FROBNICATE

FUN FUN FUN 'TIL DADDY TOOK THE KEYBOARD AWAY!!!

- ACORN WORLD 1996
- BLIND DEVOTION
- FIVE YEARS AGO

WOW!
10th
ISSUE

RISC TECHNOLOGIES

Acorn

Hissing Sprouch
Autumn 1996 Issue 10 £0

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EDITORS PAGE

Welcome to part one of the Editors pages.

Well, to be honest there isn't much to say here that has not been said elsewhere in the magazine. We are looking back at the happenings of five years previous whilst also looking forward to the future. Herein you can learn about something you may not have known your keyboard could do as well as reading a review of the delightful Databurst magazine. There is a helping of my usual ramblings in the difficultly named "Qe'est-ce que c'est, ça?" article. A report on Acorn World 1996 as it happened and as I saw it. The usual ranting of our demented hacker is after my meeting with the infamous Helen Rayner. To round it all off – a readership survey to see if you still like Frobnicate. :-)

What more need I say? Except to point out that those looking for a 10th issue party are to be let down. Like the November Acorn User appears in October, Frobnicate is the other way around. We'll party in issue #11.

Will there be an eleventh? Hell yes. I've not come all this way to say "Ah, a nice round ten. Let's throw in the towel". No, I don't intend to drag on and on like an Aussie soap opera or the X–Files until it becomes slightly farcical (though one wonders how much tongue–in–cheek the X–Files actually is!). When Frobnicate is no longer stimulating and original, it's life support will be cut. Yes. I wrote this entire issue on my own. No. I didn't run out of ideas.

Look, I'm right here with you now. The first to bring you show news. The first to bring you an insight into the show. Sure, Acorn User and Archimedes World probably got the exclusive and the hot titbits confirmed. Me? I have myself and an ear to the ground. Not bad.

But like everything, Frobnicate must evolve. The AU–style front cover was chosen as being better than the previous style which was better than the one before (thanks to Nava's logo). Maybe you'll see a new style coming up real soon. If you've any ideas (and not 1Mb ideas!) then feel free to send them to me.

We also have expanded our range of fonts. Before you send me "Irritated from ArgoNet" type emails, I'd like to point out that anybody who does *not* have the new fonts is probably using a pirate copy of Ovation. They're the fonts supplied... :-)

Homerton, the good old RiscOS font makes appearances still. As does Trinity and nobody can beat Corpus for clarity.

New to the scene is Vogue, a nice headline font but rarely used in narrative. Also new and taking preference over Trinity for narrative is the sexy–Trinity... Otherwise known as Paladin.

Also around are cameo appearances from the SymbolB font (Ηελλο αλλ!) which is like Paladin for the funny stuff like Greek and that heavy–duty mathematics stuff.

I hope you all like the changes, and I hope you would all be kind enough to take the time to fill out the questionnaire. Consider it like voting. If you don't vote and Labour get into power and they suck, you'll have yourself to blame for not voting. Likewise if the Internet boffs descend upon Frobnicate and kick the friendly Fidonet out on it's butt. You'll have yourself to blame. So get to it! :-)

Hey! I filled both columns. Who'd have guessed huh? <giggle>


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11th November 1996 at 01:15h.

Point•five•decade

Welcome to a look back. As the Acorn show is looming up in the present, I shall take a peek at the events half a decade ago, in 1991.

Exactly five years ago in October 1991, BBC Acorn User (as it was known then) marked a 'first' in the Acorn magazine sector by including a cover–mounted floppy disc. BAU joined with ESM to offer a demonstration version of Desktop Folio.

But that is not the biggest news. BAU was treading the rumour mill for a new operating system. Let's take a look at what BAU foresaw:

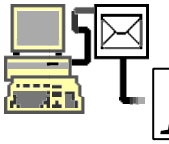
- The new machine is most likely to be of the three–box design, and include an ARM3. It is likely to be given a sport–related name, like the "Acorn Olympus".
- The new OS is to be called "RiscOS 3".
- The new computer is rumoured to be "more like a PC" instead of looking like the older Archimedi.
- The new computer was also expected to handle high-density floppy discs with DOS–disc compatibility.
- There is likely to be some form of bundled software, such as the PC emulator and a DTP package.

