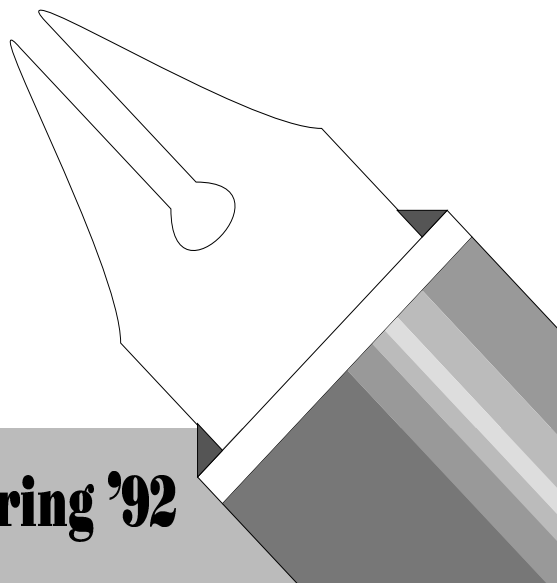


*The independent user group for
all Acorn RISC machine users*

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ANDREW'S BIT

OK, I know I said I wouldn't be editing this issue, but I'm just an old softy at heart and basically got lumbered with the job again. A number of exciting developments have occurred since I last wrote. Have a peek into the April edition of the Micro User and you will see a rather dashing Club A3000 advert boldly pronouncing what the Club offers.

On the topic of what the Club offers, we are very chuffed to announce that a number of companies have offered Club members rather hefty discounts, all you have to do is quote your name, address and membership number. Full details are available on request, and will be included in a separate pamphlet accompanying this edition. You'll also find a comprehensive list of Club members on this pamphlet. I suggest you have a glance down the interests lists of all the members, and if there seems to be the odd member or two with similar interests, get writing to them immediately. Don't forget to look for members in your area, as well.

Club functions continue to occur, with varying levels of success. In the last edition there was an advert for our November show at Mill Hill school. Unfortunately the turn out was a little low. There were many commercial companies doing their bizz; a rather scrummy lunch was laid on and Bruce Dickson had organised some lectures on various topics. The only problem was, very few people knew about it! Any future Club shows of this nature will be well publicised in the Archimedes computer press and local press, and should ensure that this does not happen again.

Having said that, the Club A3000 !Edit, !Paint and !Draw training day was a success, with all 'pupils' getting a day's comprehensive tutorial on mastering these packages for only £12.50. Led by Steve Arnold of Acorn, the day was set up to show both beginners and more confident users how to get the most from these 3 essential Archimedes packages. Steve's friendly teaching style and extensive use of examples to demonstrate techniques ensured that everyone went home knowing more about these packages. Acorn themselves have expressed an interest in carrying out such training days, and we will be holding similar days for packages like Impression and Pipedream.

We would very much like to hear from you if you think you could help in organising such an event in your area.



Editorial

SIMON'S BIT

Thanks Andrew for leaving me so much space! It's a subtle way of keeping what I say brief and to the point! The Club is continuing to grow, and we hope that you will all take advantage of the benefits. The Archimedes scene is looking very exciting, as I have predicted before, with the 'proper' RISC OS 3 to be released quite soon now, and some exciting hardware developments rumoured to be taking place within Acorn. Finally, if you have any good ideas for the Club or magazine, please let us know. Tell us what you like and dislike, and lobby Andrew to leave more space for me!

CLUB ADDRESSES

People can get confused about who to write to at Club A3000. However, it's quite simple:

If you're writing about anything to do with joining up, membership, re-donating etc. then **Mark Watts** is your man: He tends to hang out at **84c Boston Road, Croydon, CR0 3EE**.

If you want to submit an article, hints 'n' tips, game high scores or anything else for the magazine, then address your letter to **Andrew Thacker**, who currently resides at **24 Fernhurst Road, Addiscombe, Croydon, CR0 7DG**.

If your correspondence doesn't fall into those 2 categories, then you probably want to have a gossip with **Rene Barreto** who can be found at **48 Michleham Down, London, N12 7JN**.

If in doubt, send it to Rene . . .

THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Hmmnnn, dunno about important, but these are a few of the people that have something significant to do with Club A3000:

Rene Barreto Club Coordinator
Simon Burrows Co-Editor
Bruce Dickson Exhibitions
Andrew Thacker Co-Editor
Mark Watts Membership Secretary

bits 'n' bobs

DISC-BASED MAGAZINES

Illusions is a new disc-based monthly magazine for the Archimedes. Andrew Thacker has a look at this brand of magazine.

The Archimedes is constantly exposed to new 'trends' of sorts. There was a time when a lot of companies developed art packages, then came the Desktop Publishing surge. Public Domain houses were almost unheard of just over a year ago, now their adverts occupy many pages in the big magazines. Similarly, disc-based magazines are now becoming more and more popular as an alternative (or complement) to printed magazines. They bypass the printing and paper costs, yet discs do not come cheaply. Therefore, compression techniques are used on most discs to maximise room.

Some Public Domain houses seem to be producing disc-based magazines (and I'm not referring to the disc-based catalogues that they all seem to churn out now). Skyfall started the ball rolling with it's 'Arena' magazine, and more recently the DataStream launched 'Absolutely'. After having changed 'hands' two or three times, this 2 disc monthly magazine's reading circle continues to expand. The first disc contains a selection of articles (from reviews and programming tutorials to more abstract topics) which is displayed using a WIMP interface, the other disc contains a selection of recent(ish) P.D., compressed using ArcFS. Some example programs are also supplied alongside the tutorials. Having received the first six issues of the magazine, my only major complaint was that of the editorial: the odd spelling mistake or two is acceptable, but in Absolutely the 'pages' were not consistent in format (for example, some gave the author's name, some didn't) and were littered with spelling and grammatical mistakes. More exhaustive use of a spelling checker wouldn't have gone amiss. One edition even had the editorial page of the PREVIOUS edition in it.

'ASTE Syracuse' have no connections with any Public Domain house, and the only magazine I've seen is the one they were selling at the last BBC Acorn User show. Coming on 3 discs, enclosed in some smart packaging, it certainly looked like a professional affair.



Indeed, the articles disc is produced using Magpie, a hypermedia package, resulting in a professional-looking selection of pages, linked together by various icons, with outline fonts used for text and graphics and sound samples sprinkled in where appropriate. A great many reviews featured in their pages, yet some reviews were of lesser-known packages. The second disc contained game screenshots, game demos and some P.D. The third disc (which was mailed about a month later) contained a detailed resumé of the B.A.U. show (all very well, but pretty boring for the masses who got their discs from the show, and thus knew all about the event anyway).

The latest addition to the disc-based magazines comes in the form of 'Illusions' – now in its third issue. For your cash you get 3 discs; a program disc and 2 P.D. discs (both compressed using ArcFS and having 0 bytes free!). The P.D. chosen for issue 3 was a selection of recent P.D. and the Scorpius demo. The programs disc contains the text reader interface and the text files. One nice little addition is that clicking on the !Illusions icon and selecting HELP from the brings up a filer window containing virus killers, adverts, example programs and screenshots. The program also utilises the !Help application supplied on the welcome disc. Once loaded, the Illusions icon is installed on the icon bar and you can alter a few options from here (most of them seem to be added just for the sake of it – e.g. change pointer shape from the normal arrow to some sort of pole with string around it!) The actual display program is single-tasking and uses very stylish 3D plinths. Pressing the MENU button brings up a list of all the articles; amongst other things a few reviews, some hints and tips and many funny articles, my favourite being a gem entitled '25 reasons why beer is better than women'.

Disc magazines are here to stay. I would certainly recommend that you have a look at all the magazines mentioned here. The content of the articles in all 3 is not altogether dissimilar to that appearing in the printed magazines (I would be surprised if it was) but it's usually more informal in style and reading it on screen makes a nice change. The P.D. sections are always superb and regularly getting a disc-based magazine will ensure that you are always in touch with what's new in the world of P.D. Most magazines offer free issues to contributors of articles that they print, and as they stand all magazines represent excellent value.

F a c t s ' n ' F i g u r e s

Absolutely costs £3 (1 issue), £7.50 (3 issues) or £13 (6 issues) and is available from 26A Bull Lane, Rayleigh, Essex. **ASTE Syracuse** costs £4.99 per issue and is available from Wythenee House, Prenton, Wirral, L43 0UR. **Illusions** costs the same as **Absolutely** and is available from 42 Wimborne Gardens, Ealing, London, W13 8BZ.



Labels, Tickets, Posters and much, much more...

I give here my ideas on how you could produce Tickets/Posters/Birthday and Christmas Cards. To produce any of these things it does help if you have some advanced design software such as !Poster, but if you are on a low budget the system fonts and Acorn's !Draw will do.

O.K., say you have before you the task of providing tickets and posters for a disco and all you've got is the basic information of time, place and what age group the disco is being aimed at. So where do you start? Firstly I think it would be best to put a word or a string of words which will clearly point out what you are advertising or selling. A simple word such as 'DISCO' (Gosh! Mindbendingly striking stuff! – Ed.) Now you have got the title you need to emphasize this word either by using say the bold face of a font or what I commonly use is my faithful copy of !FontFX (a utility no DTP conscious person should be without!) or now the more flexible and slightly more expensive !Fontasy (don't forget Risc Developments' Tapestudio – Ed.#2). Using these packages you can now chose a font from your system and manipulate it, either by giving it a shadow (very effective) or another effect such as to create a white filling to the text and a dark shadow and thick outline, making a very bold informative title. The created Drawfile can now be dragged into !Draw or for in this case !Poster. If on the other hand you do not have these packages, the path style feature of !Draw can create similar effects. By decorating and enhancing the text by placing a block in the background of the text, a circle, square of various colours or perhaps weaving a green vine over the text and enlarging and splitting the text into various colours, you can create just as good if not better effects (it is up to your imagination!).

