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Regular Spots

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This Version

Issue No--32
Date---April

◻▶CREDITS◀◻

FRONT COVER:
EARNEST
FREESTONE

Member's Perks

Book Library
Disc Library
Tape Library
Hints 'N' Tips
Homebrew PD
Help from UAUG
Reviews
Technical Info

CPC USER

BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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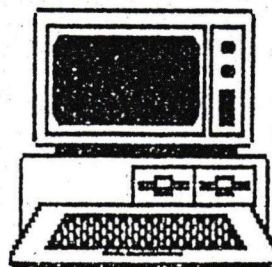
The UNITED AMSTRAD USER GROUP was founded in 1986 by a handful of dedicated CPC enthusiasts. Membership now extends throughout Britain and overseas. The bi-monthly magazine CPC USER Is written BY CPC users FOR CPC users and contains authorative reviews and articles, and other regular features specific to CPC computers including MAILBOX (for general correspondence), CONTACT for member-to-member contact and MONITOR (members soap box). The magazine also carries trade and members' advertisements. The BOOK LIBRARY is operated by post and is open to ALL members. The books may be hired by the month for a nominal fee. The PD SOFTWARE LIBRARY (Discs AND Tapes) contains many programs covering such topics as Games, Business, Educational, Language and Utility programs. Again, it is open to ALL members and is free of charge.

The Editor welcomes the submission of articles for publication. Material should be submitted on tape/disc or typed. Hand-written articles are accepted but they MUST be legible. Contributions accepted for publication by CPC USER will be on an all-rights basis unless otherwise agreed and MUST be the senders own original work. No material may be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission of the Editor. Whilst every care is taken, neither the UNITED AMSTRAD USER GROUP nor its officers can be held legally responsible for any errors or omissions in articles, listings or advertisements. Material published does not necessarily represent the views of the UNITED AMSTRAD USER GROUP or its officers.

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EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

The Editorial can sometimes be the hardest part of the magazine to do. By the time it comes round to write it, everything you were originally going to waffle on about has flown from your head.

So, on with the apologies! I apologise to everyone. There, that should about cover it.

Many thanks to all of you who sent letters, articles, etc. We need more though. This issue is two pages shorter than normal, because I've had to hold some articles over until the next issue to make sure there is something to go in it (yes, things are that bad!). So, unless you want my four page review of Jet Set Willy please send something in!

The UAUG Convention idea (see last issue) has generated a fair response. Next issue there will be a little questionnaire to find out how many are interested, what the best locations are, etc. I must state however, that the UAUG itself cannot fund or organise any convention (see The Chairmans Bit for explanation). The info gathered in the questionnaire will be like a 'pool', open to anyone who wants to know if it's worth organising something in their area.

One member has put forward an idea, about having small conventions around the country. That way the distance travelled could be cut dramatically. I'll see if a 'convention pack' can be made up, giving guidelines on how to set one up. Write in if you've anything to say in favour, or against the convention idea.

I said in the last Editorial that there would be a small type-in this issue, to allow you to experiment with the firmware calls in the Firmware section. Time hasn't permitted me to get it done though. Sorry about that. Has anyone out there written something along similar lines that could be printed? I'm sure you'd make a better job of it than me.

The results to the opinion poll are in this issue. It's been kept fairly short for reasons of space. Have a look in the bit about 'what articles do you want', and see if you fancy writing any of them. The full (ie, all the gory details) results are on the Letters Disc.

The PD disc stocklist hasn't appeared (in full) for a while. It now spills over onto three pages, so will only appear every few issues, unless I find a shorter way to present it. The updates will be printed in every issue though.

There isn't a UAUG 'Spotlight' this issue, because I forgot to remind anyone. Someone suggested the idea of a members Spotlight, to draw more members together. If it appeals to you, just drop me a line.

Now for a plea. Could people sending material to me please send it on either a tape or disc. Typing stuff in takes me forever (especially when I have to go through correcting my mistakes!). Letters are, of course, exempt from this - unless you want to make my job a little easier. The files should be in ASCII, or Protext format. Remember, if you want the tape/disc returned, include enough return postage.

I was reading in the computer press recently, that Amstrad (the company) are having a pretty lean time of things. This isn't really surprising if you consider some of their past 'brilliant' marketing strategies. Firstly, they sold a lot of CPC's with either a green screen or modulator attached. When lots of people decided that they wanted to get a colour screen, did Amstrad start selling them separately? Nope. Then they released the CPC Plus's, and marketed them purely as a games machine (the original CPC was advertised as a business/games machine). The new machine is not 100% compatible with the old machines (one of the worse aspects being the 6128 Plus's inability to load tape software), and Amstrad also failed to back up the machine with enough cartridge software (the original CPC had a lot of software support BEFORE it was released). There was talk of doing Protext on cartridge, but Amstrad didn't go ahead because it would have interfered with the sales of the PCW (or so they thought). It's no surprise that they didn't sell in the quantities that Amstrad hoped for. The CPC Plus's are nice machines. The keyboards are very responsive, they look good, and the stereo sound comes out of the monitor itself (with the old CPC you have to channel the sound through a Hi-Fi to get stereo). If it wasn't for the previous points, I would have bought one. As it is, I'm going to get one of the old style 6128's to go with my 464.

Amstrad seem totally blind to the fact that there are a hell of a lot of loyal Amstrad users. Either that, or they don't really care (which I think is the case). The computers I'm going to get (when money allows) are a 6218, a PPC640D, and a PCW9512 - all Amstrad machines. It leaves a slightly bitter taste in the mouth to know that although I will support the Amstrad company, the company won't support me.

Gosh, I feel better after getting that off my chest! The subject is open to discussion if you agree/disagree with me. Or any other subject that annoys you. The lack of support for disc users perhaps (the software houses are even more annoying than Amstrad)?

And now for something completely different. How can CPC User be improved? Would you like to see more pictures in it? Is the layout okay? Do you want special headers (titles) for the regular bits of CPC User - such as Adventure Chronicle? Would you like five pound notes stapled to the cover? Should the Mailbox be split up into two sections - normal waffle, and problem pages? Or are you satisfied with the format as it is? Let me know what you think.

Oops, I nearly forgot! My thanks goes to Earnest Freestone for producing this issues' cover. He also sent a few other designs, which may make an appearance in future issues. I'm especially grateful, as design is not one of my stronger talents.

Well, that's the Editorial finished for another issue. Stay safe & happy until the next time!

The Chairmans' Bit

I read with interest the letter from Mr P. Borley in the February issue, suggesting a UAUG Convention. During my years on the Committee, the possibility of holding a Convention has been discussed on at least two occasions, but each time we decided against the idea for two main reasons - cost and time. We try to keep the subscription as low as possible, and at any one time we probably have enough in the bank to cover the cost of two or three more issues of the magazine plus our other incidental expenses. As we owe new members six issues we have to rely on income from renewals, and new subscriptions, to honour our commitments. To organise a convention, even If it finally proved to be self financing, we would have to spend a considerable sum on hire charges, visits to the proposed venue, etc, well before any income could be expected. That would mean having insufficient funds to produce the magazine, and hence the end of the UAUG.

The second reason for deciding not to proceed with a Convention was the time factor. The members of your Committee already spend many hours running the Group, and just cannot take on further commitments. I hope that this does not sound too negative, but please remember that we have to earn our livings and also devote time to our families!

On a more positive note, I suggest that if any member (or group of members) would like to organise their own Convention, they could use the pages of CPC USER to contact others, and to publicise the event - but please remember that ALL costs would have to be met by the organisers.

I hope that the forgoing arguments will not deter members from putting forward ideas and suggestions. We would love to have a Convention, but I feel we must be realistic and not risk the future of UAUG. Too many CPC magazines, and support groups, have already gone to the wall. Our first priority must be to maintain the production of the magazine, and also the other services that we offer. I trust the majority of members will agree with that point of view. Happy computing. Regards, Tony Baker. ●

PD DISC LIBRARY UPDATE

PD 29/2.	CPM	PrintMaster System disc No. 1
PD 29/3.	CPM	PrintMaster Data disc No. 2
PD 29/4.	AMSDOS	More Scull PD - graphics slide show No. 2
PD 30/1.	AMSDOS	Super Slide Show No.3 - from Scull PD
PD 30/2.	AMSDOS	PageMaker clip art viewing (Scull PD)
PD 30/3.	AMSDOS	Scull PD - More pages of STOP PRESS
PD 30/4.	AMSDOS	The Rocky Horror Picture Slide Show (Slide Show No. 4)
PD 31/1.	AMSDOS	The Paula Abdul & Delite Slide Show (Slide Show No. 5)
PD 31/2.	AMSDOS	Games disc - Scull PD (GAM1)
PD 31/3.	AMSDOS	Games disc - Scull PD (GAM1 side 2)
PD 31/4.	AMSDOS	Print Shop (Imported from Germany)
PD 31/1.	AMSDOS	GPAINT - A German art package plus Xtra clip art
PD 32/2.	AMSDOS	A Sample of DARTSMA PD type-ins
PD 32/3.	AMSDOS	Another selection of DARTSMA PD. (DPD 06)
PD 32/4.	CPM	Use this Database to get the feel of the real Ashton Tates dBASE2
PD 33/1.	CPM	PC FILE - The Complete Database Package
PD 33/2.	CPM	PRINTIT - add Xtra Fonts to your Hard Copy from MML the SCRIVNER (PD 5/1) people
PD 33/3.	CPM	More very useful CP/M Plus Utilities
PD 33/4.	AMSDOS	EASIDRAW - Drawing Package
PD 34/1.	AMSDOS	A Large selection of BASIC type-ins.
PD 34/2.	AMSDOS	More type-ins to compliment PD 34/1.
PD 34/3.	AMSDOS	Will be added later
PD 34/4.	AMSDOS	Will be added later
PD 35/1.	AMSDOS	Graphic Screens - Originated WACCI PD Needs to be unsqueezed - use NSWP.COM
PD 35/2.	AMSDOS	More Graphics from the WACCI Collection See PD 35/1
PD 35/3.	AMSDOS	The WACCI Homebrew Collection - 1
PD 35/4.	AMSDOS	The WACCI Homebrew Collection - 2

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COMPUTER FAIRS

First off, some news about a couple of computer fairs. If you're in the area, why not pop down and see what bargains you can pick up.

12th of April
Cavendish School Hall,
Eastbourne.
(Entry fee not known)

18th of April
The Corn Exchange,
Church Street,
Brighton.
Entry £2, or £1 for OAP's.

GMF DISCOUNT RISE

GMF Programs have very kindly offered to raise the discount they offer to UAUG members, from 10% to 15%. GMF do a variety of programs, two of which have been reviewed in CPC User already - Cheque Checker (CPC User Issue 29), and French Test (CPC User Issue 30).

Cheque Checker allows you to keep accurate track of your bank account - transactions, standing orders, cheques, etc.
French Test is a teaching/learning aid up to GCSE standard in French.

GMF's address can be found in the Discount section of CPC User (inside the back cover).

DISC PRICES DOWN?

If you take a look in the Mailbox section, you'll see that the lovely man from Binary Bits is doing a special offer of ten Maxell discs for £12.95. I don't know how long this offer is going to last, so make the most of it!
Binary Bits' address can be found in the Discount section of CPC User (still inside the back cover).

LOW PRICE GAMES

If you're able to run tape based software on your system, the following bit of news might be of interest. Fun Factory Promotions have been advertising 'clearance' games in AA & ACU lately. After doing a bit of research I've found out that all the games in question are already budget games, but they're being sold off at £1 each. There are some good ones on the list, and (surprisingly) five on offer are adventure games.
If you want a list, just send a 1st class stamp, along with a letter asking to be sent the Amstrad details (they also do Spectrum, CBM 64, Atari ST, Amiga, & PC) to:

Fun Factory Promotions Ltd,
Unit 6,
Calleva Park,
Aldermaston,
Berkshire,
RG7 4QW

NEW PRODUCTS

Now some news of a couple of new products being written for MJC Supplies.

First off is a colour printing utility for users of the Star LC-10 colour 9-pin printer. It does lots and lots of things, but unfortunately I've lost my info sheet. What I do know is that it's 'intelligent' - it reads what colour it needs to produce from the CPC's memory. If you look at the MJC advert in this issue, you may find a few more details.

Secondly comes a print utility for 24-pin printer users. All I know (lost info sheet, etc) is that it can do screen dumps.

If you want to know more about either of the packages, why not give MJC a call. Their address, and phone number, can be found in their advert on page thirteen (or page 12A for the superstitious). If you feel confident enough to write a review (and you have either a Star LC-10 colour, or a 24-pin printer), drop me (the Ed) a line.

LETTERS DISC

The 'letters disc' is now updated as of the 1st of April. The letters section is on side one. On side two you'll find: the full opinion poll results; a full list (as far as is known) of what goods all the Discount companies offer; the Contact section reproduced; and the up to date mini PD lists.
What I want to add is a 'Homegrown' section, so if you have any software that you've written yourself (and want to sell) drop me a line. You can make the program descriptions as long as you want, within reason. The 'Jargon Box' will also be going on the disc, as soon as people write in with words/phrases they do/don't understand.
Has anyone got an idea of what else can go on the disc? Articles are a 'no-no', because they go in CPC User. Drop me a line if you've anything to say on the matter.

If you want a copy of the 'Letters Disc', just send me (the Ed) a blank 3" disc (or a blank tape) in a padded envelope. Enclose the return postage (same as the sending postage) PLUS a 28p stamp. The 28p stamp will go towards cutting the cost of mailing CPC User to you.

The CPC Users MAILBOX - readers letters

CHEAP COLOUR MONITORS

From Mary Smitton of Bootle, Merseyside.

● First of all a 'thank you' to Paul Owen, who had numerous phone calls from me wondering when the magazine would arrive. He had already sent two copies in the post which never made it (there is obviously some secret CPC users in the GPO), when finally it was third time lucky.

