just for a while, I'm going to pretend that he does and that he gave me this wonderful little 3½" disc drive, which I have connected to my CPC system as drive B, for Christmas. Why so wonderful? Up to 880K of storage capacity on a single £1 disc is pretty wonderful, isn't it? And that's without having to turn the disc over.

oooOooo

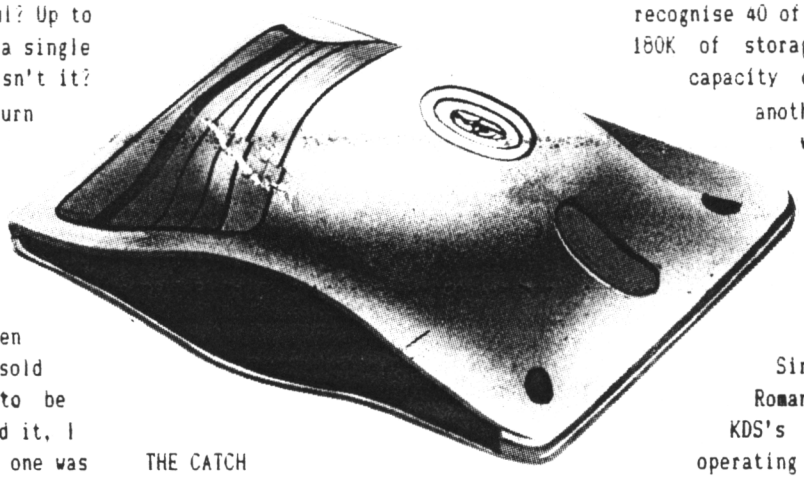
BACK TRACKING

The 3½" drive, offered by Siren Software, is the first to be sold specifically for the CPC and to be honest, until I saw and tried it, I wasn't at all bothered whether one was available or not. I was perfectly happy with a 5¼" for backups and archives, but this little cutie has stolen my heart.

For a start it's only one inch high due to the use of ultra modern surface mount technology. In its case it measures 4" x 6" x 1¼" and sits perfectly on top of the internal CPC drive. Power supply and drive cable are supplied with it.

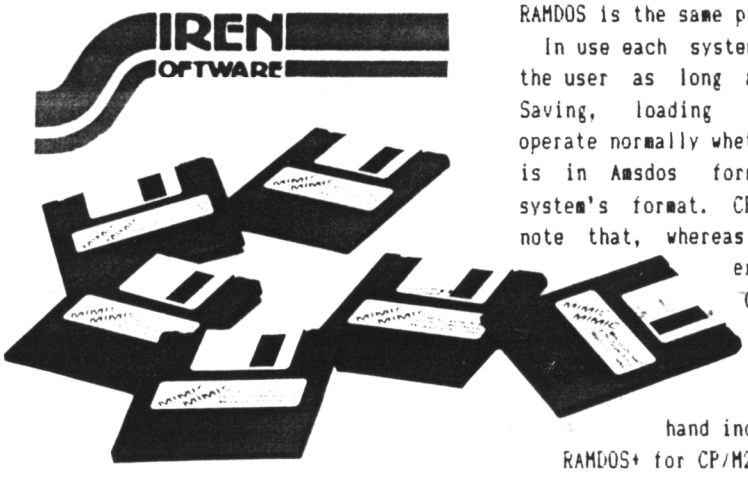
Normal 80 track formatting will give 800K of storage space on a single disc but most disc drives will step a few tracks more than normal and Siren's Simon Cobb is happy for their drives to format up to 84 tracks giving 880K.

Whilst both sides of the disc are fully used for data storage, there is only one directory and so it appears to the user as though only one side of the disc is used. Discs average about £1 each but cheaper ones can be found by shopping around. Our 3" drives are certainly quiet enough, aren't they, but this little device is even quieter.



THE CATCH

This all sounds pretty good stuff but the more observant will have noticed that I referred to *normal 80 track formatting* and we don't have 80 track formatting on the CPC, normal or otherwise.



Since the CPC's drives are 40 track mechanisms, AMSDOS, the CPC's disc operating system (DOS), will only format 40 tracks, even on an 80 track drive. Some disc utilities will format 80 tracks but Amsdos will only recognise 40 of them and still give 180K of storage. To get the full capacity out of Siren's 3½", another DOS is needed. CP/M won't do since not only does it not provide 80 track formatting but most programs need to run in Amsdos.

DIS OR DAT DOS

Siren offer a choice of Romantic Robot's RODOS or KDS's ROMDOS/RAMDOS disc operating systems to accompany their drive. They are both excellent systems and make full use of the drive. Each have their not-so-good points and a little checking would not go amiss before a choice is made. Incidentally, ROMDOS is on ROM and RAMDOS is the same program on disc.

In use each system is invisible to the user as long as it is active. Saving, loading and cataloguing operate normally whether the disc used is in Amsdos format or the new system's format. CP/M users should note that, whereas RODOS has some excellent features, CP/M compatibility is not one of them. RAMDOS, on the other hand includes RAMDOS2 and RAMDOS+ for CP/M2.2 and CP/M+ use.

TECCY BITS

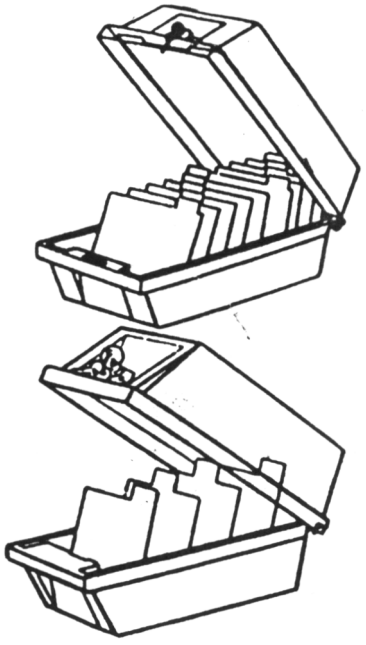
The drive is designed and configured as drive B but, by changing the position of its drive select switch, it will operate as drive A on a 464. However, the CPC disc interface will still be needed and, since all CPC disc software is on 3", it would seem pointless to use the 3^1_2" as drive A.

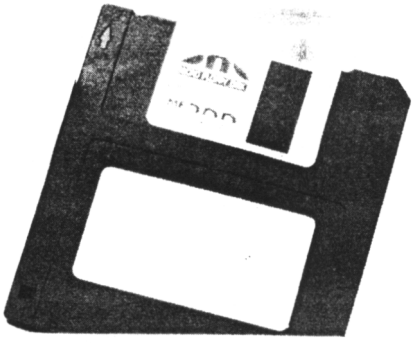
With up to 880K of storage space and only one directory, the usual 64 directory entries would not be enough.

Both RODOS and ROMDOS/RAMDOS overcome this by allowing a selectable number of directory entries, such as 128 and 256.

