

WACCI

The Amstrad CPC magazine · Issue 140, Summer 2003 · www.wacci.org.uk

Thanx... and stuff

With any luck, the magazine wot you are holding in your hands is actually A5, rather than A5-blown-up-to-A4 resembling a large-print book for the visually challenged. I reckon the 10pt text is legible enough, but let me know if you can't read it.

This issue of WACCI is about as late as you'd expect an issue of WACCI to be, and my excuse this time is that I've got a new job (editor of British Waterways' new website, www.waterscape.com), and it's all been rather hectic recently. So this issue's 'thanx' go to you all for your patience.

Special thanx

As ever, further thanks to those who've written something for this issue. We've made an effort this time to round up some of the latest CPC software: if you stumble across any more, write a review and we'll include it. Also coming soon: James Hoskisson's guide to fixing corrupted discs, Roy Everett's interview with Danish coder NWC, Kevin Thacker on cross-development, great lost CPC programs, and the letter F.

Special stuff

What else is happening? The *Amstrad Action* scanning project at www.cpcoxygen.net is coming on great guns, with more issues being resurrected by the week. Do take a look if you have a chance: the early issues are real 'Blast from the Past' territory.

For those of you interested in games, there's an immense cataloguing-and-reviewing effort underway, also on the Internet. Prime mover Nich Campbell and various others are attempting to collect every CPC game ever released, write a brief review (www.cpcgamesreviews.com), and make them freely available (tacgr.emuunlim.com).

With CPCists an increasingly disparate bunch, there's been no WACCI Conventions for a few years. But perhaps we should attempt to organise an informal get-together/booze-up now that we're approaching the traditional autumn date. Any thoughts?

Meanwhile, I shall get back to work on Palatine. Enjoy the issue!

Richard Fairhurst (CRTC/Système D)

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Fair Comment

The first WACCI letters page for... ooh, ages.

Gone publishing

Firstly, thanks for issue 139. Congratulations to Brian and Richard for keeping WacCI alive in a such a viable format. This is not soft soap as my company no longer sell anything for the CPC but I still feel some affection for the machine.

I greatly enjoyed Richard's History of CPC article but I did feel that he skirted over our effort in that market. In fact, he dismissed us in half a sentence without even mentioning the name of the package. It was *Page Publisher*.

By today's standards, all the CPC DTP programs look inadequate, of course, and so a discussion about which was best is purely academic but nonetheless interesting. As is true of any generation of software, no one program is best at everything but in its time *Page Publisher* (PP) was often acknowledged as the best all-rounder. PP had the look and feel of *Stop Press* in many respects but all the code was loaded in one operation. There was no repeated demands to 'insert the system disc' which users found so irritating about *Stop Press*. PP could use a mouse, joystick or keyboard for control of the drop-down menus and was a comfortable program to use. How did it compare with the other commercial packages? Well, PP did just about everything that *Stop Press* could do but more quickly and easily. Quite frankly, it thrashed the much-vaunted *MicroDesign Plus* as far as text handling was concerned. PP had justification (left/right/centre), word wrap, columns, the lot. Someone asked for a spellchecker once which we thought was pushing it a bit in 128K although naturally you could also import text files.

Yes, PP did start life as a homebrew program but we got the author (Stuart McColl) to make various improvements and it sold well in the UK in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s. However, France was our major market. The CPC was *le computer* there, the most fashionable home micro of the lot as far as the Frenchies were concerned. We had a top distributor who took out double-page spread adverts in the French mags like *Amstrad 100%* and PP sold by the cart load. So did the add-on packages with extra clip-art and fonts although this was actually PP's weak spot as the program could only use its own fronts and graphics and couldn't directly import .cut files although it could load BASIC screens. To offset this, PP offered an excellent range of art and drawing tools including a paintbrush with 50 pattern styles.

Printers were sometimes a problem as the various manufacturers had their own ideas

as to what Epson compatibility meant. PP used quad-density graphics mode and not all 'Epson compatibles' had this and so where possible we wrote alternative drivers even catering for the then-new 24 pin printers. How good was PP's output?