Next, I think you need a border of some sort; either just a plain and effect rectangle created in !Draw, again embroidered with shapes or various colours and sizes (remember for most occasions it is best to keep the colour a shade of grey with as much contrast as possible with the text, so that when it is printed it will stand out more). You could also use one of the hundred or so borders supplied with !Poster, or probably the cheapest and most effective way is to use the new program complementing !FontFX, !ShapeFX; this program uses simple manipulation of designs created in !Draw or just clipart to create various border shapes.

It has not mattered up until now what size the info has been, but now is the time that you can start thinking about the positioning of the title in relation to the border. Such things depend on what package you are using, and what you have done, so here are a few useful tips:

It is always nice to have the title slightly overlapping the border. If possible rotating the title can be effective. With !Poster, moulding the text is an excellent idea. Making the title into an



arch shape or column in !FontFX can be very visually pleasing. The border need not be a square – try a circle, oblong or diamond shape. I hope you manage to get going.

Next, I think this sort of material needs a centre of focus like a drawing of some sort. You could either start from scratch, or do as I do and grab your nearest box of clipart and spend the next hour trying to find a picture you like which fits the idea of the ticket. After fiddling around with layout again you have now a ticket with a title, border picture and not much space left for text, so now you can move all the items to make way for the other information. With this information, the simplest method is to use a standard Acorn font such as Trinity. Now place the information using one size, but shrink information you feel less important down to save space, and more important information should either be enlarged or use a bold or italic typeface. You should now have all the details of the disco on the ticket and are nearly ready to print.



You have to group the ticket into one object i.e. Ctrl G on !Draw and !Poster. Then make the package display the whole page, including print borders if possible. Depending on the size you want your ticket, shrink and move the tickets so you get between 6 and 8 on the page. Remember you must not stretch the ticket out of proportion – this is down to your own judgement though. Now you can print it as normal by loading the driver and selecting PRINT.

Voila! One finished page of tickets ready for photocopying or multiple printing. Make sure you save a single ticket of your design (or the whole page of tickets) in case you want to use it again. Now turning the ticket into a poster should not be too difficult. All you need to do is split or ungroup a single ticket and enlarge each part (it's better if you enlarge the text as a whole) so that it looks right on a whole page layout, and then perhaps you can add a few

more bits of clipart to give it that extra something. You know now how to produce a ticket and poster and most things work along these lines with just a few changes. The easiest way of doing things is to experiment and look at existing items for ideas. You can produce Christmas Cards, Letterheads, Compliments Slips, Birthday Cards and lots, lots, more.

I hope this has given you some ideas.

Ben Eshmade

(Ed's note: Ben's writing style is, erm, unique, so his original has had to be edited to make it understandable to mere mortals)



With good multisync monitors costing hundreds more than normal colour monitors, many potential purchasers wonder whether the benefits justify the extra expense. Simon Burrows investigates...

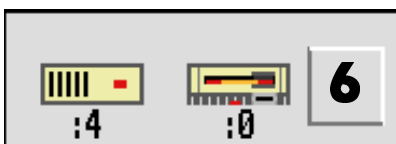
Multisyncs offer a significantly better picture quality than ordinary monitors, which is why Acorn have taken the decision to package the A5000 with one. Whilst you may be under the opinion that you are perfectly happy with your current, standard monitor, just the simple desktop display on a multisync monitor is enough to make your Arc feel like a completely different machine.

The A5000 is supplied with a very basic multisync monitor; this is superior to the standard one supplied previously, but poorer than most multisyncs. Acorn freely admit this, but made the decision to bundle a cheap multisync because it keeps the price of the complete system down whilst giving acceptable performance. However, the picture from an Acorn multisync is not as good as most multisync monitors. That is why the new Archimedes DTP system is supplied with an Eizo monitor – it would have been laughed out of the market if it had been supplied with the Acorn monitor.

Later this year, Acorn are very likely to release their new monitor as a separate product, at a price somewhere between £250 and £350. In comparison with standard monitors, this is a good buy, but do remember that multisync monitors of various makes can be picked up for less expense, and will probably offer a better picture. Look out for second hand bargains, often costing around £200 or occasionally even less. I have noticed at least one dealer offering new Taxan 770+ monitors for around this price, and providing you set it up properly, it should provide you with a very good picture, as well as a monitor which can be used with other machines in the future.

Multisync monitors can be slightly tricky to set up. VIDC enhancers make a significant difference to the picture quality. Once you have started using one, you will never regret it.

John Bancroft is selling his high quality Multisync monitor for £220. To find out more information, write to John at:



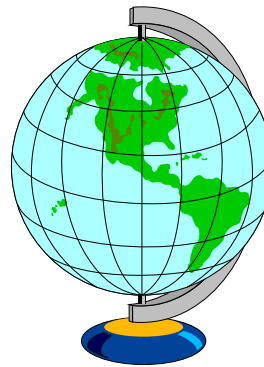
2 Foskett Close
Rushden
Northants.
NN10 9PR

THE WORLDWIDE ARCHIMEDES COMMUNITY

by Simon Burrows

If you mention comms to the average Archimedes user, he/she will immediately think of modems, hackers and expensive long distance phone calls. What many people are unaware of is that the majority of people using digital communications to discuss the Archimedes do so on academic networks, with no need for personal modems or heart-stopping phone bills.

Most Universities in the developed world are connected together by wide-area networks such as Internet, JANET



and BITNET, providing the means for people to communicate. To access these, a modem is not required, since the computer systems have constant links into the system, and these can be called up from any terminal connected to the systems. The backbone of communications on these networks is

electronic mail (email), which basically enables you to send a text file containing a message to other users around the world, by using their unique email addresses. These addresses are generally similar to `smb@cs.nott.ac.uk` (my address), which gives information about the user and location of the intended recipient. A lot of discussion about Acorn matters takes place using this facility, and this is enhanced by the fact that some companies such as Acorn are connected to the networks, so that for example, every member of staff at Acorn has a unique email address (eg `qwerty@acorn.co.uk`).

There are various means of downloading Archimedes P.D. type software over the networks; the main ways are to connect to a remote computer using special file transfer protocols (e.g. Lancaster University or machines in Germany or Australia), or requesting files containing software to be sent to you by email. The biggest email server operates from Newcastle University, run by Albert Koelmans. If you want software for other micros, huge quantities are also available - how would you like to download 60Mb of Soundtrackers free of charge?

The best feature of having network access for Archimedes Users must be the Usenet `<comp.sys.acorn>` newsgroup, a sophisticated system for sending email messages on a topic so that all other interested people can read them, and reply with another public posting, or by private email. The `<comp.sys.acorn>` newsgroup is officially estimated to have 16,000 readers worldwide. As a result of a recent posting in the group, I received replies from all over the world. Staff at companies such as Acorn and ARM contribute on a regular basis as do many of the best known authors of Arc software.

rogramming *by John Tytgat* **Andy**

A few months ago Andrew asked me to write an article about BASS for the Club A3000 magazine. Well, because I could not refuse such a honourable offer, here comes the – until yet unrivaled – BASS story :

BASS (the Belgian Archimedes Software-writers Society) was founded about two years ago when Gil and I met each other at the Acorn stand on the Microtex computer show in Brussels. We both wanted to write Archimedes P.D. programs which were of a better quality than the current P.D. programs. At that time I started to convert my 'Disassemba' ARM disassembler and source list generator program to a WIMP version called 'Dissi' and Gil became interested in SoundTracker software and started to write 'TMS'.

There are not so many Archimedes users in Belgium as in England but many of them like programming. One such person is Carl, who joined BASS about a month after its foundation. He is a real lover of fractals (and the Sisters of Mercy, but that is another story) and wrote several versions of his 'FracTrace' program. But now he is hooked developing his 'RiscBBS'. The quality of this P.D. program pleased Acorn so much that they are now using it for their 'Acorn Technical Bulletin Board'.

Meanwhile I found a way to implement the famous Computer Concepts' 3D icons in my 'Dissi' application and Gil started to write the first routines of the 'TNT' demo. During the developing of 'TNT' Gil decided to abandon 'TMS' because it was based on Hugo's sound routines which did not have a very good quality at that time (eg. unpleasant clicks at the end of a sample).

In August 1991 Gil finished the 'TNT' demo and about a month later we were pleased to announce the fourth BASS member : Bernard. He made a fantastically good compression program (the TNT demo was reduced to about a quarter of its original size) and together with Gil they began to write ProTracker. ProTracker is a P.D.

SoundTracker player with completely rewritten sound routines and with monitor features and was based on a dummy application and ARM libraries that I made. The development time of it was about one month. The whole BASS team visited the BAU show in October 1991 and distributed all their P.D. programs : TNT, Dissi, FileTree, PrintEmul, RiscBBS, ProTrack, etc.

A lot of people were impressed by the quality of our programs and one software company offered Gil the possibility to make a commercial version of ProTracker (which will probably be called 'Symphony'). He accepted and now he and Bernard are busy writing it. They were not fully satisfied with the enhanced sound routines of ProTracker so they rewrote these routines for the second time. Gil also found a way to extend the library of my 3D icon routines to allow 3D slide & title bars.

These were major events in the BASS history up 'til now. We also wrote several smaller utilities like : Access, BatSpark, Laugh, PC-Gate, GuessType, FontDump, etc. but overall we prefer writing larger applications.

What about the future? Well, we have a lot of plans but... not enough time to develop all of them. First of all the commercial version of ProTracker has to be finished, Carl is thinking to extend his RiscBBS even further, and if Bernard finds some time he will finish the WIMP front-end for his compression program. I plan to improve the registered Dissi version on request of all my registered Dissi users and I have some exciting hardware and software projects in mind...

BASS ARE :

John Tytgat, Brusselbaan 445, B-1600, St.-Pieters-Leeuw, Belgium

Gil Damoiseaux, rue du Vivier 153, B-6730 Ros-signol, Belgium

Carl Declerck, Vrijgeweidestraat 24, B-2800 Mechelen, Belgium

Bernard Jungen, Friedericht 27, B-6706 Autelbas, Belgium



Scanners

**The
defini-
tive
study of
the entrails
of whatever
scanners I could
lay my hands on at
the time.**

The range of scanners available for the Arc is now as bounteous as the art package. Some have already received lots of attention in other magazines, but fairly recently (well, yonks ago actually) the scanner market saw two budget additions in the form of the FaxScan scanner from Spacotech and the 256 grey-scale Scan Light Junior 256 from Computer Concepts.

