8BIT

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EDITOR'S COLUMN - ISSUE 7

Well, it *has* been a funny old month: Britain swelters just as if it's summer and 8BIT is rather late going out for the first time in seven issues.

The real problem is one of overwork in all departments of the editor's life, but this last month has found me doing a lot of the background work on the relaunch of the **Independent Eight Bit Association** (see pages 2 and 3 for details) as well as more radio work.

Little did I know when 8BIT went to press last time and I announced in the accompanying letter that **Amstrad Action** would be gone by the time *this* issue of 8BIT went out that it already had, as had **Locoscript User**, formerly **PCW User**. I must thank FW Manders for the bad news; I had assumed LU was late again, or that I just hadn't been to the right newsagents yet.

Perhaps some 8BIT readers couldn't care less about one magazine more or less, but with each additional one gone more supporters and suppliers lose touch with potential customers, and vice versa. This is bad news for us all.

At last, the 8BIT survey form is enclosed with this issue. Answering all, or any, of the questions is, of course, optional. But the more you tell me, the more I can respond to provide what you want. Wherever it was possible I have provided suggested answers which can be ticked, or deleted if they do not apply. Please add any additional information if you wish. The sooner the forms are back, the sooner I can publish the analysis in a future issue of 8BIT.

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THE INDEPENDENT EIGHT BIT ASSOCIATION, or IEBA

Probably the biggest news in the 8-bit world this month must be the announcement of the re-launch of The **Independent Eight-Bit Association**, or **IEBA**. I cannot say you are reading it here first as **PCW Plus** have already covered the news and the other priority mailshots have gone (or are are going) out this week or the next, but perhaps I can supply more details here to **8BIT** readers.

By way of providing some background, the original IEBA was largely a Spectrum and Sam enthusiasts' group which had run successfully for several years. It published a newsletter periodically and had built up a network of users and suppliers, some of whom offered discounts to IEBA members.

When I was starting up 8BIT about a year ago, I had communications with the then organisers about possibly broadening its appeal and scope to serve the users of, and suppliers to, *all* the 8-bit computers. While expressing interest in general, that idea did not develop further at that time. I had no thought then of finding time to be more directly involved myself. When I learned recently that due to pressure from other commitments the **Association** would be changing hands I contacted the original organisers and others to see whether this was a good opportunity to make something more of it. **8BIT** magazine has been very successful by its attempt to be as *in*clusive and non-partial as possible and build bridges between the supporters of the various 8-bit computers, recognising their particular strengths and values. With the closing of the last few newstand magazines, the need is even greater than a year ago to pool our knowledge and preserve contacts between suppliers/supporters and users.

The outcome of the consultation period of the last few months is that David Ledbury, who had 'inherited' the old **IEBA**, Leon Bebbington and I have agreed to turn it into exactly what its name says it is: an Association which is not attached to any particular user group or business, but serving the interests of 8-bit computing.

To clarify that statement; the various magazines and/or businesses of the three individuals involved at the outset are not connected in any financial sense with the IEBA and none of the three's magazines are the IEBA's 'house journal.' The **Association** will publicise itself and its activities widely through *all* the computer and other media and it is hoped that other editors and user groups will see its aims as complementary to their own and become involved to a greater or lesser extent as their time and resources allow.

As a further example of the **Association**'s independence and intention to adopt good practice, cheques for the IEBA are payable to the IEBA and the **Association**'s accounts will be published to the membership periodically. No salaries will be paid, and it is suggested that only expenses claims which are deemed reasonable *in advance* by the committee will be allowed. For now, all IEBA costs, including postage charges etc are being covered by my personal registration fee which was paid in stamps. I have also donated some paper and envelopes to assist setting the IEBA up.

As the **Association**'s first major project, we are already compiling a comprehensive directory of 8-bit information, including stockists (whether shops or mail-order), software houses, repairers, magazines (paper, disc/disk and tape), PD libraries, user groups, Usenet newsgroups of interest to 8-bit owners, an E-mail directory of/for 8-bit users, helpline assistance, etc, etc. All offers of help and contributions for this project will be warmly welcomed, especially as is expected to take some time to get to a suitable level of completeness for publication! The handbook will be free to members and published on paper to ensure maximum compatibility among users of different computers. All entries in the list will be free, so we hope to give some coverage to quite small companies who do not usually have an advertising budget. Updated and supplementary information will be published in due course which will be distributed to members. In time, major revisions will require complete reissues.

contd.....