Well, we're talking about the Blocky Horror Show era here. The CPC could only manage bit-mapped pages and fanzine headlines often had more jagged edges than Mount Fuji. Yet if you were careful in your choice of fonts and sizing, PP could produce quite acceptable results. Trouble is desktop publishing was (and is) an art form and it was (is) too easy to make a page look like a dog's dinner. And too many editors enjoyed winalot meals.

PP eventually received a 90% rating in an AA review but by the mid 1990s the CPC commercial market was failing fast. I have to say at this point that it is my opinion that AA hastened this decline by trying to turn itself into a lurid comic even though it still retained some talented technical writers. But that's a subject for another day [*and could make an interesting article - Richard*].

I haven't touched PP in years: the last time was when I was playing with a CPC emulator on a PC and wanted to see how PP ran. It looked good but that was then and this is now although a lot of people still use 8-bit technology to publish some very professional publications, just not on the CPC. The mid-to-late 1990s saw further development of the PCW's two greatest programs, *MicroDesign* and *LocoScript* in versions 3 and 4 respectively. *LocoScript* supports scalable fonts, as good as anything on a PC, columns, pictures, inkjet and laser printing. The CPC could only dream of scalable fonts. We still produce all our sales material and newsletters using *LocoScript Professional*, albeit on a PC, although we could do the same on a PCW.

I am not claiming that the PCW was or is superior to the CPC because it's horses for courses. I am simply making the point that by aspiring to scalable font technology the PCW remains a computer for every day use and does not rely on retro status to keep it alive. As far as I'm aware, the CPC did not bridge that gap apart from an April Fool spoof in an issue of Wacci. Anyone remember *PowerPage Professional*? Did anyone actually order the package?

Steve Denson, SD Microsystems & LocoScript Software

You're quite right, Steve, I did rather ignore Page Publisher - largely, I confess, because I couldn't remember much about the package. Thanks for putting the record straight. As for PowerPage Professional, I do remember one fanzine (which shall remain nameless) expressing great interest in ordering a copy, but I don't think I ever received the cheque...! Perhaps the earlier versions should be renamed PowerPage Unprofessional. - Richard

Resurrection men

Thank you sincerely to both Brian and Richard for getting another issue out, I was going to/had given up on assuming I'd ever see another issue again - I like it when I'm wrong in special cases like this one.

It saddens me to think that so few people are contributing to Wacci, but just as sadly times and computing are moving on. I am glad that my article(s) are to be used: there may be someone out there (if only an enthusiast) who has a broken down computer and can't fix it or upgrade/replace a part/drive etc. I hope my feature will go some way to helping said persons. With this in mind I would like to offer an on-going feature of the same nature. *[Please do! - Richard]*

I have several old printers (some minus print heads) that I can strip and photograph as I do so. Who knows, this too might enable someone to regain use of a non-working printer that may need nothing more than a clean up?

With this in mind, I would like to ask do any members have broken or unwanted CPC hardware that I can use as part of my on-going feature? Anything CPC! Printers not listed in my future article(s), 464 keyboards/monitors etc. Any hardware sent would be used for features for Wacci and will not be rebuilt or returned, so I must make it clear they must be either non-working or unwanted hardware items! Sadly, I must also make it clear I cannot pay for any items being sent to me: I am hoping people will send items to use in my feature as a part on their side to keeping Wacci both active and viable.

As to the current layout of Wacci - it's an issue, what more could I want?

And as to the future layout of Wacci - as long as it's an issue, what more could I want?

I shall continue to contribute to Wacci and support the magazine as long as I can, but my requests for broken or unwanted CPC hardware to create future articles dictate my being able to do so in future... Please, everyone reading this, think about it, send me your hardware for articles, and help me to help keep Wacci and the CPC alive.

Send your broken unwanted hardware to: J Jones, 17 Beachway, North Seaton, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9TD. If you would like to check if I have what you are sending me already, you can e-mail me at jonty.theghoul@btopenworld.com. All e-mails will receive a reply within 48 hours.