The FaxScan package (which costs £100) comprises of the 'board' which plugs somewhere on the Arc's main circuit board (I'm reliably informed that it goes in the Econet space; my dad deals with all that as my knowledge of the internal gubbins of the Arc is about on par with a fried kipper's). There is neither podule nor 'scanner' as such, because the package makes use of the Amstrad 9600 AT fax machine (which is a combined fax machine/telephone and answerphone and is criminally good value for money, but that's another story) to do all the dirty work. Obviously you need the fax before you can start scanning in material.

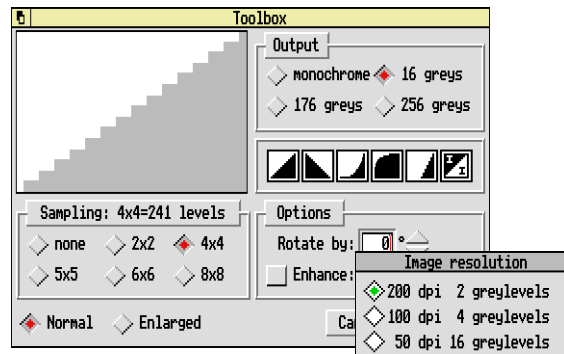
Instructions are in the form of a pamphlet which gives all the relevant information, and there were no problems encountered in fitting the hardware. The software on disc includes a program to edit and subsequently download one-touch and short-code phone numbers from the computer to the fax machine. The main driver software for the scanner allows you to change the scanning resolutions (200dpi - 2 grey-levels, 100dpi - 4 grey-levels, 50dpi - 16 grey-levels) and also shows the scanned image on screen as it is being scanned in. The contrast of the image can be controlled directly



from the fax machine. Once scanned in, the entire image can be saved to disc, as can a selected area (unfortunately

direct memory-transfer of the image to some packages is not supported, although I could directly drop it onto the !Paint icon). There is absolutely nothing at all that you could do wrong, you simply stick your A4 page in the scanner, hit a couple of buttons, and it is fed through for you in just under half a minute.

The resolutions are the major let-down, and I tended to stick with the highest resolution as it seemed to always give the best results (at the expense of extra memory taken up by the picture). In most cases the results were acceptable, but not a shining example of DTP capabilities. Monochrome images came out splendidly, but full 16 grey-level images were often not acceptable. One must consider what this package offers for £100. Assuming you already have the fax machine, you get the equivalent of an A4 scanner and sheet feeder. Having the built-in sheet feeder makes an important difference as it ensures that every scan is produced with effortless ease.



*Each package has a toolbox of options;
one slightly more comprehensive than the other.*

Oh dear. After initial testing of Computer Concept's scanner I must say that I felt a wee tad of disappointment in the product. As I have previously discussed, the FaxScan product from Spacotech may not produce stunning output compared to other scanners, but what I almost took for granted, having extensively used this product, was the ease with which I obtained my digital piccies. The 256 grey-scale scanner from Computer Concepts is a different ball game entirely.

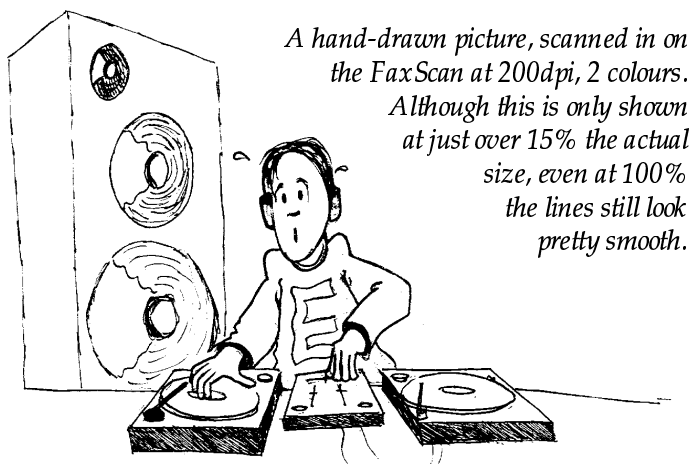
After (dad) installed the podule, connected the scanner and loaded up the support software, I was ready to scan in some test pictures. This involves setting the resolution on both the software and the actual scanner. It's a shame that the software cannot recognise what the settings are on the scanner itself as both settings need to be the same. There is also a brightness control on the scanner. Scan-

ning involves pressing the button and pulling the scanner over your document. Move the scanner too quickly and the green light on the scanner turns orange. It's annoying having the scanner lead at the bottom and not the top (like the mouse) as it can get in the way. In addition, it would have been far better to have made the desktop border flash, or sound a beep when moving the scanner to quickly/slowly, instead of only having a light shine on the scanner. It's pretty difficult, whilst scanning, to look at the scanner and the preview window on the screen at the same time.

I stumbled across an excellent photo of actress Julia Roberts which (after being scanned in, enlarged considerably and printed out) would look perfect somewhere on my bedroom wall. Having got a serious motivation to master this piece of hardware, I set to work.

I tried everything. I held the scanner in different positions (which can help improve the image), scanned standing up, sitting down, leaning over it, leaning backwards as I scanned it, lifting it up slightly and even with both hands wrenching it! Alas, I could not get a scan without some degree of interference (making some images almost unrecognisable) so I gave up and started scanning the wooden desk! By this time I had scanned all manner of material, all of which didn't come out very well.

I reached the conclusion that maybe attempting 400dpi resolution with 256 grey-scales was a little ambitious until more experience had been gained, so I lowered the resolution to 100dpi and the grey-scales to 16.



I was getting desperate for a success, so I scanned a piccie of Michael Bolton. It came out really well. Typical! Who wants a picture of him in their bedroom anyway? Has this scanner got something against Julia? It seemed that I had found the answer: 100dpi and 16 grey-levels worked. The resultant sprites only had one or two lines of interference, so with a minute's touching up in !Paint, a final (half-decent) picture could be produced.

My friend has another hand-held scanner, which allows you to turn the preview screen on the monitor off. With it off you can vary the scan speed without getting interference. Keeping a constant speed is difficult and is extremely important on the better quality scans. I would

imagine that if Computer Concepts had introduced this feature into their software, far more scans would come out with no interference.

The support software allows the user to rotate and sample the sprite, and to edit the 'grey map', which can improve the contrast and clarity.

The manuals (one general for hand-scanners, one specific for the 256 junior) are well written and clearly explain even the most basic and obvious functions which is naturally a boon for the beginner (such manuals are almost trademarks of Computer Concepts). Some background into scanning resolutions/sampling/dithering is also given so that limitations of this and other scanners are pointed out (excluding the fact that it's ***** hard to get a good, high quality scan!).

If a 100dpi, 16 grey-levels A5 scanner is sufficient for your needs, then for £220 it is not a bad buy, and the superb software bundled with it does much to enhance the image. If you plan on producing high quality (256 grey-levels), high resolution (200dpi or 400dpi) artwork, then I suggest you forget it, or at least consider buying either an A4 scanner with paper feeder, or a flat scanner. In all instances I found the width of picture scanned very restrictive indeed; ranging from 52mm to 105mm, depending on the resolution and number of grey-levels used. Someone in the Computer Concepts office must have achieved this Elite status as the example pictures shown in the manual are crisp and easily mistakable for photos. I wonder if I ask this person nicely, they'll scan my pic of Julia in for me? This piece of hardware has the potential to produce illustrations that are only limited by the user's printer; it's just reaching that potential is going to take struggle and patience.

Spacetechn are at 21 West Wools, Portland, Dorset, DT5 2EA. Tel 0305-822753 or Fax 0305-860483, and Computer Concepts... well, everyone knows where they live...

Spacetechn are at 21 West Wools, Portland, Dorset, DT5 2EA. Tel 0305-822753 or Fax 0305-860483, and Computer Concepts... well, everyone knows where they live...

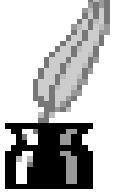


*Madonna: Gracefully posing for me whilst scanned at 100dpi, 16 grey-levels. 'Patterning' appeared (bands of lines that look like the reflection of a swimming pool). The image can therefore be 'sampled' at a number of magnitudes (from 2*2 to 8*8). Sampling increases the number of grey-levels in the pic at the expense of detail. It is also supposed to get rid of patterning, but it didn't always in my tests.*

Andrew Thacker



Letterbox



Andrew Thacker's vain attempt to justify all the boo-boos made in his review.

It's not all too uncommon for a company to write in to a magazine after it has published a review of one of their products. The letter is usually one of polite complaint that has a go at the reviewer (in the nicest possible way!) and tactfully says that the reviewer must be a tad on the 'vacant' side to have said all the obviously 'incorrect' things mentioned in his/her review. Well, at Club A3000 we always like to go one (or even two) better, so alongside my review of the Commie Concepts' scanner, I've printed some comments from the Managing Director of Computer Concepts, Mr. Charles Moir (he **does** know what he's talking about!) This means that you don't have to wait 3 (4, or even 5!) months to hear about all the things I got wrong. Anyway, here's all the juicy bits from his letter:

i agree that it would be better to flash the border or something when overscanning but there is no way our software can tell if the scan is going too fast.

oh well, such is life.

you mentioned that your friend has another scanner that allows you to turn off the screen preview which helps the interference, which i find very surprising. since all scanners have 300 or 400 sensors to the inch i can't see there is any way to stop such interference.

hmmn. i imagine we've got our wires crossed here. i think the interference you are referring to is the 'patterning' effect produced by scanning printed material, and as you have clearly shown, this is not a problem with photos, and printed photos (like the ones out of magazines etc.) can usually be dealt with using the brill software supplied.

the interference i refer to in the review is the dirty great white lines that appear all over the image when the scanner has not 'picked up' that part of the image correctly. i found that sampling could actually make these stand out more strikingly.

it is my experience (and i think the manual says this) that the best results for such pictures are nearly always obtained by scanning at the maximum resolu-



*tion, 400dpi, with 16 grey-levels then performing 8*8 sampling, to average out the interference. i have always found this produced better results than 100dpi scanning at 16 grey-levels.*

i guess this is where we agree to disagree. i no longer have the scanner to test this one out, but i do remember trying every combination of 400dpi scanning, and on each occasion far too many white lines (what i call interference) appeared to render the image suitable.

i would welcome the opportunity to scan your julia roberts picture...

aw shucks! unfortunately julia will have to remain unscanned for the time being, as the picture in question has now been securely stuck to the headboard of my bed. (good grief, the things i reveal in this magazine). getting this to my computer is not half as much of a problem as getting it through the post office letterbox.

finally i must say that i think the design and layout of your magazine is absolutely superb.

sorry. had to put that in. something to do with me having an over-inflated ego, i think.



if you were debating whether you think it would be worth attending one of our training days (see elsewhere in the mag for more details), then you may be interested to read some of the comments we've received from the people who attended the recent 'building blocks' training day on !edit, !paint and !draw:

just a few words to say thankyou to you, mark and bruce, and of course to steve arnold, for organising the day, yesterday 23/2/92, at mill hill school. it was a really excellent and informative day, and i look forward to the next one.

mick cooper

i would like to take this opportunity to thank you, steve, mark, bruce and acorn (for letting steve have the time off to do what he did). to say i learnt something is an understatement . . . it was the best £12.50 i've spent for a long time.