Well, they were wrong about the name. It was called, simply, the Acorn A5000. A three–box solution that looked like a sleek PC, included an ARM3 and RiscOS3. DOS disc capability was included, right up to the high–density types. And software was bundled. The "Learning Curve" offered the PC emulator, Acorn DTP, 1stWord+ and a few other bits like PacMania.

But the news keeps on flowing. October, being showtime, was when:

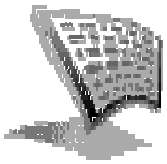
- Aleph One announced that you could bung a 20MHz 80386SX processor into your machine.
- Acorn launched the ARCHIMEDES echo into Fidonet.
- Arcade installed a new fast line on the 0181 655 4412 number.
- Hot games were Saloon Cars and Top Banana. Lemmings was taking the World by Storm.
- BAU was 160 pages long.

And a little earlier that same year, CJE micros get in the hot spot with Aleph One for "flagrant and outrageous breach of copyright" over software that allows the user to control the speed of an ARM3 processor from the DeskTop.


NetMail
A fully Fidonet compatible network based mailing system.
Exclusively available on the Acorn platform.
Coming soon from Squirrel Solutions
For further info E-Mail richards@arcticbb.demon.co.uk

Databurst

Upon loading, you get a little icon on the iconbar. Click on this and the screen blanks for a while and you get a crash. Why? It uses the system sprite area. Count that as grudge one. After unarchiving a massive load of data, you try again. After a few hourglass movements, the introduction appears, oh how slick it looks too.



From then, we are prompted to look around a beautiful creation. Sure, it isn't perfect – but it looks good and does its stuff without any hiccups. In fact, I bashed this program quite hard and only had three quibbles about it:

1. It doesn't multitask.
2. It uses the system sprite area.
3. It doesn't cache the index page for quick access.

That's it! If the music bugs you, you simply click MENU and this toolbar thing (to the right) simply *oozes* down the screen. It is ***so*** cool.

The toolbar

Yup, I was dead impressed. And as if that isn't enough, a source tells me the next version is likely to multitask – so the system sprite area won't be used (as it is bad protocol) and we may even see a 'menu' of pages to jump to. Quibbles? What quibbles? :-)

So what did the magazine contain? Not as much as Frobnicate. It is more of a graphics oriented package, designed to hit a different 'readership'. There were parts on BBSing and doors, parts on football, parts on C and a bit on SSTV (slow scan television) which even included a sample of SSTV broadcast for you to listen to, as well as the original picture and how it looked on the way back.

This it how Databurst appears when you first look at it.

The magazine is presented in a two-page spread. Each page is roughly two screens in length. When the mouse reaches the edge, it will scroll in that direction. It is, all in all, rather quite clever.

If Databurst starts as it means to go on, it should have a bright future ahead of it.

So, we come to the ratings, and introducing a new ratings scheme:

RiscOS DeskTop		
User friendliness	###	
Graphics	#####	
Code stability	####	
Meets objectives	####	
Overall score	####½	(90%)

As you can guess, I *was* impressed. Databurst is available from the Digital Databank BBS on +44 1707 323531 or +44 1707 329306. Average download time is 8 minutes (at 14400bps).

The new ratings

You should, by now, have noticed at least one example of the new ratings system.

Like every review, it is always totally biased towards the person reviewing the software. It is virtually *impossible* not to inflict your own preferences upon the review software, no matter how hard you try.

It is for that reason that I ask you to treat each review as **NOT** being the word of the deity of your choosing.

The typical review will look like:

RiscOS DeskTop	##	
User friendliness	###	
Graphics	##	
Code stability	#####	
Meets objectives	###	
Overall score	**###**	(60%)

Each entry can have up to five 'hash' symbols (the #). To put it into numerical terms, each hash is roughly 20 percent. However the total score is an 'overall' opinion, not the components averaged or anything technical like that.

You could possibly average the components and compare with the overall to see what I thought of the product.

Here is the breakdown of what each section mean…s...

RiscOS DeskTop:

This section comments upon compliance with DeskTop protocols and ideas *only* if the program polls during operation. If, like a game or a demo, it pops up an icon and goes single–tasking whilst doing its stuff – it won't be scored in this section. Not everything is tested, but sometimes it is tested under RiscOS2 or other weird setups (Arthur1.20?)... Extra points are scored for little things like DeskTop Save or interactive help.