I haven't mentioned the make of the drive. This is because Siren will supply either the NEC or the Mitsubishi mechanism, both reliable, makes depending on which is in stock at the time, in either case the metal housing is white.

Some drives are described as one megabyte which would imply that they have 1024K of storage capacity and this is one such drive. Whether or not





1024K is realised depends upon the constraints of the system's hardware and software to which it is connected. In our case we can only get 800K on 80 tracks and that is done by increasing the number of sectors per track from Amsdos's nine sectors to RODOS's and ROMDOS/RAMDOS's ten sectors. Most, if not all, computers never realise 1024K on a one megabyte drive after formatting.

THE COST

So what's the damage for this all singing all dancing little wonder that is almost small enough to fit in the disc slot of the original 8"? Actually, it's not at all bad. The drive, including RODOS or ROMDOS

A CASED HISTORY

SHRINKING FLOPPIES

The progress in miniaturising the floppy disc since the original 8" with its enormous drive unit first appeared, so recently that it is still in everyday use, is quite amazing.

As technology has developed and become smaller, so the floppy disc has followed suit. The 8" soon gave way to the 5^1_4" and drives were reduced to half the original size. The size of 5^1_4" drives were reduced to half height and then one third height but an inherent problem with all of these drives was (and still is) the floppiness of both the disc and the disc's sleeve. Another problem is that the large hole in the sleeve, through which the head accesses the disc, is never closed and so the disc is always open to dust.

DOUBLE VISION

Whilst the 5^1_4s were losing height and 8" discs were seeking work as floppy frizbees, two smaller floppies were introduced. The 3", with which we are very familiar and the 3^1_2".

Thankfully, Amstrad chose to fit one of these to the CPC because not only is the drive a fraction of the size of the smallest 5^1_4" but the discs are housed in rigid sleeves which makes them less easy to damage and the dust problem is solved by a slide which covers the head access hole.

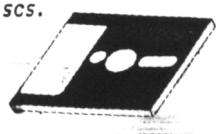
The main differences between the two are that our drive is 40 track single sided and so we have to turn the discs over to use both sides whereas the 3^1_2" is 80 track double sided, that is 80 tracks per side and does not need turning.

KEEPING TRACK

Perhaps I should explain that the more tracks there are on a disc the more data it is able to store. An 80 track disc will store twice as much data as a 40 track disc.

80 track double sided 3" drives are made and used as the PCW's second drive but not for the CPC.

Even now, new and expensive computers come onto the market with 5^1_4" drives built in and we could be tempted to think that the 5^1_4" is the better device. This is not necessarily the case. They are there, simply, because the original computers, with which they are compatible, had them and a lot of software exists for them on the 5^1_4" discs.



(Roms), is £134.99. Why don't they say £135 and have done with it? The drive, including RAMDOS (disc) is £10 less at £124.99. Many users already have RODOS so Siren will supply just the drive at £110. The last price is quoted by Simon Cobb of Siren Software and is not advertised.

COMPARISONS

To the best of my knowledge, no 3" drive package is offered to CPC owners which uses both sides of a disc as one disc in the same way that the Siren drive does but there are at least two 5¼" ones that do, the KDS and Pace 80 track drives, so some comparisons are in order.

The 3½", plus RAMDOS, at £124.99 scores over the KDS 5¼", plus RAMDOS, at £149.95 and over Pace's 5¼", plus some CP/M software, at £190.90. Again it scores when coupled with ROMDOS at £134.99 to KDS'S £169.90.

Where the 5¼" scores is in disc prices. Top quality 5¼" discs, at £1, cost about the same as 3½" but regular 5¼" can be bought for as little as 30p each in quantities of 50 or 100 and 40-60p in small quantities. The normal FD1 3", 40 track second drive doesn't need any additional software to get the most out of it but the most it can offer is 360K in Amsdos and that's by turning the disc over. 400K can be achieved with the addition of RODOS or ROMDOS/RAMDOS. At £99.95, for the drive alone, it is the cheapest alternative.

CONSIDERATIONS

The choices can be summed up as follows. Is 800K desirable and worth the extra money and, if so, will a large quantity of discs be needed or not? If a large quantity is needed, will the saving on 5¼" discs more than make up for the higher cost of the drive? Will Charlene divorce Scott to marry Geno or will Scott elope with Madge. How did Des manage to become a father and when is Daphne going to be killed off. Who is the father of Spock's baby and does anyone care anyway? All this and more will be revealed in the next episode of Naybores.

The 3½" drive is available from Siren Software,
2-4 Oxford Road, Manchester, M1 5QA.
Telephone 061 228 1831.

Z-PACK

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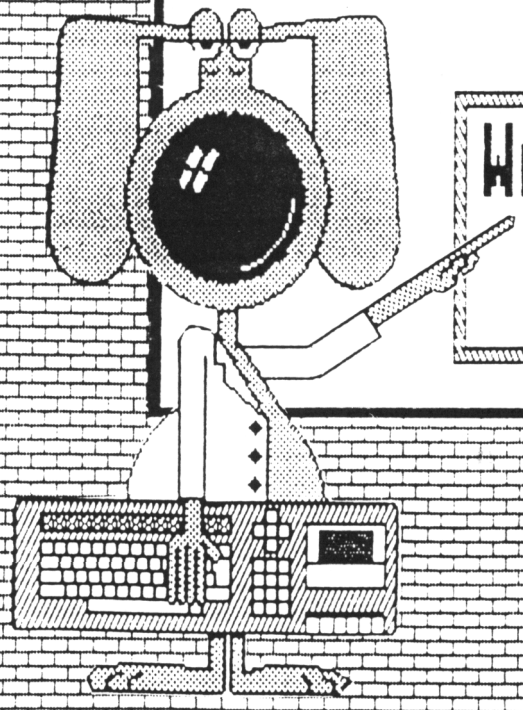