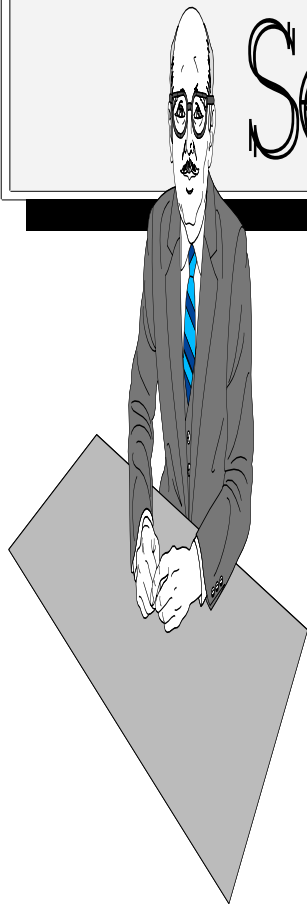
ralph sillett

oh dear, this is beginning to sound like the yellow pages' advert on the radio: these are genuine letters taken from our files. if you'd like to be in a position to write a similar letter, sign up for a training day!



Help

Service



Club member Toby Smith provides a help desk service for subscribers of the disc magazine Syracuse. He has kindly offered to extend his services to Club A3000 members.

The service attempts to provide immediate help for any user in any field, from basic usage of the machine, through using a particular software package and how to get the computer to do such-and-such. He also has many P.D. demo versions of serious applications and games, thus promoting a try-before-you-buy scheme.

Anyone with a problem who wishes to use this service can phone for an immediate answer. If your problem can wait a few days, then write to him at the address given below. Toby may follow up the problem by supplying a disc of P.D. that may combat the problem in some way, indeed he has already written many P.D. applications himself. Should he not know the answer to your problem himself, he is 'friendly' with many well-known P.D. authors, and should be able to come up with some sort of solution sooner or later.

The entire service is free, with the only provisos being that any discs he sends out are returned, and anyone wanting a written reply should enclose an S.A.E.

PROVIDING A HELPING HAND

7 St. Catharine's Way
Houghton-on-the-Hill
Leicestershire
LE7 9HE

Tel: 0533-413850
(5-9pm and weekends,
or he'll probably be out)



TRAINING COURSES

In association with Mill Hill School

Following the success of our first Hands-On training day at Mill Hill, we have organised the following training classes:

DeskTop Publishing 28th March 1992

Using the Impression package from Computer Concepts. The instructor is yet to be arranged.



PipeDream 4 28th March 1992

The course will be lead by Rob MacMillan from Colton Software: the company that produce PipeDream 4.

Building Blocks: !Edit, !Paint and !Draw 26th April 1992

The course will be lead by Steve Arnold of Acorn and includes introducing the WIMP system for beginners.

All courses start at 10am (prompt) and finish at 4pm. Lunch and refreshments are included. The cost is £20 per person (additional family members on the same terminal cost £10 each). For reservations, call Bruce Dickson on 081-906 2322.



scene

Howdy once again. After the Christmas deluge of new titles, there seems to be a bit of a resting period currently being enjoyed by some of the major software houses (this may just be because they are getting maximum selling out of their Christmas titles). Many 4th Dimension titles quoted as being released in November/December are only just coming out, and there is still no sign of S.W.I.V. or Gods from Krysalis. I just wish they had converted these and left James Pond on the waiting list.

Please do send in your games hints, high scores and passwords to me as I'm hoping to feature as many of them as possible in the next issue, and we're planning to hold a games playing day in London to find the most efficient game-smasters (isn't that a cheepo Channel 4 production?) in our Club, with prizes for such people.

Finally, I'm plodding away at constructing a Pandora's Box map, and have already marked out scores of the screens featured (with not just a little bit of help from the reviewers' pre-saved positions kindly supplied by 4th Dimension) but cannot reach all the rooms. Can anyone give me a hand with the map, or with general hints and tips for the game?

Andrew Thacker

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPEAN EDITION

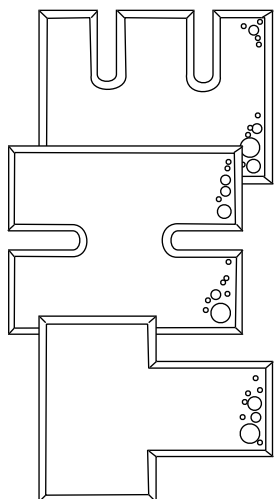
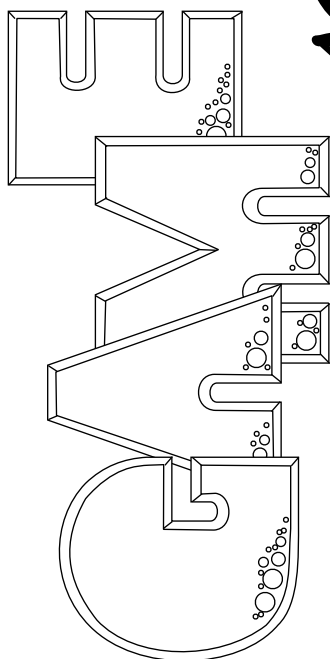
by Mark Richardson

Manchester United European (MUE) comes on one disc, the original (Amiga version) came on two. Double clicking the icon brings up the loading credits with a reasonable tune (not one of Krysalis' best), and an animated Flutterby. There is a display which shows the hardware the machine has, i.e. RAM and processor; it doesn't seem to affect the game in any way, but at least its Archimedes specific. There is the usual Krisalis icon menu system, neatly laid out and fairly easy to understand. You choose which cup to play in, and then you can play a friendly or bite the bullet and give those foreign teams what for.

The arcade section of the game has been radically altered from the original Man United. The size of the men has been reduced to reflect more accuracy, Red and Yellow Cards are now incorporate and there is a great sequence where the Ref gets out his book, talks to the player, writes his name down and raises the card. Substitutions are well animated and corners and penalties are included. Still no off-side though. The replay facility is also very good and animation throughout is excellent.

Your men now have a far greater range of actions, they can now head, volley, slide the ball into the net, and have a range of curl and spins they can put on the ball in an attempt to foil the goalie. The intelligence level of your players is now slightly above the brain dead amoeba and they sometimes will move into a good position of their own accord. The goalies are just as hard to beat as in the original, but again it's just a question of finding the technique that will beat them. M.U.E. is almost as easy as the original which I completed in days (hmmnn, just had to add that, eh Mark? - Ed.) M.U.E. doesn't have any 'well done' sequences when you win the cups as the original did.

The game is very good technically, but it has an unfinished feel, where I suspect it was rushed out for the B.A.U. show. This manifests itself most painfully in the arcade section where it is possible to kick the ball behind the goal and no one will get it, the timer just counts down and if you weren't in the lead you've lost. Another instance: you've just released a 25 yard belter aimed straight for the top right corner of the goal, the goalie is stranded on the far side of the goal with no chance of getting it, he does a vertical jump and suddenly the ball is in his arms?!? (hmmm). Overall, the game has the potential to be brilliant: it isn't realised, and sadly its a bit of a flop. Full credit to Krisalis for trying, but leave it on two discs lads, don't cut sections out, and test it to death.





Air Supremacy is the latest gaming venture from Superior Software. On disc comes the main game and a textfile 'Briefing' which provides additional game instructions.

I was impressed by the classy title page that 'draws itself', alongside some boppy music, and after it's all loaded up, you can get straight down to playing Air Supremacy. Despite its title, the game is played in the air, on the ground, and also in the water, with you initially having the choice of piloting a simple bi-plane or a tank. It looked like it could be a cross between Chocks Away (with outside view of the plane as opposed to the 'simulation' cockpit view) and Conqueror (similar gun sound effects and dust trails, although 'wind trails' are now left behind in the air when you move airplane wings about). Indeed the landscape is of the same calibre, being built up of rectangles (although a noticeably 'tragic' loss is the 3rd dimension; this one's only flat). One may ask as to whether a potential purchaser could justify his/her/its buy if already owning Superior's first two games, Zarch and Conqueror. Believe me, there is some overlap in the 'tank' part (although it's easier to control), but the plane's a real pig to master (and I prefer using keys as opposed to the mouse). It's worthwhile taking time out to become an expert pilot, as flash stunt manoeuvres can soon be achieved with more success than I felt was possible in Chocks Away, which gives a racier and more exhilarating edge to flying.



Taking off in a plane of the future in the Combat Arena. It is in this final zone that many 'nice touches' have been added.

In the air you fly around looking for enemy planes and other airborne objects (like Zeppelins and stealth figh-

ters) to gun down. To aid you there is, on the top left, a 'pilot's eye' view of the action which makes lining up shots easier, and on the top right a radar printout of the area, similar to Zarch's, which fails if the radar control towers are shot (something the enemy has a definite partiality to doing). On ground you do much the same as you would expect, shooting down the landscape and the other tanks/ground vehicles. This is very easy to do and with a little practise you can soon hit the enemy before they get a look in.