User Friendliness:

Here we score a program on how 'intuitive' it is. Need you constantly refer to the instructions? Can it move A to B and B to C but not A to C? Does it use garish colours? Is it visible when I switch to monochrome? Does it still make sense in MODE 0? Documentation is covered here. No help = low score.

Graphics:

If the graphics are good, this score will be high, else it won't. Programs like StarFighter 3000 score extra because they allow you to choose a resolution best matched to your machine (so even though it looks crap, it is still playable on an ARM2).

Code stability:

The stability of the code. If something goes wrong, will it fall over in a heap or get up and deal with it? Can it handle a forced error (ie TaskKiller)? When it can't find disc X in the floppy drive, will it prompt forever or give up after a while. Can it handle media errors? What if it asks for a number and the user types "TWO"?

Meets objectives:

At the end of the day (daft cliche alert!), does it provide what the shrinkwrap says it provides with the facilities the shrinkwrap recommends (like 'doze is usable in 8Mb?).

Overall:

My final opinion, taking the package as a whole.

It's time to kick some *serious* butt.

Life was passing by, as it usually does. Then there was the Acorn World 1996 show.

This, my friends, could be the new awakening of Acorn. Forget your crappy PC clones and the farcical mess of an operating system that has appointed itself the industry's standard. Instead, consider this:

The Rocket ship ten-slice RiscPC. Look carefully, it contains everything including the kitchen sink!
© 1996 ART. Taken from their WWW site.

The ART stand. Unmissable with flashing orange lights and Acorn personnel in blue combat gear.

There was an A7000 in a perspex case. The processor looked a little weird and there were flying leads to it.

That, that little thing is an A7500 processor with hardware floating point. It apparently got itself working the night before. Running at 40MHz and using EDO RAM.

There is also going to be a new OS. It is rumoured to be microkernel based with pre-emptive multitasking and asymetric multiprocessor. All kinds of terms that one would probably find in a book describing *real* operating systems like VMS or Unix.

The RiscPC II will hold 2 to 4 StrongARMs, support a PCI peripheral bus with DEBI. The VIDC will be produced smaller (0.6 micron) for three in the machine. A new interface chip produced in association with Cyrus will replace the IOMD and it will do SCSI as well as many other things. Support for EDO RAM / SDRAM.

As for the StrongARM... DEC already have 233MHz versions, and 300MHz versions are in existence.

Acorn

The new OS is hoped to run existing RiscOS applications. If it really is pre–emptive, then this ability will be pretty amazing. Look at the mess a certain PC GUI makes of 'old style' applications. It'd be suicide to write off all RiscOS applications, so you should expect the usual upgrade quirks and not all hell breaking loose. There will be about three incarnations of RiscOS before the new OS, which is codenamed "Gallileo".

There ***will*** be a portable next year as a kind of A7000 replacement? The price seems to have been pretty much confirmed at ***£500!!!*** Wow! This is planned for Autumn 1997. I'm saving up for it like yesterday.

The new hardware could reach 1200MIPS so several project are planned such as a software modem and software MPEG-2. It was mentioned that the RiscPC II would be available as a motherboard change. However this was not "on the record".

As for CHRP. That can take a running jump into a vat of sulphuric acid. I can imagine Peter Bondar dusting off the old "Sorry, we can't take such a retrograde step" quote. :-)

RiscOS has been licensed to the Korean government.

So, as they say in WarGames, "Confidence *is* high".

Who still wants a PC?
Sheesh. I almost said "Kewl!".

Acorn RISC TECHNOLOGIES

Rendezvous

John and Helen checking out Frobnicate's past and present.

Today I met John Stonier and Helen Rayner. Finally, after being in comms for over three years (gosh, doesn't it seem a long time?), I get to meet somebody I've been talking to.

Well, I instantly knew which was which. Helen is apparently 14 years old, though she looks about 16ish. John? I don't know his age and he's the kind of person where it is hard to guess.

To the left is an impromptu image grab of John and Helen checking out the official Frobnicate archive. All nicely printed and placed in red plastic wallets. The observant will see a PRM down bottom left, maybe some other things around too.