Part of the inspiration for this compendium of all thing 8-bit has come from Andy (Alchemist Research) Davis' project covering Spectrum and SAM computers, which was widely publicised in the last issue of **8BIT**, and information gathered by the **IEBA** will be freely offered to Andy to assist his work of creating a tape and disc text file version. As a more closely focussed work in the text file form, Andy's directory will have particular value to Spectrum and SAM users.

It is also intended that as a nationwide group with international members and contacts, the **IEBA** will also function as a responsible publicity generator and 'gentle pressure' group for 8-bit interests, perhaps pointing out that 8-bit computers' technology might be described as WIN (What I Need), rather than WINDOWS (What I Need Demands Overstretched Wallet, Seemingly), - the good value our computers represent is one of their most easily conveyable features to current non-users. I already have good connections with *some* newspaper and local radio stations from my other work, but anticipate the group building contacts in other areas in time.

In the longer term the **Association** will seek to obtain the rights to good software with a view to its reissue and/or conversion for other machines. As an example, in the last issue of **8BIT** there was coverage of a superb journey planning program called RoutePlanner. This is currently only available for the Amstrad CPCs but, from what comments have come to me about the piece, it would also be a great asset to other 8-bit users who travel a good deal. I must stress I have not spoken to the author (Richard Fairhurst) about it, but perhaps this is the kind of conversion work where the **IEBA** might have a role? Similarly, there are the possibilities of converting some of the better old games to run (possibility in an enhanced form) on computers for which they were not originally designed and adding additional levels as add-on programs if copyright matters can be resolved. Similarly, some while back I was contacted by an author of some CP/M programs with a view to getting them converted to run on machines other than the PCW. At that time I was not able to help; perhaps this might now be possible.

I hope I do not give the impression that this is a closed society with fixed ideas. Within the context of a proper and workable structure, albeit separated by many miles, the committee of the **IEBA** must react to its membership's wishes and develop over time. At present the three prime movers are operating as an 'ad hoc' committee until proper elections can be held. If you would be interested in joining the committee of the **IEBA** please contact me at the address on the front of **8BIT**. We need (at least) a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, a Publicity Officer and a number of representative users of the various 8-bit computers. Please note that for Chairman or Vice-Chairman, the words Chairwoman or Chairperson also apply as it is not be an all-male preserve. *All* the officers' positions of the **IEBA** are open to any and all applicants, regardless of etc, etc.....

There is a draught constitution available for discussion, but this and the rules of the **IEBA** will need to be firmed up once the committee is in place.

One radical aspect of the **IEBA** is that there is no renewable membership fee or subscription, apart from a once-only nominal registration fee of £5 (or equivalent from overseas members) to provide a foundation of working capital for the group. It is expected in the longer run that further income will be generated through other **Association** activities to be determined by the committee. Some of these are touched upon above. It is not intended that the **Association** will compete with other suppliers or supporters of 8-bit computing by seeking to provide competing products or services or negotiate on-going discount arrangements. Trade is tough enough at present without trying to trim margins. Let's just be glad we can still *get* the supplies!

You will find there is a section for joining the **IEBA** as a member in this issue's readership questionnaire. Also further information on the **IEBA** is available on request from 01353 777006 between 7 and 10 any evening, or all day at weekends.

Brian Watson (Acting Joint Chairman **IEBA**)

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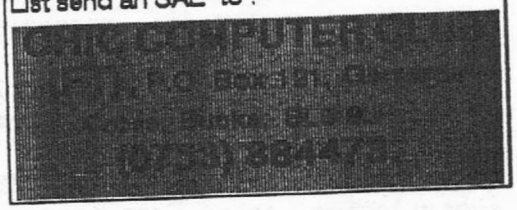

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THE SPECTRUM & SAM PAGE

Rather a 'bits and pieces' look to this, the first dedicated SAM and Spectrum page in **8BIT**. However, that's the way the news comes in...