Secondly I would like some help. We have a 6128 with an Amstrad LQ3500 24 pin printer, and we would like to know if there are any art packages (or DTP) that you can use with a 24 pin printer. All the ones we know of are for 9 pin printers.

Thirdly, maybe this can be of some help to someone. We originally only had a green screen (due to lack of funds), and we managed to buy a Sony colour monitor for £30 (unbelievable!). When we tried it, it would not work - the picture was all squiggly (hope the language isn't too technical). We telephoned Amstrad, who said it was impossible to get it to work. We even took it to a place who said they didn't know why it wouldn't work. After much fiddling with wires, we decided to sell it (we knew it worked on other machines). We had one person interested in buying it, when we decided to call into our local electronics shop. We described the problem to him (the shops' expert) in our 'technical' language, and straight away he said that all it was, was that there was too much power getting through and all we needed was a 10k ohms resistor connecting to the sinc wire. We did this, and 'Hey Presto' a beautiful picture at a very cheap price.

▢ Thanks for the tips about the monitor Mary. Hopefully it should come in useful for people who find that the original Amstrad colour monitors are as hard to get hold of as hen's teeth!

There are a few things that cater for 24-pin printers. MJC Supplies will soon be getting (if not already) a specially written 24-pin screen dump utility thingy. Also available from MJC is Miracopy (another 24-pin screen dumper) at £14.95, and Miraprint (a print enhancer/multi-font thingy, along the lines of Qualitas) at £19.95. I'm not sure, but I think that SD Microsystems' "Page Publisher" DTP package MAY also cater for 24-pin printers.

DTP PROBLEMS

From Tom Walton of Manchester.

● I have recently started getting aquainted with Stop Press DTP. I am enjoying the experience, but I'm a bit miffed about the use of the B drive. I put the system disc in 'A', and the cut-out disc in 'B'. I click the 'B' drive to load the cut-outs, but if I am asked to insert the program disc I cannot get back to 'A'. I would have thought two drives were a must for this package - or am I missing something?

▢ I'm not too sure about this one Tom, as I only have a single drive system. As far as I can tell from the manual, the system disc always loads from the 'A' drive. So there shouldn't really be any problems if you always keep the program disc in drive 'A'. To be honest, I'm stumped. Can anyone else offer some help?

OOOPS!

From Meri Stubbs of Headington, Oxford.

● Here is a tip for Wal Savin's file:- If you have any unused sections of sticking out circuit board (eg, expansion drive port) get hold of an edge connector (Tandy sell them), then write the name of the port on it in permanent marker. Place it on to the port, and DO NOT REMOVE IT unless you are attaching the relevant piece of equipment. Repairs can be expensive - take it from me!

▢ Lancelot (what Meri calls her 664) has a dead disc drive. I won't go into the details of it's demise, but I've been told that "Cyril the Cassette deck" has been helping out while Lancelots' drive is out of action.

CHEESE SAUCE

From Dave Andrews of Binary Bits.

● I feel that it's about time that I made contact with all my friends who use the CPC, and not some super fast, 32 bit hyper widget, with a 200 mega-byte flipper that can do twenty zillion calculations per second. Yes, life at Binary Bits still goes on, regardless of the members of the public who try to confound me everyday with new jargon. The computers, processors, memory chips, don't change - just the words used to describe them.

It's nice to read the Editorial Ramblings that you write for the mag, and it gives me a warm feeling to know that you've put a whole new meaning to the phrase "A DEADLINE" - I add from my safe, and yet insanitary, position in the toilet of Binary Bits as I contemplate this epic letter to the Editor.

As all the people who have done business with me in the past will note, the only way to stay remotely sane in the computer business is to develop a good sense of humour, and try ones best to see the funny side of life. Hence my acute sense of humour, and my ability to laugh at almost anything except my wife. Some of the latest jargon is beginning to wear a bit thin though. Just the other day a bloke wanders in from the street, looks at me and asks "Does the 486 chip in this machine multiplex with the CMOS in cache memory in a fully synchronous way, or not?". I looked at him, and replied "Only if the hard disc has a cache wait state set to eighty mega

blips". He stood for a second, and said as he left "Oh, I thought so". Out of curiosity, I telephoned Tiawan (where I import the computer mother boards from), and asked the technical department the same question. He was confounded with my question, and after about five minutes gave me a reply that sounded like "Who win dhow, slop coe min dropsy" (I think translated roughly this means "The best part of you was thrown away at birth pigsbrain"), and sent me a fax of his mother-in-law out of spite.

It would appear that computer experts are coming out of the woodwork of late, more I feel after each issue of the computer magazines. They are almost telling me that they've read the car manual, seen the film, looked at the highway code, and can now drive a racing car. I might sell up the business, and take up farming instead.

I sit somewhat dazed by all this increasing garbage given out by the computer press, and wonder where (and indeed when) it will all end.

I remember the day that I unpacked the CPC 464 that I had just bought my kids. Shoved a tape in, typed RUN"", pressed the return key, and shared some of the best hours fun with my two daughters playing games on the good old 464. Without any knowledge of a mega byte, a hard disc, multi-tasking, access times, MIPS, Mhz or nano seconds. Seems strange to me now that before you can use a computer, you've got to go to University for seven years and take a degree in hyper jargon related mega wimps, or at least have an 'A' level in multiplexed hypo nano dos.

A couple of people were looking at a row of computers, thinking about buying one. One turned to the other, and said "This one functions at over eight million instructions per second, and is about fifty times faster than that XT over there". An old man listened behind them, and then said "Tell me son, just how fast can you type then?", which I feel says an awful lot about the way people look at computers. I've yet to meet a man that can tell the difference between a 386 and a 486, without looking at the label.

I think if the truth was finally said, a computer has now taken over the role of the fast car as a posers tool. Psychologists have said for years that a mans car reflects the way he feels about his 'manhood'. Maybe now the size and speed of his computer reflects the way he feels. I can almost imagine some wally in the disco, smoothing up to a woman and whispering "Come back to my place. I've got a 300 mega byte hard disc with super VGA, twin disc drives and a mouse. What do you think?", and the girl going weak at the knees at the thought of just how fast it is. She might even ask if it's a mini-tower or a cabriolet, because women understand computers a lot don't they lads. Only joking ladies. Some of my best friends are women, but don't tell my wife!!

I think my life has never been the same since a lady came up to me, and asked "Have you got one of those black things with the red bits on that my daughter likes playing with? She broke the last one". At the time I didn't know she was talking about a joystick.

Well I guess I'd better close this letter with an offer for those that have managed to stay awake whilst reading it. How about an offer of Maxell CF2 3" discs at, well £14.95 sounds too dear, so how about a special offer to UAUG members at just £12.95 for ten.

□ *Thanks for your letter Dave. It brought a smile to my weary face. I still haven't worked out if your comments on the Editorial were compliment, insult, or statement.*

A young lad I know wants a 386 PC to do word-processing on. If he gets it, I won't be surprised if a 'go faster' stripe appears down the side. I'll stick with my CPC thank you very much. All the power I need, and very user friendly.

EXPANSIONS

From Mr G.Cahill of Stonehaven, Grampian.

● Many thanks for issue 31, late, but not forgotten. As usual, first read was the Mailbox, and it was with great interest that I read P. Borley's letter, re the Maplin Expansion System. Unfortunately Maplin no longer supply the system, as I found to my disgust after I had built two of the I/O boards that I purchased from them, and then tried to purchase the ROM board and Motherboard. So now I can only make two or three queries.

The first one could solve the others. Has anyone got a Maplin's Expansion System ROM board that they would care to get rid of? I am not concerned about the completeness of the board, as I am not requiring the ROM side of it. As long as the printed circuit is not damaged, the bare board is all that is required, although I will pay for the complete board if necessary.

Second: The ROM board contains a buffer circuit through which the I/O boards are connected to the 6128. Has anyone connected the I/O boards without the buffer board (ie, the ROM board), and if so would they please contact me and pass on how successful this is?

Thirdly: Failing all else, I will have to design and build a separate buffer. Has anyone done this? Again, if so you would be doing me a great favour if you could pass on any information you can.

I also noted in the mag' that Terry Green is also interested in the use of the add-on facilities of the CPC. Is this not a hint of a future series of articles on "How to use the I/O ports"? Unfortunately I am not experienced enough in this aspect of the CPC to help Terry out. As to Mr Borley, I am sorry, but the Maplins Expansion System is no longer available. Although I have two 6*8 bit I/O boards, I have yet to connect them to the CPC. Depending upon the response to this letter, it may be some time before I can do so.

□ *I have the circuit diagram for the board if it's any help (drop me an SSAE). It's annoying that Maplins have discontinued the kit though. Do any members have the facilities to produce circuit boards?*

LOTS OF THINGS

From Stan Walker of Rotherham, South Yorks.

⋆ You try to encourage letters from members, so here goes, but first a word of caution regarding the "Tree of Knowledge". At first the idea seems marvellous - why has no one thought of it before? It has been done before, or at least the nearest we can ever get to it.

Your comments in issue 10 indicate that you now realise the enormity of the project. Will you finish up with a rival to the Encyclopedia Brittanica? Even that would not be enough. You would have to produce a duplicate of the non-fiction section of the public library - and that already exists. I'm sorry to dampen enthusiasm, but we had better stick to computing in general, and the CPC in particular.

Secondly, a request. I read "John Packhams' Firmware Guide", but with very little understanding. I have a copy of the Glentop "Advanced Users Guide", one section of which contains the same information, and I don't understand that either. Could we please, now and again in this series, have a fairly short type-in program that illustrates how to use this information.

Finally! One of the most interesting parts of the magazine is the Mailbox, together with the editorial comments. It seems that you are now trying to complicate matters by publishing some of them in a different form - on disc. Would it not be simpler (it would certainly be more interesting, and have a wider readership) if you -added one more sheet to the magazine? If there are too many letters to get them all onto two extra pages, then either hold some of them over for the next time or print edited versions so as to squeeze them all in.

▢ *I agree that doing something along the lines of the Brittanica is obviously out of the question. That still leaves a lot that can be included, for instance: hobby overviews; moving graphic thingies (eg, showing how the cells split up/develop in a growing baby); short book reviews grouped in the relevant headings; etc, etc.*

With regard to the Firmware section - John states that it is there as a reference source only, but I know that doesn't quite resolve your query. If no-one sends me any type-ins though, I can't print them.

The Letters Disc will serve two main purposes. Firstly it will enable complete letters (and replies) to be viewed, rather than the shortened versions. Secondly, side two will contain a number of other 'useful' things (look in the News section for details). Extra pages cannot be added to CPC User, because of the cost. The UAUG runs on a tight budget, with allowances made for thirty pages in CPC User. More pages would mean a higher annual subscription fee. I also dislike chopping things about too much.

UAUG CONVENTION

From Dave Havard, CPC Users' Strategy Man.

⚫ While I'm sure everyone will agree what a splendid job you're doing in editing the magazine, do you think a few more graphics would add to the appeal? Particularly as you were commenting that you may have to add a few items of your own to fill things out a bit. With all the clip art now flooding onto the scene, I'm sure there would be enough suitable material to break up some of the pages, whether it be used in reviews, technical matters, programming, mailbox, or wherever. If you are short of suitable clips, I could send you a few of mine (in fact I think I did a while ago (you know you did - Ed)).

Secondly, I would be only too happy to attend a weekend UAUG Convention, provided I was free of other commitments. I have attended both of the Adventure Probe bashes, and enjoyed them immensely.

I think the idea of one day for members, and the second open to all, is a good one - except that if one of the aims is to attract new members, you would be limiting the exercise to a single day. Charging two separate rates for members and non-members seems even better. That way it would be open to all for two days, giving a 100% increase in possible new members.

It would probably need at least six members to take their CPC's along, as there is such a wide range of interests to display to current and prospective members. With regard to location, although London is nearer to me, I wouldn't care to drive there. Birmingham would suit me, as if I drive I can take the CPC.

The Adventure Probe Conventions were held in a large hotel, with a conference room booked for the weekend, with discounts on room charges for those staying overnight.

Though work commitments prevent me from offering to organise this one, I would suggest that whoever does take it on would need to find out how many members are going, how many are taking CPC's, how many need power points, tables, etc, then compare prices for a conference room big enough to take up to twice as many - allowing for unticketed arrivals, and non-member visitors. Remember to ask about discounted room prices for conference guests, and adequate car parking.

Should the Convention ever work out, include me in the Laser Squad challenge. Also Lords of Chaos if anybody fancies their chances at that. Bear in mind that these games can take several hours with two players (or sometimes several minutes).

"May your wings never drop off"

▢ *Adding pictures doesn't solve the problem of not having enough text material Dave. It's easy to fill a page with text, but not very brilliant to make a two page article out of a 'one-pager', and pad it out with graphics. There are two other things that restrict the use of graphics. Due to the way I produce the magazine, having to leave spaces (or to re-format the text) for the pictures would give me horrendous problems. The second reason is the killer though - time. The Mailbox section of this issue will have taken me over six hours to get finished (initial typing in, proof reading, correcting mistakes, formatting, editing to fit the space, then printing). The Strategy column took around five hours, after a power cut wiped out the finished material, and left me crying in a corner (Tip: always SAVE frequently!). The time all adds up. I would love to add suitable graphics to articles, but....*

You've got some good idea's about the convention Dave. Another put forward, was the idea of having a few in

different parts of the country. Has anybody else got any thoughts on the matter? See also THE CHAIRMANS BIT for important news.

BITS 'N' BOBS

From Mike Catton of Gosport, Hants.

● Some miscellaneous comments arising from items in recent issues:

Kjell Robertson can probably get a printer switch from either Watford Electronics, 250 Lower High Street, WATFORD. WD1 2AN or Technomatic, 468 Church Lane, LONDON. NW9 8OF. Both have switches advertised in the Oct. issue of "Computer Shopper" at around £15.

