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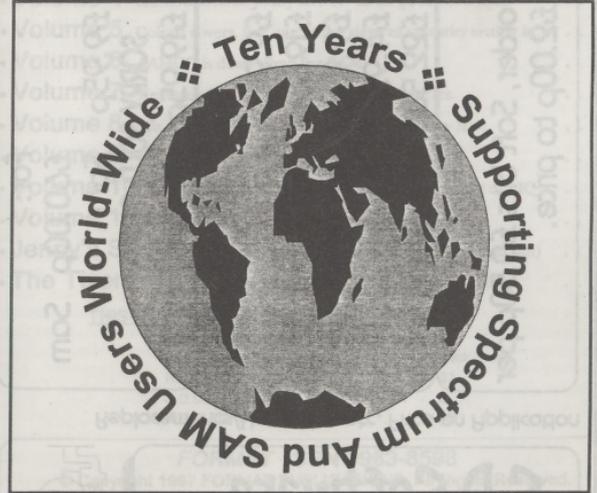


Vol.11 N°1.

September 1997.

FORMAT

THE HOME OF Z80 COMPUTING



SPECIAL 10th BIRTHDAY ISSUE

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AKO CONTENTS

Vol.11 N°1.

September 1997.

- **Editorial** - The editor has his say (censored by Jenny of course). . . . 4
- **NEWS ON 4** - Only a small one this month, but worth reading. . . . 4
- **SHORT-SPOT** - John Wase takes a break from collating your short routines and looks back over the last 10 year (and beyond) . . . 5
- **Volume 1** - Life begins for *FORMAT*, our first year. . . 10
- **Volume 2** - Part 2 of year-by-year look at the history of *FORMAT*. . . 12
- **Volume 3** - 1989/90 SAM is born. . . 14
- **Volume 4** - SAMCO arrives, Jenny arrives - its all go around here. . . 16
- **Volume 5** - Colour covers, just one of the signs of maturity setting in. . . 18
- **Volume 6** - SAMCO is dead - long live SAM. . . 20
- **Volume 7** - Recovery, new hope, and even more articles. . . 22
- **Volume 8** - We reach 1994/5 on our trip down memory lane. . . 24
- **Volume 9** - You just can't keep good computers down. . . 26
- **Volume 10** - Into double figures (and I'm not talking about our IQ). . . 28
- **Volume 11 And Beyond** - Our plans, our hopes. . . 31
- **Jenny's Story** - The truth, the whole truth... (read it and find out) . . 33
- **The Tizers** - Without whom *FORMAT* would have been smaller. . . 34

THIS MONTHS ADVERTISERS:-

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| FORMAT (SAM REPAIR SERVICE) | 9 |
| FRED PUBLISHING | Back Cover |
| REVELATION SOFTWARE | 32 |
| S.D.SOFTWARE | 2 |
| WEST COAST MAIL ORDER | 30 |

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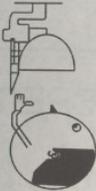
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Welcome readers, to the delights of volume eleven and **FORMAT's** super special 10th birthday issue.

My how time does fly when you are enjoying yourself. It only seems like yesterday I was doing the 5th birthday issue, which, if you remember, contained lots of ramblings, from the **FORMAT** team at that time, on how they ended up in the computer field. So there I was just a couple of weeks ago thinking "what the heck can we do special for the 10th birthday issue?" Well, after much cogitation I thought "a complete history of **FORMAT** would go down well". So here it is.

Now I must admit, my evil plan had been to get Jenny to do lots of the work, but she saw that one coming and played the "but I don't understand what most of this is all about" trump-card. "Look," she said, "why don't you do the write-up for volume 1 so I can see what you want, then maybe I can do some of the others." And I fell for it. So loyal readers, in this issue you will find a massive twenty-page 'history' of **FORMAT**, all written by your's truly - so no excuses now, I'll be setting a test soon, so get studying.

What I have done, with an awful lot of encouragement from Jenny (she crossed out bullying) is to look, year by year, at the major news items and the hi-lites of the articles. If you, or anyone you know, got left out of the list then I'm sorry, it was hard work squeezing in what I did so lots have been left out. Still, I hope you like what there is, it has been a trip down memory lane for me and I hope it is for some of you as well (and for those of you new to **FORMAT**, it just shows some of what you have missed).

One last thing - remember the Gloucester show is the 25th October.

Until next month.

Bob Brechley, Editor.

NEWS ON 4

QUAZAR WIRE SAM

Colin Piggot has spent much time and effort writing a new SAM game called *Stratosphere* - and from the pre-release screen shots all you can say is wow!!!

Stratosphere is a 3D wire-frame, mode 4, cyberspace battle where you pit your skills against numerous types of enemy craft while attempting to collect all the flags on a level - before advancing to a new and even more dangerous level.

Priced at £17.99 it has full support for the Quazar Surround Sound system (of course) but if you can do without the stunning Quazar effects you can still play *Stratosphere* on a normal SAM.

Stratosphere can be ordered now from Quazar, 204, Lamond Drive, St. Andrews, Fife, KY16 8RR.

C5 SET TO SELL AT AUCTION

Remember the Sinclair C5? Many considered it laughable but there were lots of people who loved them.

Well, I think you may soon be wishing that you had purchased a few and put them away - especially at the time when one retailer in London sold off their stock at £49.95 each. Why? How would a £650 profit grab you?

Yes, thought that would grab your attention. Bonham's, the large London auction house, are holding a 'Futures: The Antiques Of Tomorrow' auction, which will include a Sinclair C5 that is expected to go for £700+. Now, I wonder what a prototype SAM is worth?

YOUR NEWS HERE...

Come on readers, we need your news. Anything related to computers which you think will interest other SAM and Spectrum owners. Just jot it down on a piece of paper, add your name and membership number, and send it off to us at the usual address. Please mark the envelope 'News' so that we can give it the priority it deserves.

Remember, you get three months extra subscription for every news item we print, so don't rely on others to send in an item you have seen - send it off yourself and earn our thanks as well.

This months credits:-

SHORT SPOT

YOUR HINTS, TIPS AND PROGRAMMING IDEAS

Edited By:- John Wase.

This month's a special month. I hadn't really noticed until Bob rang up and jogged my memory - I've been too busy trying to deal with juggling hospital appointments for Lorri (at last they're going to have her in and do proper tests) and father-in-law's just been rushed into emergency with a suspected slight stroke. So with all this, I was far away, when Bob rang. "Tell you what I'll do," I said. "I'll put in some of my very own personal reminiscences, and compare the sorts of things we dealt with then with the bits and pieces that are currently of interest; that way we'll have an interesting and relevant column."

So that's what I planned. But today we meet reality. With hospitals, and dashing around, it's got to be done by tomorrow. Help! Drags out all the old **FORMAT's**, chucks 'em in a plastic bag, and off we hotfoot back to Coventry, hospital-bound.

The first thing I notice from the old yellowing copies is that I've got two spare copies before issue 1 starts - in August 1987. They've got differing covers, and I guess the earlier is the one printed on a dot-matrix printer - free introductory issue of **FORMAT** - the newsletter of the Independent DISCIPLE User Group, as it says. If you got there later, you'll find the text tidied up and daisy-wheel printed, one or two extras in (like 'Bargain Corner'), and a new cover, subtitled 'A magazine from INDUG for DISCIPLE and PLUS D users'. As you can see, this is the later one, and things have already been quietly evolving; for instance as the PLUS D's been

introduced. And that's what I want to emphasize: the way in which things have grown and evolved.

In its earlier days, there was, of course, no disc system at all for the Spectrum. My earliest pieces of text were on cassettes, and very frustrating it was to get scientific papers on these, using Tasword 2 - I remember, I found a source of supply with five plastic transparent cassettes, each in a horrible fluorescent colour, all in one transparent plastic box. These fitted along a little shelf, and the name of each of the files was on the end of the transparent box; usually one file or an associated group of files on one cassette, and usually with a duplicated cassette, for I had early learned the value of duplication to avoid lost files. They were appallingly slow to load!

You will also, possibly, have learned that my first disc system (it never really worked properly) was a thing called a *Spectrados*, which fitted under the Spectrum like an Interface 1, and was made in very heavy gauge mild steel - like the proverbial tank. It bore great affinities to the BBC disc system; for instance, the numbers of the tracks and possibly even sectors came up on the screen in a nice shade of green, and it was made by Opus - forerunner of the later *Discovery* disc system I used to write so much about in the old *ZX Computing*. Interestingly, it was in many ways more like a DISCIPLE. Thus, the format program was 'soft' and was fed in by a utilities disc. (The first clanger Opus made was to include, in error, a BBC

formatting disc, rather than a Spectrum one). It also fitted underneath, like the DISCiPLE. However, at that time, *that* was a mere twinkle in Alan Miles and Bruce Gordons' imagination - if that!

Much more recently, I went to a Spectrum fair of some sort at St Francis J & I School, Birmingham - John Croghan organized it - and was accosted by a man who had a problem with his Spectrum with five and a quarter inch discs - It took quite a lot of talking at cross purposes about the DISCiPLE before I realised that he had a problem with his *Spectrados* system - probably the only one left in the world. So if he's reading this - well; please contact me; I'd love to see one again!