Firstly I must mention **Crashed**, which I had not seen before issue 6/7 crashed (sorry) through my letterbox. He's got what I've got this time, 'late-itis', hence the odd numbering. It's brash, breezy, and fairly brilliant. Using PCs and Apple Macs may be regarded as cheating by purists but it does make for clarity in the text and pictures included. I've said before that if a magazine can hold my attention when I don't know much about its main subject matter it is doing well, and **Crashed** did/does. There's news, coverage of the Gloucester gathering, in-depth interviews, reviews, nostalgia corner, technical page, a 'resources' page and ooh, loads of stuff. I took it to read on the train and hardly looked out of the window at all. **Crashed** has 20 pages of good stuff, is 75p and usually monthly, but you can get your first issue free for 2 1st class stamps from editor Mark Sturdy, *Pear Tree Cottage*, North Deighton, Wetherby, West Yorks LS22 4EN. Full subscription details will be included in the next **8BIT** magazines supplement.

Next we turn to **Format**. This stalwart of Spectrum and SAM computing has a counterpart in **WACCI** for the Amstrad CPCs, though neither might thank me for saying so... Both are serious, ie very informative and technically invaluable to users of the respective computers, but not a lot of laughs apart from each's cover picture, which range from good to excellent. Also both are well produced: in the case of **Format** it appears to be professionally printed. Bob Brenchley is editor and general 'main man', indeed he appears to be virtually a one-man SAM and Spectrum powerhouse; as well as editing **Format**, he is involved in the marketing and support of SAMs with West Coast Computers and organises the Gloucester get-togethers in his spare time. Mind you, he looks well on it. I just hope he's got 'key man' insurance in case he ever gets a cold! In case you don't know, **Format** is monthly and can be got from Mr R Brenchley, 34, Bourton Road, GLOUCESTER, GL4 0LE. It costs £1.50 per monthly issue.

The latest newsletter from Softsell, only available to customers, wafts through my door. Compared to the previous two magazines it's a lighter read (it's doing a different job) in more ways than one and always makes me want to brew up a cuppa and settle down in a favourite chair to read it. Actually, that's darned inconvenient some mornings just as I'm supposed to be going to work. However... Joyce's music studies (Bach to Bon Jovi) still allow time for her to run her shop in Trowbridge, do the mail order and keep on top of the world's computer news. In the latest issue she has come across a hire service, similar to Softsell's, but for users of C64 software: Mrs C Statham, 3 Briarbank Avenue, Porchester Lodge Estate, NOTTINGHAM NG3 6JU. Apparently a large SAE will produce a catalogue - sounds good to me. The newsletter carries an enormous list of suppliers, magazines etc as usual. See their advertisement opposite for Softsell's address.

Andy Davis of Alchemist Research reports Bill Richardson is poorly at the time of writing so best wishes to him. He was very helpful to me in **8BIT**'s early days, but we have lost touch since then. Andy has heard from an Albert Harper that I was about to start a full-time job and won't be continuing to edit **8BIT**. Well, I already have a full time-job (and several part-time ones!) and though this issue's late I'm not giving up **8BIT** as long as the demand remains. His latest letter, dated 22nd June, confirms the manuals project as mentioned in the last issue of **8BIT** is going well; Johan Koning of the SGG Spectrum and SAM group has volunteered to compile all the information. I am very pleased to hear it's going well; I hope this will be a chance, as Andy said last time, that individual users and groups will be able to work together on the project, and a worthwhile precedent other computers' users might wish to consider taking on for their own machines.

Sorry, Darren Randle's review of Crazy Cars 3 will have to wait until next time.

THE LAWYERS' PCW CLUB... Locoscript for Automated Letter Writing...

Club Enquiries to: Keith Simons, 10 Orrishmere Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire. SK8 5HP.

Smith & Smith
Solicitors
122 North Street, Stockmouth,
Northshire. ZZ31 3ZZ
Telephone: 01111-000000

25th June, 1995.

My ref: SS
Your ref: HJ

Messrs. Jones & Co.,
Solicitors,
152, New Brighton Road,
South Millward, Southshire.
ZZ32 2ZZ

Dear Sirs,

Subject to Contract - Cooper from Bonson
123 South Street, Stockmouth.