Peter Brecklin asks about how to get the high-order 8-bit codes. Assuming you want the IBM graphics set with its very useful #box' characters, the drill is as below:

1. Program a pair of keys to produce the codes 27,116,1, IBM character set (I) and 27, 116, 0, Epson (E). These work with most printers, but some use other codes and you will need to check in your printer's manual.

2. Program another pair to produce 27,62, high-order On(H) and 27,35, low-order(L).

3. At the start of the file insert the code 27,55. This prevents the control codes 0 to 31 being changed to characters when the 8th bit is turned On, which produces chaos. Other codes are sometimes met, and with some printers you can set this condition with switches.
Having done that, sending the sequence:

eeeeeeeeeeee IH iiiiiiiiiiiiii LE eeeeeeeeeeee

in which the e's and i's denote arbitrary characters, will result in the e's being printed from the low-order Epson character set and the i's from the high-order IBM one according to the table in the printer's manual.

My article "IBM and the 8th bit" in the April 1990 issue expands on this, and gives an example of what you can produce from the IBM set.

Something my review of Brunword Elite didn't make clear. If you have a DMP printer and a Dart scanner, you can load hand drawn characters into the font editor. I also boobed when I referred to a Star LC10 as needing extra memory to handle the down-loaded fonts. It should have been the LC24-10.

Lastly, a query of my own: has anyone experience of Seven Stars Miraprint for use with 24-pin printers?

□ *Thanks for those 'bits' Mike. I spoke to one of the guys at MJC Supplies (who sell Miraprint), and he told me that it was "average". It'll still knock the spots off a 9-pin though!*

UAUG CONVENTION

From Bill Trice of Peacehaven, East Sussex.

●. (About the UAUG convention) Great idea if it was local, say within 30 or 40 miles. But if it was more than this distance, I can't see many people attending. These days travelling seems to be an expensive thing, especially by rail. Add to that the cost of stopping somewhere overnight, and you are in lumber costwise! But local to where? I should imagine the members of the UAUG are spread all over place, and the only way of reaching most of them is via the magazine.

□ *Would a number of conventions around the country be better then Bill? The distance would be cut, attracting more people. The accommodation price could be brought down by doing a discount deal with a hotel local to the venue.*

CPC USER COMPENDIUM?

From Martin Hack of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

● Some time ago it was suggested that a compendium issue might be produced, which contained interesting articles from past CPC User magazines. Having only been a member for 12 months, this would have been an easy way of catching up on past issues without the large expense of buying the whole series of previous issues. The suggested price was about £10. Is there any news about this idea?

If you retain the text files of old CPC User magazines on disc, would it be possible to make these available through the software libraries - if the compendium idea does not get off the ground?

□ *The Compendium was shelved, due to lack of support for the idea. Lots of people might have bought it, but only two people said so. If there is enough interest now though, maybe it can be looked at again. Write in!*
The article files are stored on disc, but couldn't be placed in the libraries, unless (I suppose) permission was obtained from all the articles' authors. The way I prepare the stuff for printing also messes them up, and I don't have the time (and to be honest, the inclination) to get them into a readable format.

CPM SOLUTIONS

From P. Hannon of Harare, Zimbabwe.

● With reference to Arthur Cooks' letter as to how to configure keys so that one can use Control or Shift on the numeric keypad in CPM, I give you the extract from the help file on the CPM disc that comes with the computer.

□ *I can't actually print the text that was sent, because of copywrite reasons. If anyone wants a copy, just send me (the Ed!) an SSAE. Alternatively, enter the HELP program on the CPM+ utilities disc, and then type SETKEYS when prompted for the subject.* ●

UAUG BOOK LIBRARY

Cat No. Book Title.

B1001P The Colour Coded Guide to Micro-Computers
B1002P Computer Programing In Basic
B1005P Writing Adventure Games On The Amstrad
B1006P 60 Programs For The Amstrad 464
B1008P Machine Code For Beginners
B1009P Using Your Amstrad 464-Made Easy
B1010P Computer Challenges For The Amstrad
B1011P Advanced Amstrad Basic
B1012P Introducing Amstrad CP/M Assembley Language (3 copies)
B1013P Subroutines For The Amstrad 464 & 664
B1014P Sensational Games For The 464
B1015P Applications For The 464 & 664
B1016P The Working Amstrad (2 copies)
B1017P Filing Systems & Databases For The Amstrad CPC 464
B1018P Amstrad Advanced Users Guide
B1019P Using Dr.Logo On The Amstrad
B1020P The Amstrad Pentacle Adventure Creator
B1021P Write Your Own Adventure Games For Your Micro-Computer
B1022P Understanding Computer Graphics
B1023P Amstrad CPC 664 Computing
B1024P Introducing Logo
B1025P Mysterious Adventures for your Amstrad
B1026P The Amazing Amstrad Omnibus $$
B1027P The CP/M Bus $$
B1028P Master Machine Code on your Amstrad 464, & 664
B1030P 100 Programs for the Amstrad 464, 664 & 6128
B1031P The Amstrad Disc Companion for the Amstrad 464, 664 & 6128 (2 copies)
B1032P Amstrad Machine Language for the Absolute Beginner (2 copies)
B1033P Amstrad CPC Whole Memory Guide
B1034P Illustrating Basic (basic tutor)
B1035P Simple Applications of the Amstrad CPC's for the Writer
B1036P An Intro to Programming for the Amstrad 464
B1037P How to write Word Games on the Amstrad 464, 664, & 6128
B1038P Using your Amstrad CPC Disc Drives
B1039P The Amstrad 464, 664 & 6128
B1040P Amstrad CPC 464 User Instructions
B1041P Amstrad Graphics-Advanced User Guide
B1042P The Amstrad CPC 464 Disc System including CP/M & Printers
B1043P Basic Programming on Amstrad 464,664, & 6128
B1044P The Punters Revenge (Gambling & Computers)

B1045P The Amstrad CPC 464-Advanced Users Guide
B1046P Amstrad Computing with the CPC 464
B1047P Graphic Programming Techniques on the CPC 464
B1048P The Amstrads Programmer's Guide
B1049P The Amstrad Games Book
B1050P Easy Add-On Projects for the Amstrad 464, 664, & 6128
B1051P A Z80 Workshop Manual
B1052P Computer Engineers Pocket Book
B1053P Your First Amstrad Program $$
B1054P Mastering Machine Code on your Amstrad 464,664, & 6128
B1055P The Ins & Outs of the Amstrad
B1056P The Anatomy of the CPC's $$
B1057P Advanced Programming Techniques on the 464
B1058P Programming in "C" on the Amstrad $$
B1059P Computer Programming In Pascal
B1060P "C" For Beginners
B1061P Introducing Pascal $$
B1062P Using A Modem With Your Computer
B1063P Beginners Guide To Basic Progamming
B1064P Introduction to "C"
B1065P Fortran For Micros
B1066P An Introduction To Z80 Machine Code
B1067P Mastering Pascal Progamming $$
B1068P Computer Programming In Fortran
B1069P A Crash Course In Pascal $$
B1070P Introducing "C" $$
B1071P The Hitch-Hikers Guide To Artificial Intelligence (Amstrad Basic Version)
B1072P Databases For Fun and Profit
B1073P Introduction To Microcomputer Programming
B1074P Further Computer Programming In Basic $$ (designed for "A" level studies)
B1075P Get More From Your Epson Printer
B1076P Hacker's Handbook 111 (comms + hacking)
B1077P Powerful Progamming for Amstrads 464,664,6128
B1078P Forth - The Next Step (Advanced)
B1079P A Guide To Playing the Hobbit.

NEW BOOKS

B1080P The Amstrad Programmers Guide $$
B1081P Z-80 Reference Guide $$
B1082P Microcomputer Puzzles
B1083P Structured Basic (BBC Computers) $$

Many thanks to the members who sent in these books. Books marked $$ cost £1.50 because of their size. Will members please return all books PROMPTLY.

BOOK HIRE SECTION
***** CURRENT FEE:-   £1.25. per book per month *****
If you wish to hire a book please send a letter containing the book Catalogue No. and Book title together with a Cheque or Postal order to The Library Book Manager.

If by any chance the book you require is already out on loan then it will be reserved for you. Once the book is returned (usually no longer than a month) it will be sent straight to you. Please return the books promptly, as this will avoid disappointment for other members. CHEQUES AND POSTAL ORDERS ONLY PLEASE. Payable to the United Amstrad User Group.

BEGINNERS BASIC

WITH JOHN PACKHAM

In this months instalment, I'd like to show you a little on the use of some graphics commands. The first one we'll look at is ORIGIN. First of all, reset your machine with the CTRL-SHIFT-ESC keys (providing you have it turned on of course), then type in the small program below and run it....

```
10 MODE 1
20 INK 0,0:INK 1,24:INK 2,6:INK 3,3
30 BORDER 13
40 PLOT 0,0,1
50 GOTO 50
```

Now, what you should have staring you in the face is a blank (black) screen, with a small yellow dot in the bottom-left corner. This is because we told it to put that dot there in line 40. The coordinates 0,0 refer AUTOMATICALLY to this corner, provided that we haven't altered the ORIGIN of graphics coordinates. The value 1 by the way in line 40 refers to PEN 1 and NOT INK 1, and we have set Pen 1 to hold the value 24 in line 20, which is the value for Bright Yellow.

Now, press ESC twice to break out of the infinite loop in line 50, and enter the following line.....

```
35 ORIGIN 320,200
```

and then RUN the program again. What you should see now is a black screen with a yellow dot in the CENTRE of the screen. Although we haven't altered the Plotting coordinates directly, we have done indirectly, by moving the point 0,0 by 320 to the right and by 200 upwards.

You may wonder why we need to alter the origin at all. Well, just suppose you wanted to plot a graph which gives details of negative values as well as positive. If we left the origin alone and needed to plot a point at -10,-10...you wouldn't see it. But by moving the origin to the centre of the screen, you WOULD see it.

If you type in the short listing below, you will get some idea of the coordinate values which can be displayed, by moving the origin to the centre.....

```
10 MODE 1
20 ORIGIN 320,200
30 MOVE 0,-200:DRAW 0,400
40 MOVE -320,0:DRAW 640,0
50 LOCATE 10,5:PRINT"-X,Y"
60 LOCATE 28,5:PRINT"X,Y"
70 LOCATE 10,20:PRINT"-X,-Y"
80 LOCATE 28,20:PRINT"X,-Y"
90 LOCATE 1,12:PRINT"-320"
100 LOCATE 37,12:PRINT"320"
110 LOCATE 21,1:PRINT"200"
120 LOCATE 21,25:PRINT"-200"
130 GOTO 130
```

The values for X will now range from -320 to 320 instead of 0-639, and the values for Y will now range from -200 to 200 instead of 0-399.

There is also another way of using ORIGIN. Instead of using just 2 parameters as in line 20 above, you can follow them with an optional 4 parameters making 6 in all. For example, reset your machine, then type in the following program and then RUN it...

```
10 MODE 1
20 BORDER 1
30 INK 0,13:INK 1,0:INK 2,6:INK 3,3
40 ORIGIN 0,0,32,592,352,30
50 CLG 1
60 GOTO 60
```

What we have done here is used the ORIGIN command to define a new graphics window, which is shown in black. Line 40 is used for this purpose. The 3rd parameter sets the left edge, the 4th is the right edge, the 5th is the top and the 6th is the bottom of the new graphics window. Whenever the machine is first switched on, or after a soft reset, the graphics window automatically covers the entire screen, so this method can be used to change that. The first 2 parameters in line 40 sets the position of the origin (0,0). In this case, it is still at the bottom-left of the SCREEN. To move it the bottom-left of the graphics window, simply make the first value equal the same as the left side (32), and the second value the same as the bottom (30).

Now add the following lines and run the program again. After the first black window appears, press any key to get another on top of it.

```
55 CALL &bb18
56 ORIGIN 0,0,40,600,360,38
57 CLG 2
```

Notice how a window appears and seems to have a shadow around it. The shadow is the old window.

The CLG commands in lines 50 & 57 are a graphics equivalent to a CLS, and simply clears the graphics window to the PAPER number following it. The first was 1 which was set to 0 in line 30 (black), the second was 2 which was set to 6 (bright red).

One final thing...add the following line and then RUN it again....

```
58 LOCATE 15,10:PRINT "I'M A WINDOW"
```

...notice how the background colour (grey) is also shown through?

Until another time, see if you can figure out how to prevent this, and simply have the text appearing as normal...Ta Ta for now! ●

✧ ✧ CONTACT ✧ ✧

OFFERS OF HELP

Help with problems on a varied subject list except hardware and assembly language (full details on request). Contact:COLIN EVANS, Windsor Crescent, Monk Bretton, S.Yorkshire. S71 2LU.

Help with Maths and Pascal programming. Contact:NEIL BUKHARAYEV, Abonent Box 120, Tatarstan str. 13-272, Kazan, 420021, U.S.S.R.

Help with Brunword, printers. Also utilities for use with Brunword: initialization, letter-templates, draw tables & family trees on screen using IBM box characters, control Qualitas. Send a stamped-addressed-padded-envelope with blank disc to get these. Contact: M.CATTON, 11 Battery Close, Gosport, Hants. PO12 4PA. Tel: 0705 585764

Help for anyone with problems in BASIC. Contact:DERRICK SHERWOOD, 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby, Warks. CV22 7HJ

Have you any damaged, creased, distorted or snapped tape software? Or do they simply give read errors when loading? Send your tapes together with loading instructions & £1.00 plus 2 first class stamps to....STEVE MAKIN, 19 Westbury Rd, Dover, Kent. CT17 9QH. Programs will be retrieved and returned on a new tape (originals only please!!).