I well remember all sorts of early incidents; like how I went down to Bristol to get a new, upgraded *Discovery* ROM. Although it was 4.30 in the afternoon, my companion, hammering at the door of the elegant terrace house (well, faded elegance; white plaster and stucco turning algal-green; dustbins instead of shrubs) got no reply for a full five minutes. Then there was a whistle and a key flew down. My friend, Ian, disappeared, and after a respectable interval, a further whistle and down flew an EPROM. Apparently, the programmer programmed all night, and went to bed, exhausted, around 7am. Ah; those were the days...

Anyway, after Opus were screwed up in a deal with Boots, and lots of *Discovery* systems were sold off cheap, poor old Spectrum owners were left high and dry. Or would have been, had it not been for Alan and Bruce.

I discovered this pair with difficulty. After travelling to London, I eventually found them up a flight of rickety wooden stairs in an upper room in Hendon. But what they'd got was of interest. Yes, folks, it'd got all the problems one can

imagine. It was supposed to be firmly sat under the Speccy to provide a good connection, but was just as bad as Interface I. What's more, the damn plastic creaked and groaned like a ghost train! But it worked, and some of us in this very club are still getting good service from them.

I can't find too many problems with Spectrums and DISCiPLEs from the first volume of *FORMAT*. There was no SAM; as I mentioned, the PLUS D was only just being introduced, and *Short-Spot* - well we hadn't got it off the ground.

However, there was evidence that many people had problems converting things to the new disc system, and getting printers to work properly. So, by April 1988, Steve Nutting (bless him; still a familiar name) was giving listings of a tape to disc routine, using the snapshot button, and different keys for the PLUS D and DISCiPLE, and in May we printed modifications because it fouled printer routines, and also a routine to give an ASCII screen copy for either a daisy wheel or a dot matrix for the DISCiPLE: Bob had rewritten it to include the PLUS D.

Around this time, Alan and Bruce moved to Chesterton Mill, Cambridge. My principal memories are of a room rather smaller than your average garage, and next door to it another which I don't think was really theirs, stuffed up to the gills with bits of Sinclair Research stuff; returned Z88s and stuff like that, which occasionally Bruce or Alan would stray into. The whole outfit was crammed and approached by narrow Cambridge roads and one-way systems, and I was glad that within a very short time they left again and moved to Swansea.

By the time MGT were in Cambridge, we'd got a help page (but no proper *Short-Spot*; this developed from the *Hints and Tips* section. I was also

writing lots of reviews of things like *Beta Basic* (which was a way of trying out bits of Basic and routines that would be useful in SAM's ROM, later) and hints were given on saving *Beta Basic* splicers and dealing with the pound, hash and copyright signs in *Tasword 2*! Clearly there was a need for this sort of thing, for in issue 12, output to printers was still giving trouble, and the *Help Page* had jumped to two pages!

Volume 2 started with a bang, with Alan and Bruce promising a SAM release date of February 1989! Optimists! February came and went, and there was no mention of SAM, but, reading between the lines, things must have been rather busy, for Bob was so tied up that the next issue of *FORMAT* didn't emerge until May! A little letter in the June issue from MGT gave details of 'innovation awards', and a promise that although things were delayed, they were on the home straight, and were pretty confident of a late summer launch! Optimists again!

On the other hands, the good news was that a short piece called *Short-Spot* appeared. The first routine ever to appear in *Short-Spot* was by a Nick Fleming of Cleethorpes, and which finds if a Spectrum pixel is selected or not. This came along with a routine to change the screen that CLS# returned to Basic with different colours and borders, a routine by Harold Burton to keep track of your files, and finally, Hangman by Malcolm Perry. Not so very different from current *Short-Spot* pages (there were just less of them for me to fill in those days. Next month, though, bits were much shorter. I was trying to make it into a really Short routine slot, with bits like soldering a 1000pf capacitor across diode 35 if your grey +2 keys won't work when it's cold and warming up! You lot wouldn't let me, though!

September 1989, and there's lots of hype about SAM. By this time, I'd gone through rough proofs of the desk-top published SAM manual; a rarity in those days. How things have developed. Short Spot contains a short routine on a Tandy TRS80-II by no other than Roy Burford. Here, I must acknowledge the debt that we all owe to Roy. There's little doubt that *Short-Spot* would have had far less impact (it might even have foundered) without all of Roy's many conversions and contributions.

Meanwhile, October arrives, and there are Alan and Bruce holding a SAM at a press conference. (Trouble is, if I remember rightly, it was made of wood, but it doesn't look too bad in the pictures). By November, it had all seemed to go quiet, and I was still running programs over printer problems - one Daniel Neidle, if I remember rightly, caused considerable chaos. I also had one or two journeys to panic-stricken Swansea during that period, when occasionally Andy Wright could be seen with new EPROMS, instead of programming quietly in his box-room in Birmingham. It culminated just before Christmas in staff, family, friends, anyone who would help working flat out and up all night finally to assemble the boards, now that the last bits (much delayed) had been delivered, so that as many SAMs as possible would go out before Christmas. This is reflected in January's *FORMAT* - for Spectrum and SAM users. SAM made it at last!

Lakeside Technology park is an odd mixture. Technology park they might have intended it to be, but certainly by that time, technology park it wasn't. It was much more a big retail park, although it did have the Hilton Hotel nearby. Alan and Bruce lived in a vast (by previous standards) emporium made of grey-painted breeze-block with the big

plastic doorhandles of the age; outside it was newly 'landscaped' with standard issue council-type 'indestructible' sharp-thorned dog-rose flower-beds over scrap-iron and rubbish, bleak, windy and inhospitable. And it was damn cold that Christmas, when MGT were trying to get machines out. They emerged without drives, and I remember Bob's trenchant comments when, around February, the first DOS trickled out - it wouldn't even deal with otype files!

A quick trawl through the pages suggests that readers must have been very satisfied with their SAMs, or so busy using them that they had no time to write in *Short-Spot*, for I had nothing on SAM for quite a time. Even by May, nothing much had appeared. The Spectrum submissions were, however, still going strong and already, a Mr Baumann of South Africa had made his presence felt. This year I received his contribution too late for April Fools' day, but it appeared in May 1990 (3/9) the usual and quite typical bit of entertainment.

```

1 REM ***HOWWORK***
2 REM ** L.G.BAUMANN**
10 LET D$=" HOW DOES THIS WOR
K?"
20 LET B$="": LET A=19: LET B=
5
30 FOR N=1 TO 20
40 LET B$=B$+D$(N)+CHR$ 22+ CH
R$ A +CHR$ B
50 LET A=A-1: LET B=B+1
60 NEXT N
70 LET A$=B$
80 PRINT B$: PAUSE 70
100 CLS: FOR N=2 TO 74 STEP 4
110 PRINT B$(N TO N+3) : BEEP .
2, (N+2)/2
120 NEXT N
130 PRINT AT 0,0:D$
140 PAUSE 0: GOTO 100

```

"Well," he asked, "how does it work?" Thereafter, Mr Baumann for many years sent an April contribution which

infuriated, delighted and amused many, and we still hear from him occasionally. Can I express my gratitude for all his contributions, and mention that we hope to have some more stuff from him, soon.

By this time also, a member called Ettrick Thomson had begun sending in mathematical programs like the "Rose Curve with a Twist" mentioned in the same *Short-Spot*. Again, he has been a regular contributor, and again, I must express my thanks and those of our readers.

Now, I know what's going to happen when I start mentioning names. Other equally regular contributors are going to complain of being omitted! Please, don't take offence if I leave you out - I'd love to mention every contributor, but am just running out of room!

Anyway, by June, SAMstuff started to come into *Short-Spot*. SAM had finally arrived.

It's pretty clear that for at least the next twelve months, it was all systems go. Alan Cox and Bjorn Nyberg corresponded regularly, as did Carol Brooksbank, and the columns were full of SAM snippets not very different from those one might currently find. This was a time of SAM enthusiasm, however, and the Spectrum addicts were apparently rather quiet; there was less Spectrum stuff than usual, though still quite a lot about "PRINT USING" and Spectrum equivalents. UniDOS arrived, as did MasterBasic and Bruce's clock. The *All Formats Fairs* of Bruce Everiss fame finally hit Birmingham, and I've some entertaining memories of the hysteria which arose when Bob inadvertently wiped the *FORMAT Font Library* disc on the previous Thursday!

By 1991-92, some nice SAM snippets were coming through. Things like a MasterDOS faulty sector lockout, when I was again appealing for Hints and Tips.

Just like I do now...

By 1992, Brian Gaff (bless him) was selling PRO-DOS, so that SAM would run CPM 2.2 programs, and the Spectrum's 10 year birthday party was being advertised. There was acrimony by a Malcolm Perry, and comments on various word processors. Ettrick modified his *clock* program. And a neat snippet from Mr Baumann. Really not very different from today's *Short-Spot*, except that today we have rather more translations and re-runs of older programs.

Then came the bombshell. It started with rumours which, sadly, proved to be soundly based. As reported in August 1992, SAM computers went into liquidation. Was this the end?

Many of us feared it might be, so it's gratifying that, five years further down the line, the Spectrum and SAM are still with us. Dave Tonks has produced a number of novel games. There's now a hard disc for SAM (bless you, Nev), and there's even a new SAM available. Some parts, notably disc controller chips, are getting hard to get. Interestingly, as I mentioned, *Short-Spot* still manages (just) to print quite similar problems to those of five years ago.

Next month, all being well, I hope to feature another of Peter Williamson's 'KEYIN' SAM programs, and an item on anagrams for the Spectrum, retranslated from the Quickbasic of *FORMAT PC* by Roy Burford.