Jonty Jones, Northumberland

Hot off the press

We round up the latest CPC software releases

New CPC software may be more of a trickle than a flood these days, but we aim to chronicle it and, perhaps, thereby encourage more development. These are the programs most recently received through the WACCI letter-box...

He lives in a land down under

Richard Wilson – author of ParaDOS, Xexor, and other such fabled programs – is still writing ridiculously impressive stuff. Those of you with PCs may already know of WinAPE, his CPC emulator *sans pareil*. But he's also been working on a couple of other CPC projects.

One such program is KTris. Yes, it's yet another version of Tetris. It's as good, and as addictive, as any: but substantially shorter than most. KTris, astonishingly, is just 1k long.

This is Richard's entry for the annual minigame competition, in which Spectrum, Commodore 64 and CPC programmers do battle to produce the best work in a limited amount of memory. There's also a 4k category this year, and we'll report more in the next edition of WACCI.

Richard's second project is a little more ambitious in scope. Anyone who's wandered near a Playstation, PC or Nintendo in the last few years will have seen the genre of arcade game known as a 'first-person shootemup' (FPS), of which Doom and Quake are the most famous. In these games, you're a Fearless Warrior exploring a dungeon (or an alien planet, or a futuristic New York, or Newnham College – maybe not) packed with enemies, inevitably including man-eating dogs, killer tomatoes and Hitler's cabaret troop. You see your surroundings as if you were there – a 3D view oddly reminiscent of Sultan's Maze, but updated in real time as you walk around.

Before Doom and Quake came the true innovator, a game called Wolfenstein 3D. In the heady Quantum Computing days of the mid-1990s, I vaguely remember Richard sitting in a house in Barry, South Wales, enthusing about Wolfenstein in between programming new features for ParaDOS. Now the wheel has turned full circle, and he's cloning Wolfenstein for the CPC.

An early preview is doing the rounds on the Internet, allowing you to walk around the dungeon. As you walk forward, turn left a little, and walk forward again, a 3D view of the dungeon magically appears on your screen. A deeply impressive piece of coding.

For those of us without Richard's programming abilities (and he has been known to talk z80 in his sleep...), salvation is at hand with Zack. This arcade game construction kit is another one I remember from the South Wales days. At that point, it was all finished – graphics editor, simple programming language, compiler – except for the missing music editor. That's still the situation today, but sensibly, Richard has decided to release it as is.

So if you've always wanted to rewrite Uridium but never been bothered to learn machine code, give Zack a whirl. (The game Richard wrote as a demonstration of its capabilities, Cobra Mission, is just as good as the £2.99 Mastertronic games that were so popular in the CPC's heyday.)

Sound as a house

Meanwhile, in France, the revered coding group Arkos – arguably the nearest modern day equivalent to the legendary Logon System – has released the most flexible CPC soundtracker yet.

Soundtrackers, for the non-initiate, are music composition programs that use a scrolling list of notes to play – rather akin to an old-fashioned piano roll – instead of a musical score. Since the original example on the Amiga in the 1980s, derivatives have appeared for most computers: on the CPC, the best known were Poum's Equinoxe and BSC's Soundtrækker (respectively sold by Ubi Soft and the appalling New Age Software).

STarkos is the latest of these. The connoisseur will appreciate several improvements over Soundtrækker: notably, instrument sounds can be higher resolution than 50Hz and can use hardware envelopes for just a small portion of their duration. But the main innovation of STarkos, I think, is that your music can interact intelligently with the rest of your program, sending trigger messages at key points in the music. This gives you the flexibility to add digitised drums, CPC Plus DMA sound, or even have your screen display respond to the music. The programmer, Targhan, includes a couple of examples on the disc. Though likely to prove baffling to the non-programmer, they demonstrate STarkos's flexibility.

There are a couple more soundtrackers under development: another French effort dedicated to the improved sound facilities of the CPC Plus; and my own ChaRleyTraCker, which has been stalled for many years (largely because it takes so long to assemble with Maxam... if I ever get a PC with WinAPE, I might have another go), but also has the event-trigger flexibility of STarkos.