Helen and John looked at my BBS and my room. My room is known as most things between "tornado" and "pig sty" and "Bosnia" and "train wreck". Everybody moans about my room and its apparent lack of organisation. They both wanted a room just like mine... Though at the Acorn Show (where I met John again), he commented he tried to make his room like mine but could not find enough junk. ROTFL. :-)
After that, we all went to the local Burger King. John treated me to a burger in recognition of around £800 spent calling his BBS. Probably twice that in reality, but I'm sure I'd cry if I knew the real amount. Helen decided to roly-poly along the pavement, for no reason other than she felt like it.

Back at home, we had the obligatory poke–the–camera–in–your–face session (image below) where Helen decided upon becoming camera shy. Ahhhhhh....

John and Helen in the garden...

If you look closely at the image of Helen on the right, you may notice she was giving the new Digibank sweatshirt a test run. I'm now the owner of one of those. Time drew on relentlessly and they had to leave for the journey home – but not without a Helen Hug first!

Helen Rayner

It was fun meeting both of you. Come again any time. :-)
Richard – tired, worn out and hugged. 19th October 1996.

Diary of a [illegible] hacker

Life calmed down where I lived, after the police raid. I was sentenced to two hours of community service for abuse to the police officer. I had to wash all the police vehicles. Something big was going on down the docks, so I had fun driving around the basement with the flashing lights on. The burglar alarm took all of twenty seconds to suss out and disable. The Dog Section van's burglar alarm has been modified so if it ever gets set off, it will never shut up.

I'm back at college. Everybody is running around like a headless chicken. Sopowitz apparently left a message on his computer saying "I can't take it anymore. Goodbye cruel world." and then he filed his resignation. The college, on an efficiency drive, processed the resignation that very evening. His pension and references were stricken from the record on account of gross misconduct, though nobody is quite sure what the misconduct was. Sopowitz turned up the next morning to find all his files in the bin and his photographs and trophies piled in a cardboard box. Then all hell broke loose. In the middle of it, I heard the administrator say "Well the computer can't be wrong. It says so right here that you...". I smiled as I hooked my laptop to the Ethernet socket by the notice–board in the entrance hall. A few keypresses and all information pertaining to Sopowitz's resignation vanished to the same bit bucket as that crap about my expulsion and Albert Sanawuse's termination.

I unlinked and walked to my next lesson. Sopowitz stormed over and fumed "You.....".
I smiled in the cutest way possible and said lamely, "Me Sir? I'm off to class TDA1 Sir.". And off I walked.

No doubt Sopowitz knew it was me. He had no proof and he didn't know how. But he knew. Just the way I like it. He'll think twice before screwing with me because everybody believes the computer. Next time it might be the ghostbusters a'knocking at the door.

Our obligatory hell–hole lesson is economics. Not the fun "Home economics" where you got to soak your teacher in egg white and pin her to the wall but the boring old monetary economics. The teacher bleated on about stability in the market and Wall Street (now *that* would be an interesting hack!) and so on. Finally, bored of all this, I stood up and began to ask some questions.

"Sir, is it not true that many significant database systems operate using only the last two digits of the year?"
"Ummm...", he managed.
"Also is it not true that the computer industry has done bugger all about this problem up until recently?"
"Ummm...", again.
"Also, Sir, is it not true that around fifty percent of software being sold in the shops this very day are unable to cope with a new millennium?"
He said nothing.
"Is it not true that the computer industry hasn't even decided on some kind of 'Millennium compatible' mark and, quite frankly, nobody has a clue?"
Finally he said, "So what is your point?".
"Well Sir. Assume you have twenty thousand pounds in your bank account. What do you think will happen when the computer ticks over to the year 1900? Then it gets rectified. Does all the information past 1900 get wiped off as data error? Do you get hit for a hundred years of taxation? Will the whole damned lot blow up?"
"That is hardly pertinent."
"Oh, Sir, I think it is. It is no good you bleating on about the stock markets and how to make a killing on Wall Street if you refuse to acknowledge that the banks could have difficulties. You are ignoring the problem too."
"No serious software suffers from that, and hasn't done since 1990. Only back-street dodgy software has these problems."
"So according to you Windows is back street and dodgy?"
"Windows works fine."
"95, yes. I don't think you'll find 3.1 likes the roll–over. And that was being sold up until recently."
Silence. The entire class was silent, waiting for the teacher's next reply.
Finally, a good friend of mine took a pickaxe to the ice. "Sir...", she asked, "If you were any good at making a killing on Wall Street, how come your house is on mortgage and you are teaching us? Why aren't you like totally rich or something?"
"Up yours.", came the reply. The teacher slammed his briefcase shut and stormed out.
I turned to the girl, who was blushing. "Hey, nice hack Joanna!".