On a personal note, I suffered a tragedy in 1995, and am grateful for all the help and support I received through *FORMAT*. Things looked up again this year, and Lorri joins me in wishing you all the best and many happy computing returns!

Once again; *I'm running out of material*. Please keep all your snippets

coming to me; without them I can't put a column together. Please send them to:-

John Wase,
Green Leys Cottage,
Bishampton,
Pershore,
Worcs,
WR10 2LX.

See you next month.



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Send your machine to:-

Format (SAM Repairs),
34, Bourton Rd, Gloucester, GL4 0LE.

Volume 1 - August 1987 To July 1988

(Our Work Had Just Begun)

August 1987 saw the first *real* issue of **FORMAT** winging its way to over 200 readers. It was, by later standards, a small issue (only 16 pages) but it was a start. At that time it was referred to as a 'newsletter', it was not until the Christmas issue (N°5) that we decided we were good enough to call ourselves a magazine.

THE NEWS

Early issues were of course dominated by the DISCiPLE and the new software or conversions that were appearing for it. One of the first conversions was *The Last Word* which was released at the August ZX Microfair in London. MGT/Rockfort had taken the entire stage area and sublet it to small companies producing for the DISCiPLE.

Amstrad launched the Spectrum+3 and immediately drew a lot of criticisms for its small capacity disc drive and the fact that it was not fully compatible with previous Spectrums.

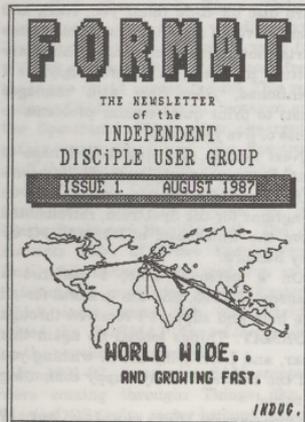
In October we gave details of *DUGOS*, a new Swedish DISCiPLE user group which lasted for several years.

November saw the exclusive announcement that MGT were to launch the PLUS D - this followed their split with Rockfort Products and their move to Cambridge. The PLUS D was launched at the December ZX Microfair in London and was an immediate hit with the public. Also in December Amstrad dropped the CPC range of computers (they were relaunched a little later in new cases but were not successful).

1988 got off to a good start with Kempston launching a DISCiPLE compatible version of their Mouse system. While the older version of the Kempston Mouse was hardware comparable with the PLUS D the software caused problems so Kempston also released upgrades to the software for existing users.

The infamous +2a crept, totally unannounced, from Amstrad's warehouse - causing big problems for users and retailers alike. As usual, **FORMAT** was one of the first to cover the story.

The big news in March 1988 was about SAM. It had been kept secret until CRASH jumped the gun and printed



details. While at that time there was still over 18 months to go before the machine was shown to the public, it was instant BIG news. March also saw the release of Wordmaster, the program that eventually formed the heart of PCG's DTP system.

April saw MGT starting their move to Wales.

As usual, the summer months were quiet, MGT completed their move to Swansea, and immediately had four colour monitors stolen in a night-time break-in. Amstrad launched its first PC clone, the 1512, and Sinclair launched the Z88 into the American market.

Articles - The HI-LITES

INDUG and **FORMAT** were launched on the back of Rockfort's mailshot announcing the launch of the Version 3 DISCiPLE ROM, so our first issue gave a full review of the new system and explained OPENType files which were new to V3. Issue 2 saw Nev Young's first article (The Light Stays On) as well as the first article from John Wase (on converting from Discovery to DISCiPLE). Both of course soon became mainstays of **FORMAT**.

Issue 3 had reviews of TLW, updates to GDOS, a large article from Alan Miles and the first part of an article on a DIY RS232 interface for the Spectrum. Issue 4 had a good item on printer drives by Francis Miles and the definitive article on DISCiPLE error trapping.

Our first Christmas issue had some fun items as well as the start of Nev Young's high respected series on the Incremental Back-up Utility (IBU).

Issue 6 had the second part of IBU and a disc file recovery program. #7 contained the first of a series on covering/expanding HI-SOFT's GENS



assembler to disc as well as a major item from Steve Nutting (later of Steve's Software fame). #8 had a review of the Kempston Mouse and a conversion for the OCP Art Studio.

Issue 9, now boasting 24 pages, was packed. The hi-lites were the Bulk-Erase utility, the start of a series on Micronet and Steve Nutting's Tape To Disc program. Issue 10 contained another set of updates to the DISCiPLE's DOS, a very useful utility to aid the readability of listings and an ASCII screen dump routine. June's issue (#11) featured a review of the Trojan Light-pen, updates for G+DOS on the PLUS D as well as some for GDOS. Hugh McLenaghan, who has been a regular contributor over the year, started his Hack-Zone series.

Volume 1 finished with a packed issue including an article on Logical Conditions, a conversion of Stock Manager, several utilities and lots more.

Volume 2 - August 1988 To August 1989 (Growing Fast - And Getting Bigger)

August 1988, our first birthday issue and the biggest so far at 32 pages - wow!

Volume 2 saw several changes, the most dramatic of which were the change to specially drawn front covers by Jon Nixon. Jon has gone on to do 108 front covers if you include the one to this issue and they have certainly been a very varied mix. The other change was a gradual move, part way through Vol.2 to a two column layout which allowed us to get even more text on the average page.

At the start of the year membership had topped the 1000 mark, and little did we know that that was an omen of even better things to come.

And yes, there was no March 1989 issue, it changed to April to fall in line with publication dates - my, the confusion that caused, and later when people ordered back-issues.

THE NEWS

The big news in 2/1 was that MGT was launching the PLUS D hacking software called *Pick-Poke-It*. There was also an item that predicted that the sales of 3½" disc looked set to overtake 5¼" within three years.

Issue 2/2 was dominated by the postal strike that was causing havoc, there was news of distribution problems for *Popular Computing Weekly* and that *Your Computer* was up for sale. We also launched conversion software for Tasword 128 and +2.

2/3 would have had Uncle Sir Clive turning in his grave (if he had not been still alive) as Amstrad launched a PC

clone under the Sinclair logo. It did not last long and the PC200 certainly had the smallest sales of any Sinclair computer. Amstrad continued to have problems in the early part of 1989 with the +2a (the black cased version of the +2), large stocks were apparently withdrawn due to major production faults but MGT launched a *Fixit* to allow the PLUS D to work in it and the +3.

The end of January '89 saw SAM (or at least a very early prototype) shown to the public for the first time at the Norbreck show in Blackpool. The crowds were amazing and MGT were delighted with the way the SAM was received.

By April, the big news was that both Pascal and FORTRAN were now available for the Spectrum from Mira Software and that MGT had launched its Universal Disc Drive (remember the advert with the girls?). The May issue (2/9) saw condemnation of CRASH for a rather stupid April Fools article that they had printed. In June OXFAM launched an appeal for second-hand games they could sell for charity and in July MGT announced plans to become a PLC company to help raise money for the impending launch of the SAM Coupé. And, BT sold Telecomsoft (Firebird) to Micropose.

Articles - The HI-LITES

FORMAT expanded during its second year, both in page-count and in the variety of articles we published.

Of course issue 2/1 was dominated by our first birthday, lots of tributes

(including a large one from Alan Miles). But there was the start of a new series from Clyde Bish (who had been a regular contributor to the venerable ZX Computing) and a superb article on Tasword 2 by Ken Elston, we also had a little fun with a glossary of computer terms that was far from serious.

2/2 saw a new regular column, Adventure Corner by Paul Rigby, Hugh's Hack-Zone was still going strong and we started to look at MIDI with Ray Elder (ex editor of ZX Computing).

The big step in 2/3 was the start of SAM Report. The machine was still a long way off but we started to reveal its secrets. There was the definitive list of GDOS command codes, an article on extending Basic and lots more.

Issue 2/4 contained a very good article on computer ciphers, more on expanding Basic, a description of SAM's intended screen modes and even more on MIDI.

Christmas came round again. So issue 2/5 had to have a bit of fun. But it also saw the first article from Carol Brooksbank - a machine code screen copy routine called Small Is Beautiful. We also packed in a Network Battle game by Nev Young (for use with DISCIPLE or Interface One's network), more Beta Basic from Andy Wright, more MIDI, more....

The new year started with articles on Streams and Channels, a utility to map the sectors used by a file on disc, an Ohms Law Calculator and a parallel to RS232 interface to drive a serial printer.

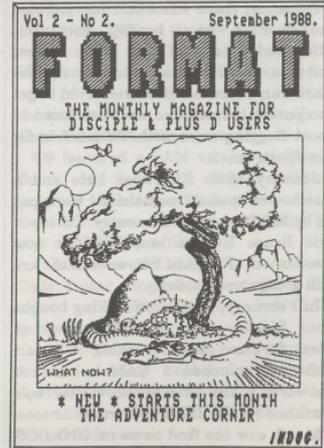
2/7 saw the continuing series on MIDI, a conversion of the Artist II to disc, a program to help schedule tasks in the kitchen (very useful at Christmas I can tell you) and Clyde Bish started 'Beyond Simple UDGs'. April's issue contained a Filofax page designer from Carol

Brooksbank, a look at Hisoft's C, and the start of a series from newcomer Stephen Warr on the inner workings of the PLUS D's DOS (Stephen went on to write the UNI-DOS system that became so popular on both the PLUS D and the DISCIPLE.