Help with CPM+ Protext/Promerge/Prospell (or try me with other versions). Contact:BRIAN WATSON, 39 High St, Sutton, Ely, Cambs. CB6 2RA. Tel: 0353 777006

Help with with CP/M, BASIC, FORTH, assembly language (machine code), RSX's, etc. Contact:DAVE CHURCH, 1 Merston Close, Brighton, Sussex. BN2 6WJ

Help with all sorts of Amstrad problems. Software, hardware, games, tape to disc. No problem too small! Please send a stamped addressed envelope. Contact: CHRIS WILLIAMS, 6 Frank St, Great Horton, Bradford, BD7 3BT.

PENPALS - LOCAL CONTACTS - DRINKING PARTNERS - ETC

Help and advice given about general computer stuff. Ale quaffed, etc, etc. Interested in Lovecraft (the author, not the technique), or the Call of Cthulu game? Contact: STEVE HAYWARD (address inside front cover). Tel (0203) 312571

CPC or PLUS local contacts wanted (ale quaffed? - ED). Contact: WAL SAVIN, 201 Ulverley Green Rd, Olton, Solihull, West Mids. Tel 021 706 0992

CPC & CPC Plus contacts wanted to swap PD, games, and other software. Contact: ANDERS NORDLI, Mo, 2072 Dal, NORWAY.

Fellow CPC users wanted as penpals/contacts. Contact: R. PRIEST, 8 Motueka Street, Nelson, New Zealand.

Local CPC contacts wanted in the Reigate/Dorking area. Contact: R. TYE, Rosemary Cottage, Gadbrook Lane, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7AH.

Local CPC contacts wanted. I may also be able to help anyone having problems with Basic programming. Enclose a stamp if you want help. Contact: M. STUBBS, 8 Overdale Close, Barton, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9LE.

HELP WANTED

We have a 6128 with an Amstrad LQ3500 24 pin printer. Are there any packages that can be used with a 24 pin printer? Contact: M. SMITTON, 67 Orrell Rd, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 6DX.

Can anyone explain about English currency before decimalization (at around the 1920's)? I can't find anything in the library that explains it. Contact: STEVE HAYWARD, (details inside front cover). Tel (0203) 312571.

The Maplin Expansion System ROM board contains a buffer circuit through which the I/O boards are connected to the 6128. Has anyone connected the I/O boards without the buffer board (ie, the ROM board), and if so would they please contact me and pass on how successful this is? Failing all else, I will have to design and build a separate buffer. Has anyone done this? Contact: G. CAHILL, 1 Craden Terrace, Stonehaven, Grampian, AB3 2LQ.

OFFERS OF HELP WILL BE INCLUDED IN EACH ISSUE UNTIL THE MEMBER WISHES THAT HIS/HER OFFER SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN.
ANY HELP WANTED WILL BE IN ONE ISSUE ONLY SO MEMBERS ARE ADVISED TO RENEW THEIR REQUESTS.
PLEASE KEEP ALL AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE AND MARK THEM "CONTACT"!!

DISCOUNT SOFTWARE
FROM MJC SUPPLIES
SPECIAL OFFERS TO UAUG MEMBERS

THE TAPE PD COLUMN *WITH GORDON WOOLLISCROFT*

The Library is very quiet at the moment - although when I mention this fact one can be sure that there will be a rush for the tape/s. It is worth noting that our fame has spread to "down under". I recently received an enquiry about PD software from Australia.

Listings of the PD tapes are at the moment being published only in every other issue of the CPC User due to the fact that they occupy 2 pages, so do please save them for future reference. Copies of the listings will of course be sent out when the Tapes are loaned, and can be obtained by sending me a self addressed envelope with a SECOND CLASS stamp on it.

The fact that Steve has put on a "TEXTREAD" program onto the tape, means that it will now be possible for the ASCII files on tapes 2 and 3 will be able to be read. However, I have still to obtain the new Telephone Codes for London to replace the old one on the tape, and this is more of a problem than I thought for the Public Domain copy on disc has been updated (15/1), but is not at the moment of use for it actually reads from the disc when you ask it for the required code.

With regard to the Tape Programs themselves, I feel that I should again point out that almost ALL of these programs are present on our PD Discs, and therefore even if you have only one disc drive with your 464 it is to your advantage to use the PD Disc Library with its ease and speed of loading and saving. The PD Tape Library was created for those members who have the tape loading facility only, in order to be able to offer them some of the PD programs already available to disc users.

Another point that I would like to make is that whilst the Tape Library is Public Domain material, the Tapes will only be loaned to members of the UAUG as part of our service to members - would you therefore please quote your membership number and full name in your correspondence so that membership can be verified.

Finally with many forms of Public Domain software, quite a few programs are supplied either with very limited instructions (in the form of a document file, or sometimes as a basic file for screen or printer). Some in fact have no instructions at all, and the user has to work out what to do. This is the case with some of the programs supplied for the Public Domain to the UAUG by some authors.

FOR TAPE OWNERS WISHING TO BORROW THE TAPES

Those programs from the library which should run on a 464 have been collected together onto three C90 tapes. Disc to tape copying is a time consuming task, and so we have decided to adopt a different system for the tape owners wishing to obtain tape compatible PD software.

PLEASE NOTE: I shall only send out the GAMES/UTILITIES tape unless asked specifically for the full set.
Please send TWO X Second Class stamps for the Games/Utilities tape.

If you ask specifically for the set of three tapes please send FOUR First Class stamps to me, and I will send you all 3 library tapes.

You may then copy those programs you require, and return the library tapes. PLEASE RETURN THE TAPES WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME, as another member may be waiting for them (use original packing).

Please remember to add your names, address and Membership number.
Write to:
GORDON WOOLLISCROFT,
UAUG PD TAPE LIBRARIAN,
2 WRENBECK DRIVE,
OTLEY,
WEST YORKSHIRE,
LS21 2BR.

JOHN PACKHAMS' FIRMWARE GUIDE

This is the section of the magazine for all machine code addicts. As the Firmware Guide is no longer available, I have decided to provide you with all the necessary firmware jumpblock addresses, along with their relative entry and exit conditions. Most of the addresses can only be accessed via machine code, but some can also be CALLed via BASIC. In these cases, the address will be marked alongside with a (B). Some of these may not have obvious effects. Also, those routines which have NO entry conditions and are not marked, you could also try calling from BASIC, but the effects are unknown to me so try with care. If you have any questions about the routines, then please contact me. If a personal reply is wanted, then please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. I must tell you though, that I am no expert. I am merely taking the info straight from the guide.

48 &bb90 - TXT SET PEN
ACTION:-
Set the Text Pen ink for the current stream. This is used for writing characters (foreground ink).
ENTRY CONDITIONS:-
A contains the ink to use.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
AF & HL are corrupt.
All other registers are preserved.

49 &bb93 - TXT GET PEN
ACTION:-
Ask what the pen ink is set to for the current stream.
ENTRY CONDITIONS:-
None.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
A contains the ink.
All flags are corrupt.
All other registers are preserved.

50 &bb96 - TXT SET PAPER
ACTION:-
Sets the Text Paper ink used for writing the character backgrounds or when clearing the text window.
ENTRY CONDITIONS:-
A contains the ink to use.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
AF & HL are corrupt.
All other registers are preserved.
NOTES:-
This routine doesn't clear the text window.

51 &bb99 - TXT GET PAPER
ACTION, ENTRY & EXIT CONDITIONS:-
As for (49 - TXT GET PEN) but for the Text Paper Ink

52 &bb9c - TXT INVERSE
ACTION:-
Exchanges the current streams Pen and Paper colours.
ENTRY CONDITIONS:-
None.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
AF & HL are corrupt.
All other registers are preserved.
NOTES:-
In V1.1 firmware (664 or 6128) the cursor is removed and replaced which may cause the screen to roll. In V1.0

firmware (464), this is not the case, so the cursor should not be on the screen when this routine is called.

53 &bb9f - TXT SET BACK
ACTION:-
Sets the character write mode to Opaque or Transparent for the current stream.
ENTRY CONDITION:-
If background is to be written (opaque)...
    A must be zero.
If background is not to be written (transparent)...
    A must be non-zero.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
AF & HL are corrupt.
All other registers are preserved.
NOTES:-
This routine doesn't affect the graphics write mode.

54 &bba2 - TXT GET BACK
ACTION:-
Gets character write mode for the current stream.
ENTRY CONDITIONS:-
None.
EXIT CONDITIONS:-
If background is to be written (opaque)...
    A contains zero.
If background is not to be written (transparent)...
    A contains non-zero.
Always...
    DE,HL and flags corrupt.
    All other registers are preserved. ●

BEGINNERS BASIC

THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY SPEAKS

First of all many thanks to Steve Hayward who was determined to give the changeover on the 1st March 1992 a good send off. My name appeared at least 14 times in various pages of the magazine - is this a record?

I must, before going any further, again thank Paul Owen for his untiring work as Membership Secretary over the years and his agreement to continue to deal with back issues of the CPC User. No doubt Paul will be willing to give me advice and moral support if needed until I get into the swing of things.

For the present I will carry on as Public Domain Tape Librarian unless there is a volunteer willing to do it, who is interested enough to contact me.

Now to a few items for Members. As some of you may know from my potted history recently published in CPC User, I do still work for at least 2 days per week on an erratic shift system that includes some evenings. So if you wish to contact me by 'phone, please try BETWEEN 6pm and 7pm FOR BEST RESULTS. If there is no urgency then a letter will give me a little more flexibility in dealing with your problem.

On next to Membership numbers and the renewal date of your subscription. Do try to make a note of these - why not on a little label in the lid of your disc box! Then you can quote your number when communicating with me, any Officers of the Group or for discount offers from the CPC User. It helps us to locate your "file" quickly and more easily than going through over 250 members each time. Now I know what you are going to say - you cannot remember your number! Well, every 2 months we send it to you on your address label used to send out the magazine (on the clear envelope, bottom right hand corner of the label). So when the next one arrives have a look and make a note of it.

Finally on to the question of money. We do not want to lose you nor do we wish to upset you by failing to send out your copy of the CPC User on time, but if renewals are not paid when addresses go to Alan Stead this may happen to you (and we'll send 'the boys' round - Ed). So please try to send me your renewals just before your expiry date to avoid this happening to you. I am hoping to send out renewal notices with issues of the CPC User in the near future to jog your memory, so do look out for them. Gordon Woolliscroft - Membership Secretary. ●

BRUNWORD - Brunning Software

Reviewed by Mike Catton

Having been using Brunword for several years and having recently been investigating and using some of the alternative programs, I thought it time I wrote a review of it. Compared with the others that I have tried, it strikes me as markedly superior in at least three major aspects:

Text entry is extremely easy, because whatever you do the text is always word-wrapped correctly between the screen margins. Insert a word, delete a block, move a block, change the margins - no matter what, the text is re-shuffled automatically to produce the correct word-wrap. You need only concern yourself with the layout when you come to print, when you can centre headings and justify the text should you wish. It is not possible for the word-wrap to be wrong, so there is no need for the frequent formatting operations of the others.

When you load the program, the dictionary is loaded into memory with it. Access to the disc not being needed, the spelling-checker zips through the text at a few seconds a page. You also have a look-up facility. Pressing ●f3▢ tells you at once if the word under the cursor is in the dictionary. Invaluable for such things as "one 'l' or two?", "'judgement' or 'judgment'?".

When you save a file, as well as the text, you save everything of consequence with it: the screen settings, the headers and footers, a 9-character initialisation sequence in which you can put anything you wish, the printer codes, and the printer menu. There is no need for drivers or other files.

In addition to these, there are many other features that either help to make the program easy and quick to use or provide facilities that other programs don't: marked blocks are highlighted in reverse print; there's a display of the word count; page breaks are shown on screen; the disc is catalogued whenever you load or save.

You can load and save in ASCII, which makes it possible to transfer files in either direction between Brunword and any other software that has the same facility.

Files can be of any length. If a file is too large to go in memory you can save it in sections, and then load and print them as one using a chaining facility. The sections can either follow on directly one after the other, or can each start on a new page with new headers and footers and page numbers.

Memory not occupied by the text can be used to store temporary files, which can be transferred in either direction between memory and text or memory and disc.

You change the screen resolution very easily. If you set the screen to give 40 columns or less the display is changed automatically from its normal Mode 2 to Mode 1 and the text re-shuffled to keep the word-wrap correct. Having entered and corrected the text, you then set the margins to those you are going to print in and tidy up with any centring or justification that may be needed. You can even get lines of 128 characters on the screen without side-scrolling using a squashed 5*5 display. The legibility is poor, but that doesn't matter since the word-wrap will still be correct and at this stage you are only concerned with the layout.

The layout is not upset by printer control codes. When one is inserted a Space is incorporated in the file so that the text prints as on the screen and the justification is not affected. The program ensures however that you don't get Spaces when you don't want them, such as at the ends of a line.

Some of these features are shared by other word-processors, but only Brunword has them all. The combination of them makes it much easier to use than any of the others. To illustrate this, a week after I bought it I launched into the longest and most complicated document I have yet produced. It was written in several sections as thoughts or information came to me, sometimes with more than one section in memory at a time. These were saved separately and then chopped up and woven together in their right order. The filing facility was very handy for this since it enabled me to dump bits in memory and then later to insert them at the right point in the text I was working on. It was a lengthy document which had to be saved as three separate files and printed with the chaining facility. Other than the unavoidable novice fumblings, I had very little difficulty with it but I am sure I would have had very much more with any of the others. Apart from anything else, with a document of that length the chore of perpetually having to re-format in order to get readable text on the screen would I think have worn me down with a likely increase in the number of errors.

Its only significant weakness to my mind concerns its printer codes. These are normally limited to three characters, which I sometimes find restrictive, and there isn't any display of them, which on occasion gets me in a tangle if I've changed some and forgotten what they are.

Other facilities provided are: a card-indexing system, Datafile, with sort-and-search, mail-merge, and label-printing facilities; loaders for Qualitas and the KDS port; A key-defining program with which you can define twenty-one keys to display any symbol and to send any sequence of ten characters to the printer that you wish.