As you wipe out one landscape, you progress to the next. Landscapes are set in wartime eras, the first being Europe in World War One, the second is set in the Pacific, in World War 2, the third is set in Arabia 1991 etc. As the level scenario changes, your vehicles change to accommodate this (thus you are not still driving your trusty World War 1 tank in the futuristic 2150 scenario). The action definitely gets more intense, and each level is progressively more difficult to complete. Whilst this game is undoubtedly a step forward from Zarch and Conqueror (it combines good aspects of both titles, with a few nice additions of its own), I can only recommend it if you do not already own the former games, as the additional scenery and final 'combat arena' aspects cannot really be considered enough bait to tempt the average Zarch/Conqueror veteran to splash out another £25 for it.

HINTS, CHEATS AND OTHER NAUGHTY THINGS

I suppose it could be considered 'premature' of us to publish the passwords to Air Supremacy alongside a review that's supposed to make you rush out and buy it! Therefore, if you have just gone out and made a purchase, exercise some self-discipline and don't use the passwords until you get fed up with the game. For all those who have had the game for months and would like to have a dabble on those up until now untouched levels, here (courtesy of Mark Richardson) are the passwords to the levels:

SCRAMBLE - PACIFIC
STACCATO - ARABIA
EQUANIMITY - COMBAT ARENA

On to a few bits 'n' pieces of information concerning 4th Dimension. If you have problems loading up any of their (or any other company's) games, th-

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en it's probably because you're out of memory. Get a 4mb upgrade immediately! For a slightly more inexpensive solution, pop a disc and an S.A.E. in the post to 4D and they'll stick their configuration suite of programs on the disc for you. Being fully WIMP driven and programmed by the dude who brought us classics such as Break 147/Superpool and Apocalypse, they handle all aspects of memory configuration and memory optimisation for game loading. Well worth checking out. They are also supplying 2 discs worth of demo versions and screenshots of their more popular games with all game orders. Don't forget to quote your Club A3000 membership number with your order to get a hefty discount.

Lastly, it has come to my attention that some people are having problems with games such as Nevryon and Enter the Realm, in that they tend to crash somewhere in the game. These are bugs that have been rectified by 4D. If you bought the games as soon as they came out and are having problems then send back your original discs and they'll replace them free of charge. Good, eh?

I've managed to get my trotters on a screenshots demo disc of Superior Software's forthcoming Archie 'Last Ninja 3' conversion. Oh yes, in case you didn't already know, somebody at Superior Software has been busy converting the Last Ninja 3 game onto the Archimedes! I can faithfully report that the graphics look nothing less than spectacular; in fact, they look positively sexy!



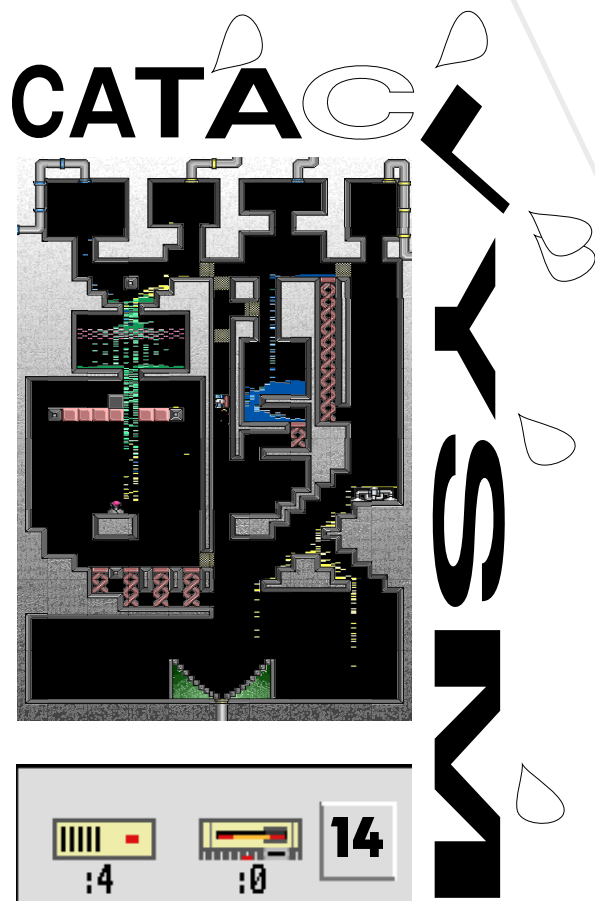
Once again, a potentially mind-blowing screenshot has been reduced to a small blob of greys on the page!

The game's concept (once you have discarded all the scenario drivel thrown at you in the manual) is original yet annoyingly simple: Get a certain amount of water/acid/strange coloured liquids (depending on the level) from the top of the 2-screen-high 'room' to the funnel at the bottom, in a certain time limit. I say 'annoyingly' simple because for 25 quid you would possibly want more from a game. Well, the task is not that easy. Controlling the path of realistically-modelled water droplets

can get quite tricky, especially when you have to direct the water to the funnel thingy at the bottom. This may involve dodging nasties, keeping out of the way of the (acidic) water, opening the right door at the right time, placing blocks down to divert the liquid, and so on and so forth.

Graphics are nothing special at all, but the simulated liquid movement is impressive. Sound is up to scratch, with a beefy title-screen tune and some samples employed in the game. I did like the facility to view score information for each level and the option of increasing music and sound volume etc.

After playing this allegedly 'stunningly original and watery game' for the first time, I was left with the impression that once was enough, and it was about as addictive as sucking my toes. Still, being the gallant chap I am, I decided to give it a few goes, to see if its appeal would grow. That was just after 8pm. At 3:30am I decided it was time to stop playing it and go to bed! Cataclysm has a dangerously high 'come back for one last game' factor attached to it. Once you have solved one of the 40 levels you move on to the next and your progress is saved to disc. This means that you don't ever have to do the completed levels again in order to reach a new level (which can be tedious and shorten a game's lifespan considerably), although there is the option to redo levels in order to achieve a better score. As the levels increase, so does the shrewdness and luck needed to master them. The first levels should present little difficulty, yet the latter levels will keep you frustrated for hours (on most of the latter ones I failed over 100 times before mastering each level, and level 40 still has me stumped, even though I've already attempted it 255 times (so far)). This is the sort of game that you play solidly all week until you complete it; then never load up again. If you have, in the foreseeable future, a week with nothing to do, I suggest you go out and buy it. I've put more hours into completing Cataclysm than any





PANDORA'S BOX



overs of all things classical will know all about Pandora. She was a naughty gal who let all the evils of the world out of a box which kept them all locked up. 'Nuf of all that; I usually don't give two shakes of a chipmunk's bottom as to the scenario. All you need to know is that you are a hunky fella disguised as a weedy magician, and in this slightly altered version of the original legend, you have to gather

After a couple of months of inactivity from the 4th Dimension, X-Fire (pronounced 'Cross-Fire', no doubt) appears, promising 'Highly Addictive Classic Arcade Action'. What is classic arcade action? In this case, it involves driving your buggy thingy-bob around several one-screen-big grids, (it's not a scrolling shoot 'em up) taking pot-shots at the nasties; avoiding them and their return fire. Heard this record before?

On each level a selection of baddies appear around the outside of the grid, 'fizzle' on, then home in on you. They are harmless whilst fizzling on, but after that contact with them is deadly. On every level you have to blast a certain number of baddies (indicated by a bar). And each level demands more kills. Naturally the higher the level, the nastier the baddies (some levels get more hairy than Simon's legs). Not only that, missiles appear and start dropping mines, aliens reproduce and countless other worrying things appear to make your life uneasy. Fortunately, help is at hand (isn't it always) in the shape of various power-ups. These include various weapon upgrades, screen zaps, invulnerability, shields, and some not mentioned in the manual. As most upgrades can be used in conjunction with other upgrades, you can wipe out great wedges of enemy on occasions. There is no problem with moving about the grid, yet firing takes some getting used to as you have to select the direction you want the bullet to go in before firing.

Each screen has a completely different background (some quite graphically superb) and overall the graphics are crafted to a professional standard. Complementing these graphics are first class explosions, a selection of cross-screen fade routines and a delightful title sequence comprising of a spray can being rattled and the title screen being sprayed onto the screen. In fact, with all this and the constant 'X' logo spinning around, presentation has to be given full marks. Sound's another matter, with the title tune being about 8 seconds long! Once you get the hang of things, it does get addictive, except that on every turn you have to wade through all the easy levels before getting to the more taxing ones. For an original shoot 'em up, it's fresh: 4D have churned out worse!



Exciting action from X-Fire (above) and Pandora's Box (below).



together 4 amulets which will join up to form a seal. This can be used to close Pandora's Box and restore the world to an altogether nicer place.

Set in over 200 screens of delightful graphic backdrops, Pandora's Box is an isometric 3D adventure (i.e. the controls and direction are a bit of a pooh to get to grips with). You guide Merlin (wizard/hero thingy) around, looking and searching for all manner of treasures and trying to get some points on the table (which is actually quite a difficult thing to do).