2/9 had a beautifully illustrated article on Mandelbrot pictures and an introduction to the programming language FORTH - it also contained the first ever SHORT-SPOT from John Wase. 2/10 had what is still my favourite Spectrum game S.O.S. together with articles on Sorting in Basic and the start of a long running series on machine code secrets by Francis Miles.

Vol.2 N°11 explored the 128K's screens, looked at how Carol Brooksbank used her Spectrum in the church library and to top it all the first ever Help Page from Nev Young.

Volume 2 came to a close with a Lunar Calendar program, a TV Test Card utility and more information on SAM.



Volume 3 - September 1989 To August 1990
(SAM Is Born - A New Era Begins)

Two years old and still growing. So much already behind us but we were looking forward with great anticipation to the launch of SAM (already behind schedule by then and slipping further each day). I was spending much of my time in Swansea helping with the SAM project and it took a lot of late-night working to ensure **FORMAT** did not suffer too much. Oh, nearly forgot, we had a new logo.

THE NEWS

No doubt about it, the big news was the SAM. In the run-up to its final (very late) launch just before Christmas 1989 there was a frantic demand from readers for more information.

However, there was other news. Psion launched a new lap-top computer, Microdealer (one of the UK's largest software distributors) went bust, the Christian Exclusive Brethren tried to get computers banned and Amstrad tried to boost flagging sales with TV adverts for the Spectrum+2.

January 1990. SAM was here and a number of special 'road-shows' were put on by MGT around the country. On top of this Bruce Everiss launched the now famous All Formats Shows which are still going strong today.

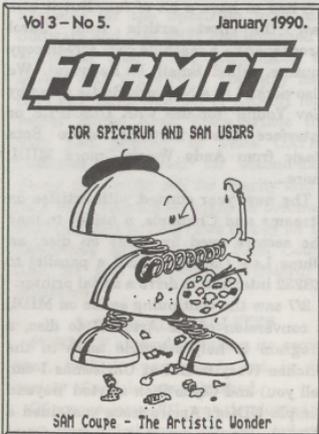
In February, Future publishing bought *Your Sinclair* (and promptly moved it even further down market), Tasman Software launched a SAM version of Tasword 2, and The Music Writer was launched for the 128K Spectrum.

March saw the first news on UNI-DOS

from S.D. Software while April saw MGT scooping the Hardware Innovation Award at the *European Computer Leisure Industry* conference in Malta (and they didn't even invite me). There was also news that Datel had taken over the PLUS D from MGT (something that has been a bone of contention ever since).

In May 1990 MGT announced the new ROM for SAM and both Lerm and Steve's Software launched their first SAM utilities.

In June MGT plc went into receivership. I do know the full story, I could dish the dirt on the banks etc, but I'll save that for another time. However, Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon were not



to be defeated - SAMCO soon rose from the ashes.

Karen joined the staff here at **FORMAT**, Enigma Variations launched their first SAM game, *Defenders of the Earth*, and anyone interested could buy Alan Suger's biography (did anyone?).

Articles - The HI-LITES

Our second birthday issue was packed. **INDEXER** was probably the star item as it allowed readers to build their own index to **FORMAT** (or any other mag for that matter). Dick Guy started to explore the inner workings of the **DISCiPLE** and Carol did an in-depth guide to Spectrum sprites and looked at some of the sprite design programs available.

3/2 included an article, **Faster Than Basic**, which looked at alternatives to programming in Basic on the Spectrum and I continued my irregular series on DOS command codes.

Issue 3 was very varied with articles on such diverse subjects as Amateur Radio, map drawing and Spectrum colour screen dumps.

Christmas comes but once a year, but a **FORMAT** Christmas issue is useful year after year. Volume 3 N°4's star article was a work of artistic genius from Carol Brooksbank on producing Christmas cards on your computer.

January 1990's issue (3/5) gave readers their first full review of the SAM Coupé, lots of photos, benchmarks, and plenty of hard information on the new machine. Long before the weekly or monthly mags - it was in **FORMAT** first. We also gave readers a utility to load the Spectrum ROM into SAM for even greater compatibility.

February (3/6) featured **DFLIP** a useful **DISCiPLE/PLUS D** routine that doubled the number of files you could store on a disc. There was also a hardware project

Vol 3 - No 9. May 1990.



to add a 128K's sound chip to the 48K Spectrum. Issue 7 contained an article from Ian Cull giving some home-grown +3 disc utilities and Carol Brooksbank delved into DTP on the Spectrum.

By number 8 we had reached part 5 of Stephen Warr's **Inside G-DOS** series and one of our many overseas readers showed us how to have an 'On Error Goto' function on the Spectrum.

3/9 featured a SAM version of Carol's **Small Is Beautiful** screen printing program while issue 10 featured no less than four reviews and a useful utility for copying **OPENType** files.

July's issue (3/11) had a nice Morse Code Tester program, an excellent disc utility called 'KA' and our first SAM game - **Othello**.

And to round off the year, issue 12 featured Jeremy Cook's first **Thought Spot** and the first review of the new SAM assembler **SC_ASSEMBLER** from Steve's Software.

Volume 4 - September 1990 To August 1991

(The Fun Continues - Then Jenny Arrives)

SAMCO was up and running, SAM had taken a knock, but things were looking much better. The Spectrum was still going strong and membership was rising faster than at any time since we started. We therefore began volume 4 with a real air of optimism.

THE NEWS

The first news items in volume 4 were that Enigma Variations had signed a deal to produce a game based on Enid Blyton's Famous Five characters and that S.D.Software had launched **SPECMAKER** for SAM.

October saw the news that the Spectrum +3 had been dropped by Amstrad, that PCG were converting

their Spectrum DTP package to SAM. The month also saw the final demise of Popular Computing Weekly.

November saw Adrian Parker form Blue Alpha Electronics and launch a Sound Sampler interface for SAM and Brian Gaff at B.G.Services obtained large quantities of the VTX5000 modems for sale to Spectrum users.

Christmas came, and with it the news that GM Software were launching a database program for SAM. At the same time S.D.Software finally announced the launch of the UNI-DOS operating system that united DISCiPLE and PLUS D users with one universal DOS.

The new year welcomed a major step forward for SAM users as Dr. Andy Wright released MasterDOS. First shown to the public on the SAMCO stand at the All Formats Show in London it was a sell out long before the day was over. Karen Kemley left suddenly so I was up to my ears in office work.

February 1991 was a sad month for the ZX community. Mike Johnston, organizer and mastermind of the ZX Microfairs for so many years, died at the age of 47. Although he had given up the shows two years earlier he was greatly missed.

March saw the end of the road for two veteran Spectrum software companies. Softek (publishers Artist II) and Interceptor (famous for their budget software ranges) but it also saw the arrival of Jenny Bundock (and the start of me really having to work).

April was another good month for SAM users, SAMCO opened their own shop in Swansea and Dr. Andy Wright released the first version of MasterBASIC - the extended Basic for SAM.

By June, as Amstrad made major cuts to staff levels, SAM was still expanding. New software was coming out, including Kobrasoft's DICE disc utility package. There was also new hardware in the form of the Messenger from SAMCO and the Joy-Mouse from Blue Alpha.

In July Alan Sugar started his football career when he purchased a main shareholding in Tottenham. This did not go down too well with people as it was also announced that he was switching production of his PCs to the far east.

August saw the All Formats Shows going nationwide and there was a big convention for adventure gamers in Birmingham.

Articles - The HI-LITES

Calendar Maker got the new volume off to a very good start, as did an article by Simon Goodwin on using functions in SAM basic for manipulating/testing bits.

October (4/2) saw the start of Carol Brooksbank's long running series Money Manager - designed to teach SAM Basic programming as well as providing a useful program for readers to use.

Re-inking printer ribbons was John Wase's quest (on top of his regular SHORT-SPOTS) in 4/3 - was there no end to this mans skills?

The Christmas issue came round again, and this time we ran a seasonal article by Clyde Bish about playing Christmas Carols on a 128K Spectrum - very tuneful. There was also a database program from G.Stevens designed to hold your Christmas card list, although of course adaptable to lots of other jobs.

1991 started as usual with a slightly

smaller issue, but by then Carol Brooksbank was getting well into her SAM Basic series. Issue 6 saw the first review of UNI-DOS for the DISCiPLE and PLUS D. It also contained the first real review of MasterDOS.

In March's issue Carol looked at what was available to clip-art enthusiasts and there was a useful mortgage repayment calculator from David Tinker.

April's issue included a conversion of Mini Calendar to SAM and a first look at PD software, while May (4/9) included a review of Astrum+, one of the best assemblers for the Spectrum.

In Vol.4 N°10 (June'91) there was a full explanation of MasterDOS command codes plus UNI-DOS Poker - a useful hacking utility. July saw the first review of MasterBasic and to round off volume 4 August's issue included the very first part of Carol Brooksbank's Machine Code Without The Tears - her long running and much acclaimed tutorial.

Vol 4 - No 3. November 1990.

FORMAT

FOR SPECTRUM AND SAM USERS

RE-INKING YOUR RIBBONS
FORMAT TELLS YOU HOW

Vol 4 - No 12. August 1991.

FORMAT

FOR SPECTRUM AND SAM USERS

** STARTING THIS MONTH **
Machine Code Without Tears.

Volume 5 - September 1991 To August 1992 (Growing And Maturing)

Volume 5 was marked by a change to coloured covers, more pages and even more variety. SAMCO had settled down and the future of SAM looked secure. Amstrad had killed the sale of new Spectrums but the interest was still there and software continued to appear - much of it DISCIPLE/PLUS D compatible. Jenny was already settled in and was taking more and more office work off my shoulders so I was able to concentrate more time on the magazine.