All on one disc for a very modest thirty quid. I know of no other program at anything like this price that can provide all these facilities and at the same time is so easy to use. ●

PROTEXT OFFICE - from ARNOR

Reviewed by BRIAN BRISTOW

Readers may find it beneficial to re-read my review of Filer in the Issue 27 of CPC User before proceeding further, as many of the terms used herein are described in that review. My copy of Filer came with Office on the disc too, presumably in error. Whoops! At least this means I can tell you a little about the program. I haven't actually used it, and would not expect to have use for it (but maybe some of you would). So this is not a review as such, just my report after having read the manual.

The manual is shared with Filer. Office contains all that is in Filer. System requirements are the same as for Filer. There are no extra RSX's for Office, so all of the programs are just Promerge documents. Like Filer, there are full specimen files on the supplied disc. There is no Office tutorial, but the one section appears adequately descriptive.

The extra contents of Office are for INVGEN, an invoice generator. The whole purpose of Office is to create invoices (and credit notes and statements). A template invoice is provided (filename OMINVGEN), which would be adapted to suit requirements. The template is a Promerge document and full customisation can be carried out very simply via E on the Office menu.

The Office menu can be called up from the Filer menu, or directly with 'X OM' from command mode.

The menu is as follows:

I - Print an invoice.
Full details of the specific details for that particular invoice are prompted for, as follows:

1. 'Search datafile ?' is prompted so that names and details can be transferred directly from the datafile. Search for a specific entry uses the Protext find facility, so you could reply with 'bri' to find the record for me in the datafile. If some other record contains 'bri' also, just reject the record and wait for the next to be prompted. So put the most invoiced customers at the top of the datafile for speed. Alternatively, one off details can be input from the keyboard.
2. The default invoice number can be accepted as set by the N option, or changed for a one off, in which case the default invoice number will not be incremented.
3. The date can be accepted as set by the D option, or changed for a one off.
4. Customer's order reference is prompted for, and can be left blank if required.
5. Discount type code letter is prompted for, as set by the E option.
7. The amount for Carriage is prompted for, and can be zero.
8. A footnote is prompted for, or the default footnote can be used.
9. VAT can be charged, or not charged.
10. Where a product file is used, quantities for each product in the product file are prompted for. If no

entry, the product will not be listed on the invoice. Enter E to end if all the required products for this invoice have been prompted for. So put the most used products at the top of the product file.
11. Products can then be entered manually, under the same headings as used for the product files under option E.
12. The invoice (just the specific details, not a complete invoice) is saved to disc. Next choose to send to printer immediately, or to screen for checking prior to subsequent printing of all invoices together, using option R.

C - Print a credit note.
As for printing an invoice, with minor detail changes.

S - Print a statement.
As for printing an invoice, with minor detail changes. Also statements are not by default saved to disc (to save disc space), opening balance is prompted for, and credits are catered for.

D - Set current date.
CPC's do not have a system date, so this has to be entered manually.

N - Set invoice number.
Number of next invoice. Subsequent invoices will be numbered sequentially.

R - Reprint document.
To reprint invoices saved on disc, to screen or printer. It is suggested that an invoice discovered to have a minor error can be corrected via Protext command mode, then re-saved.

L - List invoice summary. Not on CPC versions.
A file containing a summary of all invoices is maintained, but not on the CPC version because CPC's do not permit two disc files to be open at the same time.

E - Edit configuration settings.
For the P option. You can edit:
1. Your business name and address.
2. Name of the address datafile used for preparing invoices.
3. Drive A or B.
4. Option to use of a Product File. A Product File would be used where most invoices include one or more of a small number of different products. It would be a separate file on disc, containing details of several products, under the headings 'Description, Price, Product Code, VAT Code', and 'Discount Code'. If most invoices contained different products, a Product File would not be appropriate. In any event, for each invoice you are given the opportunity to manually add items.
5. Option to print name and address on invoice. Choose

no for pre-printed forms.

6. Option to Show VAT details on invoices.

7. Option to enter prices including or excluding VAT.

8. Whether details of a personal footnote should be asked for for each invoice.

9. Whether to be asked for carriage for each invoice.

10. Configuration. Virtually the whole of the configuration of the invoice printout can be altered by this option.

11. Configuration of the VAT codes. Up to 5 different VAT codes can be catered for.

12. Product and customer discount codes. Where a product file is used, Office can allow for both product and customer discounts. Five different discount code letters are used.

13. Set the default discount code.

14. Set up filenames of address and product files.

F - Filer menu.
Exit Office menu and call up Filer menu.

Q - Return to Protext.
Command mode. ●

WHERE TO STICK YOUR ROM'S   By IAN HIGHTON

Let's keep it simple, let's consider ROMDOS, UTOPIA and PROTEXT - all on ROM and PROSPELL on disc. Myself I find PROTEXT an invaluable tool as I do UTOPIA and now ROMDOS. I do have PROSPELL but I find that quite suitable in its disc form and so, although I'll mention it in this article, the main purpose is to explain where and why all these newfangled ROMs should reside. Anyway, the day came when I had to decide whether I should lose my old DD1 drive and have it make way for a super-duper 3.5" drive. Well I did have a ROMBOX, and I have always thought that the best thing to drive a 3.5" drive would be the ROM version of RAMDOS called ROMDOS. By coincidence it was about that time that my DD1 drive expired, so after some hard soul searching (and saving!) I finally sent off my cheque and back came my lovely new drive and ROM. Now, the drive won't work without the ROM, but as I also wanted to use my Arnor ROMs I soon found out that there are a few simple installation rules to be observed to be sure that everything worked properly together.

I was itching to get back to the happy situation of using one drive for my PROSPELL dictionary, and a second drive for my PROTEXT files. Quite frankly I was tired of all that laborious disc swapping that one disc drive had caused me! Smacking ROMs into a ROMboard requires some discipline - you can't just stick ROMS in your board in any old order! UTOPIA is a deeply wonderful utility and I didn't want to lose any of its features, just as I really wanted all the features of PROTEXT and PROSPELL available to me. All this of course requires a little planning. The first thing to note is that the ROMDOS chip lies at exactly the same address as the Amstrad CPM ROM (ROM 7) that is at address &A700. This means that ROMDOS just has to be inserted with a lower ROM number than ROM 7 or else ROMDOS won't interrupt ROM 7 when it should.

"But where does the PROTEXT ROM reside?" I hear you cry (or perhaps just mutter). Quite right too, but it's a little more complicated than that (ain't it always) because, for example, UTOPIA allows a simple CTRL[3] to get a CATalogue within PROTEXT. So for everything to work nicely, UTOPIA must be in a ROM number that is lower than the ROM number used by PROTEXT. But how low? Should it be lower than ROMDOS? No, because all ROMDOS commands will be intercepted by UTOPIA first and ROMDOS will become redundant. So we have to have ROMDOS in the lowest socket number, next should be UTOPIA, above that comes PROTEXT and right at the top comes the CPM ROM, (ROM 7 remember). In normal use you'll notice only one difference, and that will be that the UTOPIA command |RUN no longer works because it is being intercepted by ROMDOS. However the ROMDOS command RUN works just like the usual AMSDOS command so nothing is lost.

Anyway, if like me you have PROSPELL on disc, how do you start word processing? When you first fire up the dear old Arnold you should RUN PROSPELL as usual in drive A. That installs PROSPELL as an RSX and the dictionary disc should then be shoved (or put) into Drive A. Drive B (the 3.5" wonder drive with loads-a-memory) should be the drive for the PROTEXT files. Now enter PROTEXT (CTRL[7] in the UTOPIA command) and while in the command mode type |B <RTRN>. The | or bar symbol is obtained by pressing SHIFT and the @ key together. Now you will have set up PROTEXT so that documents will be saved to the B disc drive (3.5"), and calling SPELL from within PROTEXT will cause the dictionary disc (which will be in drive A, remember) to be read by PROSPELL. Wonderful innit? Anyhow, there are one or two points to be remembered when using this setup. Nothing daunting but important nevertheless.

First, the PROTEXT ERAse command will not work because it is intercepted by ROMDOS. This means you'll have to use the AMSDOS |ERA which is inconvenient but not "earth shattering"! If you're not going to use PROSPELL but are going directly into PROTEXT then, if you want the PROTEXT screen colours, you should note that UTOPIA CTRL[0] has to be used before entering PROTEXT as CTRL[0] won't work after CTRL[7]. UTOPIA TOKEN numbers f1,f3,f4,f5,f6,f7 and f9 all work in the PROTEXT command mode, and apart from the little problem with ERAse all PROTEXT commands will work as they should.

Happy typing!!! ●

MAIL ORDER SOFTWARE – HOW TO GET IT RIGHT.

By Dave Havard.

There are often letters of complaint in many magazines about mail order companies and the service, or lack of, which they supply. I do not intend to add to the complaints list, but instead would like to give a few tips to those who look warily at the idea of software at about one third off.

There are several things I look for before I even consider buying through mail order.

Firstly, does the company regularly advertise in computer magazines? In my experience, one off advertisements stand more chance of turning out to be bogus than regular advertisers. I choose those words carefully, as I also know there are many small businesses who can only advertise occasionally, and they all have to start somewhere.

This brings me on to my second check. Any advertisement, whether large or small, stands no chance of a response from me unless it is accompanied by a telephone number. This should be rung, to check the availability of any software, and to confirm the price and delivery. The response on the phone usually tells me whether the person at the other end is keen, helpful and well informed. It is this check that usually sorts out which smaller advertisements are worth following up.

Obviously, if there is no answer, or just an answering machine despite several calls over a few days, then there is little chance of speaking to anyone should a problem develop over the order.

Finally, have there been any letters of complaint, or praise printed, or any mentions of the company on the news pages of any magazines?

As I said earlier, I don't intend to add to the list of complainents, but I happily mention MJC Supplies of Hitchin, Herts (regular advertisers in CPC User) for their fast and considerate service. I have dealt with them on several occasions, and find that they do not make rash promises in order to secure a sale, but will explain why they do not carry certain items, and how long they expect certain out of stock items to be before they are delivered.

I also hear many good things about K&M Computers, Sandy Lane Centre, Skelmersdale, Lancs. ●

FOR SALE

Amstrad 6128, colour monitor, datacorder, mouse & Art Studio, light gun & joystick. Over 200 games on disc and tape (including compilations). Serious software includes Mini Office II, Instant Recall, plus others. Also included is original manual, control discs, 3 Intro to Basic manuals, 6 spare discs, and over 50 Amstrad computer magazines. All for £400.

Contact: S.Broom. Tel Bourne (0778) 423064

STARION

Reviewed by JOHN PACKHAM

How would you like to play a simulation shoot-em-up, and at the same time learn a little bit of history. Well, with STARION you can. The idea is this... ·

Your name is STARION and you've just left the Space Academy, and seeing as how you were a bright spark in school, you've been chosen to pilot the world's first timeship. Evil aliens have discovered time travel and are now creating havoc throughout history. It's your task to travel through time and put things right.

The space-time continuum is made up of 3 Time blocks, each made up of 9 Time grids, and each of these are made up of 9 Time zones. There are thus 243 Time zones to put in order.

As you fly to each time zone, you're faced with a number of alien ships which must be destroyed. As each is obliterated, a letter will materialize in space. Flying through this letter stores it in your cargo hold. When enough aliens have been zapped, you'll find that you have a number of letters to unjumble and make a word out of. When you think you've figured out this word, then it's off to the Time warp to select the appropriate Time zone in which you think this word belongs. When you're in the Time zone, then it's down to the Earth's surface.

A clue is given here and if you have the correct cargo/word, then that Time zone has been put right, and it's off to do battle again. If you haven't got the correct cargo, then it's off to do battle again, simply to enable you to reach the Time warp again.

When all 9 Time zones in a Time grid have been corrected, you'll have a nine letter word to unjumble, which then enables you to select another Time grid. Further words/passwords are presented as you progress, and I must admit, that I've only managed to complete 1 Time Grid (9 Time Zones).

Controls for the game can be either Joystick or Keyboard and can be re-defined if necessary. Positions can also be saved for later play if you get tired.

I must say that I liked this game. It gets a little repetitive, but then again, you do learn some interesting things along the way. The graphics remind me of Starstrike quite a bit with its cockpit view and 3D vector graphics, although the enemy do move pretty quickly in this one. It's an old game (originally from Melbourne House) so I can't really give a price. It's probably a budget title by now or on a compilation, so you'll have to look around. As I said, I like it, and maybe you will too. ●

GRAPHICS..........8
SOUND..............4 (basically just laser fire)
PLAYABILITY........8 (easy to get into and you just have to complete one more Time zone)
VALUE FOR MONEY....? (depends how much you pay)
OVERALL............8

ADVENTURE CHRONICLE

WITH DEBBY HOWARD

It has been exactly two years since I put paper to pen to bring you this column, or should I say digit to keyboard? I hope you have enjoyed my feeble attempts to bring a little adventuring into your life, and for those who have never been interested in adventuring, I at any rate hope that you have been tempted to at least give it a try. There are plenty to choose from, either from Public Domain or from the small distributors. The amount of adventures being released by the small distributors is on the increase all the time.Most of the new releases seem to be convertions from the Spectrum. One of the most well known small distributors is WOW Software, set up and created by Joan Pancott - a well known and much respected adventurer. The last time I counted how many adventures she had for sale it came to 42. For those of you who are interested in adventures games for children there are two that specialise in this subject from the collection, the first one being "The Last Snowman" written by M & MJ Crewdson and "The Big Top" by Ronny Slater. The Last Snowman is personalised for you, so it would make a suitable gift for the child it is intended for. Just one more remark about the children's adventures - they are suitable from the age of nine to ninety!

The latest news on the grapevine is that there is going to be an Amstrad adventure specialist magazine released soon, it is run by Paul Hunnisett. At the moment I am unaware of what sort of format it is going to take, or how successful it's going to be, but be assured I will inform you as soon as the details emerged.