I enclose Property Information Form duly completed, together with draft Contract in duplicate for approval. Further protocol documentation will follow shortly.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully

fig 1.

```
Drive A
group0 (Letters)
DOCUMENT.002        1K
DOCUMENT.003        3K
TEMPLATE.STD        1K

group1 (Addresses)
BRUS                1K
COOS                1K
HALIFAX .HQ         1K
KINP                1K
SMIS                1K
SMIP                1K
TEMPLATE.STD        1K
WILP                1K
```

fig 2.

On the left (fig 1.) is printed a fairly standard letter. It was one letter of some 12 written to Messrs. Jones & Co. in this (imaginary but typical) case.

This means that the part of the letter alongside which appears a double line was typed in twelve times.

A PCW using Locoscript can save all this retyping - other wordprocessor programs have similar functions, so see your manual. (You may also need a Data Protection registration.)

Create a file, on group 1 of a disc. Give the file an appropriate name. E.g.:

COOS - Client is Cooper (coo), Solicitor on other side of sale (s)
KINP - King (kin), Solicitor on other side of purchase (p)

Type into these files the name, address, references and headings (the part of the letter with the double line alongside in fig. 1).
Now create your letter on the same disc, but in a different group.
When the time comes to type in the address, press [f7] in Locoscript 1, [f1] in Locoscript 2. Use the down arrow key to move over "Insert Text", then press [enter].
The screen now displays a list of filenames. Move over the filename you wish to insert, press [enter][enter].
When your disc has been used a little its contents will look like figure 2. The files called DOCUMENT.xxx are your letters. Periodically erase these to save space on the disc.
As you get more proficient, you could store standard letters too. Use group 2 to store the text of paragraphs. And use Drive M when creating short letters which need not be stored.

AROUND THE PCW CLUBS

I have been unable to contact **PCW-Software Link**. There has been no response to my notes and the phone number is ex-directory. Does anyone have further news, or should I assume it is no more? You know how these rumours can spread....

South Essex PCW Club. Recent meetings have covered CP/M talks from Mike Elliston from beginner to advanced use, and on 3rd August there was a Brain's Trust, with the experts being bombarded with difficult questions. Apparently the *members* enjoy these sessions, though having been on the receiving end at a similar event I can vouch for the fact that it can be a bit tough for the 'experts.' Mike Elliston is a busy fella - he writes that he has just finished a disk of Microdesign 3 fonts for Creative Technology and is already working on another. Contact for the group is Secretary Jim French on 01268 415255.

Cornwall PCW Club. The group's May newsletter brings the story of computing up to date. The club run a monthly meetings schedule and here's one for *your* diary - to celebrate their second birthday the group are holding an open day on Saturday 14th October 1995 at King's Acre (the home of **Luxsoft** business software and hardware), Luxulyan, BODMIN, Cornwall from 2-5pm. This is open to all interested in PCW and other Amstrad computers, and I'm sure they wouldn't mind if other 8-bitters turned up too. The program arranged includes club-price sale prices, demonstrations, technical help and advice. Other upcoming meetings will cover Basic (9th Sept), Rocket Spreadsheet (11th Nov), the Christmas party (9th Dec - start early, I say) and the AGM on 13th Jan. Contact for the group is Secretary Kate Hadley on 01208 872720.

Scotwest.pcw Club. Hey guys! I've found where you keep the number for your excellent newsletter but could you put the date on it somewhere too, please? I've commented on the quality of the group's newsletter before and last time it has a feature on formatting slightly dodgy discs to include a 'lock out' patch over bad sectors as mentioned in last issue's **8BIT**. **Scotwest.pcw** meets in the Hillend district of Glasgow and would welcome some more visitors who may be able to attend their meetings. Contact is David Williams, 32/34, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, MOTHERWELL, Scotland. ML1 4JL Tel: 01698 732403.

"TRADE" ITEMS-FOR-SALE ADVERTISING FEATURE by the SCOTWEST PCW CLUB

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The latest additions are Megablasters (94% in AA), which comes on two discs, and the newly updated Routeplanner.

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All of the above are original disks, boxed and with manuals or instructions where applicable.

In addition there is a 3 row lockable disc box containing dozens and dozens of 3" and 3.5" discs which contain hundreds of commercial and PD programs. I don't have the time to go through them but there is something for every taste. I also have a Genius Mouse and interface (£5) which is suitable only for normal CPC machines.