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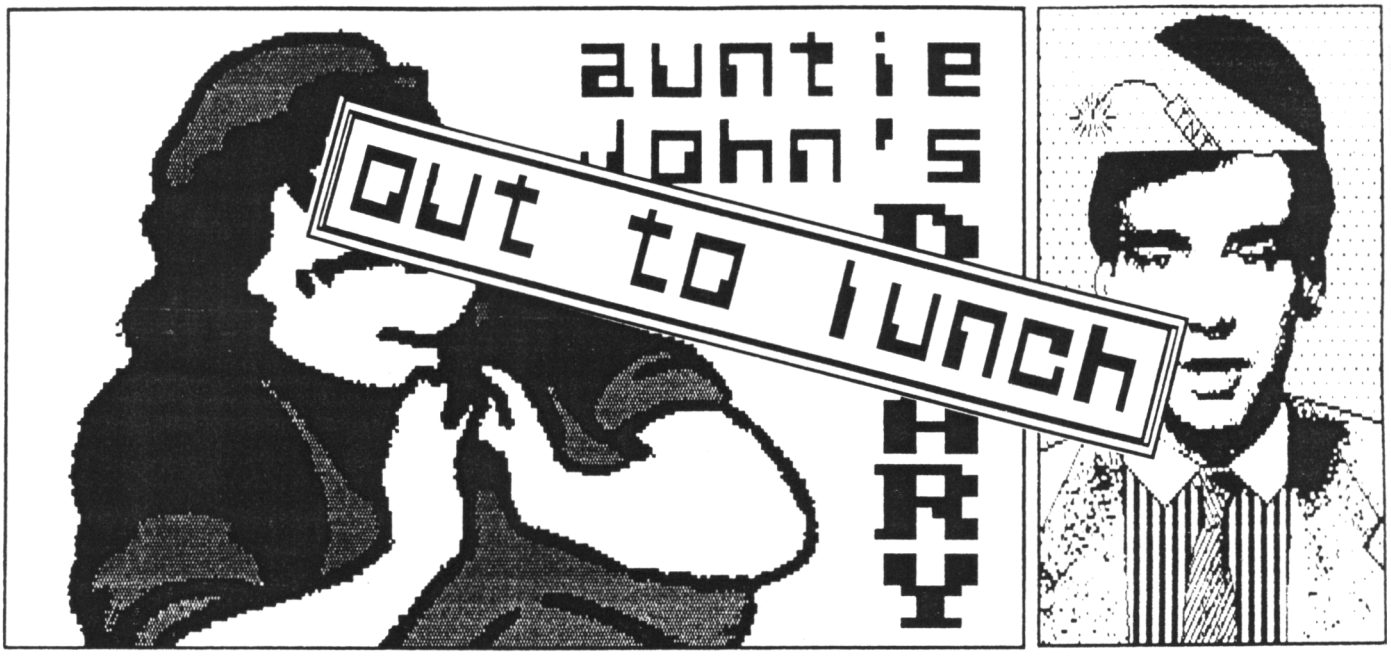


AUNTIE JOHN HAS GONE WALKABOUTS YET AGAIN. SO CB TAKES OVER IN THE MEANTIME.

Each month, Ciceley Barton, The Sunday Excess Magazine's Haute Cuisine reporter, visits a top restaurant and interviews a celebrity. This month no famous personalities were available, so she called WACCI's "Auntie John" instead.

I finally met up with Auntie John (or "AJ" to those who think they know him) at the exclusive Whimpy in Picadilly's Circus. I was three hours late, due to the fact we had agreed to meet at "Chez Fred's", a small Italian Bistro in the East End.

The doyen of digital technology was dressed in his favourite blue Marks and Spencers jumper, some ill- fitting brown courdroy jeans and a pair of off-white size eleven trainers. AJ was studying the menu displayed above the counter with trepidation. Nervously I tapped him on the shoulder and introduced myself. He greeted me warmly and asked how much money I had with me. We prepared to order.

oooOooo

"I think we'll start with some of those delicious little pieces of golden-brown maize flour and then I'll probably have a Half-pounder Cheese burger," I said.

AJ slowly turned to me and drolled. "I can recommend the Chocolate milk-shake. I'm allergic to milk products but I drink them. no problem. Come to think of it, I'm also a vegetarian but those hamburgers don't give me any qualms at all." Already the sexual chemistry between us was making the atmosphere electric.

We took our little plastic-wood trays upstairs to the observation level where we could overlook the tourists getting run over by the busy London Taxi drivers.

I decided to start the interview. *"So," I quipped, "the question that I suppose I must ask is..."* "Oh don't tell me," he interrupted, "why am I called Auntie John?" *"...Er no. I was going to ask why you wear such terrible jumpers?"*

"Hmm. You think this is bad?" he answered." At least I bought this one myself. My mother bought all my others and you should see them. Mum isn't exactly fashion conscious. She thinks '501's are a type of large aeroplane."

"That could explain a few things," I continued, *"but tell me, just who is the real 'Auntie John' and how did he come about?"*

"The idea came from Green". AJ mused, lazily dipping his pomme fritte into the delicious ketchup dressing sachet. "Back in secondary school we had written our own private Teletext system on the BBC computer network. He had an agony column called 'Auntie Green' and I stole the concept. Of course after the fire no-one could prove anything."

"I see. But tell me about the young lady you continually go on about? What is her name again? Oh yes. Fio..o..oh..ohh...OHHHH."

"Oops. Sorry, did I accidentally spill my rather cold thick-shake all down the front of your blouse? Never mind. So, you were asking me, why did I start writing for Amstrad Computer User? That's an easy one - but I'm not going to tell you."

oooOooo

"I think I get the point," I said quickly changing the subject. *"What about the next Amstrad Computer Fair? Do you think WACCI will have a stand at the show?"*

"Hmm. WACCI couldn't have a stand because all the people manning it would have to keeping running to the ACU stand. It could turn out to be very confusing."

"Yes, I can imagine it could be." I decided to try a new approach. *"So are you working on any interesting projects at the moment?"*

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am." His eyes lit up as he replied. "I've found a way on connecting my Casio synthesiser to my computer and control the notes played with an imaginary-fractal plot." *"Oh and what does that sound like?"* I asked, sipping on my lightly chilled Chateau Pepsi 88. "It is terrible," he said, slowly shaking his head. "Absolutely awful. I'm may try selling it to Bros."

"Yes, I suppose it could only be an improvement. But tell me, what else are you currently up to?"

"At the moment I'm trying to chat-up a girl called Carol, who sits next to me during Computer Science lectures. One of these days I'm going to show her my juggling clubs. They are about so big and covered in coloured tape. When I put them down my ..."

"YES, I'm sure. How interesting. But how do you plan on spending Christmas and the New Year?"

"Oh. Christmas. Hmm. I usually get very depressed. Quite amazingly depressed in fact. Sometimes I go down to the beach with a six-pack and even surprise myself with the level of depression I reach.

Auntie John. Modern day saint or simple poseur?

I mean, exactly why did my parents have to tell me Santa Claus doesn't exist? After twenty years I was just getting used to the idea of a man, in a red suit, coming down the chimney. Sometimes I walk around town and visit some of the Santas in large supermarkets but they just tell me to naff off when I ask them if they have heard of the greenhouse effect. It's just not fair..."

"You are completely mad aren't you?"

"Yes but I've explained that before in an earlier issue of WACCI." <<Try the Oct 87 issue -Ed.>>

"So you have. Moving on now and I have heard reports from various people that when they telephone you, you aren't as funny or strange as they think you should be. Why is this?"

"Ahh. That's an easy one to explain. My brother, Andy does all my boring PR work, things like answering the phone, making public appearances etc. In fact at this moment, I am talking to Phil Craven and the poor man actually thinks it's me. Most people couldn't cope with the sheer uncompromising weirdness that pure Auntie John can produce."