As part of my new year resolutions, I am hoping to bring you more reviews of the adventures that can still be purchased from distributors. I would welcome any thoughts you have on any adventures that you have played, and if you are stuck on any adventure send me a stamped self addressed envelope and I'll try my best to help you out. If no SSAE is included then I will assume that it is intended for this column.

THE ANGELICUS ANSWER - Reviewed By Ann Robinson.

Available at last the long awaited sequel to the Angelicus Saga, but you don't have to have played Saga to enjoy this completely independent game. You continue in the role of Gamaluchad, a member of the Angelicus army. In Saga you rescued the squirrel of Angelicus from the clutches of space pirates, you now have to return to Skully (their home planet) to capture their leader Captain Morgan and bring him home to Angelicus for trial.

Unlike Saga, this is a one part game played entirely on the planet Skully. It is a relatively small game (approx 35 locations), but tightly packed with many interesting puzzles, red herrings, and a great diversity of locations incorporating dragons, squirrels, a magpie, a crow, a snake, Lily the Pink and a Fair!

A great game for an average adventurer like me to get stuck into, and if you haven't yet bought Saga the £6 disc for both games will keep you thoroughly entertained for days.

Written on GAC by Margret and Mike Crewdson. Available from WOW Software, £2 on tape & £4 on disc for all CPC's. Special offer - both Angelicus Saga & Angelicus Answer on disc for £6.

DANGER! ADVENTURER AT WORK! - written by Simon Avery & reviewed By Debby Howard.

There is no doubt about it, Simon has to be one the the best adventure writers on the Amstrad. In this adventure he surpasses himself. You play the part of an adventurer who is desperately looking for a quiet place to play your adventures.

Time is very precious, so for me to find an adventure that makes me put everything away until it is complete is a miracle in itself. And that is exactly what Simon has done...created a miracle! Well, almost anyway. Simon has the knack of knowing exactly what your input would be, even if it's not a logical one. The puzzles themselves are neither too hard or too easy, making it ideal for the novice to the more experienced.

DAAW was play-tested by Lorna Paterson, who is well known for her ability to spot the slightest mistake right down to a comma being in the wrong place. So you can be sure that you won't get any bad spelling or bugs in this adventure.

DAAW features many well known adventurers, which adds to the atmosphere. Although a couple of the names are rather cryptic, it doesn't take long to figure out who they are. If you want a funny, and well written adventure I would highly recommend this. Simons other adventures from WOW are high on my on my list as future buys.

From WOW Software, £2 on tape & £4 on disc. Written on the Quill, and text only. ●

Where to go: WOW Software, 78 Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9RS. TEL: 0305 784155 1pm to 10pm. Cheques payable to J.G. Pancott.

SOLUTION TO THE 'HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY' - By KEN DEAN

.....When you come out of the dark, you find yourself in the Lair of the dreaded Bugblatter Beast. You are here for a purpose, so you'll just have to do something about the Beast. Consulting the Guide tells you that Bugblatters are incredibly stupid, which is certainly the case. In the meantime, the Beast is bearing down on you, demanding your name. Don't be shy, introduce yourself, then run like heck East out of the Lair.

Pick up one of the sharp stones, and then cover your head with the towel. Old Buggy is so dumb, he thinks that, since you can't see him, he can't see you. But, this won't last for very long, so you have to fool him, and quickly. Lucky for you, this isn't hard.

Carve your name on the Bugblatter's memorial. When he sees the name there, he will think he's already eaten you, which is why he can't see you ('dumb' may be an understatement here). The Beast will then curl up for a nap, leaving you free (after removing the towel!) to re-enter the Lair and then go Southwest.

Here you will find the skeleton of some poor soul clutching a Nutrimat Computer Interface Card. Take the card, and just wait around for awhile. You will be mistakenly captured as a Bugblatter Beast (talk about insults!), but you will eventually be freed, and have some other adventures along the way, before you find yourself back in the dark again.

When you get back to the HOG, you can drop the asteroid paint chipper and the interface card in the Fore End before going up to the Bridge (you'll need the interface later, but there's no need to drag it around with you now). Once on the Bridge, push the switch again, and you'll be back in the dark.

TRILLIAN

The dark ends with something liquidy to the touch. In fact, you find your fingers bathing in a glass of wine. Coming to your senses, you realise that you are now Trillian, and you are at the party where you (she?) met both Arthur and a mysterious man named Phil.

Take a good look at Arthur, and you will see he has a huge ball of fluff on his jacket. Just what you want, but your hands are full. Drop the plate you're holding, and get the fluff. Open your handbag and put the fluff in it, then get the plate again (otherwise, the pushy hostess won't leave you alone).

Now, all you need to do is wait, trying not to be bored to tears by Arthur's feeble attempts at conversation. Give Phil a look, and shortly he will come over, and take you out to his scooter. As you blast off, everything once again becomes....dark.

FORD

Now you find yourself standing in a country lane, holding a satchel. The place looks familiar. In fact, it's the lane outside Arthur's home, and this time you seem to be Ford Prefect.

Those Vogons will be arriving soon, so there's not much time. Open the satchel, and take the satchel fluff,

the towel, and the sub-etha signalling device. Go North, and there you will see Arthur lying in front of the bulldozer.

With a certain feeling of deja vu, you offer him the towel. However, instead of taking it, he asks you about his home. You suddenly realise what is going on (not that it really matters, considering what will shortly happen!). In a moment of magnanimity (or possibly madness), you decide to take Arthur hitchhiking with you.

But first, you have to deal with Prosser. Go over to him, and ask him to lie down in front of the bulldozer. He'll make a little fuss, but you'll manage to persuade him. Now, you and Arthur can hurry over to the pub, and drink some beer (remember to buy peanuts).

Sit there, drinking your beer (no more than three!), meditating on why Arthur is taking the imminent demise of the world so calmly, until the house falls and Arthur goes tearing out.

Follow him to the ruins of his home. Drop the satchel, and put the satchel fluff on top of it. Now wait. The Vogon ships will appear, the winds will pick up, and you'll start fumbling with the device.

Oops! You just dropped it! Fortunately, it rolls over by Arthur, who picks it up and looks at it. Also fortunately, Arthur manages to push the right button, and everything becomes....dark.

ZAPHOD

You come out of the dark to find that you're now Zaphod Beeblebrox, the President of the Universe. In fact, you're on your way to steal the Heart of Gold (with a little help from Trillian).

As your speedboat zooms towards its destination, search the seat carefully and you will find seat fluff and a key. The key opens the toolbox, but you don't need to do that now. Just make sure you take the box; you might be needing it later.

Now, if you continue on your present course, you'll never make it between the cliffs and the spire (or maybe you know that already). The trick is to make the auto-pilot do the hard work, so steer the boat towards the rocky spire.

The spire gets closer...closer...closer...and then, at last(!) the auto pilot wakes up, just in time, and steers you safely! Whew, that was a close one. Ceremonies will be held.

Wait around, enjoying the cheers of the crowd (read the banner if you like), until Trillian appears. She will jump out of the crowd, and hold a gun to one of your heads. The guards are a little hesitant about what to do, so now's your chance: tell them not to shoot.

After a few moments, they will drop their rifles into a pile...just what you've been waiting for. Tell Trillian to shoot the rifles. As the weapons disappear, you and Trillian make a break for the HOG! You made it! But...everything seems to be getting...dark. ●

[Continued next issue.]

TAPE PD SOFTWARE REVIEW

With GORDON WOOLLISCROFT

This is the second set of reviews of some of the programs to be found on the Tape Number 1 (Games/Utilities) available from the PD tape library. The opinions expressed are my own, and in some instances come from personal experience.

ELECTBIL.BAS

This is a little program that saves you doing all the calculations on paper, and gives you an estimate of your bill at the end of a quarter. You enter all amounts in pence, eg £1 = 100. Then you are asked to enter in the Normal Rate information, consisting of the last reading and the present reading from your meter, plus the cost per unit for these (obtain this from your last bill). If you have an Economy rate then you are asked to repeat this information, as well as the Standing Charge, and then enter the number of days of the quarter that have expired from your last bill. The maximum is 91, so use a calendar for this information. The result produced will be the bill estimated for the whole quarter. Quite a good little program to use when your computer is on line, but I am not sure whether it is worth the effort to set it all up just for this.

FLAG-1.BAS

When run, this program draws on the screen the Australian flag which is alright if you have a colour monitor, but I am not sure what it looks like on a green screen. As it is in Basic, one can list the program and look at the various sections as they are all headed by a REM statement (for the learners a REM or REMinder statement is inserted to help the programmer and user to identify certain sections of the program. However they do not appear in or affect the program). One can then look at the portions of the program that draw the stars, and also the Union Jack. If you have a printer, by typing in LIST £8 you can get a printed copy so that you could use similar programs to draw other items.

LASBAL.BAS

A more testing type of wall game produced by a UAUG Member. It is operated either by using the cursor keys, or by using a Joystick. I found that, for me anyway, it takes quite a lot of skill to position the hole in such a way to allow the ball to pass through, and begin to destroy the wall. A program to have fun with!

CARDCASS.BAS + BUSY.RSX

This is a program that I wrote some little time ago, following an enquiry from a member for an easy program to print out inserts for cassette cases giving details of the contents of the cassette. All instructions are included in the program, and as it is in Basic you can look at its' layout. It is best to load the BUSY.RSX program first, and then run CARDCASS.BAS so that the computer then checks your printer is on line (ie ready for printing).

You are then prompted to type in one line of text at a time (maximum 60 characters) which you can edit. On pressing ENTER the line is printed, and can no longer be altered. This continues for 15 lines with a prompt each time, followed by a prompt to type in the spine title. Finally, you are invited to enter 5 more lines of text before the program ends and prints a line at the end of the insert. If you cut along the lines, the insert will just fit into a cassette case. It is possible to have various layouts by planning them beforehand especially as the lines remain on the screen during the program. I would recommend some practice on scrap paper first! (For the interested, the BUSY RSX was created using Smogware Systems RSX-LIB utility - Ed).

BIOCHART.BAS

This program is a little bit like looking at your horoscope for the next month, although how true and correct it is I would not like to say. Perhaps someone would like to be objective for a month, and let me know how close it is to the real thing. You are asked to enter two sets of information - Year/Month/Date of birth of yourself, and Year/Month/Day required. After a very short time the program produces in turn 3 different colour line graphs for the month from the day required relating to your:- Physical Cycle, Emotional Cycle & Intellectual Cycle.

There is no provision for this screen to be printed out, but I feel that one may be able to do so with a Screen Dump program providing one notes which line refers to which Cycle.

MORTGAGE.BAS

A very useful program in these days of moving interest rates, and also the present economic climate, as it prints to either the screen or the printer information which shows the amounts paid/interest paid, and the amount of the Capital repaid for any number of years in the future.

All that you need to supply is the amount of the Principal, the rate of interest, the amount you will be paying monthly, and the year of commencement. As a result you can, by trying different figures for the rate of interest and for the amount being paid, obtain forward projections as a result of increases/decreases in either or both. Well worth trying out! ●

WANTED

"How to get the most out of your printer" by Ian Penfold.

Contact: C.Russell, 57 Brookside Close, South Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 9AW.

RIBBON REFRESH REVISITED

By GORDON WOOLLISCROFT

Some little time ago I wrote an article for the CPC User giving an initial report on the can of Caspell Ribbon Refresh that I had purchased promising a later report. Well here it is!

As I mentioned in the original article, I have three ribbons for my Citizen 120D+ which I use in rotation, re-inking as necessary when the printout needs "BOLD" or "NLQ" to produce a readable text. After one or two trials to get the right amount of ink on the ribbon I have found that the ribbons are "refreshed" and last for some time before requiring another dose from the can. In fact the current one in use has been in the printer for the last 4 months, and has still some life in it. Of course a lot depends on the amount and type of printing done - a lot of Desk Top Publishing printouts will take more out of the ribbon than just letters or reports.

Is it worth it? Well as I mentioned I paid half price for my can (£5.00) as I bought it second hand via a private advert, and have re-inked all 3 ribbons at least 2 times each. If I had sent them off for re-inking I estimate that I would have paid about £10.50, so for me it was worth it. Also there is still quite a reasonable amount left in the can for future use. If therefore you are prepared to put up with the work required, then it would be worth it even at the current price for cans of re-inking fluid.

Are there any disadvantages you ask? There is the problem that occurs for a short time after re-inking of a slight smudge at the top centre of the paper when you are using single sheets due to some ink going onto the print head, but this disappears with use and does not occur with continuous paper.

Occasionally if you have overdone the ink you do get a rather heavy printout and if the ink is uneven then the printout is also uneven for a time. However the situation soon settles down and the printout evens out. Once or twice also I find that if I have not used the printer for some time I have to wind the ribbon on as the exposed section gets a little dry but again this soon settle down.

So that is the position as I have found it - I would probably get another can when the current one has run out although by then it may be necessary for me to get new ribbons for as I mentioned originally this process will not rejuvenate your old tatty ribbons. In closing, and provided the Editor allows, I have reproduced the main parts of the original article for those newer members who may not have seen it (erm, okay - ED):-

Preparation beforehand is most important for reasonable results - it does help if you have a very old ribbon case that you can open carefully just to see what it looks like inside and how it is fastened. Some have a pad inside that re-inks the ribbon as it passes and one could possibly spray this, but I would not like to guarantee this as I have had no experience of this type of ribbon (yes, you do spray the pad - ED).

Anyway on to the preparation - do remember that you are using a form of dye in a spray can which will spread and stain. I therefore carry out the process in my workshop where I have plenty of room and good lighting. I make a spray 'bay' of newspapers, about 6 layers thick forming an open fronted box with up to 18" high sides and back (a cardboard box could be used, lined with newspaper). Obtain a supply of paper towels or old cloths for mopping up/cleaning the casing after the re-ink operation, and if you can work in them a pair of disposable plastic gloves. I also wear an old coat as protection for my clothing in case of accidents.