The price for the whole lot is £250 o.n.o.

Please telephone Andy Gibbons on 01733 334246 (Peterborough) between 2 pm and 6 pm during the week and anytime weekends.

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BONZO NEWSLETTERS - THE HISTORY

The three newsletters relating to the Bonzo suite of programs: Bonzo Super Meddler, HackPack and Bonzo Blitz, started publication in 1986, edited by the author of the programs, Colin Harris, of the company Nemesis. The names of the suite of programs were originally called after the cats, Bonzo and Blitz, which supposedly sat with Colin as he was writing the programs.

The first of these newsletters, called Bonzo's Bulletin, were bi-monthly, and consisted, on average, of 8 single-sided A4 photocopied leaves. The bulletins contained news of tape to disc transfers using the existing automatic transfer programs. There were also included, as the bulletins were published, various additional programs for dealing with the different protection codes that were duly implemented by the software houses to prevent buyers of the tape versions of their software transferring the software to disc.

(The reason was always stated as being to stop software piracy, although it transpired that anybody who had a tape to tape player could do a copy of the tape if they so desired without much trouble; the only thing that the protection systems were in effect doing was to prevent anyone with the tape version being able to transfer the software onto the much quicker loading disc, instead of paying for the disc version which was probably between one and a half and twice the price of the tape version.)

The Bonzo Bulletins also contained various printed solutions to transferring tape software to disc, that were sent in by various members of the 'club' that sprang up around the bulletins. These were mainly for one off solutions, but some became the basis for new options that were being added to the transfer suite of programs as the months went by.

The final issue of Bonzo Bulletin was number 37, in October 1990, as Colin had by then decided to emigrate to Canada. There was a very last newsletter dated June 1991, which offered the latest updates to the disc programs, and a few odd programs that had been amassed of the previous few years. The copyright of the Bonzo programs was passed on to Phil Craven of Microstyle, as Colin said he wanted the programs to be left in the hands of someone who would further the cause of the CPC, and carry on the tradition of the sentiment behind the help offered by Nemesis. Little did we know at the time!!! The programs are now lost to newcomers to the CPC scene, and if anybody needs them the only thing to do is scout through the small ads in the various newsletters and fanzines currently available.

The newsletter mantle was passed to Carl Surry, and was part of his fanzine Play Mates, which ran for 12 issues. This 'zine contained games reviews, news and tips, along with cheats that could be implemented in various games. The Bonzo section was known as Bonzo's Litter Tray, and again information was forthcoming of odd type-in programs for tape transfers. There also became a regular set of transfer type-ins for the Amstrad Action cover tapes that had the dreaded Menu system with the various software just having a number to run the file. This was pretty wasteful of disc space, and the subsequent loader programs enabled a much better utilization of the disc which were beginning to creep up in price.

This article will be concluded in the next issue of 8BIT.

WoW SOFTWARE
ADVENTURES FOR THE 464 & 6128

NEW ADVENTURES	AUTHOR	CASSETTE	DISC
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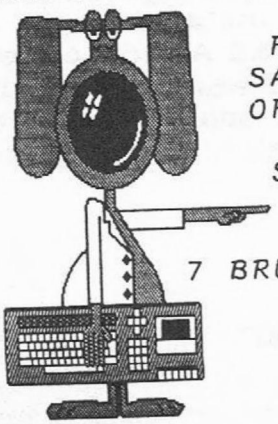

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All quotes from 8Bit.

I'VE GOT A ?, NOW WHAT CAN I DO WITH IT? NUMBER 2 - Commodore C64

This is the third and last part of the second in the series on each of the 8-bit machines in turn, and is intended to be the kind of introduction to an unfamiliar computer that might be useful to someone who has just bought, or is considering buying, one second-hand and wants a brief summary of its best applications. I hope it may also encourage interest in a type of computer you do not currently have.

Hello folks! It's me again; LS Bebbington. This is what to look for when buying a C64 and how to find a 'best buy'. Second-hand C64s can cost up to £200, can you believe? this will normally include a C64 or C64C, some sort of hardware cart such as Action Replay, 1541 (or similar) disk drive, several joysticks, maybe a mouse or tracker ball, a Commodore MPS, or other Commodore-compatible, printer and a Commodore monitor with, of course, a tape deck, all leads, and lots of software. So for your £200 you're actually getting a decent setup and you don't have to worry about a lack of new releases for your tape deck as you have a disc drive.