Speculate to accumulate

After years of cynicism (from myself as much as anyone else), Our Brian has at last

unearthed the much-rumoured Spectrum emulator for the CPC, reviewed in Amstrad Action all those years ago.

It's called ZXM, and on running, greets you with the famous '© 1982 Sinclair Research Ltd' in the ever-granular Spectrum font. I've tested it enough to see that you can write and run Spectrum BASIC programs on it quite happily; access Spectrum files stored on your CPC disc; and even make it beep. It'd be interesting to hear a report from someone with more Spectrum experience as to whether it actually runs any games.

Demonstrably useless

And, of course, there's the usual stream of demos. Those of you who don't like demos can shove off to another page at this point.

Or maybe not. *A Step Beyond*, principally by Greek coder Optimus (Michael Kargas) but with contributions from others including our own Simon Lucas, isn't your traditional CPC demo fare. Rather, it's a five-minute rolling presentation where one effect succeeds another: no scrolling message, no rasters, just effect after effect. Optimus calls it a 'trackmo'. The effect is rather spoiled by the fact that the long texts are still there – just shunted off into another program – but nonetheless, this is an impressive innovation.

A similar approach is promised by a forthcoming demo from Brittany, unsubtly named *Climax*. A short 'teaser' doing the rounds suggests a rather more frenetic affair than the relaxed pace of *A Step Beyond*: the final demo is expected to be released in time for *Ze Meeting 2003*, the biggest CPC demo-party this summer.

Rebellion is a new release by the French groups Kill Or Die and Mortel (cheerful blighters, evidently). It's a fairly polished take on the standard scrolling-message demo, with nicely drawn graphics.

23 24 25 was released at the end of last year, though most of the coding appears to have been done in mid-2001. It follows another demo called *20 21 22* (I didn't understand that, either). A multi-part demo of the sort seen several times from France in recent years, *23 24 25* has particularly good musical accompaniment and a couple of nifty effects, especially in Eliot's part.

And I'm still working intermittently on *Palatine*, the very old-school demo I've been writing for the past eight years or so: it'd be great to get it released this summer.

And the rest

Other new stuff includes the latest version of CPCT, a cruncher (file compression program) that will appeal mostly to coders; a new utility called *DiskDoctor*; and *Soundtrakker Player*, a jukebox that allows you to create playlists featuring hours of *Soundtrakker* music. More on all of these in the next issue.

Rob Buckley has launched a competition to encourage development of new games, with a £500 cash prize for the best. More details at www.amstradaction.com.

Where can you get it?

All the above software is available for download from the Internet: Emmanuel Roussin's site (www.genesis8bit.com) is the central repository for new releases, CPCscene is the best place for demos (www.cpcscene.com), and ZXN is at the BTL site. Ah yes, did I mention there was a new BTL site (www.systemeD.net/bt/)? If you don't have Internet access, drop me a line and I'll see if we can sort out something with the WACCI library.

Market Stall

CPC bits and bobs for sale

3in discs – disappearance greatly exaggerated

Dave Smith, of the late lamented Dave's Disk Doctor Service, has 'several hundred' 3in discs still available. If you're interested, visit his website at www.diskdoctor.co.uk, e-mail him at daves@quakerdave.freemove.co.uk, or call 01892 835974.

CPC 6128

Jeff Rushby, in South London, has a 6128, screen, addons, and loads of books and extras up for grabs. If you're interested, contact him at jeffrushby@tiscali.co.uk, or through myself or Brian if you don't have e-mail access. He's in South London.

Jonty's booklet

The full text of Jonty's article this month, together with next month's instalment, is available in its original form containing full colour pictures alongside the text – presented as a manual-like A4 booklet. It costs £7, including postage, from John Jones, 17 Beechway, North Seaton, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9TD. Or e-mail jonty.theghoul@btopenworld.com.

Get rid of your old gear

If you're thinking of throwing your CPC out, don't – send us details instead. We may be able to find a worthy taker, either through the pages of WACCI or by advertising it on Internet discussion groups such as comp.sys.amstrad.8bit (don't worry, we won't give your personal address out except to serious inquirers).