Now remove the ribbon case and ribbon from the printer mechanism using the instruction book if necessary, and check to see how the casing is secured together. Usually the top is pressed onto the base and can be separated by carefully inserting a small screw driver between the two surfaces. By moving around the top you can usually open it a little at a time until it can be lifted clear leaving the ribbon and any mechanism in the base. Put the top in a safe place and examine the ribbon track and the mechanics inside, making notes if necessary on the first occasion so that all stays in place or can be replaced. Place the ribbon still in the base at the back of the "spray booth".

Shake the can well - for at least one minute (timed) or longer if it has been stored for some time, and read all the instructions on the can before use - note that most sprays should NOT be used in an enclosed space. Attach the tube supplied to the nozzle and holding the end of the tube at least 6" from the ribbon spray in short bursts over the length of the ribbon, wetting it thoroughly, but taking care not to allow the spray to "blow" the ribbon out of the case.

Allow the ink to soak in for at least half an hour to one hour and re-examine the ribbon. If it does not appear to be slightly wet then respray and allow to soak again. Then carefully replace the top ensuring the ribbon run is alright and lock it in place - this is where your cloths and gloves come in use. Wipe all over the casing checking for any fluid still running out of any holes in the base and ensure that the top is secure. I then manually run the ribbon through the case in order to spread the fluid and to ensure that the ribbon runs smoothly. Check for any more excess fluid running out (I leave for a day covered with paper towels) before re-fitting it to the printer. Then you can run a test print to see if the process has been a success. You may need to re-spray the ribbon if the print out is still rather light. As to how much you have to spray on each time, you can only discover by trial and error. ●

THE BASIC ELECTRIC BILL

By TONY BAKER

If you have been learning to program in BASIC by studying the recent articles in the magazine, you might now be wondering what kind of programs you could try writing. This article shows how to write a program to calculate your electricity bill, by using a few very simple BASIC commands.

The first step is to list the OUTPUTS - ie the information you want the computer to display. Having decided on these, you can then list the INPUTS - ie the information that the computer will need to be given. In this example I suggest the following: OUTPUTS - meter readings, units used, cost of electricity and total bill. INPUTS - meter readings, cost per unit (usually in pence) and quarterly charge (usually in pounds).

The INPUTS are the variables - ie amounts that will change from time to time and are represented by a letter or group of letters. Other variables used by this program will represent number of units used, the cost of electricity and the total bill. I prefer to use a single letter for each variable, but in this example words will be used as this makes the program easier to read:-

    Previous Reading = previous
    Present Reading = present
    Number of Units used = units
    Cost per Unit (in pence) = pence
    Quarterly Charge (in pounds) = charge
    Total Bill = total
    Cost of Electric (correct to 2 dec. places) = cost

Having decided on the above variables the program will be as follows (each section will be explained in turn):

```
10 REM INPUTS & CALCULATIONS
20 CLS
30 LOCATE 13,2
40 PRINT"ELECTRICITY BILL"
50 LOCATE 13,3
60 PRINT"--------------"
```

Line 10 is just a REMark, to remind the programmer what the next section does. It is ignored by the computer when the program is run. Line 20 clears the screen. Line 30 places the cursor 13 spaces to the right and 2 lines down before the title is printed.

```
70 LOCATE 1,6
80 INPUT "What was the previous meter reading";previous
90 LOCATE 1,8
100 INPUT "What is the present meter reading";present
110 LOCATE 1,10
120 INPUT "What is the price per unit (in pence)";pence
130 LOCATE 1,12
140 INPUT "What is quarterly charge (in pounds)";charge
```

Line 80 prints the message within the inverted commas, and waits for a number to be typed in and stored in the variable 'previous'. Lines 100 - 140 repeat the process.

```
150 IF present<previous THEN LET present=present+10000
```

```
160 LET units=present-previous
170 LET cost=units*pence/100
180 LET total=cost+charge
```

Line 160 gives the variable 'units', the value which is the difference between the Present and Previous meter readings. Line 170 calculates the cost of the units used, and by dividing by 100 converts to pounds. The variable 'cost' is then given this value. Line 180 lets the variable 'total' equal the sum of the cost and the quarterly charge. No I have not forgotten line 150!

```
200 REM SCREEN DISPLAY
210 CLS
220 LOCATE 13,2
230 PRINT"ELECTRICITY BILL"
240 LOCATE 13,3
250 PRINT"--------------"
260 LOCATE 1,6
270 PRINT"Previous Meter Reading = ";previous
280 LOCATE 1,8
290 PRINT"Present Meter Reading = ";present
300 LOCATE 1,10
310 PRINT"Units Used = ";units
320 LOCATE 1,14
330 PRINT"Cost of electricity = ";USING "####.##";cost
340 LOCATE 1,18
350 PRINT"Total Bill = ";USING "####.##";total
360 LOCATE 1,24
370 INPUT"Calculate another Bill (Y/N)";a$
380 IF a$="Y" OR a$="y" THEN GOTO 10
390 CALL &0000
```

Lines 200 to 350 display all the calculated values. Lines 330 and 350 show the PRINT USING command. This example rounds all decimals to two decimal places, and caters for amounts up to 9999.99. If your electricity bill is likely to be higher than this, you would need more than four #'s before the decimal point! Line 370 waits for a letter to be typed in and then assigns this to the string variable a$. Note that the dollar sign is used for characters whereas our previous variables represented numbers. Line 380 returns the program to the start if the answer is Y or y. Any other letter will result in a jump to line 390 which resets the computer. WARNING!!! Save the program BEFORE running it, otherwise you might lose all your work!!

What does line 150 do? This caters for meter readings where the Present Reading has passed the maximum 9999 and passed zero again. If the Present Reading is smaller than the Previous Reading then 10000 is added to it, giving a correct reading for the number of Units used. Without it the program would give a negative number. ●

STRATEGY & SIMULATION

WITH DAVE HAVARD

This months column is fully taken up with what has to be one of the more exciting developments in years for the Amstrad Strategist. No more waiting for the rare occurrence of a wargame to hit the mail order ads (or even rarer - the shelves). Malcolm McQuaid, of SPM Software has made available his Wargame Creator, opening up all sorts of possibilities for Wargaming on the Amstrad to develop and grow.

One has only to consider what the Quill did for Adventuring, before being followed by GAC and PAW. There are now more adventures being released than at any time in the history of the Amstrad. The question is, does General Military Simulator have what it takes to set the ball rolling? Will that ball become an avalanche?

GENERAL MILITARY SIMULATOR - SPM SOFTWARE

One of the worse things about owning a CPC is the lack of strategy software, particularly wargames, available.

SPM Software from County Durham have come to the rescue with General Military Simulator, a wargame creator which allows you to recreate battles of the past, present or future.

The Simulator comes complete with two scenarios for you to play, and they are both open to examination when used in conjunction with the utilities elsewhere on the disc or tape. This is in fact a recommended way to learn how to use the creator program. By examining the method used to create the two scenarios, and discovering how some of the features of them have been implemented, things become much clearer. This is not to say that the manual needs expanding. It is well written, and straightforward to follow. It begins with a short introduction, followed by the method used in playing the two scenarios: Tank Attack, and The Italian Campaign. Then it moves on to the Creator, including sections on Icon Design, Map Design, Terrain Types, Unit Editing, Victory Conditions, Computer Opponent, and how Battle Calculations are made. Finally there is a description of the two Introductory Scenarios, setting the scene.

Looking at the program in more detail, the scope is plenty wide enough to satisfy most prospective authors. For example, up to 60 different icons may be designed. These are taken from 6 banks of 10, with (for example) banks 1 to 4 being used for terrain, bank 5 for units of one side, and bank 6 for units of another.

The display is in Mode 1, allowing four colours to be used. With the icon designer allowing stippling, shading, etc, this is enough to not only suit most tastes, but is a good restriction in discouraging garish combinations.

The Map is a standard 40x25 squares, with a scrolling window of 13x11. It's possible to obtain a full, reduced in detail, overview of the whole map at any time during the conflict. There is also the facility to switch off the information display, for faster scrolling.

There are five different terrain types immediately available to the author. These may be modified to create up to 40 different types, from no resistance to movement, to impassable to everything, with a full range in between. It even allows the recreation of Naval battles!

Three full pages are given over to unit editing, again displaying the depth of scope available. It's possible to create up to 100 different units, each with a name up to 10 characters. The Class of each unit can be defined, taking into account action points (0-99), action points per move (0-99), action points per attack (0-99), max force (0-9999), and max resupply (0-9999). There are options to define the strength, quality, and morale of the unit, plus a dig-in option for extra defence.

The Victory Conditions are defaulted to one side losing all of its units, or all turns being taken. However it is possible to assign certain squares as Victory Squares, with one or both sides set the objective of occupying them. Up to 10 may be used.

The computer opponent is an impressive concept, with the option being available to the author to assign certain roles to the computers units. These fall under the categories of Defender, Attacker, Blitz, Reserve, and Capture. Considering these may be spread between the units, or all units being given the same Role, there is again enormous scope for scenario design.

The short section on Battle Calculations shows how easy it can be to describe this often mind boggling mathematical miasma. It is easily understood, and helps with the logical selection of various unit statistics.

If there is a fault, it would be the system of having to go through a menu when playing to select the various options available. Also, the scrolling isn't the fastest I've seen. Nevertheless, these pale into insignificance when one considers the huge scope for design which SPM have made available to the prospective Wargame Author.

The speed with which a scenario can be created, tested, and tweaked, giving a logical, playable battle, with or without an intelligent computer opponent, is a credit to Malcolm McQuaid the man behind SPM Software. I can recommend this piece of software to anybody who fancies themselves at making wargaming on the Amstrad a regular alternative to blasting everything in sight!

General Military Simulator costs £14.95 on tape or disc. The price is reduced to £12.95 for UAUG members (not THAT expensive when you realise you could recoup that by selling 5 copies of your game at £2.99 each!).

SPM Software,
32a, Albert Street,
County Durham, SR7 7RJ. ●

HOW TO WRITE A WARGAME

Now that SPM have introduced the General Military Simulator, there will doubtless be a rush of enthusiasts clamouring to write the battle that saved the world. The trouble with this is that many of them will fall by the wayside, due to having more enthusiasm than wisdom. There are several do's and don'ts to writing anything, and Wargames are no exception.

Firstly, spend some time thinking of your Scenario. Will it be set in the past, present or future? The past holds many possibilities. The Romans fought everywhere, as did many other imperialist nations in their day. What would have happened if Hitler HAD invaded England? Then there are all the little known theatres of war, from Crete to the many Pacific islands taken and lost by the Japanese. The past could include Korea, or Vietnam.

The present? Well, there is the Gulf conflict, and even the Falklands Campaign is recent enough.

The future? Thankfully the Cold War is over, and we can now concentrate on a few comparatively minor loonies like the one in Northern Africa (who's that? - Ed).

The future of course includes planetary exploration, and conflict. Star Trek may revolve around one ship (or it's tubby Captain), but there would have been many battles in setting up and defending the Federation.

At the same time, an eye should be given to scale. Is it practical, within the constraints of 64k (there are a lot of tape based 464 users out there), to recreate World War 2? Or even D-Day. It depends how accurate, and on what scale you want things to be.

Having mentioned accuracy, it is important when basing a scenario on a historical event to get your facts correct. Take a trip to the local library. You will not only get some good ideas from the books on historical battles, but also the information necessary to maintain some accuracy. Remember, on most occasions BOTH sides expected to win, or at least achieve certain objectives. In which case, the forces, units and their relative strengths will be ideal places to start when designing stats for the forces in your masterpiece.

This takes us to Balance. One of the points mentioned earlier, was what would have happened if Hitler HAD invaded England. NOT what would have happened if he had 30,000,000 tanks! A balance has to be achieved if you are to make a scenario interesting and challenging.

It isn't necessary to equip each side with the same forces of the same strengths, but some sort of trade off is necessary for the player to believe what he is doing is reasonably possible, given a good strategy.

Okay, so you've decided on the Time Period and the Scale. You've researched your facts, and decided on the relative strengths, starting positions, strategies of the two sides, and Victory conditions. Now is not the time to start typing it all in. Not yet anyway. How about a map? If you don't draw it out, keeping the whole thing within a certain area (say 40 X 25 Squares), you will find the whole thing just gets bigger and bigger. Get hold of some squared paper, or draw a grid. Then rough out your map, putting features in the squares where they should be historically (roughly), or where they will be in the future (imagination time - but be logical. You don't get much forest cover in a desert).

Once the map is roughed out, spend some time thinking about terrain, and whether the units you intend to use are suited to this area. Is the scale about right?

Assuming all is well, decide on which colours you want to have for the map and units. They should go well together, and neither freak out the player or strain his eyes. Different effects can be created using stippling, shading or other methods. Look at some of the graphics in other games. Instead of just admiring them (or hating them), pay attention to how they've been achieved.

Similarly, the colours and designs for the units need some consideration. The colours chosen shouldn't clash with the map, but should be easily seen. They should be different for each force, but this can be achieved by using the same colours....just swap the paper and ink colours over. There is also a convention which is widely used, showing the opposite forces facing in opposite directions (they usually face each other).

When designing the icons, for the map or units, do you want an overhead view, or a side on view. It is common in Wargames to have the map as an overhead view, but the units of each force as a side on view.

When designing the actual icons, remember that although you are spending a long time working on this, a player will want to know what is happening instantly. A tank should resemble a tank, not a cabbage or frying pan. Similarly, different infantry units need to be designed with subtle differences if they have relative differences in strength or ability.

Looking back, almost all of these thoughts could fit into the description of Presentation. Accuracy, Logic, Colour and Design of Map and Unit Icons.