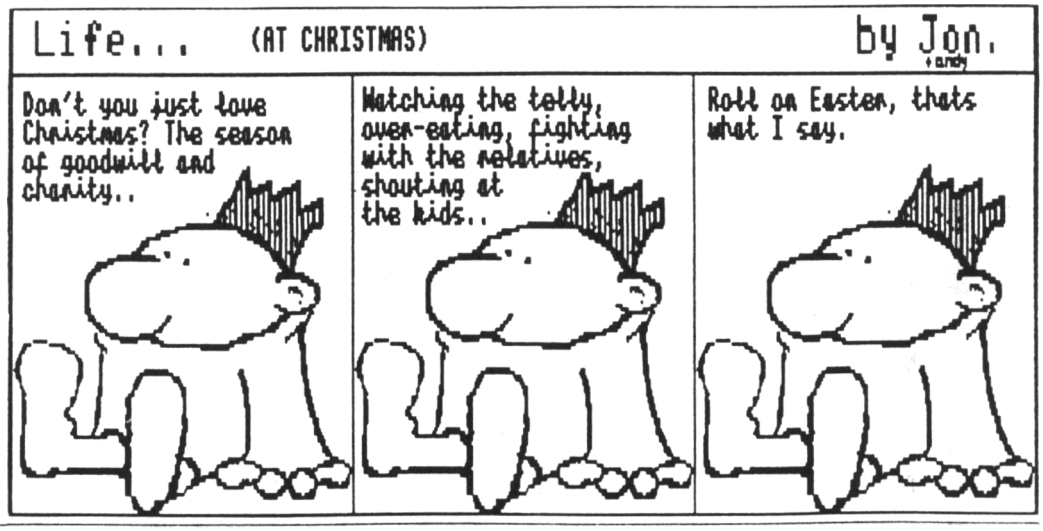
"Is that why you are wearing that crash helmet?" I asked.

"Oh no. That's so I look cool and attract lots of girlfriends. Have you seen any about yet?"

"I'm afraid not," I replied. *"Hey, listen, could you teach me to juggle?"*

"Oh, no problem. Just take any three objects... here these burgers will do... and throw them up like.. oops.. sorry. Can I have that back please, miss? Oh never mind, it looks better on you than on the tray.."

AJ will be back next month. Probably.



WOPPING MAX

KEITH POMFRET COMPARES TWO SUBSTANTIAL FRONT MEN

THE CPC AS A FRONT MAN

When you push the button marked power you get a nice royal blue (or royal green) screen with a polite little message telling you that big Al Sugar owns the rights etc. and a "ready" prompt. Ready for what? A small yellow blob gives no clue as to the state of the machine or discs.

-((0-0))-

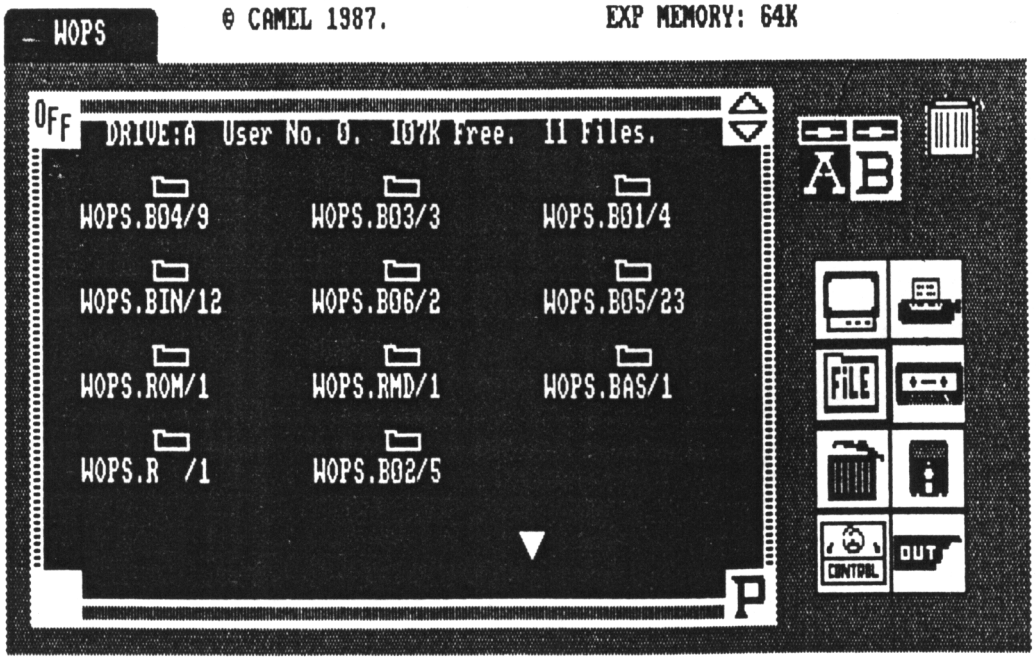
It may be a giant leap from the (?) prompt of the early mainframes and at least there are error messages to baffle you into submission but would it really be that difficult to make it friendly. I suspect not, otherwise the chaps at AMS and Camel Micros wouldn't have written these elegant little scenarios. Both MAX and WOPS have a similar appearance and look slightly similar to the AppleMac windows environment.

WHAT DO THEY DO

Both are tools to make disc and file handling easier. The decision making process is controlled by moving a pointer over an icon (picture) and pushing a button to confirm the decision.

Pictures of dustbins to throw files away, printers, discs and drives all make these sort of programs user friendly.

It makes sense to have a picture of a printer to click on to get a hard copy rather than delve into the manual for a series of obscure codes.



MAX

Max comes in a plastic pseudo-book shaped box which contains the disc and the comprehensive manual. After reading the manual for a few minutes to get an idea what to do, it was discarded only to be retrieved on the very odd occasions that I got stuck. MAX is at its best with a mouse.

-((0-0))-

Like all the AMS software, it is designed with a mouse driver second to none and this compliments the well designed screen area and sharp graphics. Built into MAX there are disc editor, file copier, user change, directory editor and all the normal disc orientated jobs that are usually handled by unfriendly and dare I say it CP/M utilities.

Almost as an afterthought a disc copier has been added. This is accessed from within MAX but is a separate program and after use dumps you somewhat rudely at a reset, hello from Amstrad PLC again.

-((0-0))-

Looking at the features individually, the disc copier is very basic. At the sight of a funny format or strange protection, it gracefully declines. The sector editor does just that, the formatter offers a quicker version that formats without verifying. It is possible to speed up disc

access as well but I wonder at what cost?

-<(0-0)>-

I was impressed by the directory editor which made light of rescue, rename, user change and all the other little tweaks and protections that require an empathy with the system. The bad news is that MAX only seems to like 178k and 169k standard discs. Feed him something else and he gets a bad case of indigestion and gives up. A shame when more and more people are getting umpteen zillion K mega drives and funny (RODOS) operating systems.