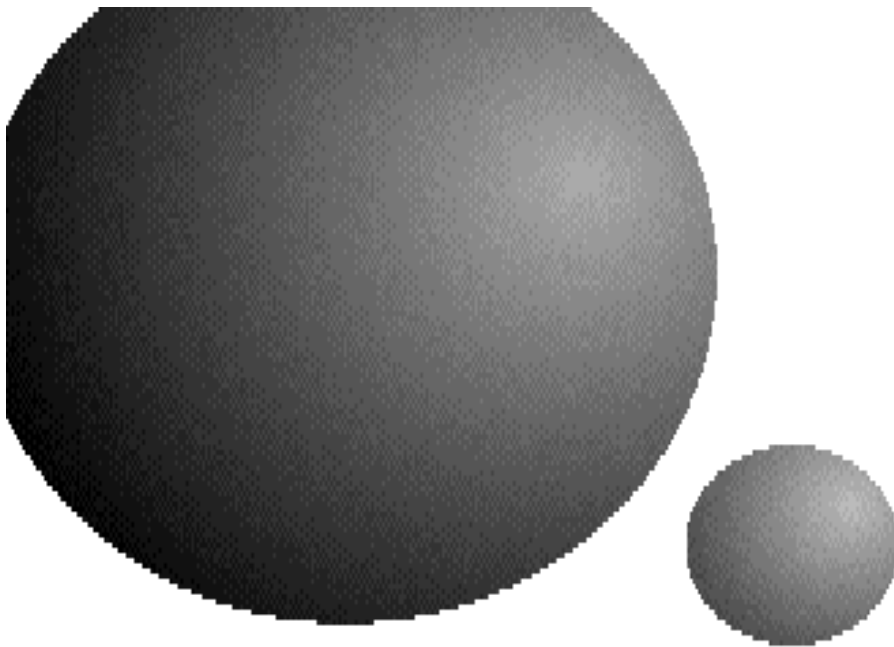
Getting down to proper business, it's best to set about investigating this strange world and start collecting gems, wine and mushrooms amongst other things. Bumping into

anything of significance in the game will either cause you to hear a grunt (the ONLY sound I've heard in the game so far) and for Merlin to loose some energy, or for a description to appear. This may tell you what someone is saying (if you've bumped into a person), or merely describe the object (which you can pick up and examine).

As a pleasant change from most genres of 4th Dimension's titles, Pandora's Box is a chirpy effort comprising of a thinking man's graphic adventure, with a healthy dollop of action just when it's needed. There are lots of puzzles to be solved to complete the game, but they are not mentally strenuous ones. Because of the nature of the game, the initial joy is in wandering around the 100 or so immediately accessible screens, constructing a map and admiring the graphics. I found a map a necessity.

If graphic adventures are your thing, get out the cheque book and order it immediately. This is without doubt another quality 4th Dimension triumph.



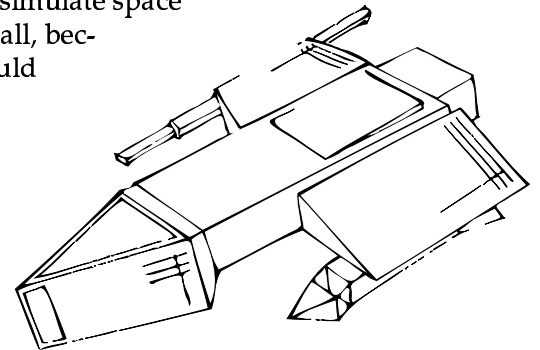


KARMA

Well, dangle my dongle, it's finally here. The initial instalment of Karma (the much hyped game that allegedly picks up where Elite left off) from Periscope Software is no longer a myth. The first part of it (the flight trainer) has finished production and will set potential purchasers back around £26.00. The upgrades to the finished product (it comes in three parts) are promised later in the year, with Flight Trainer owners being able to upgrade at a special price. As you can only buy it direct from Periscope, your copy is personalised and registered.

I installed the game code onto my hard disc, loaded it up and, after a short while, the icon appeared on the icon bar. It has a desktop interface similar to that attached to Elite, but I felt this part of Karma was a little more sluggish.

Five minutes playing the game left me rushing for the manual – it's certainly not a game that you can just load up and play without any help. The manual is big, wastes a lot of paper with a fair few pages having only 1 or 2 lines of text on them (still, this does make for an easier read). After reading it I was left both bemused and astonished. Intertwined with game plot come comprehensive physics, geometry and astronomy tutorials, as this is one of the game's selling points. In Elite it was customary for stars to fly by ten to the dozen, which is (obviously) completely unrealistic. In addition, it was normal to be able to go from full thrust to standstill in a matter of seconds. Again, desirable but unrealistic. Karma's manual points out these shortcomings and carefully explains what would happen if you were actually out there in space. In other words, Karma sets out to simulate space travel in a way that Elite didn't even attempt (hence no in-game sound at all, because you can't hear anything in space (or so I'm told)). What's more, should you be cruising around that great black wilderness, you won't come across hostile aliens every ten seconds, and it would take a lot longer than a few minutes to fly into a new world and proceed to dock at a space station. The fact that this was possible in Elite is because if it was realistic in these aspects, one would spend far too much time doing nothing. Constant action is the key to an addictive and enjoyable game of this genre. Elite has plumped for the action, Karma for the authenticity.



The Karma Flight Trainer doesn't feature any of Elite's equipment upgrade and combat opportunities; two features which kept me hooked to the game for months. Instead, communication between your ship and objects floating in space is possible on a limited scale. A mission is supplied, but to be perfectly frank, I would imagine that most thrill-seeking game players will have got bored a long time before completing (attempting?) the mission.

The Zuphonian Humguatha Mark IV: sadly it will remain one of the many ships that you WON'T encounter and shoot at in the Karma Flight Trainer. Hopefully this will be rectified in the proper game.

The sad downfall of this is that Karma is nothing more than a simulation. What we must ask ourselves is 'do we really care if the 2400 solar systems are modelled down to an accuracy of 0.0035cm?' Considering the solar systems are approximately 45,000,000,000km in radius, I don't think we'll notice if it was a centimetre or two out.

As a space virtual reality simulation, Karma is without doubt the best available on the Arc. When the final game is finished, I can foresee a sizzling blockbuster of a game, assuming all this 'accuracy' in the game is put to good use. The much gossipped 'real time' feature of the final game is particularly exciting. As all objects move in real time, you may save your position with your craft next to, say, a beacon, then load it up a week later and the beacon is not there any more because it has moved in that week! Once the 'offensive' menu on the mothership is in operation, and other nasties introduced into the plot, I guess that it would have more appeal, but for now I suggest all you thrill-seekers stay away from the Karma Flight Trainer.



WHICH SPACE

The continuation of our Trans-Atlantic jaunt into the deepest reaches of space.

O.K, what's going on? How can a docking computer lock onto a Python? Well I don't know, so answers on a postcard! No, seriously. We kick off my bit of Which Space for this issue with an extremely weird happening. Whilst in Colesque (Galaxy 3) at a planet called Riedin I was quietly approaching a Python whilst within Space Station Range. I engage my docking computers and amazingly, the computer starts to track the Python instead of the Space Station. The problem was remedied by disengaging and engaging the Docking Computers again.

Well how has commander **MAVRIK** (that's me) progressed since we met last? I must admit that after obtaining the Elite cheats I lost total interest in the game and didn't play it for over 1 month, but now the urge to blast pirates to oblivion has returned. Elite cheats I here you all cry? Yes it's true. If you're interested, then you can get them from most P.D. houses (I've taken the liberty to remove that shameless plug that you put it for your P.D. library Mavrik – Ed.)

Hints and Tips

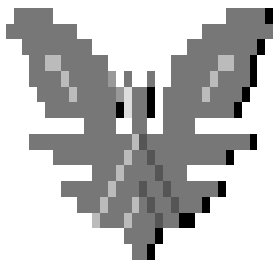
Try not to use docking computers whilst the space station is directly between the planet and you. If you do, you'll plough straight into it! Always destroy asteroids. It helps increase your combat rating and it makes Rock Hermits damn crazy! Watch out for armed transporter craft at Cerexe. Yes, that's right, armed. Now that's what you call a sneaky pirate.

The Experience Zone

Now you all must have seen the screenshots of Elite in magazines such as B.A.U. and A.W. Remember that nice symmetrical arrangement of triangular objects which formed a square? This phenomenon can be experienced at a planet called Bezaed in Lara'tan (Galaxy 4).

Now my Cobra's come under some heavy cross fire in its time but never has it been damaged so badly as to have its motion ushers destroyed. This very thing occurred at Maedra (Lara'tan) where I encountered a massive pack of pirate vessels (some 25 crafts). As I engaged in combat I took out three Sidewinders in rapid succession and turned 180 degrees to see 6 Adders. At this point my craft came under immensely heavy fire. Boosting out of the way after taking a few pot shot at them a message flashed across my screen which disappeared too quickly for me to read. The next thing I know is that my Cobra's motion was not centering itself as it should do when using Mous (Motion Usher). The next thing I know is that my Cobra's motion was not centering itself as it should do when using Mous (Motion Usher). OK, I've just ran out of space, so I'll hand you

Witch Space, the final frontier, these are the voyages of the Shark. I will be giving advice (hopefully good) on any aspects of Elite, not covered by Mavrik, that means that I don't want to know if your dog has just eaten your entire family, and then turned into a pickled gherkin. I do want to know if you have had any strange experiences in Elite, and what they were.



Today's topic kiddies is Witchspace. Hyper-spacing normally from one planet to another, Witchspace is heralded by a message flashing on the bottom of the screen, usually 'HyperSpace failed', although various other messages are also possibilities. The next thing that you notice is that suddenly your shields are going down faster than the Titanic, and there are quite a disturbingly massive number of ships on radar.

The next thing you see will probably be the all too familiar cargo canisters. These nasty alien fiends that hang around in Witchspace are in fact Thargoids (boo! hiss!), and their sole aim in life is to turn you into random particles.

If your rating is lower than Average, don't even think about fighting, your only chance is to hit that Energy Bomb button (what do you mean, you haven't got an Energy Bomb?) If your rating is higher than this as it now should be, you can consider fighting. The first thing to consider is how many of them there are; a quick glance at your radar should give the bad news, more than about 12 ships and forget it, its time for the Energy Bomb. If there are only a few, its time to kick arse, find the mother ships and destroy them, and the remote control drones (Thargons) will stop working. Thargoid mother ships are very fast and have quite good shields; no worries. Assuming that you have zapped the mother ships, it's time to fuel scoop the drones, because Thargoid drones are classified as Alien Items (that's why you can't buy them anywhere!).

One last point: missiles are useless against Thargoids as they invented the ECM system, which the Galactic Navy stole. Why isn't that in the manual?

Okay, so you're sitting in a now very empty WitchSpace, with no one anywhere. If you use your Escape Capsule, you'll be dumped back at the previous planet, so instead HyperSpace again, and you will get to the planet you originally set out for.