Normally though, when you go down to a boot sale, the most you're likely to see is a stone-age tape deck with all leads, some tape software, and a C64 or C64C. For a setup like that, taking into consideration that tape decks are being phased out, if you want to stick with the C64 you will need at least a 1541 disk drive so, (unless you see one second-hand) you will have to spend £79.99 for a new one. For a setup as basic as that, don't pay any more than £20. If you see a C64 (or C64C) with leads, software, and disk drive, as well as all the usuals - tape deck, software, joysticks etc I'd think twice about paying more than about £75. Make sure the disk drive is a 1541 or compatible (5¼")

If there is a Commodore MPS printer chucked in with it, this could bring the value up to £100. Make sure everything's in good condition, though; the MPS printers are not the best in the world. If the deal includes the scarce 1520 printer/plotter, consider paying only up to £85. Why? Well, this device uses special printer pens and paper which were discontinued in 1992. If the package includes a Star LC100 printer with leads, let me point out that the printer alone costs £200. Any price below this is a barg!

Well that's it. I think I've covered everything briefly. One thing to remember when buying any C64 or C64C setup - you will normally get a good amount of software. I consider though that my software collection is somewhat limited, and I have roughly 115 games and 16 compilations (each containing at least 3 games).

ELECTRIC BOYS ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE - the latest

At the beginning of April, I received a note from one of **8BIT**'s regular C64 correspondents indicating that Electric Boys Entertainment Software were proposing going out of games software. Before going to press with this, I wrote to Russ Michaels of EBES for clarification of his company's position. Here is his reply, followed by my response to the points he raises.

"Thank you for your letter regarding information supplied about EBES from one of your readers, I can confirm the facts to be legitimate despite the wording leaving much to be desired so I will hereby give the facts firsthand.

"Due to the lack of new software being released for the C64 in the UK, EBES undertook the task to remedy this problem by 1> Importing games from abroad 2> signing up development teams from abroad to work for EBES. We have now released 4 games, 'Heavenbound' which we licensed UK and USA distribution rights for from the Australian producers at the time of release, 'Lions of the Universe' & 'Saliva Kid'

contd.....

which are imported re-releases from Germany and 'Chicken' which is a new and previously unreleased game from an ex-Codemasters programmer. These games have been available for many months now and have all been reviewed in **Commodore Format** and since their release only 'Heavenbound' has only sold more than 20 copies, which is totally pathetic and shows there is obviously no market for games in this country thus all future planned releases such as Captain America, Flashback, Defensive have now been shelved along with the the many other imports that were also planned for release.

"The only possibility for a reprieve of this decision is if the USA market deems more profitable as 'Heavenbound' and 'Lions' are due for release in a few weeks over there, if these do well then the aforementioned games will be completed for the American NTSC system, other than this all future releases will be geared towards productivity software such as GEOS as this is where there is still a strong userbase with guaranteed sales, all products and software we will only be advertising through our new magazine **Commodore World** so only UK readers of this will have knowledge or access to new releases, unless of course other UK magazines/fanzines make the effort to keep up to date, which obviously **Commodore Format** do not as they have been stating for so long that C64 users are screaming for new games, which as we have seen is not the case.

"With regards to your mention of sending complimentary copies of your **8BIT** magazine, I thank you for this but as **8BIT** seems mainly geared towards the Amstrad and has hardly any C64/128 coverage, I would expect you do not have many readers who own a C64/128 so it would be a pointless exercise to advertise our products."

Regards, Russ Michaels

Dear Russ,

"Thanks for your letter setting the record straight on the Electric Boys games software situation. I will include *your* version in the next **8BIT**. My experience parallels yours; the majority of 8-bit users with disposable income are spending it on serious software and peripherals rather than new games. I am pleased to see that **Commodore Format** is, at last, moving towards more coverage of serious software and hardware, as your own pieces on hard drives and Geopublish in the April issue and their appeal for a comms 'virgin' to assist in coverage for E-mail/Internet newcomers confirms.