PASS ME THE BLACK CAP

Its a very tidily done well designed suite of programs that tend to approach the tasks with a delicacy not appropriate to utility jobs. Would you prune rose bushes wearing a silk kimono? (If you would, apply to Auntie John's Vacancy dept.)

For those who have standard three inch letterboxes and aren't bothered about backing up protected discs then MAX is all right. Mouse owners will lap it up as the accuracy of movement is impressive. I think however that twenty pounds for an incomplete set, with part of it an afterthought, is a wee bit steep.

WOPS

When I first saw this advertised, I thought that racism was alive and well in Twickenham but I was soon to find out that WOPS is an abbreviation for Windows OPerating System.

-<(0-0)>-

Arriving in an A5 sized folder, it has a disc, instructions and the teeniest newsletter I have ever seen. Again a quick look at the instructions then in at the deep end.

I was initially put off by the jerky cursor. After the mouse on castors feel of MAX, WOPS felt rough and ready. As the cursor moves, it accelerates and this can be a bit difficult to control if you have to move from one end of the screen to the other. If you move off the end the cursor scrolls round and comes back on the other side. Graphically it isn't as slick and crisp as MAX but it is very easy to understand. The pictures are big and the words are clear.

Down to business and the copier was the first port of call. With room to configure discs to a specified format and track size, this looked like the pneumatic drill of the copying world. On my bench I have three discs which are difficult to copy. Numbers one and two copied OK but number three seemed to throw a spanner in the works.

-<(0-0)>-

Not to be deterred, I phoned John Keneally at Camel Micros and asked him to go over one of the RSXs with me. It turned out to be pilot error and not program error. For the first time disc three is on the shelf and I am using a backup.

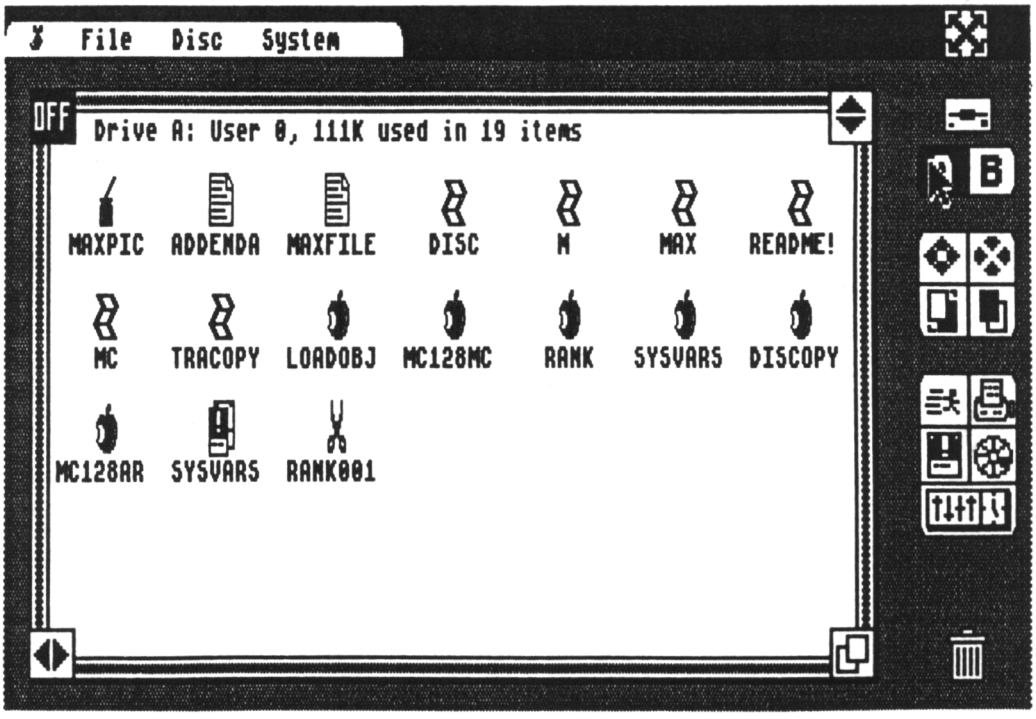
As I went through the formatter, disc editor and copier, I found it to be a quirky system that took me some time to master but after mastering it, I am impressed. Also included is a file editor which allows you to take a spanner to an individual file, useful for tweaking programs and altering parameters.

While I had John Keneally on the phone I asked him how WOPS came into being. "There was nothing on the market that would do all of these jobs" said John "and even something as necessary as formatting involved a trip into CPM."

-<(0-0)>-

From within WOPS there is an RSX extension set for key definitions, cassette speed, printer functions, user numbers and tracks. My favourite of these is a Memory finder that looks round for expansion and silicon discs etc and utilises them as a buffer, thus making it possible to do a disc copy in one pass.

It suggests in the manual that you may want to tailor WOPS to your own needs and explains which files on the disc do which job. Another point of interest is that WOPS loads what it needs from disc as it needs it but there is an option to load it all into the top half of a 6128 and save on disc-swapping and loading time.



A PNEUMATIC DRILL ON A DISC

WOPS attacks everything it tackles with the subtlety of a cruise missile. The jerky cursor and quirky operation are a small price to pay for an operating system with plutoniumesque energy. Each time I wanted to try something it was there. The extra RSXs and memory grabber and the ability to put all of WOPS into the spare memory make WOPS worth the £15 cover price. This is definitely my choice for a weapon come the Revolution.