THE NEWS

In September Lerm issued an upgrade to its SAMTAPE Spectrum emulator for SAM and Garry Rowland released a new version of Music Writer that was now able to cope with midi.

October saw Format Publications re-release the Artist II (pre-converted to disc) and SAMCO announced that the SAM was now standardised in its 512K version. The shock news was that Newsfield, publishers of Crash, went bust and that the on-line service Micronet was to close down.

November brought the announcement that Fred Publishing were moving into the SAM games market, building on the disc mag Colin McDonald had been publishing for some time. And yet another assembler appeared for SAM as Comet was launched by SAMCO.

With Christmas looming S.D. Software launched the excellent SPECFILE+, a powerful database program for the 48K and 128K Spectrum.

1992 opened with the news that the

CP/M system PRO-DOS was about to be launched by B.G.Services.

The big news in February was that Modula-2 was coming for the Spectrum (from Mira Software) and that Manic Miner was to be converted and enhanced for the SAM Coupé by SAMCO (who also hinted that Spectrum software was on its way from them, but it never did appear).

GamesMaster, a game design system for SAM written by Dr. Andy Write was the big news item in March (well, that and my birthday) but there was also a lot of interest in Spain as the Spanish market started to do good things with SAM.

SAM PRINT, a poster, card design and stationary design package was launched by Noesis (part owned by Bruce Gordon) and Betasoft (Andy Wrights company) launched File Manager, a very extensive database/filing program written by Carol Brooksbank.

May'92 brought news of a +3 version of SD's Specfile+, a SAM version of PAW (Professional Adventure Writer) running under PRO-DOS and Fred Publishing released (by popular demand) an extra 25 levels to its Trilex game.

June's news included the release of The Secretary for SAM and news that another adventure writing package was on its way.

In July we marked the 30th anniversary of Telstar and were pleased to announce that SAMCO had at last found an alternative to the Citizen slim-line drives, the shortage of which had

been holding up SAM production for some time.

And so to August, and the news that SAMs were available (albeit in short supply) in John Menzies and that Romantic Robot (famed for their Speccy interfaces) were selling off the last of their stocks and ceasing production.

Articles - The HI-LITES

Type-in programs have always been popular in *FORMAT* so UDG Designer went down very well with readers and there was also an interesting program for Biorythems - something you don't hear much about these days.

Volume 5 N°2 saw even more from Carol Brooksbank with her Machine Code Without The Tears settling into its long run.

Issue 3 featured Chordmaster for guitar players and a new column, Z80-Subs, for machine code enthusiasts.

Christmas brought the full review of Specfile+ from S.D. Software and among too many other things worth mentioning there was a Wordsquare compiler (oh, and lots of jokes - and some famous photos).

January (5/5) carried a thought provoking piece for Ken Elston and a look at disc by John Wase. While in February there was an exclusive review of the Sound Machine software that was about to be launched by SAMCO/Revelation. Oh, and if you want to know about MEM\$ on SAM then this is the issue for you.

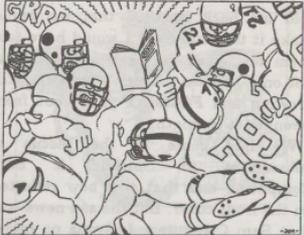
March saw my birthday (I do like to mention it now and again) and Carol reached episode 7 of her machine code tutorial - probably the biggest reason for the sale of back-issues we have ever had.

April, and issue 5/8 featured an article on Typography by Ian Ross and a

Vol. 5 - No. 7. March 1992.

FORMAT

FOR SPECTRUM AND SAM USERS



The Magazine Worth Fighting Over. ISSN 0963-6594.

detailed article on Extending the features of SD's Specfile+

May's big articles were reviews of PRO-DOS (CP/M for SAM) and Modula-2 for the Spectrum. Mark Lambert wrote some very interesting and informative things on hacking Spectrum games.

June had a nice Inlay Designer to type in as well as a UNI-DOS disc doctor. Also included was an in-depth article on +3 disc drives and how to add an external 5¼" or 3½" drive so you could use cheaper discs.

Then along came July's issue (5/11) with Alan Cox doing a wonderful job explaining Epson's Printer Control Standards - an article I keep handy at all times myself.

And so, finally, to number 12 with articles on Disc-Pros, Spectrum Communications and adventure games. There was also a review of our Utility Disc for the PLUS D and DISCIPLE.

Volume 6 - September 1992 To August 1993 (The Dark Before The New Dawn)

Volume Six!!! Wow. If someone had told me back in 1987 that we would make it to volume six I would have told them to go get the brain checked. But not only had we made it - we were still growing and **FORMAT** just went from strength to strength.

We had come to the rescue of subscribers to Sinclair & Sam Computing and that was now reflected on the front cover. But the sad news was that Sam Computers Ltd was no more. Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon had been forced to shut down due to the small minded, petty bureaucracy of Swansea Council. If ever there were people that needed stringing up they were there in the council's offices.

However, all was not lost. A lot of work, many long hours of negotiating, and things were to work out alright in the end. There is no doubt that 92/93 was a very testing time for SAM and the SAM community - it is I think a testament to the quality of the machine that its owners stuck with it and helped it live again. **FORMAT** played a big part in the rescue and we consider ourselves deeply honoured to have had the support of all of our readers through that difficult time - thank you one and all.

THE NEWS

September kicked off with news that Revelation Software (formally SAMCO's software division) was now under new ownership and moving to Exeter. It soon relaunched most of the old titles - and planned lots of new ones. Amstrad

returned to the Z80 with the NC100, a machine that had more than a passing resemblance to Sinclair's Z88.

By October there was more news on Revelation Software, but the fate of SAM was still up in the air. Atari looked like they had serious financial problems and multi-format mag *Zero* closed down.

November, and the good news that West Coast Computers had signed the rights to SAM. Bruce Gordon's other two companies shut, Sam Technology for good, but Noasis was taken over by Fred Publishing.

By December things were really falling into place as Blue Alpha Electronics returned and was given the contract to oversee the building of SAM and carry out development work.

January '93 saw the first news of a new release from Steve's Software - a new DTP program for SAM. We also broke the news that 48K Spectrum owners were having problems getting replacement keyboard membranes.

February had Fred Publishing in the news again, this time taking over the SAM version of the *OUTLET* disczine. We also reported massive losses at IBM.

March saw Amstrad back in profit and the news that the price of discs was on the up as the EEC imposed anti-dumping levies on Far Eastern import. W.H. Smith dropped 8 bit software from their shelves.

April saw the end of veteran magazine *Sinclair User*, both Commodore and Atari slashing prices of their 16 bit

machines to get sales, and Revelation Software hitting a software pirate where it hurt.

May brought a warning against unofficial SAM power supplies and news that Blue Alpha were working on a remote control joystick project.

June's big news was the takeover of Psygnosis by Sony. Spectrum PD software was reported on the up and Revelation launched a schools software license scheme.

Following the closure of *SU* in April, July saw that last issue of *Your Sinclair*. Nev Young also got married (tho' I doubt he will thank me for reminding him).

Finally August dawned with the news that Lemmings was coming to SAM in a major license deal by Fred Publishing and SAM was also to get a WIMP system called DRiVER.

Articles - The HI-LITES

Volume 6 N°1 was largely taken up with celebrations to mark out 5th birthday. We had invited most of the leading writers, and a few industry figures, to tell us all about themselves and how they got started with computers. Funny in places, very informative and a fitting tribute to our first 5 years.

6/2 contained an article on 'Friendly Programming' and Carol reviewed *Spell Master* for SAM, she had also reached part 13 of her *M/C* tutorial.

Issue 3 looked at mail-merging on SAM and their was a 'Soft ROM' for +2a/+3 users.

The star of our Christmas issue was the Golf game (for either Spectrum or SAM) it was a big type-in but well worth the effort, although if you feel lazy you can now get it on disc.

The new year got off to a good start

Vol. 6 - N° 7.

March 1993.

FORMAT

FOR SPECTRUM AND SAM USERS
(Incorporating Sinclair & Sam Computing)



GO ON, MAKE YOUR DAY...

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with articles on File Transfer and Animation while February (6/6) featured items on Problem Solving, Include Strings (in Spectrum word-processors) and a review of *File-Manager* for SAM.

March came along with a feature review of the *GamesMaster* package and part 2 of Problem Solving. Part 3 appeared in the April issue along with a review of *Etracker* and a good article by John Redfern on Using Printer Control Codes.

May, time does fly. A new hardware design course and how to use fonts on the Citizen 120D printer.

June had reviews of both *Campion* and SC-DTP and Problem Solving reached part 5. July saw *Inside Specfile+* and Carol was still going strong with part 19 of *Machine Code Without The Tears*.

Volume 6 rounded off with *Data Recording With Beta Basic*, *Ohm's Carpet*, and a review of the SAM program *Style Writer*.

Volume 7 - September 1993 To August 1994 (Renewal, And New Promise)

1992/93 had seen massive changes in the SAM world but it was well on the road to recovery. Surprisingly to some (although no surprise to us, or to our readers) the Spectrum was still refusing to lie down and die. As I say, those in the know would not be surprised, we all know how good the Spectrum is - but at ten years old the main-stream software companies and retailers had passed on to flashier things.