Almost the last thing to do is what most enthusiastic beginners do first....typing in all the Unit details. This should be written down first as well, as it is easier to see the bones of a concept take place on paper than on screen.

Once all this has been done, only one thing remains, and this can take as long as all the rest....playtest it, and debug it. By debugging, I mean correct all the little bits that aren't quite right. The starting positions are incorrect, one unit consistently beats everything else out of sight, the unit icons would be better if..., the victory conditions are too difficult, or easy, there aren't enough turns. Each of these can be corrected by tweaking a Stat, or changing a couple of pixels in an icon, or altering the victory conditions.

When all is complete, write down the Scenario, Objectives, Rules & Conditions, and give it to a friend or two to playtest. Then send it to me to review! ●

THE DISC PD COLUMN

WITH RICHARD SERGEANT

My February 1992 issue of CPC User eventually arrived (at long last) first post on the 18th (not my fault this time! - Ed). After giving our beloved magazine a quick scan, it prompted me to knuckle down and write this piece for the next issue, and I'm still knuckling three weeks later.

Firstly, the library files (both PROTEXT & BASIC versions) are now so large, that they need both sides of a disc to hold details of the complete contents. In future, if you send me a disc and ask for the LIBINDEX you will only get ONE version, also if you fail to specify the format, remember the default is PROTEXT.

Yesterday, I had a long phone call from Clive Bellemy (The new boss of WACCI). He told me that he was sending, large amounts of new PD our way, so watch this space for further details. Clive and I both agree that there isn't any clash of interest between the PD sections of UAUG and WACCI, so the future PD cooperative scene between our two organisations looks pretty rosy, especially as the contents of our club PD library stands to benefit.

Since I last wrote, the library has received a host of new material. My first recommendation is for a CPM Plus program called PRINTIT. This useful printer (Epson compatible) utility was written by the same team that produced SCRIVNER. PRINTIT allows you to print your text file out in an interesting variety of different condensed fonts. It can be found on PD 33/2. Also, included on the same disc are loads of PRINTIT demo files and a comprehensive 40 odd page manual, to help you get started. PD Disc Librarian's Rating 8/10.

My second recommendation this month is another serious (database) type of program, called RAMBASE 3 (PD 17/5). This is the very latest version, we already have RAMBASE (PD 17/5) and RAMBASE 2 (PD 23/2), and like RAMBASE 2 it can only be used on a 6128, as it makes use via BANKMAN.BIN of all that extra memory. PD Disc Librarian's Rating 9/10.

Two other databases are now available (both CPM), DQB (PD 32/4) and PCFILE (PD 33/1). DQB is not dissimilar to dBASE2 as it incorporates and uses its own programming language. As a dbase user I got to grips with it fairly quickly, however I'm not so sure that the less experienced will be quite so lucky. A version of PCFILE has been in our library for sometime, it is now complete. The missing file PCSORT has been found, plus a file called OS2AMS.COM, it is suggested that this is run before using PCFILE, as it sets up the program for the correct screen configuration.

At this point, I would like to thank everyone who has donated PD Software:-

1) First out of the bag this month is Thomas Walton who sent in some betting programs. See PD 16/2

2) Al "The L Plate" Cooper has once again (Updated January 1992) sent in some revisions for his printer utility programs. See PD 22/3 and 17/3.

3) Bill Trice, has bestowed to the library a file called PLANET.BAS (Just watch the Heavens revolving). I added it to disc PD 16/2.

4) Ed Pickin is the chap responsible for finding PCSORT.COM, this file completes the PC-FILE suite of programs. He also sent in the DBQ database. See PD 32/4 and 33/1.

5) Bob Blanshard sent me a pile of PCWorld PD, such as PRINTIT (PD 33/2) and MAXISWEEP (PD 33/3).

6) Derek Hyland from the Republic of Ireland has donated some PD that originated from the DARTSMA PD Library. See PD 32/2 and 32/3.

7) Ronnie Baird sent the library the new update of (6128 only) RAMBASE 3, find it on PD 17/5.

8) Dennis Anthes has been playing with one of our early programs BREAK (PD 2/5). He has produced a version that will now run on a 464. All the new extra files have been added to the original PD 2/5 disc.

9) Ernest Freestone, has also raided his collection and sent me a massive amount of material that has originated from either WACCI or PCWorld, also worthy of a note. On PD 34/1 and 34/2 is a selection of many programs he has written himself. The discs containing this generous donation are: PD 33/4, 34/3, 34/4, 35/1, 35/2, 35/3, 35/4.

10) Paul Dwerryhouse has excelled himself once again, hard on the heels of his PDP Spreadsheet (PD 23/1). He has produced a spell checker program called ISPELL (PD 36/1). This is a 6128 machine only program.

11) Lastly this month, a new member Veronica Petter has written a font designer program FONTDES, I have added the new files to PD 16/2. Now as a challenge to all you budding software reviewers, she has asked me if members would be willing to try out this little proggy, and report back with any constructive criticism. I look forward to reading your opinions.

It has come to light that PRINTMASTER (PD 29/2 and 29/3) is supplied with all the files marked READ ONLY. After making your backup (and before installing this program), make all the files on the working disc READ WRITE. Despite the notes on the disc, I personally can't get this program to work on a single drive system.

Only send me good quality branded discs for copying. Members using 3.5" discs, please verify your discs after formatting. This will reduce the risk of disc failure. Some cheap unbranded 3.5" discs are quite dodgy.

You may send me up to three 3" discs (6 selections) or one RAMDOS D20 3.5" (4 selections) for copying each month. I have been asked about supplying DSDD discs in the MS800 format. Well, I have now had the chance to evaluate this operating system, and to cut a long story short as far as I'm concerned this format is unreliable and I do not have the necessary hardware to run it properly. So, I'm afraid MS800 will not be added to the list of formats currently available.

I can supply brand new AMSOFT/MAXELL discs at £3.50 each (cheques payable to UAUG). This price includes 2 selections from the library and all postage and packing. One last point, please send your discs in a good quality jiffy bag and enclose a return self addressed sticky label plus (sufficient) return postage. ●

FIRING UP YOUR TASWORD KEYS

By PAT HANNON

Tasword - definitely the most used program within my circle. Used so much that I am surprised it has not worn out. Just everyone now has it set up the same way. The set-up was designed by a father-in-law who has just started his fourth book; experience to the nth degree and everyone agrees by usage that they can't do better.

These function keys are used by pressing down CTRL and the numeric key number. Try holding CTRL and f0 - if you get Amsword's name and address then the chances are you have not discovered this facility offered by Tasword.

To change it just go into Basic, list the program and edit the line that displays the address. I have numbered it as line 20 and my function setup is:

20 KEY 0,STRING$(55,243) + CHR$(1) + "Nth Degree " + CHR$(13) + "14 Tasword Rd.," + CHR$(13) + "Greenway" + CHR$(13) + "Greenland"

Then save the Tasword loader program by typing SAVE "TASWORD" and press RETURN. Now reload Tasword (after switching the computer off and then on again). When you press CTRL and F0 your name and address should now be typed on the screen. The manual does describe this procedure in greater detail and probably more clearly than I have done so please read it.

However setting up the function keys can go a lot further than that - Mr Nth Degree has set up Tasword to do the following all at the press of a key:

F1 Resets the left margin to 5
Resets the right margin to 75
Turns Right Justify off
Turns paging on
Takes the top help screen off

This is the longest of all the functions that are assigned to function keys and is:
30 KEY 1 CHR$(6) + CHR$(19) + CHR$(250) + STRING$ (4,243) + CHR$(1) + STRING$(70,243) + CHR$(4) + CHR$(250) + CHR$(190) + CHR$(183)

F2 This is the key to use when saving and is as follows:
40 KEY 2,CHR$(184)+"S"+CHR$(13)

F3 This is the key for printing and is as follows:
50 KEY 3,CHR$(184)+"P"+CHR$(13)

F4 This is the loading key and is as follows:
60 KEY 4,CHR$(184)+"L"+CHR$(13)

F9 This key is used for undeleting the many deletions (and is very often used) It is setup as follows:
110 KEY 9,CHR$(228) ●

THE OPINION POLL RESULTS

Thirty eight people replied to the opinion poll, so the views should be varied enough. Thanks again to everyone who replied. I only picked the 'interesting' results to show, for reasons of space.

3) The average age of a UAUG member is 45. The youngest who answered was 13, the oldest 77. The largest group represented were the 31 to 41 year olds.

4) Out of the 38 members who replied, only 4 were female.

7) 27% use their CPC to help with their work/job. This varied from doing the occasional report, to running the entire business with it.

8) The machine type/distribution was as follows: 3 own basic CPC 464's; 5 own 464's with a drive attached; 3 own 464's upgraded with a 6128 chip; 3 own 664's; 25 own 6128's; 3 own a 6128 Plus; 1 owns a 464 & 664; 3 own a 464 & 6128; 1 owns a 664 & 6128; 3 own two 6128's; and 1 owns a PC1640.

9) 10 people have computers others than CPC's, mainly bought after the Amstrad. These ranged from ZX81's to Liberator Word processors.

10) Average time of owning the CPC is 4.5 years, with 50% of members having it as their first computer.

11) 34 out of the 38 people had a printer, with a couple having two or more. First place (11 owners) was taken by the Amstrad DMP 2000. Second place went to the Citizen 120D (4 owners). Joint third went to the Amstrad LQ 3500di, and the Star LC-10 (both with three owners).

12) The main use of the printer was for word-processing, but it broke down into sub divisions. Letter writing, producing catalogues, writing books, document processing, all came under the word-processing heading. Other uses were for DTP, business stuff (spreadsheets, etc), program listing, and database work.

13 & 14) Only four people owned a modem, and two of them never use it. The other two use it once a week on average.

15) The clear winner here (not counting printers) was a memory expansion unit, with 14 people owning them. Next (12 owned) was the good old hackers tool - the Multiface. There were also fair amounts of 8-bit printer ports, mice, rombox's, second 3" & 3.5" drives (both equal), along with some other bits and bobs. Only one person owned Brunword on ROM, and only one person had an EPROM programmer (and I want one too!).

16) The most popular 'if I had the money' add-on, was a 3.5" second drive, with 14 out of the 38 wanting one (not counting the nine who already had one). Bringing up the rear was a second 3" drive.

17) Computer supplies bought were mostly 3" discs. People expected to pay between £1 and £2.60 per disc.

18) Twenty three people said they could program in Basic (out of 38), five could program in machine code. Two each for Fortran, Pascal, CPM, Forth & Cobol. One for Logo and C.

19) The main 'items of interest' were programming, DTP & word processing. All the other subjects were well supported too: games, CPM, business & utilities to name a tiny fraction.

20) The 'how much do you like the subject' question. The first number is the total scored (out of a possible 380), and the number in brackets is the average number it scored (out of ten):-

Comms (modems, etc) - 88 (2.3)
Word Processing - 301 (8)
Databases - 217 (5.7)
Home Accounts - 122 (3.2)
Business Accounts - 79 (2)
Desk Top Publishing - 238 (6.3)
CAD (Computer Aided Design) - 132 (3.5)
Graphics/Art - 202 (5.3)
Educational programs - 168 (4.4)
Spreadsheets - 156 (4.1)
Games - 200 (5.3)
Programming (mostly Basic) - 220 (5.8)
Utilities - 252 (6.6)

21) The new piece of serious software most people would buy, was a new DTP program - one that would work with both 9 & 24 pin printers, and that used ALL the available memory to give a higher print resolution. Most of the other choices were utilities of one kind or another (hacking, printer drivers, etc). Someone wanted a Utility that would read/write Spectrum tapes.

22) £37.05 was spent per year (average) on games, £49.58 on serious software, and £86.45 on hardware.

23) 17 out of the 38 use Mail order companies all the time, 12 fairly frequently, and 2 never order by mail.

24) The average length of time that the people had been a member of the group was between 1 & 2 years. The majority (20) were in their first year as UAUG members, but we did have one 'old timer' of six years.

25) The vast majority of the members heard of the Group from the pages of Amstrad Action, with a number of them introduced to it by 'word of mouth'.

26) Not many people have used the UAUG PD libraries on any sort of frequent basis, although two members did state that they ordered stuff very frequently.

27) 12 have used a commercial PD library, the outright winner being Adventure PD.

28) 9 people rate their knowledge of the CPC as good to very good, 12 rate their knowledge as fair, and a surprising 17 said they don't know a lot about their machine.

29) 1 person thinks CPC User is boring, 5 think it's okay, 18 think it's good, and 14 think it's very good.

30) 25 read all of it, 11 read most, and 2 read very little of it.

32) 26 want articles on programming. 14 votes went to basic, 10 to machine code, and 5 to CPM.

33) The type of articles people want to see in CPC User varied considerably, but here are the main ones (so get writing!):- Type-ins, advanced basic, how to DTP, soft/hardware reviews, "how to choose....." articles, practical projects, users stories, how/why you use a certain piece of software, how to use memory expansions. 25 people wanted articles on how to use the computer.

34 & 35) 11 say they will write an article for the magazine, 14 said maybe, and 13 gave a definite NO!

THE DISCOUNT PAGE

The companies listed below offer discounts to members. Write direct to the company, quoting your membership number, the item/s required, the advertised price, the discount offered and enclose a cheque or postal order for that amount. Please patronise these companies to make it mutually worthwhile.

GMF PROGRAMS, 21 Northwick Park Rd, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2HY
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ABC HOLDINGS, 4 Westmeads Road, Whitstable, Kent. CT5 1LR
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CPC NETWORK, 3 The Cottons, Outwell, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 8TL
Tel: [0945] 772035.......£2.00 off SUPERWIMP and TEARAWAY. Also 10% off SEGA software & hardware

SPM SOFTWARE, 32a Albert Street, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7LJ
£2.00 off both Power Basic & General Military Simulator. Both normally £14.95 each, to UAUG members only £12.95 each (inc P+P)