"By my records, a little over 15% of my readership (currently a little over 500 and steadily rising) came **directly** from Commodore-related canvassing (C64 magazines, specialist suppliers etc), and there are many (most) who do not declare their allegiances when they subscribe. I am aware that supporters of, and producers for, the various machines are not all equally contributing in the various ways possible and probably never will, and this influences the published content of **8BIT**. For the record, issue 5 saw the second part of a three issue series by Leon Bebbington on the C64 series written specifically for potential buyers/new users and I held over several Amstrad (CPC and PCW) biased articles. I used all that was submitted that was specifically SAM/Spectrum-related. However, I am not running a dedicated C64 magazine any more than I am running a dedicated Amstrad, Spectrum, MSX or SAM magazine. I do not wish to undermine what machine-specific magazines do, rather what I cover aims to complements it.

"As I declare in all my solicitations for **8BIT**, what I am seeking to cover *primarily* is items of interest to *all* 8-bit users (such as Style and Design in Home Publishing, Availability of Software and Hardware, Location of Reasonably-priced Repair Centres, E-mail and Internet facilities, file interchange between 8-bits) as

contd.Page 15...

OBITUARIES PAGE

The deaths are announced of two stalwarts of the 8-bit computing world.

After a long illness, **Amstrad Action** passed away during the week commencing 29th May 1995. Due to the bank holiday that week it is feared nobody may have noticed for some time.

Amstrad Action, or AA as it became known to its 3 remaining subscribers, had been in ill-health for some time and was not expected to live beyond August, but the sudden death in June came as a great shock to its many friends and family (P Dwerryhouse and J Packham).

For almost 10 years, AA lived a life full of fun and was known and respected throughout the world as an authority on Amstrad CPC computers. Early success led to the growth of the Future Publishing empire, which is in good health and expected to survive AA by many years. Indeed, when asked how she would manage after the loss of the patient who had been in her close care for several months, former editor Karen Levell is reported to have said, "Don't worry about me, matey, I'm off to **Amiga Format**."

Friends had noticed AA's loss of weight during the last 2 years, and even though the magazine had been on a crash course involving re-introduction of the controversial 'subscription' measures, and a strict diet of 'freelancers',this was not sufficient to halt its decline.

Nurse Angela Cook, one of the people brought in to supply help and nourishment to the patient in the twilight of its years, said she was very sorry the patient could not be saved despite a recent infusion of new blood which had appeared to transform AA into a leaner, fitter, competitor in the competitive world of computer magazines. The new blood *had* had a beneficial effect on its circulation and in the final issue this was reported as 15,168. Unfortunately these figures were the total sales for the period Jan-December 1994. Since then all but 3 had left in a mass movement towards political correctness, or 'PC' as it is known.

Amstrad Action is survived by many magazines produced by supporters of the Amstrad CPC. No flowers by request, although transfers of AA subscriptions to any other Future Publishing titles (and in particular **PCW Plus**) would be appreciated by Future Publishing.

May also saw the sudden death of **Locoscript User**. Despite more changes of name than Lord Stansgate, later Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, Anthony Benn, Tony Benn, and lastly Mr Benn, **Locoscript User** had been believed in good health and its loss has come as a great shock to friends and supporters.

In a bizarre attempt to extend its natural life, the former **Amstrad PCW** (incorporating **Computing with the Amstrad PCW**), which had become **PCW User**, changed its name in February '95 to **Locoscript User**, after the complex word processor program for the PCW and PC computers. Apparently, the names **Super Labeller User**, **Microdesign 3 (and 2) User**, and **Very Small-but-Powerful Home Accounts for the PCW User** were all considered but not eventually adopted.

It is believed by some that rash experiments with the name may have brought on **Locoscript User**'s sudden demise. A Mr Montgomery Scott commented, "You canna' change the laws of physics, Captain". However, what relevance *this* may have is hard to determine now.

The magazine had lived with a succession of foster parents through its long life, and was eventually adopted by a certain 'Nexus Media' and moved to leafy Azalea Drive, Swanley, where the death occurred.

Our reporter tried to obtain a comment on the loss of its competitor from a representative of **PCW Plus**, but regrettably was unable to make his knock on the door be heard over the sounds of the party going on inside.

Due to the suddenness of the death, a brief inquest is being held amongst its former readers although foul play is not suspected.