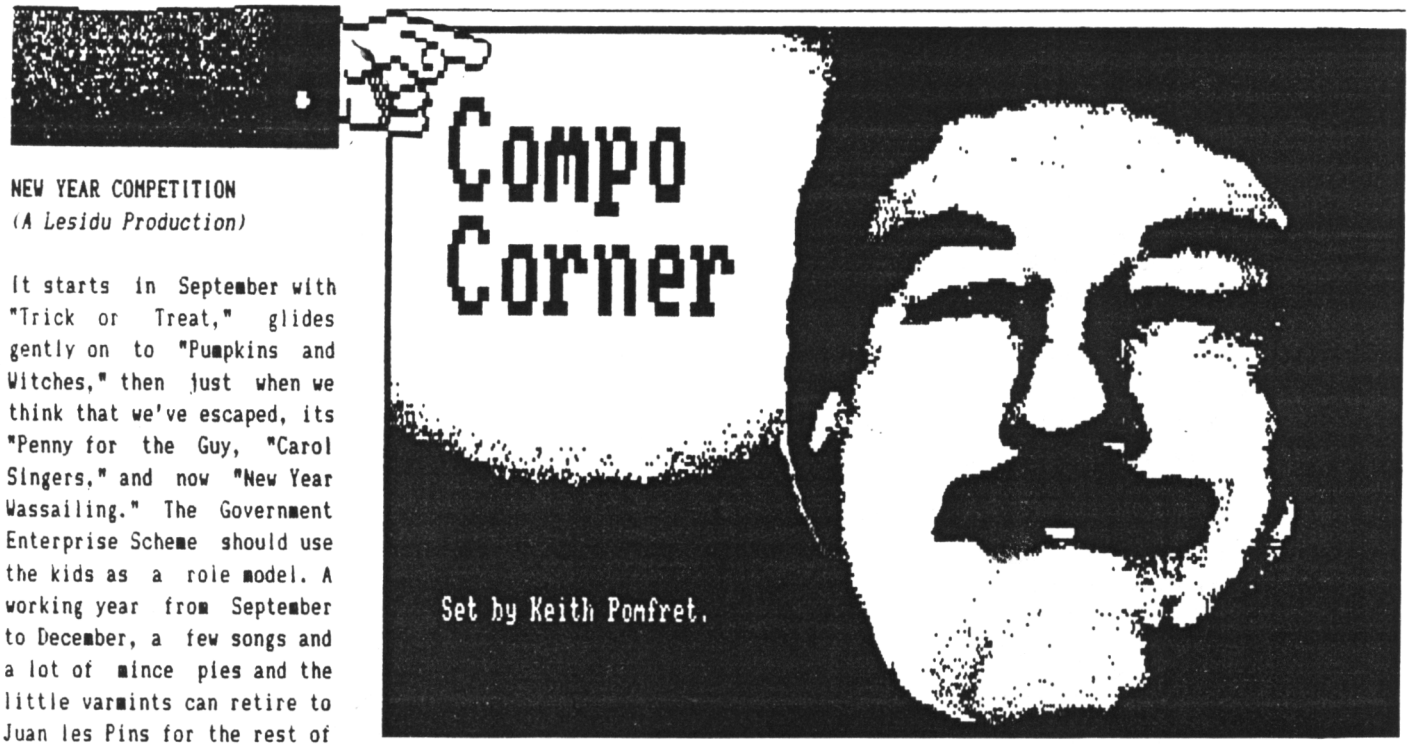
AND IN THE RED CORNER

If this was a perfect world then MAX would have the workings of WOPS and WOPS would have the graphics and screen handling of MAX.

In the meantime, if you want something that looks good, runs well with a mouse, and does basic work efficiently spend twenty pounds on MAX. If it is a serious tool that you require and you want some good hard file and disc fettling then WOPS is your choice of poison.

THE OBLIGATORY KP STAR RATINGS

	WOPS	MAX
Appearance	***	*****
Ease of use	****	****
Manual	****	*****
Range of Utilities	*****	**
Versatility	*****	*
Cost	****	**
Overall	****	***



NEW YEAR COMPETITION

(A Lesidu Production)

It starts in September with "Trick or Treat," glides gently on to "Pumpkins and Witches," then just when we think that we've escaped, its "Penny for the Guy, "Carol Singers," and now "New Year Wassailing." The Government Enterprise Scheme should use the kids as a role model. A working year from September to December, a few songs and a lot of mince pies and the little varmints can retire to Juan les Pins for the rest of the year. As music seems to be such a little earner nowadays, we should have a Musicompo.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO.

Write a short program that uses the soundchip of the CPC to play a tune. It can be as simple or as complicated as you like. It should loop so that it plays continuously. It should also be well documented and able to have a different song placed in it. It must stand alone. No songfiles from music packages or MIDI sequencers

Most of all it must be your own. A scrupulous check into all type ins and back numbers of the other magazines has been done, and if we find any "clones" or "repeats" the person responsible will be publicly branded a fraud.

The prizes are The Music System on cassette and the EMU on disc, culled from my software collection.

The winner will be informed by singing telegram and the tune will be recorded on to a cassette and sent to Alan Sugar for his Birthday.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

P.Cox (lovely tail dear) writes, *"I've played it through and I don't know what it is. Is it BROS?"* No it is not BROS. In fact it's music, who ever heard of a computer game called BROS?

In a competition some time back I left a string of chords and suggested that if you could figure out what it was then you knew what your prize was. Four guys from London calling themselves Gilmour, Waters, Mason, and Wright sent a correct solution, but were disqualified for insider knowledge. No-one, not even ol' Peacock who I'm told has the Band of the Royal Signals (or Colgates) or something to work with has even come close to it. It looks like my copy of Whoops, nearly gave it away then is safe. If no-one gets it right this month I shall be unbearable and crow my way through 1989 with that awful aloof superior look guaranteed to make everyone *Cringe*...

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tanks and trains

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THIS MONTH KEN WALKER LOOKS AT TWO NEW STRATEGY GAMES FROM ELECTRONIC ARTS (TANK TRAINING OR TRAIN TANKING?)

There are obvious dangers in what I am about to do - that is to review three games, new to the Amstrad, from my Commodore collection. I hasten to add, I have been assured there exists only minor differences between the two versions in each case and a brief glimpse at the local computer shop appears to confirm this.

--000--

THE WAY AHEAD

There has been a pronounced trend lately to combine arcade and strategy elements into simulations, as an attempt to widen their appeal. The danger is to end up with a less than adequate simulation, accompanied by irrelevant arcade action, which satisfies nobody.

Fortunately Electronic Arts who provide twelve of the games are past masters of strategy simulations and these latest offerings compare favourably. Neither are destined to set the world on fire but they are well presented and offer a few unique features to prolong the interest.