Another teacher annoyed, and it wasn't even lunchtime.

Say, don't the old ways always feel the best?

Á¢¢éñts

Did *you* know that RiscOS 3 provides a simple (yet apparently undocumented) method of entering accented characters and other such symbols into your documents? This little Frobnicate wall–chart will show you how!

ÁÉÍÓÚÝ	Hold *ALT* and tap *{*. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.
ÀÈÌÒÙ	Hold *ALT* and tap *}*. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.
ÄËÏÖÜ ÿ	Hold *ALT* and tap *:*. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.
ÂÊÎÔÛ	Hold *ALT* and tap *'*. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.
ÃÑÕ	Hold *ALT* and tap <. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.
Å	Hold *ALT* and tap >. Release *ALT* and press the letter key.

Other useful ALT key combinations (some of these are faked because the font did not contain those additional characters such as "¼") :

¹	ALT + 1	¾	ALT + 6	«	ALT + z
²	ALT + 2	¶	ALT + r	»	ALT + x
³	ALT + 3	ø	ALT + o	ç	ALT + c
¼	ALT + 4	æ	ALT + a	µ	ALT + u
½	ALT + 5	ß	ALT + s	°	ALT + ~
¡	ALT + !	±	ALT + (	®	ALT + R
¥	ALT + Y	Ø	ALT + 0	Þ	ALT + P
Æ	ALT + A	§	ALT + S	Ð	ALT + D
©	ALT + C	º	ALT + M	×	ALT + <
÷	ALT + >	¿	ALT + ?		

T.A.N.K.S.

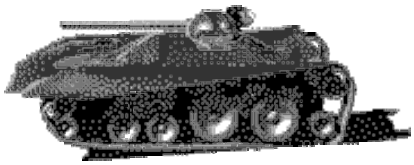
Converted by Richard Murfay

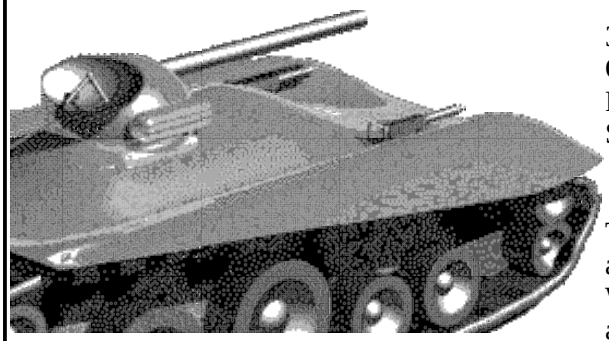
(Tactical Armoured Nuclear Kombat Stations)

An exciting new game from Werewolf Software

TANKS is a fun multi-player game for RISC OS computers. It is based on that classic idea of several tanks on a hillside, each trying to lob missiles over the hills to destroy the other tanks.

TANKS is the ultimate version of this game. Up to 12 players can compete, in teams or singly, or you can play solo against the computer. The TANKS can be human or computer controlled, with a range of computer opponents to choose from. As the players earn more money, by destroying their opponents, they can buy additional equipment for their TANKS, from a huge range including: Missiles, Lasers, Shotguns, MIRVs, Nukes, Funky Bombs, Shields, Parachutes, Tracers, Deflectors and many more.





TANKS runs on any Acorn 32-bit computer with RISC OS 3.10+ and 2MB RAM. Fully Risc PC and StrongARM™ compatible.

TANKS retails for £25.95 and is available from Werewolf Software. Please add £1.50 P&P.

Werewolf Software • 23 The Spinneys, Bromley, Kent, BR1 2NT
Tel: 0181-467 1138 • Support BBS: 0181-289 6003
Email: info@werewlf.demon.co.uk
WWW: http://www.werewlf.demon.co.uk/

Qu'est-ce que c'est, ça?