Interesting bug:- jump whilst the Hyperspace countdown is going and you will find a random group of normal ships, may even be vipers (ouch!!).

Mark Richardson



Human-Computer Interaction

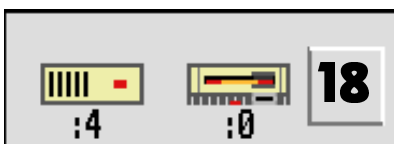
**This
edition's prize
winning article
was written
by Mark
Richardson.**

**For his efforts,
Mark wins the
4th Dimension's
arcade
adventure
'Enter the
Realm'.**

Everyday software is written, whether it is commercial or not, and one important factor is missed out; the person who is going to be using that software. The software should be designed to make the user feel at ease and to allow easy use, not because it is easy to program. After all, if someone is going to be using your software 10 hours a day, they don't want to be sat in front of a purple and green screen.

There have been whole books written on the topic of user interfaces, however, for the purposes of this article, I will concentrate on simple advice, that should help you make your programs easier to use and look better on screen. If you want more (or less) write in to the Club.

I should start by saying that there are many different interface types (the interface being the buffer between the computer and the human user), all of the different types have their advantages and disadvantages and are good for particular user groups. User groups are classified in many different ways, but an example group may be novice or first time users.



Always remember when you classify users into groups that there are many different people from many different cultures out there and all are unique individuals, hence no one interface time is going to be suitable for all users.

The most common interface types are :

**Question + Answer (eg. Cash machines)
Menu
Icons
Form-filling
Command Language
Natural Language
Direct Manipulation**

When choosing an interface type, you must consider the number of functions it can support, how sophisticated it is, how easy or difficult it is to use, and how efficient it is at meeting your objectives.

There are some simple rules which you should abide by whichever interface type you are going to use: Always strive for consistency in screen layout, keys, prompts and messages i.e. Keep screen layout the same if possible, don't change the meaning of a key in different sections of the program, etc.

For every action, you should provide the user with feedback, to let them know what is happening or is about to happen. If the user can see a clear start, middle and end to an action, they will feel contented and satisfied when they have completed the task.

Permit the user to retract an action, i.e. provide an UNDO facility wherever possible, this will allow the user to experiment with and explore the system with more confidence and thus they will become familiar with the system.

Reduce the short-term memory load on the user, this requires simple and consistent displays, and window movements should be kept to a minimum.

These underlying principles should help when designing the system, when you are designing the screen, you should also follow these rules.

- (1) Titles, where applicable, should be centred.
- (2) Highlight an option or choice when appropriate.
- (3) Do not clutter the screen or have too many windows open at once.
- (4) Show only currently available options.

/ continued on page 21 ...

PUBLIC DOMAIN

by Ben Eshmade of the DataStream

Utilities-wise it has been an average month, though I'm not sure what is average. After the arrival of !QRT a few years ago in the P.D. market, a much faster ray tracer, !PVray by David K Ruck, has just arrived. This ray tracer does work as a slow multi-tasking tracer, but uses new techniques which take over your machine while tracing and includes a fast(ish) option. Next, the latest version of a few of the favourite utilities; first the shareware program !Translator (don't forget to pay the £10 registration fee to the deserving author). This easy to use screen transfer utility, which allows screens to be loaded from most computer sources (including PCs and Amigas), is now in version 6.80 and has improved itself greatly from earlier versions. Additionally there's the Tracker play routine used in a lot of commercial programs and demos allowing the playing of Tracker files (a piece of music composed by the arranging of samples in different patterns and different pitches to create music). The latest play routine is version 4.06 and boasts: Play volume, Play speed, Play position, Play Status etc. This latest version is written by Matthew Farrow, following in the footsteps of Hugo Fiennes and later Fabrice Mercier. An alternative to Tracker is the fully fledged 10 disc Coconizer music sequencing package, details in our catalogue!

I previously mentioned four Shareware disc of great music written by Broken Arm Music (Daniel Wilson). These discs have been very popular and music lovers will find something to their taste in this selection of 8 channel, 7 position stereo piece music. Now his collection of Shareware discs has increased and there are almost 30 discs available.

Next in the drive is a hand-crafted shareware flight simulator from Simon Perkin. Created using the Simis 3D Flight Simulator (by the authors of Mig 29 and

Interdictor). This game allows you to fly a well designed computer flight simulation and experience the excitement of one of the most realistic simulation games in a long time.

Utilities are the most popular pieces of shareware and this month I'd like to mention David Holden and his selection of Shareware programs which include: !Addr_Book – a module which allow you to store and call up an address using the command line; very original and useful to most users. !DeskAid – a collection of useful utilities packed into a single compact application. The aim is to include all the odds and ends you need to make the Archimedes desktop easier to use. !PipIn – a RISC OS desktop utility mainly designed for converting files between Pipedream and Interword format, as well as Pipedream into Edit and 1stWord+ format. !Z88 – a desktop accessory which allows you to save your Z88 programs and data to Archimedes discs. It will convert BASIC programs to and from Archimedes format so that you can write programs on on machine and run them on the other. The last offering to date from Mr Holden is his simple assembler for the Archimedes. All his programs have full 20 page or more manuals and you are requested to register the programs after a certain period of use.

O.K. now we depart from the normal and useful onto the totally un-useful and strange (the world of the demo writer). Initially I'd like to mention the much acclaimed DataDemo IV (no bias here from Ben of course - Simon!) ARMageddon have taken on the task of producing the DataDemo V which will feature amazing sound, graphics and coding as we explore the galaxy to find a place known as the DataStream. For all you Hardcore music fans out there, the demo to get must be !Funky, which features an amazing piece of music being danced to (er, I believe it's 'Get Ready For This', by '2 Unlimited' – Andrew), with all the effects you come to expect

SOFTWARE



from Top of the Pops, but being performed by a perfectly shaded sphere man. This is a landmark in Archimedes programming skills.

After a long wait the famous Network XXIII are back after writing there highly successful commercial game !Provocator. Their demo, !23Street, invites you to take a little trip down a graffiti ridden street to some of the best music I've heard on the Archimedes and wonderful sprites bouncing and walking around the screen, you even get to see Jet Set Willy! The Chip Duo have released the FULL release version of their second demo with long scrolltext, added scrolltext and loader. It will now run on the A5000 and A540. It's damn good and with the mixture of high quality music and has more effects than P.D. software on Simon Burrows' list (Hmm!!! – Simon).

Just to round up the new demos is the first demo from OS_call. !3NotInCld (ARM3 not included) is a demo which boasts balls galore in all shapes and forms going into a disappearing landscape, and it is the first demo I know from a commercial software writer. Finally I should give a mention to the P.D. game Tertis, the best version of Tetris available on the Archimedes by SICK, and the Stephen Orme Shareware ClipArt discs for serious DTP users. Don't forget that a growing number of commercial programs have demos in the public domain.

Colour Printing

Images from !Paint, !Draw, Impression, Ovation, Poster etc. printed in full colour at up to 300 dpi resolution on high quality A4 paper.

Image Transfer & Scanning

1. Images transferred from video tape - VHS or Video-8 or from 35mm negatives or slides or from Canon Ion discs
- to 256 colour or grey scale sprites up to 800x600 res.

2. Photos / documents scanned upto A4 and 256 greys

Modes 13, 15, 21, 28, 31 etc. as required

Moderate prices and quick service from an enthusiastic and experienced Arc user

S.A.E for details to	Malcolm Davies
	Marebrook Cottage
	Newborough
Tel/Fax 0283-75345	Burton on Trent DE13 8SP

If you have any services that you would be willing to offer members, please get in touch with us A.S.A.P.



CLUB A3000 P.D. DISC

The DataStream have been working very hard in selecting the best P.D. over the last couple of months to put on a disc available to the Club A3000 members.

When does it come out?

The disc will be available as soon as you read this and will be available every time you receive a magazine.

What the disc consists of:

A selection of the best Public Domain from the Club library. The selection will be from as wide a range of programs as possible from graphics to sound samples, from demos to serious applications. We hope this disc will contains a mixture of programs which will enhance your use of the machine as well as provide entertainment and pleasure. The disc will be compacted to fit around 1.6MB on disc.

What have you to offer?

If you have any comments on what you would like to see on this disc, or if you would like to either release your programs into the public domain or give them exclusively to the members (please state which) please send them to the DataStream.

How to get your copy:

The disc is available by sending a £1 cheque or securely fastened £1 coin in an envelope to the address printed below, asking for the 'Club A3000 P.D. Disc No.1' with your address indicated on your letter, to:



In addition to this, by just enclosing another £1 you can obtain the DataStream's information pack containing a 50 page laser printed catalogue (designed by Andrew, the Club A3000 co-editor) and a disk with the latest up-to-date catalogue and crammed full of additional P.D.

Ben Eshmade (aka DeepThought)

FOR SALE: BBC B Computer, Mouse for BBC B.
Disk Drive and lots of software.
For details Tel: 081-445 2126

Your choice of colours in a display is of vital importance! However, you should always design your display first in black and white and then add colour, because 8% of males and 1% of females are colour blind and will not appreciate an application where they cannot make out important figures.

When you do add colours, remember that the eyes ability to resolve fine details does not rely upon colour, but a difference between foreground and background (contrast or brightness).

Colours in brightness order, starting with the brightest, White, Yellow, Green, Blue, Red.

Very bright colours produce glare, especially in large areas. But green provides good general visibility.

You should never use more than eight colours per application and no more than four per display. More than this is confusing to the user as the colours are likely to be too close in the visual spectrum.

For normal discrimination, select colours that are widely spaced along the visual spectrum, the most normally used being Red, Green and Blue - RGB.

Most people can distinguish only 15-20 colours anyway, although with training up to 200 can be recognized. Avoid opposite ends of the spectrum close to one another.

Don't use pure blue for thin lines and limit the number of shades of blue used.

Avoid Red and Green in the user's periphery (the edges of the screen).

Never have Red and Blue next to each other or on the same screen if possible.

The principles laid out in this article, must be interpreted, refined and adopted for your own interface style, as I said earlier, everyone is unique. At the end of the day, you are trying to develop a system from which the user will derive a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction.