Doing the Strip

Jonty Jones shows you how to fix common CPC problems armed with only a screwdriver

Cleaning or repairing your hardware is a daunting task if you have never attempted so much as replacing a worn drive belt before. Yet it isn't so much rocket science as you'd think - believe me, when it comes to rockets, I'm only good with them on fireworks night! Fixing 90% of your CPC hardware takes nothing more than a decent set of screwdrivers, a steady hand, and an hour or so of your time. Hopefully, with these features, I hope to bring that often dark & daunting task into the light.

In the beginning

Always read these instructions before starting work - twice or more if it still seems a little unfamiliar to you. Where possible, refer to the diagrams or pictures supplied. Familiarise yourself with the location of every item you'll be working on; double-check each step before you move on; and have a working area at least twice the size of the hardware device you are working on - once you begin working, it will take up twice the space it first occupied. Have your screw-drivers *et al* at hand.

Before you begin, don't tell yourself you can't do it - if you have never done

anything like it before, how can you know? Be positive, don't try and rush or force things, follow the text and pictures, and before you know it you will have completed what at first seemed a difficult or impossible task!

Open CPC'seme

For this first featured item, we'll be stripping a CPC 6128 keyboard (it was the nearest at hand!) for simple internal cleaning purposes. It's amazing just how quickly crisp crumbs and fluff build up, especially when you have children who still love those classic CPC games.

Place your keyboard on your working surface with the underneath or back facing up. The CPC 6128 has seven screws which hold the back casing in place: take note, one of these screws is longer than the rest. Make a note of where this screw came from if it helps.

Using a Philips screw driver (cross-headed), unscrew all these screws in turn. Turn the CPC over - when you do this, all the screws will fall out! Now look to the end of the 6128's casing. There you will find two small black-headed screws; remove them.

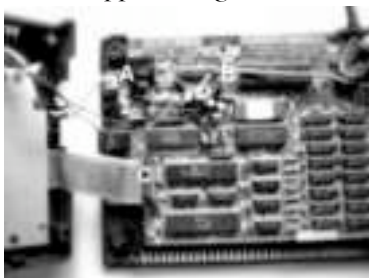
Hold the upper casing at the drive

end (*picture 1*); lift the casing up and over, and lay it flat (on its keys).



(1)

The upper casing (keypad section), will still be fastened to the lower casing (PCB/3 in drive section), by three points: the keypad sensor pad (*picture 2*), the on/off LED power feed and the speaker power feed. Disconnect these in turn to free the upper casing.



(2)

First pull free the keypad sensor ribbons. This is the double transparent plastic ribbon connection (*picture 2, letter C*); hold each ribbon in turn and pull firmly straight up (*picture 3*).



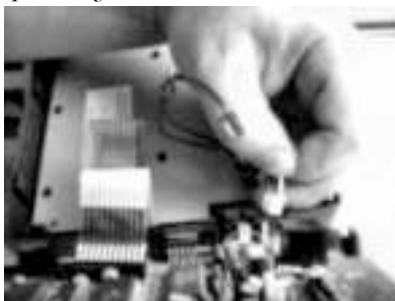
(3)

Now pull free the LED power connection (*picture 2, letter A*). This is the small white female block connector. Holding the wires firmly, pull it straight up (*picture 4*).



(4)

Next, pull free the speaker power connection (*picture 2, letter B*). This is the small blue female block connector. Again, holding the wires firmly, pull it up (*picture 5*).



(5)

I got the power

If the main on/off power switch needs replacing, start by snipping free the plastic retainer which fastens the two yellow wires of the power switch and the grey volume wires. When rebuilding, a piece of insulating tape or cellotape will suffice in replacing this item.

Start by lifting the on/off power switch straight up (*picture 10*).



(10)

Follow the two yellow wires along to the small female black connector, and as with all such connectors, hold the wires firmly and pull straight up (*picture 11*).