The support that the INDUG user group, and **FORMAT** the magazine of course, brought to users was therefore becoming more and more important. With the start of volume 7 we again showed our faith in the SAM, the Spectrum and our readers by making a massive investment. Out went the BBC that has been used to typeset the first six volumes, and in came a PC and laser printer. Better quality print, more words to the page, more variety of fonts, all leading to an even better magazine.

THE NEWS

Faster +3 Basic, that was the news as CP/M+ and Mallard Basic became available from Locomotive Software.

October'93 saw the formation of SAM PD by Derrick Morgan who was (and still is) looking for good PD software for the SAM to distribute.

November arrived and so did DRiVER, the WIMP system for SAM from Revelation Software. There was also news of West Coasts new TWO^{UP} connector a PRO-DOS Lite. November was also a good month because it saw

the first ever Gloucester Show.

And so to Christmas, and the news that Revelation reported record sales of its new DRiVER. Hilton launched their *Personal Filing System* and Fred Publishing announced *SAM Paint*.

January is always a quiet month for news but West Coast stirred interest with the launch of their Trade-In scheme to encourage Spectrum users to upgrade.

February brought news that Commodore were still in deep financial trouble (showing a \$900million loss in 1993) but the news on the SAM front was brighter with new software appearing for amateur radio enthusiasts and a version of the game *GO* arriving [pun intended].

March'94 saw the very happy news



that Dr. Andy Wright had become a dad with Marcus weighing in at 9lb. 9ozs. The other good news was that a way had been found to fit standard PC type disc drives to SAM so the drive shortage was finally over (Oh yes, and I was 40).

April was a dark month for us in Gloucester - the city made the world's headlines day by day. The Fred West story is now history, but for us at that time the horror was still unfolding. On a lighter note West Coast and Blue Alpha were moving to a more suitable site - a move which continued well into May.

June's mega news was the Launch of the SAM Elite. With its built-in printer interface and new style drives it replaced the SAM Coupé and gave a much needed boost to West Coast sales. June also saw Commodore go bust and Revelation take over SCADS.

July saw news of the DX1, a replacement for the PLUS D which we were to launch - in the end the project died because of the failure of Blue Alpha.

August ended a long summer with news of a new game for the Spectrum *It's A Goal*, a football game from Brendan O'Brien.

The Best Of The Articles

Easy Printer Control On SAM is, I think, self explanatory. Issue 7/1 also contained part 20 of Carol's machine code course for Spectrum and SAM users.

Issue 2 contained a full review of the Spectrum emulator Z80 on the PC as well as a look at HEX notation.

November's issue (7/3) saw the start of a series called Basically Speaking from David Finch - a nice series that helped improve your skills in the Basic programming language.

Our Christmas'93 issue saw the start of UNI-DOS Corner, a review of DRiVER

Vol. 7 No. 11 July 1994.

FORMAT

FOR SPECTRUM AND SAM USERS



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and another of our famous prize wordsquares. December also saw Ray Bray throw caution to the wind as he took over The Help Page (well done Ray).

Jan'94 had a very good crop of articles including 3D Construction Kit Expanded for the Spectrum and Secretary Keyboard Redefined for SAM users.

7/6 contained a review of *SAMPaint* while Volume 7 No. 7 starred a nice article from Phillip Jenner which explained the different types of printer available.

In April (7/8) Machine Code Without The Tears reached the end of the road with episode 25. May saw more on printers and a conversion of *File Manager* to run under DRiVER.

June saw the first review of the SAM Elite and a new PD Zone. July featured Pagemaker Printing with the Artist II while August rounded off the **FORMAT** year with Music for the 48 Spectrum and a look at the problems of changing from a 9 pin to a 24pin printer.

Volume 8 - September 1994 To August 1995 (Continuing To Prove That We Are The Best)

Some would say that, with no less than seven volumes of **FORMAT** under our belt, there would be little new to print. Well nothing could have been further from the truth. Volume 8 was jammed full of articles on an incredibly wide range of subjects - thanks to all the wonderful people that spared the time to write for us.

THE NEWS

September'94 brought the news that West Coast were extending the guarantee on new SAMs, at least as far as the main board was concerned, to two years instead of one. *Waterworks II* was launched by Fred Publishing and the 3rd Gloucester show was just round the corner.

In October *QL World* was up for sale, *SAM2SAM* - a new disczine was launched, and *Football League Manager* was announced my Fred.

November came round with S.D. Software selling their new Spectrum *MIDI* package and Lemmings - *The Later Levels* coming out.

Revelation were firing shots at Glenco in December, over Glenco's failure to hand over stocks of manuals that had been paid for, and Amstrad stopped selling its computers through retailers.

The new year (1995) dawned with Fred offering a souvenir for SAM owners. A limited number of the original gold ASICs had been mounted and framed.

February'95 saw a drop - not in **FORMAT** - but in the mains voltage in the UK as we moved to the new 230v

standard.

March, and SAM leaps into the big-league as *SAM C* is announced by Fred Publishing, at the same time the launch of *T'n'T* from Revelation kept SAM game players more than happy.

April saw Escom buy the rights to the Amiga range from the receivers of Commodore International. There was also the extremely sad news that John Wase had lost his wife, Cynthia, in a car crash.

The new *Quazar* sound system for SAM was the big news in May 1995 along with the announcement that Revelation Software had placed the part of SCADS into the public domain.

Summer came, and the June issue contained news that ZAT had closed down. The paper based 'fanzine' had been producing 6 issues a year since 1990.

July saw an item on the ever lowering prices of laser printers while August's issue rounded off the **FORMAT** year with news of cheap +3 keyboards.

THE HI-LITES (well just some of them really)

Of course no issue of **FORMAT** would be complete without SHORT-SPOT, John Wase and his dedicated band of contributors, **FORMAT** would be much the poorer (and probably smaller as well). Basically Speaking reached part 10 as David Finch explained even more about our favourite computer language in issue 8/1. There was also a SAM screen dump utility for BJ10 printers.

Carol Brooksbank provided the star article for October's issue - Something Shady - which had nothing to do with her character but instead did an in-depth look at producing shaded screen dumps on the Spectrum. An Easy Way To Date explained how to use ICL's standard date storage system to store and manipulate dates with ease.

Carol was back in the November issue (8/3) with colour screen dumps instead of shaded - and she also did a Machine Code Without The Tears special to answer some questions on using the floating point calculator.

Christmas again, and a nice little game called Hunt The Wumpus for either Spectrum or SAM, and a review of *SC_Word pro* from Steve's Software.

1995 got off to a good start with New Tricks For The Secretary from Tony Kinch and a review of the new style SAM drive DIY kit by Nev Young.

February took a step back in time as we reviewed the Z88. It may have been out for a long time but readers wanted it so they got it. If home videos are your thing then John Redfern's Video Titling article is a must-read for you.

Volume 8 N°7 contained an Easter Day calculator (yes it is that complicated to work out when Easter falls), there was also Tabcalc - a simple spreadsheet program for Spectrum or SAM for readers to type in.

April saw a trip down memory lane from John Wase as he looked at his early experiences with the Discovery disc system and if you were uncertain how DEF PRO worked on SAM (or Beta Basic on the Spectrum) then Darren Talbot explained.

May, and summer was a coming and thoughts of the sound of leather on willow prompted The Cricket Project

from Doug Casterton while the stay-in brigade could try out Spectrum music after reading a review of Music Maestro.

June was a scorcher, well to be honest I can't remember what the weather was like but the magazine was red-hot. Variables On A Theme was the start of a series that looked at the Spectrum's system variables and there was a first look at the new SAM C.

An article on Sorting and Printing using Fastfile (a database program we first printed way back in Vol.2) caused great interest with lots of requests for photocopies of the original article. REFing PROCs explained how you passed information to a SAM procedure by reference.

And so to a grand finale for volume 8. August's issue explored SAM MIDI, and we showed you how basic is stored on the Spectrum. There was also an article explaining how memory (the computer type that is) works.



Volume 9 - September 1995 To August 1996
(You Just Can't Keep Good Computers Down)

Another year older and deeper in debt. A very big debt actually, to all the writers who continued (and still continue) to make **FORMAT** so interesting and varied - and to all the readers who make it so worthwhile to produce **FORMAT**.

FORMAT is team work at its best, and each volume sees some people vanish from the scene but it also sees new faces coming forward - many people have never seen their words in print before they appeared in **FORMAT**, if nothing else, this would be one of our lasting influences.

THE NEWS

Magazine publisher EMAP made the news itself in September'95 as it became embroiled in a row over rights to a Spectrum emulator and seven 'classic' specky games (including *Jet Set Willy 2*) it featured on a cover CD on *PC Review* - claims for breach of copyright were firing off left right and centre with "no comment" being EMAP's only reply.

October brought news of a Scotland show organized by Fred Publishing and the news of bonus games being shipped with the Spectrum emulator Z80 by B.G.Services.

The big BIG news for SAM owners in November 1995 was the arrival on the SAM scene of S.D.Software's *Hard Drive Interface* - a major step forward for SAM. Fred Publishing also pleased the SAM community with the release of *SAM Sprite*.

December saw news of new laser

printers, the Amiga being hit by technical problems and Chris Pile, author of the SAM CPM system *PRO-DOS*, being jailed for his involvement in writing and distributing a computer virus on the PC.

Amstrad launched the PcW-16, faster than the older PCWs, now with 3 1/2" discs as standard, but still with a Z80 at its heart.