THE TRAIN

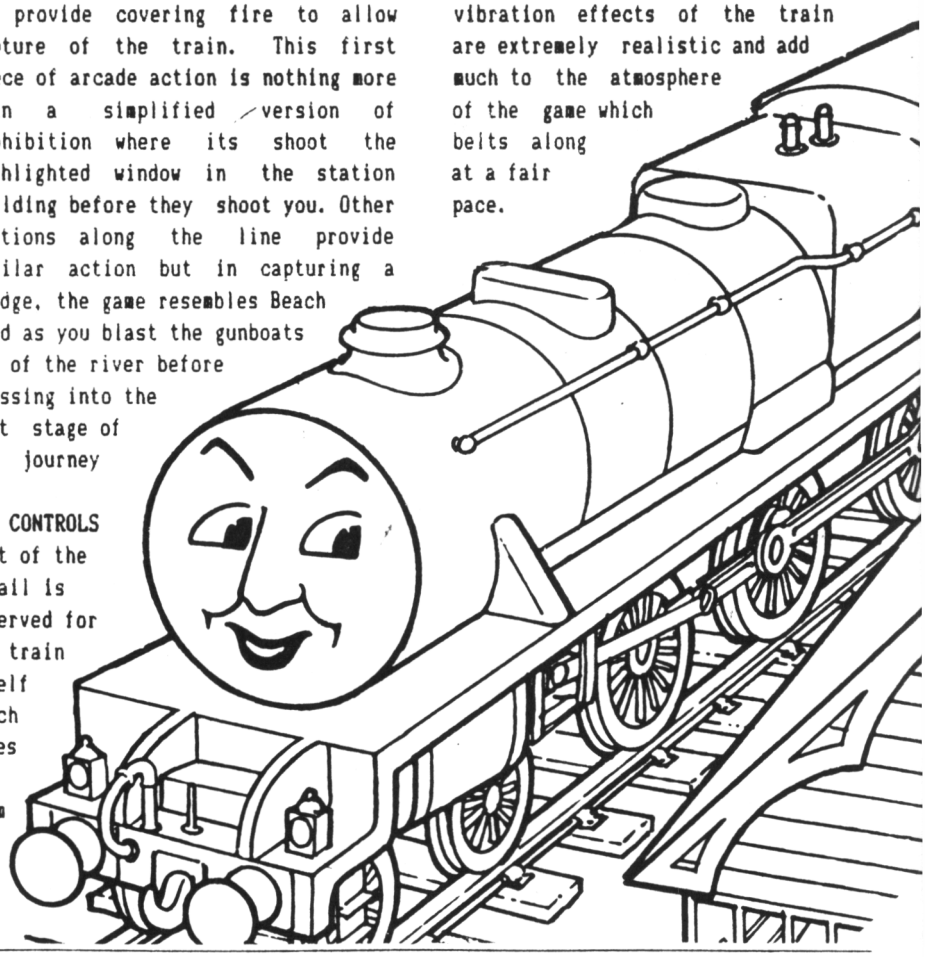
Remember the old Burt Lancaster film about the hijack of a German train in occupied France by the French Resistance in 1944? It seems the Germans were about to flee with all the art treasures they could get their thieving hands on before the Allies arrived. Well this gripping tale of action now provides the background for a train simulation, interspersed with shoot-up sequences, as you protect the train from the Huns on your way to meet the advancing Allies at Riviere.

THE ACTION

Opening scene is in the sidings of a goods yard at Metz which is heavily defended (naturally) and requires you to provide covering fire to allow capture of the train. This first piece of arcade action is nothing more than a simplified version of Prohibition where its shoot the highlighted window in the station building before they shoot you. Other stations along the line provide similar action but in capturing a bridge, the game resembles Beach Head as you blast the gunboats out of the river before crossing into the next stage of the journey

THE CONTROLS

Most of the detail is reserved for the train itself which takes the form of a simulation with superb graphics of the cab. You are provided with six controls to operate - throttle, brake, forward/reverse lever, steam blow off, whistle and furnace with appropriate dials to indicate pressure, temperature and speed. I found these controls relatively easy when compared to the difficulties of a journey on the *Southern Belle*. The sound and vibration effects of the train are extremely realistic and add much to the atmosphere of the game which belts along at a fair pace.



In addition to planning your route from the map screen and controlling the train, there are enemy aircraft to blast on either the front or rear gunnery screens and attacks can happen with monotonous regularity. I much prefer to concentrate on driving the train.

Switching tracks on your journey across France is achieved by enlisting the services of the Resistance who are notified via the steam whistle as you approach the points. Intelligence reports to guide you on your route are provided after capturing a station to add strategy elements to the game.

THE VERDICT

Overall the game is absorbing and I found it not too demanding when battling through various sequences - you are more likely to be defeated by time than enemy gunfire. Therefore you must plan your route carefully and perhaps you will reach Riviere by morning.

--000--

ARCTIC FOX

Tank simulations are few and far between. Tank Busters and Desert Fox are the only ones that come readily to mind and neither could be regarded as a serious attempt at a tank simulation.

E.A. have now entered the computer battlefield with a deadly tank of the future (their words, not mine). They go onto describe your task as a rescue mission to the Arctic with lousy odds but you can take some comfort from an array of weaponry that includes cannon, guided missiles and mines.

--000--

The controls have the looks and feel of the cockpit from Skyfox, which should come as a surprise since Skyfox is an aeroplane of the future. Life for Artic Fox began on the Ariolasoft label, which so happens to be the producers of the aforementioned plane.

for Artic Fox began on the Ariolasoft label, which so happens to be the producers of the aforementioned plane.

GAMEPLAY

Response of the controls in terms of speed and direction is almost instantaneous but the graphics reaction is less sure and enemy positions remain obscure until you are almost on top of them. Their movement is also jerky which does not help when taking aim - there are certain simulations where your death is unavoidable if you happen to stumble on the enemy at high speed, caution is therefore advisable throughout the mission when approaching targets identified on the radar. Further problems are encountered in using the icon controlled weapons which can be at best awkward and at worst fatal in the heat of battle.

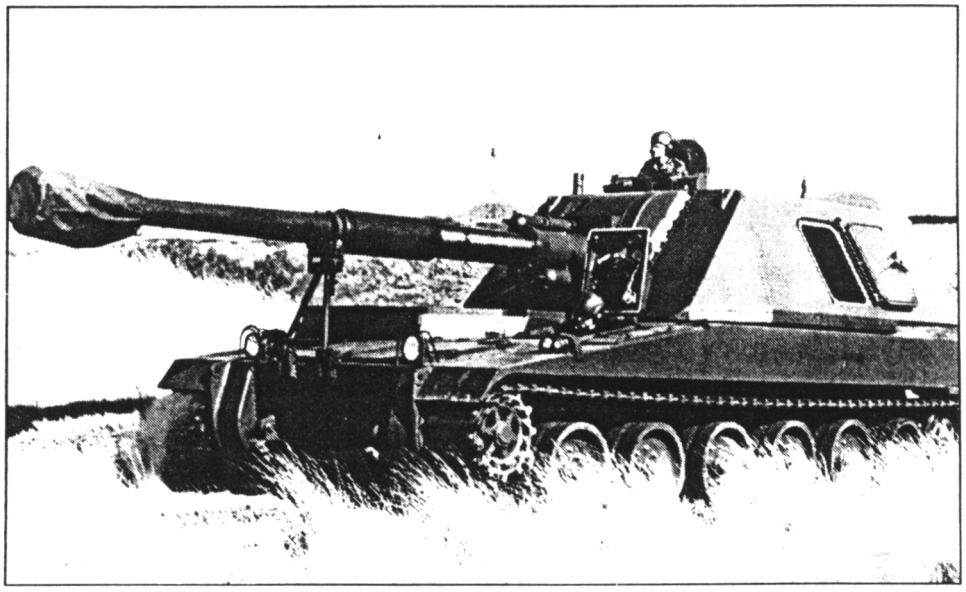
THE ACTION

The main objective is to destroy the enemy communications and oxygen supplies before attacking the Main Fort. High spot of the game is to operate the guided missiles which provide a view point from its mounted camera - good for reconnaissance and a bit like a flight simulator.

You may be like me and never see the fort but you should have plenty of fun along the way and there is always the training mode where you cannot be damaged by enemy fire - good for exploring the terrain and getting used to the controls. However the Main Fort is only present at the advanced levels, so you cannot cheat by having a go when the enemy are firing blanks (not that you ever would.)