(11)

I can't hear you

If the volume controller needs replacing, release the small PCB which holds the volume dial by pulling back the small plastic lip (*picture 12*). Care must be taken here: the clip can easily snap if too much force is placed on it.



(12)

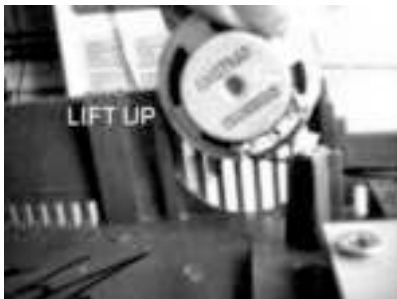
Now lift the PCB from the retainer clip side (*picture 13*). Follow the grey wire along to the small female white connector and pull it free.



(13)

Speak to me

If the speaker needs replacing, release the small female blue connector from the main PCB. Follow the two black & blue wires along the upper casing: it should be held in place along the way by small plastic hook-like retainers. When you have freed the two wires, simply lift out the speaker by lifting it straight up (*picture 32*) [*32? Ok... - Richard*].



(32)

Full power Captain!

It's unlikely that the main power feed will fail, but stranger things have happened (mostly to me... but that's another story). Or it could be that you want a longer

connection to your system. Either way, this is the simplest part to replace in terms of layout. Pull free the power feed, then pull free the larger white female connection.

As a rule the LED lights rarely fail, but if this happens, you can remove the LED PCB by unscrewing the single retainer screw. Follow the black & white wire along from the LED PCB to the main PCB, and pull free the small female white connector (*picture 7*).



(7)

All aboard

If a crucial component such as the CPU fails, it's actually cheaper and easier just to change the entire main PCB (motherboard). If all 6128s were the same internally then life would be so much simpler... but sadly they aren't. I have stripped (for spares) two 6128s and found they had contained a smaller main PCB than my 6128 in use! As far as I can remember they all have the same connections. The best place to get a replacement main PCB is of course Merline Serve. The address can be found in most issues of WACCI.

To remove the main PCB, you first

need to remove the retainer screws: I found four on mine. Take note, there is a screw burried under the disk drive wiring on the top right of the main PCB (*picture 8*). The main PCB will in some cases be attached to the disc drive via a black earth wire. This connection takes two forms: either a soldered earth wire from the main PCB, or an earth wire fixed to the main PCB with a screw. If the earth wire to the disk drive is fixed by a soldered joint you need to free the earth wire from the disk drive itself. When rebuilding, remember to attach this earth wire to the disk drive frame! Where earth wires are originally fitted, failing to re-fit this earth wire will result in at best drive read failure – and at worst a burn out!



(8)

Picking up the pieces

To rebuild your machine, simply reverse the order you went through during stripping: if you have no spare pieces it's safe to assume that you have done everything correctly. Plug it up and give it some power. Try out each key and then catalogue a disk to do a system check... *voilà!*

Next month, we'll continue by taking apart the 6128's disc drive.

The A to Z of the CPC: Europe

Unlike its British competitors, the CPC was an immensely popular computer abroad. **Richard Fairhurst** looks back

For the first six years of the CPC's life, most British users lived in blissful ignorance that their machine had a life outside these shores. They might be aware that a few software houses - Ubi Soft, Ere Informatique, Dinamic - were from more exotic climes than Sheffield or Salford. They might have seen the odd letter in UK magazines from overseas readers wondering what to do with their CPC. But that was about it.

Now flick back to page five. All the new CPC software around at the moment is from Europe (or Tasmania). Whereas we have just one fanzine still in existence - WACCI - the French have plenty. A quick Google search will reveal CPC websites in Spain, Greece, and Germany. Rumours of a Bulgarian art package, though, are greatly exaggerated.

Vive le CPC

Outside Britain, France was the crucial market for the CPC: in fact, the CPC was the country's number one home computer (displacing an indigenous Thomson machine), an accolade it could never claim in Britain. The French market was sufficiently important to Amstrad that they chose to launch the CPC Plus in Paris... though perhaps M Sucre just wanted a holiday.