A day of mourning was declared for both publications last Thursday. The day of the thanksgiving service was last Friday and I apologise if this issue arrives too late for readers to attend.

ELECTRIC BOYS ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE - the latest - Continued from Page 13

I believe the various machines each have their own features and advantages. At the prices they change hands for these days it can make sense to invest in a different 8-bit computer for a specific purpose, rather than put £1,500 into a 'Jack-of-all-trades' machine, which my son has just done - silly boy, but he says he needs it for his college course.

"Also, it may be an old idea, but I will be including a questionnaire shortly to get information on ways by which the readers feel I could improve 8BIT. This will include a space to record which computer(s) they own and use and will not presume there is only one computer in use in a home.

"Good luck with **COMMODORE WORLD**. I will include it in my round-up of 8-bit magazines in issue 6. Please keep me on your mailing list if you think **8BIT** can be of service. If you send me news of your company's activities I will publish it as prominently as space allows, regardless of whether you are placing advertising with me or not."

Best Wishes, Brian Watson

To conclude, I believe the same points raised by Russ could be said for all the 8-bit computers' software producers. The sales are shifting towards 'serious' applications and the market for new games is dwindling. This issue is *not* closed; I welcome readers' comments.

* * * *

Oops! Two late entries for the C64/128 section: (1) Philip Boyce of Parallel Logic is publishing a new bi-monthly disk magazine called **Commodore Diskette**. Further details from Philip on 01960 378954. Once again he needs contributions; if only I had the time... (2) is **Computer Scene**, a new A4 magazine from RPA Bowen, 35, Nottingham Road, Nuthall, NOTTINGHAM NG16 1DN. A sample copy can be obtained for 75p + an A4 SAE. Full review new time and both have been added to the**8BIT** magazine section.

64 magazine is now available in mainland Europe from Ivor Brands, Middelzand 5421, 1788 He Den Helder, Holland. Leon Bebbington is also looking for more overseas distributors. See his entry in the small advertisements COMMODORE section.

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THE BACK PAGE

Just a few things before I fall off the back cover:

1) To all editors (especially new ones): please do not ask/expect me to write for your magazines. **8BIT** is a labour of love, but other than that I have to spend my time earning a living. Sorry. I cannot remember who it was from, but I got an advertising note last week including what looked like an indication that I *would* be writing for a new magazine. This is not true and I would be obliged if whoever is taking my name in vain would stop it. I *will* be writing for the new 8-bit section in **PC Mart**, but that's it for now.

2) Thank you very much for all your letters, I really do appreciate your comments. Unfortunately, the sheer volume of them now means it is usually not possible now to provide individual replies (good grief, I sound like a right 'celeb'!). If you need technical or other help may I suggest a small advert; it's free as part of your subscription and I hear that the response rate is good.

(Still) COMING SOON TO 8BIT

The continuation of the Home Publishing series (squeezed out due to lack of space this time), the hidden correspondence and messages which may lurk in *your* printer, genealogical information recording on the cheap (including family trees back to great^6 grandparents, 'Magic Eye' 3-D pictures created on an 8-bit, current 8-bit computing around the world (wanna buy a C64, tovarich?), using your inkjet to the full, inter-computer file transfers, the latest generation of emulators, more Weird Wired World telecoms leaks and silliness, faxing with an 8-bit, detailed special features on Spectrums and PCWs in the "I've got a..." series, more Internet/E-mail stuff (once I get *my*, rather than *my son's* modem and software working), a 'which 8-bit is best for...?' series, etc, etc.

* * * *

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While the advertising section is the best place for appeals for (or offers of) help, I would like to publish part or all of any letters which seem to have a general interest. I will assume that permission to publish is implied with any letter received unless otherwise stated.

All facts and information in **8BIT** are published on the basis that they are believed true at the time of publication. No liability can be accepted by Brian Watson or other contributors for any loss or damage to subscribers software of equipment, however caused. So mind how you go, *I'm* doing my best! I am careful to try to supply a realistic value to any hunch, belief, opinion, rumour or fact. But clangers can still happen. So, "Sorry, and please tell me if/when it happens so that I can set the record straight."

I hope you approve of the new, slightly more organised, format. Aye! Aye! That's yer lot. See you at the beginning of October.