THE VERDICT

I cannot help feeling that Arctic Fox has taken a lot of ideas from other games like Skyfox (controls) Strike Force Harrier (strategy) and the guided missiles are straight out of Zoids. Despite all the niggles, I still enjoyed playing the game, even if the frustration factor may prove overwhelming to most.



ICKKY BITS

Ken, aided by a long suffering wife who does most of the typing, would like to wish all WACCI readers a very merry Christmas and plenty of New Year action to keep out the cold.

K.W.

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PROTEXT Grows!

PROTEXT FILER - New Release!

This invaluable program will keep your address lists or other datafiles in good order. Includes: datafile management from within Protext; extremely flexible file sorting program; label printing and mailmerging using the datafiles. Send SAE for full details.

WACCI PRICES: Disc £19.50

PROTEXT OFFICE - New Release!

Invoice printing program as used by Arnor. Easily configurable for your own requirements. Works from within Protext. Produces invoices/credit notes/ delivery notes/statements. Includes Protext Filer. Send SAE for full details.

WACCI PRICES: Disc £27.25

PROTEXT

Protext is without doubt the most sophisticated word processor you'll find on any home micro. Its ease of use and advanced range of features are normally only found in business systems costing many times more. Widely praised throughout the Amstrad press, Protext is rightly acclaimed as the No.1 word processor for Amstrad CPC owners.

* Super fast * Works with any printer * Flexible find and replace *
* Layout stored with text; normal & decimal tabs, left & right margins *
* Word count * Versatile print options; incl. headers/footers, page nos. *

"Extremely powerful editing features ... superb search and replace" AA

WACCI PRICES: Rom £31 Disc £21 Cass £15

PROSPELL

Typing and spelling errors are simple to make and frustrating to miss. But by using Prospell, you can produce documents that are error-free. Prospell is an spelling checker that points out any odd words or dubious spellings.

* checks Protext text in memory *
* checks file on disc from Protext/Tasword/Amsword/NewWord/WordStar *
* over 33000 words * room for thousands more of your own *
* up to 2000 words/min * find words and anagrams - great for crosswords *

"Fast, efficient, easy to use" YC

WACCI PRICES: Rom £27.25 Disc £19.50

PROMERGE

More than just simple mail merging for multiple standard letters!

* integrates perfectly with Protext * read data from keyboard or file *
* conditional printing so you can create your own personalised letters *
* use the built in maths functions to produce invoices etc *
* microspacing - to even out the spaces between words * typewriter mode *
* link files together at print time * Reformat while printing *

WACCI PRICES: Disc £19.50

PROMERGE PLUS

All the features of Promerge, plus:

* Edit two separate files in memory at once; copy blocks between them *
* Background printing - allows you to print and edit at the same time *
* Box mode - cut and paste any rectangle to create newspaper columns *

"You'll have a set-up that can thrash any 8-bit word processor for speed...and even some 16-bit programs for power" PCW

WACCI PRICES: Rom £27.25

ROMBO

All rom software requires a rom expansion system. Its benefits include zero loading time and maximum memory available for text, data, programs etc. Remember; Utopia and the extra commands of Promerge Plus are not available on disc. Fits CPC464/664,6128.

WACCI PRICES: 8 socket rom box £27

New MAXAM rom

MAXAM 1½ - New Release!

At last, due to massive public demand, we have produced an enhanced Maxam ROM especially for Protext users. The editor has been taken out, and you can now assemble your source code simply by typing ASM while it is in Protext's memory. Debugging is now easier with comprehensive diagnostics and the ability to change register contents and resume from breakpoints. Other new features include load/save machine code from Protext/Maxam and extra assembler directives. All the other Maxam features are included.

WACCI PRICES: Rom £23.25

MAXAM

The classic Assembler/Monitor/Editor for developing Z80 machine code.

* Plain English error messages * Disassembler * Memory editor *
* Menu driven full screen editor * load/merge/save/print/find/replace *
* Mix BASIC and machine code * or assemble directly from editor *
* Use the editor to edit BASIC programs saved in ASCII *

"This piece of software should be held up as an example of what can be done by programmers who care ... buy one now!" E & C

WACCI PRICES: Rom £31 Disc £21 Cass £15

BCPL - new low price!

Flexible, fast, easy to learn programming language. Comprehensive I/O libraries including graphics and sound. Example source files supplied, including a space invaders game, full screen editor and all the libraries. 60 page manual covers the language and gives details of the libraries.

"Designed for humans, not computers" CWTA

WACCI PRICES: Rom £23.25 Disc £19.50

UTOPIA

50 new commands available without having to load a program, including:

* Text screen dump * Graphics screen dump to Epson compatible printer *
* disc utilities - disc format, disc copy, copy files, sector editor *
* useful function keys automatically set up; easily define your own *
* BASIC programming utilities * ROM management commands *

"UTOPIA is by far the best utilities rom...it's worth buying a rom board just to plug it in" AMSCLUB
"Utopia seems to be in a class of its own" AMTIX

WACCI PRICES: Rom £23.25

C (6128,CP/M+)

Integrated C programming system. Full implementation of K&R standard.

* Floating point * 32 and 16 bit arithmetic * Optimising compiler *
* Linker * I/O and maths libraries * Conditional compilation * Macros *
* Editor is program mode of Protext *

"In typical Arnor fashion, they've taken their time and got it right" AU

WACCI PRICES: Disc £39

MAXAM II (6128,CP/M+)

Enhanced version of Maxam for CP/M+. Extras include:

* Single stepping * conditional breakpoints * symbolic debugger *
* Editor is program mode of Protext * Macro assembler *

"Now the best gets even better" CWTA CPC

WACCI PRICES: Disc £39

PROTEXT (6128,CP/M+)

Combines all the features of Protext, Promerge Plus and Prospell into one integrated program. German program & dictionary also available (Prowort).

"Protext is just so fast and versatile once you have used it - it is like putting Nigel Mansell against a C5" PYATW

WACCI PRICES: Disc £47

Available from WACCI, 59 The Green, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 5TU

Vidi

* AS USED IN WACCI *

The VIDEO DIGITISER From ROMBO PRODUCTIONS.

For CPC 464/664 6128

Video Image Digitiser

SPECIAL WACCI PRICE **£68**

VIDI is a Frame Grabber. You don't need a still picture! – grab 'action shots' from camera or video.

VIDI is Fast. Upto six frames a second.

VIDI is flexible. Brightness or Contrast is keyboard controlled.

VIDI prints superb A4 or A5 size shaded screens to EPSON compatible printers.

VIDI comes complete – with software on Disc. Manual and video lead

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TWICKENHAM
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THE ROMBO ROM BOX
8-SOCKET ROM BOARD

SPECIAL WACCI PRICE **£27**

All prices include VAT and postage & packing

Special WACCI prices for limited period only