February brought the news that West Coast were making reconditioned SAMs available (most having been part exchanged by people upgrading to the Elite) all with new ROMs and keyboards.

March came along with news of *SAM Vision*, a set of library routines from Fred Publishing to go with their SAM C

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FORMAT

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compiler. Oh, and it was my birthday again....

April was quiet on the news front but Amstrad did cut 150 jobs and Sega announced its own theme park in London called SEGA WORLD.

May rolled round again, as it does most years, with the news that Escom were selling the Amiga rights that they had purchased from Commodore's receivers to Viscorp based in America. And rules were changed to ban adverts in magazines aimed at the public from showing prices as 'plus VAT'.

June (yes, there is one of those each year as well) brought the news that the classic game *Elite* was being released for SAM and the high-street retailer Dixons were in trouble for selling secondhand goods as new.

July plugged a WWW page for SAM, hinted at the problems that the new Channel 5 were having even before they started transmission and gave details of Codemaster's condemnation of the poor games-play in modern computer games.

August's news featured the collapse of Escom, only a year after buying the rights to Commodore International. As we said - what a difference a year makes.

The Best Of The Articles

*Not that there are ever any bad ones in **FORMAT** of course.*

Variables On A Theme reached part 4 of its look into the system variables of the Spectrum and Carol Brooksbank looked at SAM C Add-ons.

9/2 looked Into The 1 Meg and explained how the extra memory could be used on SAM.

Issue 3 (Nov'95) started a look at Spectrum emulators on other machines.

December previewed the new SAM hard disc system from S.D.Software, had

lots of tips for DTP users and listed a SAM C program for creating the dreaded Autostereograms.

January (9/5) and *Mistakes In Your Listings* proved interesting to all programmers and SAM users could read the review of the Mk2 internal disc kit.

February featured *Alternate Character Sets in Tasword 2* by George Siougas all the way from Greece (which just shows that if people make just a little effort then they too can write for **FORMAT**). There was also the first part of a look at maths in the C language.

The *Quazar* sound system was reviewed in March (9/7) and there was an interesting look at Video Titling using a Spectrum.

Several items of Spectrum software from German producer Sintech were reviewed in April (9/8) and Antony Drage played tunes in SAM Basic.

Issue 9 saw George from Greece back again, this time looking at *Alternate Character Sets In Wordmaster*. Carol Brooksbank reviewed the first SAM chess game *CHESS MATE* from Jupiter Software/Quazar.

The almost mythical keypad for the Spectrum 128K was forced to reveal its inner-most secrets by Paul Farrow - fantastic article even if you never ever own a Spectrum Keypad.

Printing in Basic from Ken Elston led a good mix in volume 9 N°11, There was a fresh look at SAM C and a review of *SAM Vision*, and the Genius mouse system for the Spectrum was shown to work with the PLUS D.

Carol Brooksbank produced a wonderful graph printing program in the final issue of volume 9, while Martin Fitzpatrick started a tutorial for SAM C - not the easiest language to get started with but well worth the effort.

Volume 10 - September 1996 To August 1997
(Our 10th Year - And Still Our Work Has Only Just Begun)

The tenth volume was always bound to be something special as it contained, in the May issue (10/9) the 10th Birthday of INDUG.

Volume 10 saw big changes underway with INDUG as we expanded to include a PC section and to launch **FORMAT PC** in October'96. This came about largely because of the letters and phone calls from ex **FORMAT** readers who had moved to the PC and missed having a magazine that did not treat them like kids and did not demand that they paid out mega-bucks to keep up with technology.

But our commitment to the Spectrum and SAM is still unwavering.

THE NEWS

The complete text of the 48K Spectrum manual, on PC disc, became available in September via **FORMAT**, the manual is still acknowledged as being the best ever written for a home computer.

October saw a new SAM game from Fred called *Momentum* and Grafix Wizards of Eastwood, Notts, released a compilation tape called 'Rather Useful Utilities' for the Spectrum.

November 1996 marked the passing of an era as the announcement was made that SAM was no longer to be assembled in South Wales, production was now to be done in Gloucestershire by the same people that handle SAM repairs for us.

The festive season marked the 7th birthday of the SAM Coupé and also the news that Amstrad were, after a two year break, returning to retailer sales.

January 1997. Channel 5 TV were still having problems, the 2nd Northern Spectrum & SAM show was announced for February, and we laid plans to commemorate the ZX81 reaching sweet sixteen.

February. Yet another birthday, this time the Z80 chip that is the heart of our favourite machines, launched by Zilog way back in 1976. In the same month the news that CP/M (one of the earliest operating systems for Z80 computers) and DRDOS (one of the all-time best operating systems for the PC) had been sold by Digital Research and were to become free on a 90 day trial basis.

March (and yes, I had a birthday in 1997 as well) saw Fred Publishing

moving south and Sega being forced into price cuts for its Sega Saturn console machine.

April (10/8) Amstrad sells its mobile phone division amid mounting claims that the company were having problems.

May, and Amstrad win a long running legal battle over faulty hard drives supplied for machines produced way back in the days of their 286 and 386 machines.

June saw the news that Amstrad was restructuring with major buy-backs of shares and that the Amstrad name would disappear except possibly as a trade mark.

Sinclair made a come-back in July 1997 with the launch of his first new product for some time. The X1, a tiny radio receiver costing £10 was shown to the public for the first time and there were hints that there are more products, possibly including a computer, to come from the Sinclair stable soon.

And so to August, the end of our 10th year. News of the October show in Gloucester, news that Amstrad are still in trouble, and news that the Internet is proving too expensive for most people.

The Best Articles In The World

Issue 1 of volume 10 included the special eight page Spectrum & SAM Resource Directory. There was also an article on the Spectrum Light-Gun, something that we had never looked at before.

10/2 proved that two into one will go, at least when it is joy-sticks that you are talking about. Carol Brooksbank looked at the DIM command and arrays, and the Rev Tony Kinch continued his excellent series on improvements to *The Secretary*.

+3 DICE reviewed, Space Saving in

Spectrum Basic, Talking C, Extra Power for SAM - November's issue was packed with good things.

December featured an article that explained the way the Spectrum 128K managed its memory paging, there were several fun items for the Christmas season including a wonderful poem from Sam Quigg.

The new year issue included a review of the FRED disczine while Feb's issue (10/6) looked at CP/M and also at LOKI, the Sinclair machine that never made it.

March featured Data Handling for both Spectrum and SAM and there was also an article that explained how the calendar works and April was a great month for type-in addicts with a large SAM utility.

May (10/9) and to mark the 10th birthday of INDUG a special reprint of the first ever Introductory issue of **FORMAT**. There was also a review of the Amstrad PcW-16 to show you what the latest Z80 based micro is like.

June saw the mystery of IF-THEN-ELSE explored on SAM and we published a detailed look at the Enterprise computer, a short lived machine from the mid 80s which could easily have done well as it was almost as good as SAM.

July's issue had a look at the history of The Messenger database program by its author the Rev. Tony Kinch. Then SAM Scaling looked at a rather under-documented feature of SAM Basic.

And so to the last issue of Volume 10. Spectrum +3 users were treated to a review of Kobrahsofts Disc Management System. Then Z80 And Beyond looked at what is happening in the world of micro-controllers and Short IFs and Long IFs were explained for SAM Basic programmers.

Vol.10 N°9. May 1997.

FORMAT

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In most cases we find the faults with old drives are mechanical (due to worn heads, stepper motor failure, etc.) In these cases you need an Internal Interface Type 1 to which you transfer the 1772 disc controller chip from your old drive - thus making the upgrade as cheap as possible.

If you want to fit a second drive (or first drive, if you don't have one or the 1772 on your old drive is faulty) then order a Type 2. Both types are available in either kit form or ready assembled. For the kit you will need screwdriver, soldering iron, solder and a reasonable level of soldering skills. All you need for the assembled version is a screwdriver. Full fitting instructions are given and the only other thing you need is a standard PC type disc drive from your local supplier (cost about £20 to £25).

If you have any doubts about which type of interface you need, or any questions about the drive fitting in general, then please give the FORMAT hotline a ring on 01452-412572 and they will be pleased to help you.

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|---|----------|-----------|
| Internal Disc Interface Type 1 (without 1772) | £19.95 | £29.95 |
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Ordering: Write your order clearly, state your name, full address and phone number and if possible please quote your INDC number as this will help to speed orders. Payment: Cheques and UK Postal Orders should be made payable to FORMAT PUBLICATIONS. Overseas customers may also pay using FORMAT's foreign exchange scheme. Postage & Packing: Prices include UK p&p. Overseas customers please write for a quote. Prices valid until 1st January 1997. E & O.E.

INTERFACES

These interfaces work with both the SAM elite and the SAM Coupé unless otherwise stated.

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Volume 11 - And Beyond (Here's To The Next Ten Years)

So, here we are, volume eleven and our tenth birthday. We have come a long way since our birth back in 1987. A lot of things have changed, we cover far more things than I would ever have thought possible and yet, still, there is a magic each month as I see a new issue of **FORMAT** go out of the door and off to the post office.

Through this issue we have been looking back at what we have done over the ten volumes we have produced so far. But what of the future? What lies ahead for **FORMAT**, the Spectrum and SAM.

Well, in truth, only time will tell of course, but what we can do is look at the plans we have.