If you are interested, a recommended book is: Designing the User Interface by Ben Schneiderman.

A good interface? well you're constantly using one - RISC OS is one of the best Operating Systems in a long while, well done Acorn.

COMPETITION TIME!

This time we're giving away 15 discs of COMPRESSED P.D. (of your own choice) to the author of the best article to reach me by, erm, let's say the end of June. Some of the articles in this edition missed the last deadline, so they're also being entered into this compo.

UPGRADING TO

RISC OS 3

Now that RISC OS 3 is available to A5000 owners, people have been wondering why Acorn have not released RISC OS 3 upgrades for the rest of the Archimedes range.

RISC OS 3 is an immense collection of code, which has taken nearly three years to develop, and not surprisingly it contains a number of bugs. Acorn needed to release it with their new machine (the A5000), but this was before RISC OS 3 was really ready - as a result A5000s are currently supplied with a version which is basically a beta test version, containing a number of bugs which could not be fixed in time for the release of the machine.

Since the A5000 went on sale, Acorn have been working flat out on fixing the bugs in RISC OS 3 as well as making it work with the older hardware. A piece of software such as an operating system is of vital importance to users of a computer, and so Acorn have got to get it right. This means that it has got to be thoroughly tested and quality assured before Acorn can commit the software into ROM, an expensive and lengthy process - remember, that once it is in ROM and has been distributed, Acorn want RISC OS 3 to last a long time; containing as few bugs as possible.

The release date for RISC OS 3 is not far away now, but is dependent on how long the process of testing and bug-fixing takes. This is why Acorn have not yet announced the actual release date, but I am assured that Acorn will make a statement and release the upgrades just as soon as they can. This will certainly be before the summer holidays, when schools and colleges plan their computer spending budgets for the next academic year. Software companies are busy working to produce software to take advantage of the new operating system, and as soon as the release version of RISC OS 3 is available, I expect to see lots of new software appearing to take advantage of it. Acorn hope that all users will upgrade, as they did from Arthur to RISC OS 2.

So long as they do not overprice it, RISC OS 3 should become the definitive operating system for all Acorn 32 bit machines.

BY SIMON HURRONS



FINAL THOUGHTS

This edition's Final Thoughts is more of a STOP PRESS, as most of what follows is a bit of a jumble of things that arrived on my (rather expensive, mahogany) editor's desk at the last minute before this mag went off to the proof-readers.

As usual I'd like to thank all the people who are putting some effort into the Club. We can't offer anyone a salary or financial reward at the mo. because we too are skint! As far as the magazine goes, it's nice to see new members scribbling in with their ideas, moans and anything else bugging them.

Margaret Swinton: sorry that your excellent article didn't get into this issue. I only got it a couple of days ago and even then space was short. Some day I'll get round to typing it up. On a more general note, members, if you're gonna send in articles, could you possibly supply me with the relevant text file on disc?

MUSIC USERS' GROUP

In association with ElectroMusic Research

Mick Cooper is taking over the Music Users' Group of Club A3000. If you want to be a part of it please write to Mick supplying the following info.: Name, address, home 'phone number, a description of all music software/hardware owned, musical interests and types of music that you're in to.

He's organising a tutorial day at Mill Hill School on 17th May. You'll have full access to the musical expertise of E.M.R.'s Mike Beecher, as he will be giving comprehensive tuition on E.M.R. products, mainly Studio 24+. The cost will be £20 (£10 extra per family member on the same terminal) and lunch and refreshments are included.

For more information phone Mick on 0705-371018 (between 9am-9pm only) or write to him at:

*3 Artillery Close
Paulsgrove
Portsmouth
Hants.
PO6 4HD.*



REWARDING IN AWARDS

We all like, and probably need, recognition and a pat on the back for a job done well, and what better way to publicly recognise an achievement than to give an award? It is on those lines that I put down on paper my proposal:

I have been floating an idea, an idea to encourage a British made product, The ACORN COMPUTER, and those associated with it. Winning an award doesn't have to be the prime object but it can give added inspiration.

The idea is to organise a social evening on the lines of 'AN AWARD EVENING' where individuals and/or organisations associated with using Acorn computers will be recognised for their achievements during the current year. I have spoken to many people in the Acorn Computer world, who have shown a favourable interest; I have even had some people who have indicated their interest is in sponsoring this event.

If the idea does materialise, the event would be held in London, during the Acorn User Show. Anybody having any interest in the proposal should write to Rene Barreto (address given at the beginning of the mag) enclosing an S.A.E. for any reply.

Rene Barreto

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All the material presented in this magazine is © Club A3000, and you are not allowed to reproduce it in any means, shape, form (etc. etc.) without our written permission. If you do, we'll be jolly miffed to say the least, and we may even get Mark to come round and punch your lights out! The views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual authors, and not necessarily of Club A3000.

Gamesupdate

Try as I did, I just could not squeeze any more info into the games pages. I've therefore commandeered this gap to reveal to you firstly a few things 4th Dimension told me.

It looks as if **The Exotic Adventures of Sylvia Lain** will not be coming out, due to 'complications' (that was tactfully put Andrew!). **Nevryon 2** is in hot development and should give **Scorpius** a run for its money (don't hold your breath waiting for its release, it'll be a few months yet).

I'm getting hooked on **X-Fire** and I can safely say that the levels just get crazy. If you haven't got an ARM 3 then the slow-down does get annoying (this is not due to sloppy programming, this only happens on levels where you can't see for explosions!). Just for comparison's sake, I've reached sector 10 (58% of the sector completed) and have a hi-score of 56,724.

I've just been sent 4D's first beat 'em up, **Grievous Bodily 'ARM**. After playing it for a couple of hours and reaching level 3 (I think there's only 5 levels, but I could be wrong), I was left feeling quite amazed that 4D actually released the game in the state that it's in. After playing it for many hours more, I cannot say that my views have changed. All title pages and overall presentation seem tacky (for example, messages such as 'decompacting data from RAM cache' get slapped across the centre of the screen in the standard font). The high score table also uses the standard font and don't spell your name incorrectly as you cannot use the DELETE key. I would have expected slightly better from a graphic artist who has 'previously worked for years in the American arcade and home console markets, writing ultra-playable games that have sold around 1 million copies worldwide'. Sadly, this is not one of their ultra-playable games, and your bloke can only punch and kick!

(That's right, 2 fighting moves only). In fact, fighting in **G.B.A.** has the same feel as blasting nasties in **Enter the Realm**. At least in **E.T.R.** the graphics were top notch. The **Arc** is crying out for a decent beat 'em up. I can't report that **Grievous Bodily 'ARM** fills this slot.

Are you mad about Lemmings?

The music accompanying the hit game **Lemmings** is superb, and it is quite easy to access the **Lemmings** tunes from the desktop environment, so that you can have them playing whilst you do anything you want. Firstly load the module with the **Lemmings** directory called 'Musmod2', and then type

```
*MUSLOAD 0.$!.Lemmings.  
Lemmings. LemLevels.LemMus0'
```

(all in one line, with no spaces). Having done this, '*MUSON' will start the music playing! The tunes are all joined in the one **LemMus0** file, so to access all of the tunes, type '*MUSSONGPOS n' where n is the number giving the position of the tune. Their positions are as follows:

```
0,5,9,12,17,20,26,30,35,41  
45,48,54,57,61,62,67,70,74,77
```

There is another music file called **LemMus1**, and the positions for this are:

```
0,12,17,21,25
```

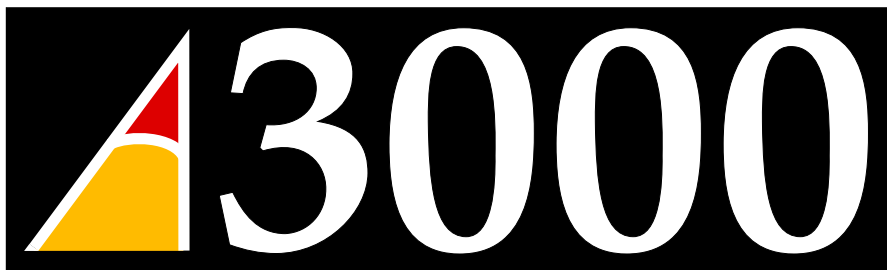
Incidentally, the same technique applies to the other **Krysalis** blockbuster, **Mad Professor Mariati**, with modules **MPTITLMUS**, and **ARCPROFMUS**, where the positions are 0,5,6,12,14,21,27,28,35,36.

Thanks to **Fil Colmer** and **Uli Reutter** of **Acorn** for this information, which they published on **Usenet**.

Andrew Thacker & Simon Burrows



club



The independent user group for all Acorn RISC machine users

I wish to enrol as a member of Club A3000: The Archimedes owners' Club

Name..... First Name(s)

Address.....

.....

..... Post Code..... Telephone Number

For the following questions, please tick as many of the boxes as are appropriate.

Which model Arc do you own? A3000 ☐ A5000 ☐ A310 ☐ A400 ☐

(For the above, please also indicate in the box how much memory your Arc has).

What are your Archimedes interests? Please tick as many as you like

Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Games	<input type="checkbox"/>	Midi	<input type="checkbox"/>
DTP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graphics	<input type="checkbox"/>	WP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Databases	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Archimedes programs with which I am most familiar are:

.....

Extra hardware that I own and use are

Please tick the following as appropriate —

I would be prepared to offer some of my hardware for the purposes of Club members. Please indicate the service you would be prepared to offer (e.g. laser printing at 50p per copy if they include SAE)

.....

I would like to be a contact for my area
(and help organise Club events in my
area and get in contact with members),

☐

I DO NOT want to be added
to the Club A3000 members'
list leaflet (see editorial).

☐

I enclose herewith a donation (minimum of £10) towards the Club. I understand that the Club does not make money in any way, and the donation is used to pay for administrative costs (such as postage, correspondence etc.). You may send a photocopy of this form if you wish to preserve the magazine.

Please sign here:

Please send the form to our Club A3000 membership secretary :
Mark Watts, at 84C Boston Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 3EE.

.....