For no readily explored reason, Amstrad France promoted the CPC with a toothy, grinning cartoon crocodile. Throughout the life of the machine, the crocodile was a familiar sight in press adverts extolling the CPC's suitability for both games and serious applications - even when Amstrad UK were simply flogging it as a games machine. This bizarre mascot explains a lot of the French CPC culture: games like *Croco Magneto*, fanzines such as *Croco Passion*, and so on.

And what a vast culture it was! The French had their own annual CPC fair, Amstrad Expo, a plush affair with stands from all the major publishers and informal evening get-togethers of CPC enthusiasts. There were hundreds of French-developed games, too. Many of the shoot-em-ups and other arcade games made it over here, such as the legendary *Get Dexter* (aka *Crafton et Xunk* in the original) and *Shockway Rider*, but the

expense of translation meant that we missed out on adventure classics such as Lankhor's *Le Manoir de Morteville*. Serious applications were a little thinner on the ground, but a few – such as the super-fast assembler DAMS – are still used to this day.

Two magazines deserve particular mention. *CPC Infos* was born out of *Amstar & CPC*, itself an amalgamation of a gamesy title and a serious one. But *CPCI* was like nothing else you have ever seen. It consisted almost entirely of type-ins – each of them a near-commercial quality arcade game in thousands of DATA statements, typically serialised over several issues. The apotheosis of this approach was *Axys* by Stephane Saint-Martin and Fabien 'Fefesse' Fessard, one of the best CPC shootemups ever released. Still, I can't see British CPC users having the patience to type in all these lines of code.

The definitive French CPC magazine was *Amstrad Cent Pour Cent* (aka *Amstrad 100%*, *ACPC*, whatever) – roughly speaking, France's answer to *Amstrad Action*. But whereas *AA* had writers called Bob, Jim, Chris and Steve, *ACPC*'s team were Poum, Sined le Barbare, Miss X and cohorts – a pseudonymous assembly of cartoon characters with an evil sense of humour. A look on the Internet, where every issue is available for download, will demonstrate that *Cent Pour Cent*'s covers sometimes rivalled those of *Amtix!* (and its 8-bit brothers *Crash* and *Zzap!64*): and even in its dying days, the magazine continued to innovate by summarising each review with a short English paragraph, and hiring the Logon System crew to write an advanced demo coding course.

Ah yes, Logon System. While young British coders would dream of little more than writing Type-Ins and sending them to *AA* or *ACU* – or perhaps, later, starting a PD library – the French were hunched over glowing screens in their bedrooms coding some frankly wondrous stuff. When these strange creations called demos finally hit our shores, via a couple of friendships forged through *AA*'s Helpline column and the nascent PD libraries, no-one in Britain quite knew what to make of them.

But it was clear that France was full of enormously talented coders: and at the time, the pre-eminent team was Logon System. They crafted one masterwork (*The Demo*), broke the CPC Plus protection scheme with *B-ASIC*, released a couple of smaller but striking demos, and then fizzled out. Nonetheless, they and their contemporaries (Malibu Crackers, GPA) unleashed a tidal wave of Gallic CPC creativity that still flows today. Even as I write this, the annual CPC meeting of French coders is taking place near the Pyrenees: doubtless, this time next week, there'll be more to marvel at.

Incidentally, some French CPCs were shipped with the Gallic AZERTY keyboard, a local variation on the standard QWERTY layout which also reversed the SHIFT pattern on the number keys – that is, you got punctuation unless you held down SHIFT, at which point the numbers came back. Very, very confusing.

Sprechen sie Locomotiv BASIC 1.1?

The CPC also sold well in West Germany, a country where the Commodore 64 had previously held sway. Rather than setting up its own local subsidiary, Amstrad licensed the CPC to local electronics firm Schneider, a relationship that lasted until Schneider started to manufacture its own cheap PCs in competition with Amstrad (curiously, they looked a bit like overgrown 6128s) and German CPCs finally regained their Amstrad branding.