Our biggest step in the last year was the launch of **FORMAT PC**. It has been harder work that I had intended because, as yet anyway, I have not been able to find someone who will act as editor. The magazines (both **FORMAT** and **FORMAT PC**) desperately need more advertising to help pay for larger issues, but again, I have not been able to find someone who will step in and help sell advertising space. Jenny and I are already pushed to the limit. So that really is my first plan for the year ahead, get more help. Anyone interested?

Next, software. In the near future we plan to bring all the old utility software for the **DISCIPLE/PLUS D** (Tascon, Artcon and the rest which we used to sell on tape) together onto one disc for people. We are also looking for other Spectrum software to re-release so if you can think of anything please let us know.

Of course SAM will not be left out of the software field, we have just done a deal with Revelation so that we can use the **Comet** assembler as part of a new project (more news soon) and I'm looking for programmers to help carry out some changes to SAM's ROM and DOS.

As I have said many times in the editorials in **FORMAT** - the larger our membership the better things are. We do have a problem with the shrinking number of Spectrum and SAM users but we know we are only reaching a small proportion of those that are out there. We therefore plan a program of press releases in the hope that the word of our existence can be spread - any help you can give, or any ideas you may have, we would really welcome. But remember that it no longer stops with the Spectrum and SAM, the PC will play an important part in the growth that is to come. Remember that the more the PC side grows the more money there is to invest in the Spectrum and SAM.

And finally, writers. We have had the pleasure of giving many writers their first break in **FORMAT**, and that is one thing that I really want to see continue. You all have something to say. It does not matter whether it is a simple letter, an item for **SHORT-SPOT**, or a proper article - each and every contribution you can make helps **FORMAT** continue. I have promised before that **FORMAT** will still be around in the 21st century, and with your help it will be.

Now please raise your glasses as I propose a toast "To the next 10 years".

SAM GAMES AVAILABLE FROM REVELATION

SOPHISTRY

Our latest & BEST licenced game. Originally produced for the Spectrum by CRL, and now brilliantly converted for SAM, Sophistry is a game that is big, perplexing, colourful, frustrating, musical, bouncy, and above all DIFFERENT (and it even has the Spectrum version built in so you can take a trip down memory lane).

£9-95 (£8-95 to INDUG members)

TNT

Written by industry mega-star Matt Round - A game packed with humour, colour, sound and above all ACTION!

Loosely based on Bomb Jack (the game SAM owners have most requested over the years). As well as the normal one player game, TNT has gone one better by giving you TWO player action - competing against each other, in full glorious technicolour - at the same time. It even has a novel feature in a SAM game - a High Score Table, how many others have that?

Avoid the meanies, collect the bonus points, Jump, Hover, Fly - what more do you want???

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ELITE

The legendary game at last available on SAM disc. Using the code of the Spectrum version, long thought the best after the original BBC version, this game is a must for everyone who loves action and adventure. Full manuals, story book and packaging.

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GRUBBING FOR GOLD - the most advanced, the most playable, the most enjoyable quiz game since the legendary Quiz Ball. They said it could not be done - they said bringing a TV quiz show to SAM would not work. Well let them eat their hearts out because YOU GOT IT....

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SCADs PD Yes, at last, we are pleased to re-release SCADs - the arcade game development system for SAM. Previously sold by Glenco at £24.95 we have now placed the software into the Public Domain so the disc costs you Only £2.50. The full manual (over 200 pages) is also available for £12.95 (overseas please add an extra £1 to postage rates below because of weight)

* All prices include UK postage and packing (Europe please add £1, other overseas please add £2).
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Jenny's Story (She Came, She Saw, She Conquered)

January 1991 started off as depressing as usual with all the Christmas celebrations over, and leaving me broke and bored. You see, I was a child minder and, as well as my own children to look after, I took in a couple of others to help with the family budget, but unfortunately, they had to move away leaving me with a rather sad looking purse, and in the position of having to go out and look for work.

So, I toddled along to the local job centre, just out of curiosity to see what was being offered and thought umm... that one looks quite interesting, I'll find out more: 'Local publisher looking for part-time person to assist in the running of this small, but expanding business'

Half-heartedly I went along for an interview thinking, well, it's only the first job I looked at so far but it will do for starters.

I knocked on the door of this, what seemed to be private house, and was answered quite quickly by this rather large hairy male, immediately showing resemblance to singer Demis Roussos!

After being invited in and being ushered to an office, which was situated at the side of the house, I started to wonder what the hell I was doing there.

Well, I've never seen an office like it up 'till then, or since! Call it fascination I suppose, but it was a complete mystery to me how anyone could work in such a mess!

Demis Roussos look-a-like turned out to be Bob Brenchley, and came across friendly and very chatty. After a cup of tea and a lecture on what he actually got up to in this muddle, I began to realise the answer why I was there.

This man needs Mary Poppins! Flick

the fingers and put some law and order into the large piles of stuff avalanching all over the place. Being a sucker for a challenge I took the role that was offered to me a couple of weeks later, and eventually (after a few months) even got a job title - Membership Secretary.

Deep down inside I thought to myself... the job will do for now, until I find myself a proper job.... six years eight months later... I'm still looking.

No, seriously though folks I wouldn't leave **FORMAT** or you nice members in the lurch like that - I'm needed too much.

My employment here has not really been 'work' as such, I was a woman with a mission, where I have had to perform an abundance of different and weird tasks that I would not have experienced in any other working establishment.

I have made good friends with Bob, his lovely, long suffering wife Rose, and, his daughter Annie, I've watched grow up into a very fine young lady.

Working for **FORMAT** is more than a job, I feel part of a big family, with all its responsibilities, carefully nurturing and seeing it grow! Bob and I have been successful so far working together as a team, not like the conventional 'Boss/Secretary' relationship. I've learned so much about computers that I never knew before, and have been able to pass some of this knowledge on to my family too.

I never did manage to train Bob to tidy up, but maybe that is why I've stayed here for so long, perhaps my job as a child minder continued at **FORMAT Publications**.

So, Happy birthday **FORMAT** and thanks to all our readers for giving me a purpose to be here. *Jenny x*

THE TIZERS

Tizers is our in-house short-hand for Advertisers, a group of people that are very important to **FORMAT**, for without them we would be a much smaller magazine.

When I first planned **FORMAT**, way back in early 1987, I did not plan to have adverts. Even back then some of the high-street mags were busting at the seams with adverts and I knew that others shared my distaste at being asked to pay for a magazine that was nine-tenths advertising. So the plan (and budgeting) was for a 16 page mag with no advertising.

But then reality dawned. At £10 per year (our original subs) there was no way we were going to make ends meet without at least some adverts, and if we wanted to print bigger issues then adverts were essential (in moderation).

Issue #1 of **FORMAT** had only one advertisement, from National Disc Supplies (long since vanished) who stayed with us for a few months. The back cover of issue 2 had an advert for the IAC (which I think stood for the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers) may sound strange for a computer mag but the advertising revenue helped.

Issue 4 saw the first advert from Dave Hood at BetterBytes. They moved to the back page from issue 6 and stayed with **FORMAT** for years until they failed to follow the trend into SAM software and gradually petered out. BetterBytes are still well remembered for their Disc Manager software for the DISCiPLE and the PLUS D.

Redcliffe Software graced issue 6 but the two Bristol guys who ran the company soon split and disappeared. Then in issue 8 Kempston came aboard

to advertise their mouse systems.

One of the early comments from readers was why did MGT not advertise each month. Alan Miles used to reply that "**FORMAT** is such a good advert for our products we don't need to". Anyway they did do frequent special offers leaflets for INDUG member's benefit.

In Vol.2 N°1 Bradway Software started advertising their range of Spectrum software and in 2/5 PCG started adverts for their DTP software (now available through us). Kemssoft started in 2/6 with adverts for the PCB designer, pity they never did one for SAM.

2/10 saw Outlet, the long running Spectrum disczine appear for their first advert in **FORMAT**. While in 2/11 Steve's Software made their appearance with an advert for Spectrum Software. Then there was the famous girls of the MGT Life-Time Drive advert in 2/12.

S.D.Software first graced us in 3/3 and became regulars in 3/8 when Nev Young liked the company so much he bought it.

Lerm started advertising their SAM wares in 3/8 as did Teacher's Pet (educational software).

BetaSoft launched BetaDos for the PLUS D in 3/12 and later of course launched MasterDOS and the other SAM products.

Leo Software, Fred Publishing, B.G.Services, Astro-Tech, Kobrahsoft, Hilton, Revelation, West Coast, Flexibase, have all appeared over the years, some regular, some not so regular.

I'm sure I've missed lots, sorry, but there was just not enough room. To everyone who has advertised I extend a big thank you. You all helped to make **FORMAT** bigger and better For its readers.

Now "anyone want a rate card?"

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+3 version: SPD-05C Price: £9.95

FORMAT

READERS SERVICES

FORMAT BACK-ISSUES

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Price: £14.00 per volume.

All issues, from Volume 8 N° 1 (September 1994) to the latest issue, are available separately. To order just quote the Volume and Issue N°.

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HARDWARE

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NEW SAM CLOCK NEW

The SAM_CLOCK is fully compatible with the TIME and DATE functions of MasterDOS and has an integral battery that keeps the board functioning when your SAM is switched off. The board fits onto the expansion connector at the back of SAM but comes with a built-in through-connector so you don't need a Two-Up to use it in conjunction with another interface. R.R.P. £29.95

Order Code: SCH-01 Price: £24.95

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