I want to run.
I want to hide.
I want to break the walls that hold me inside.

I want to reach out and touch the flame; where the streets have no name.

Where the streets have no name, Pet Shop Boys version.

Yours truly is now a member of the Acorn Clan. If you ask me, the price was worth it for this immensely cool RiscPC sweatshirt. I wear that sweatshirt almost everywhere. I'm not afraid to be an Acorn fanatic – even to the depths of blind devotion and emotion.

Sure, Windows95 has more facilities than RiscOS. However it does what it does slower, clumsier and with a few 100Mb more RAM and/or storage than a corresponding RiscOS application. Also, in my opinion, it isn't too intuitive. It's flash but... Well... It is the boy–racer of OSs. It looks good, it sounds good but there isn't much of note under the bonnet.

RiscOS. Well. That is, I guess, like the Volvo of the OSs. Solidly built. And whilst it won't win races, it will get you there and back long after the other cars have been sold off as scrap.

If Peter Bondar's speech becomes a reality (in 1997 and not sometime after 2001) then Acorn will be set to embark upon some serious butt kicking. We'll never take over the Windows sector. Not by a long shot. But we can make a dent in it. We can also aim for more specialised applications like power workstations. Acorn were thought to have put effort into the ARM processors for the embedded control market. Then along comes the StrongARM – the first Acorn processor with a clock speed in three digits (because MHz is all PC users seem able to understand <grin>). Not only that, but a new operating system written from scratch (rather than hacking bits to RiscOS) is on the cards, as well as a RiscPC with two StrongARMs at entry level.

To use a metaphor, unless Intel can squeeze more out of their processors – we shall surely p*** all over the PC market.

However some people have, in the past, asked me what it is I like about Acorn? They are incompatible with the rest of the world. They are made by some highly insignificant company that half the world isn't even aware of. They are slow. They cannot use 'off–the–shelf' parts like a SoundBlaster card and there is no video–support beyond a basic VGA clone. The processor runs at the same speed as an XT [when referring to the A3000]. It contains BASIC because it can't handle a decent language. There is no machine code support.

Amazingly, people have over the years said *all* of that crap to me.

So let me set the record straight for the final time.

1. Acorn are about as compatible as Windows95. It is compatible with itself. However Acorn can read more graphics and documents formats than I've heard off. We can read common disc formats like PC and Apple. No, we can't read Amiga disc formats. Neither can anybody else.

2. If you have not heard of Acorn then that is your failing not mine. Acorn may seem insignificant to you now. However with the deals Acorn is doing and the technology they are producing... Soon you will know.

Incidentally, it seems many users of other systems are doing the ol' Ostrich bit. When told about the specification of the RiscPC they pooh-pooh it, stick their heads in the sand and

say it is crap even though they aren't quite sure why. It reminds me a lot of the Church Leaders versus ALH84001. To find out that this *thing* is for real would threaten their ideals, their way of life, everything they believe in and everything they stand for.

Is it not surprising there is so much garbled misinformation being slung around? A television programme (on the BBC no less – tut tut!) refers to a harddisc as "memory". Everybody thinks a Level2 cache and FP maths are the be–all and end–all of processors and if your system operates at less than 100MHz it must surely be pathetic and pointless.

3. They are slow. At some things, yes. However I can delete two directories full of applications off the network, copy the Frobnicate's from :4 to :5, verify :4 and format a floppy ***ALL*** at the same time. Yes, the computer slows down. But it can be done, unlike walking into night school and switching on Windows 3.1 – which cannot. Real world applications are harder to judge. I know that when I'm in the right mood I can turn out a Frobnicate (from scratch) quicker than some people can turn out a flysheet using a PC, as was done with issue #1 created in several hours. The Acorn's ability to drag and drop is astounding. I digitiser an image. Sling it to ChangeFSI for post–processing. Sling it into the Ovation frame. Doesn't look quite right? Drag it out and reprocess it. Power–outages excepted, all can be achieved without writing to the harddisc.

Of course a pro could whip me using emacs and TeX... But we aren't talking pros. The point I'm trying to get across is that whilst the A5000 may be unable to crunch numbers as quickly as a Pentium (unfair comparison), it is much more fluid and coordinated in use. Much more.