Germany produced more serious software, though fewer games, than France. There were complete word-processors, BASIC compilers (the infamous *BC.COM*), and unlike the French, home-grown programs in PD libraries. Fittingly, the German CPC magazine (*CPC International*) was much drier, with perhaps the closest point of comparison being *Computing with the Amstrad*.

Like France, this was a country where the 'swapper' ruled – enthusiasts copying cracked games, demos and other home-grown creations for each other. In fact, ever since the late 1980s, Germany and France have alternated for demo superiority: CBS, Merlyn, Thriller and Wee! ceded leadership to Logon and Paradox, in turn displaced by Face Hugger and Odiesoft. The German scene is much, much quieter now, largely seeming to revolve around a bizarre new operating system called FutureOS whose main benefit is seemingly fast disc access.

Crossing borders

Spain's most well-known contributions to the CPC world were the fiendishly hard Dinamic arcade games and the bizarre CPC 472 – a 464 with extra memory designed to circumvent Spanish government restrictions on computers with 64k memory or less. There were CPCs in Denmark, Switzerland, and Austria too, with Austria's most famous Amstrad export being the games of Elmar 'Elmsoft' Krieger: *Zap'tBalls*, *Super Cauldron*, and *Prehistorik II*. There was virtually no CPC presence in Italy, nor the countries of Eastern Europe, other than the East German KC Compact clone.

Today, of course, the CPC has largely become One Emulator Under The Internet, making it easier to obtain European software than ever before. But I wonder if we're missing something. There was a great *frisson* in covertly loading the latest tape from your jealously-guarded French contact, then watching open-mouthed as multi-coloured text flew by, chronicling the adventures of Logon in the Ubi Soft castle, the piratical Malibu Crackers, and the inevitable stupid Belgians – another world which all seemed so much more exciting than our pedestrian CPC community.

Ah well. See you soon later, like says my sister.

CPC Mastermind

Answers to WACCI 138's brain-teasers

- 1: 'Crafton et Xunk' was called *Get Dexter* in England (as chronicled on page 13).
- 2: Britain's CPC news-stand magazines were *Amstrad CPC 464 User* (later *Amstrad User*, *Amstrad Computer User*); *CPC Attack*; *Amtix!*; *Computing with the Amstrad* (later *Computing with the Amstrad CPC*, *CPC Computing*); and *Amstrad Action*.
- 3: The name Arnor comes from *The Lord of the Rings*.
- 4: Maxam 1.5 contains the IQWXCL command.
- 5: WACCI's first editor was Jeff Walker...
- 6: ...and *Amstrad Action*'s was Chris Anderson.
- 7: VDE 2.66 is that CP/M word-processor (Visual Display Editor).
- 8: US Gold's *World Cup Carnival* was the only game ever to receive 0% from AA, largely because it was a simple re-release of an earlier Anco game.
- 9: An unexpanded tape-based CPC has 32k ROM: a disc-based machine has 48k.
- 10: The 6128 came with Locomotive BASIC, two versions of Logo (for CP/M 2.2 and CP/M Plus), and a CP/M 8080 assembler.
- 11: DEC\$ on the 464 has a bug in it requiring two opening brackets. It's therefore not an officially documented command.
- 12: Magnetic Scrolls wrote *The Pawn*.
- 13: None less than Phil Craven was the 'personality' behind Microstyle.
- 14: Richard Wilson's game creation system is called Zack, as you now all know.
- 15: The 6128 was supposedly codenamed Big IDIOT - Insert Disc Instead Of Tape.
- 16: CTRL-A in Protext swaps two characters around.
- 17: IJEUX on a CPC Plus launches *Burnin' Rubber*. It should really be IJEU, too.
- 18: dkTronics were the people who made 256k expansions and silicon discs. They were later taken over by Datel.
- 19: *Am sword* derived from *Tasword*.
- 20: And Michael Beckett wrote *DES*.

Matthew Phillips wins the competition with 14 correct answers: commiserations to runners-up Nich Campbell (2nd), Richard Wildey and Patrick Furlong (joint 3rd). More questions to come in future WACCI's!