4. What many people seem unable to grasp is that the Acorn is supplied with the "hidden costs" already built in. You buy a standard non–upgraded PC and you'll receive a machine that can only beep and squeak. You need to add a SoundBlaster (or clone) in order to get some decent sounds or to be able to play audio from CD–ROM. However the standard Acorn has reasonable sound built into it. My A5000 isn't as good as the latest SBs – no. But again unfair comparison. It can, however, play trackers with no hardware upgrades. PC users without sound cards have the option of fiddling with a hacky DIY gadget on the parallel port. Oh yeah!

5. Some 30 screen modes built into the A5000 and the ability to define your own. Just because I stick to a largish 256 colour mode doesn't mean I don't have any alternatives. The RiscPC has more *ability* in this area, including more than 256 colours!

6. The old RISC versus CISC argument that I can't be bothered stating again. Incidentally my A3000 at 8MHz whipped an 8088 at 8MHz. It pinned it to the ground and crapped all over it (benchmark conducted in 1989 at school).

7. It contains BASIC as a bonus. Half the applications are written in it because it is cool and sexy and.....
And *exactly* how many applications are written with the QBASIC attempt–at–a–BASIC supplied with DOS 6.xx? I don't mean the commercial nice version but the bundled version. Exactly.

8. Well, if you really must program in assembler on the Acorn – you insert assembler between a [and a] in BASIC. Macro–assembly is provided as is conditional–assembly and run–time compilation. You name it, it can probably be done. What do PC users get? To fiddle around with DEBUG.

Okay. TurboPASCAL (and probably TURBO C/C++ too) can handle this in–line. But you pay extra for that.

Blind devotion? Je n'y crois pas.

Apart from the usual crap that affects everything with wires... My Acorn hasn't let me down. Acted weird, yes. Let me down, no.

The failure of my 1Gb harddisc is a lesson I have learned through my own failings. I was told that the warranty was 10 years if left running and 1 year if switched off every night. Even if that is untrue, I should have gotten the point. My switching it off is hardly the fault of Acorn.

I've made my choice. The grass *is* greener *here*.

AW96

For me, Acorn World 1996 was a bit of a disappointment. Not Acorn's fault. No. You see, it was my first show and my first chance to meet all those people I'd wanted to meet (like DaviD Dade and Mike Cook and Dane and...). I was so busy meeting those that I missed out on most of the stands.

However due to circumstances beyond my control, I went on Friday – the day that is traditionally reserved for the "education sector".

It appears, from what I heard, that a person whom I cannot name popped in early on to hand out F.A.S.T. leaflets (Federation Against Software Theft) which seems to me a little hypocritical given an incident I could mention (regarding a known BBS server). Apparently our good friend returned on Saturday to have this point picked up by a few visitors to the show. According to the proverbial grapevine the place soon filled up with solicitors, politicians, police, the SAS, the international Red Cross and the whole deal being mediated by the UN and NATO.

<JohnMajor>
Oh dear!
</JohnMajor>

I guess next time I'd better go on Saturday huh? However it was fun. Yours truly signed up to the Clan. I have this nice RiscPC sweatshirt and soon – hopefully – I'll have a membership card confirming that I truly am a fully fledged anorak. Hehe... Like you didn't *know*?

Was Acorn World impressive? Was it good? Was it worth it? Well, it was slightly claustrophobic and crammed into this tiny part of Olympia. However it spanned two floors so was larger than it first appeared – though sadly the Clan Lounge was little more than a Clan Closet. Not to mention those two Germans doing good PR for their country by poking around my bags and only bothering to ask if they were my bags when I stared at them. I was in the Clan Lounge at this time. Who the heck were they?

Some people have been mentioning that nobody had a particularly impressive stand. The ART and Xemplar stands could probably have both fit in the average living/dining room. Well, let me explain something. Stands are sold by metres. A 3 metre wide by two metre deep stand would set you back around about £1200. That's apparently without electricity, furnishings, telephone etc etc etc...

Good golly miss molly.

Well. I never met David Pilling or Peter Bondar. That I'm upset about. But hey – there's always next year!

The cover image is Peter Bondar exerting some serious GBH on a PC. Best thing really. Legend has it Peter had to pay compensation for putting holes in the roof (which was ***WAY*** above him).
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